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January to March.

(Rama Krishna Centenary  
Number).

1936

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Anniversary and Its Significance

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January - 1936

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## THE VEDANTA KESARI

SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY

ISSUE

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1936

We shall be bringing out a special issue of the *Vedanta Kesari* in February next in commemoration of Sri Ramakrishna's Birth-Centenary which falls in that month. It will be more than double the size of the ordinary issue, and will contain several illustrations. The articles will deal mainly with Sri Ramakrishna and his message, but there will be a few dealing with topics of general interest also.

Among the distinguished contributors for this issue are :

|                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Romain Rolland          | Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar    |
| K. S. Venkataramani     | Prof. J. B. Pratt            |
| Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddi | Ananda Kumaraswami           |
| Sister Devamata         | Prof. Mahendra Nath Sircar   |
| Dhan Gopal Mukherjee    | Prof. P. N. Srinivasachariar |
| Hy. S. L. Polak         | Prof. Ernest P. Horowitz     |

The centenary number will be combined issue for February and March, and there will therefore be no separate issue of the *Vedanta Kesari* for March.

The subscribers are also informed that the centenary number may be posted a few days later than the usual date (i. e. the 1st of the month.)

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MANAGER, THE VEDANTA KESARI,  
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Let me tell you, strength is what we want, and the first step in getting  
strength is to uphold the Upanishads and believe that "I am the Atman."

—Swami Vivekananda

**THE VEDANTA KESARI**

VOL. XXII

JANUARY, 1936

[No. 9]

HINDU ETHICS

॥ ॐ ॥

कामक्रोधद्वेषेता ये निर्मेमाः निरहङ्कृताः ।

मुत्रताः स्थिरमर्यादास्तानुपास्व च पृच्छ च ॥

न वागर्थं यशोर्थं वा धर्मेस्तेषां युधिष्ठिर ।

अवश्यं कार्यं दृश्येव शरीरस्य क्रियास्तथा ॥

न भयं क्रोधनापन्ने न शोकस्तेषु विद्यते ।

न धर्मवर्जिनश्चैव न गुह्यं किञ्चिदस्त्रियताः ॥

बन्धलोभस्तयामोहो येन सत्याज्ज्वलितः ।

तेषु कौन्तेय रज्येया येषां न भ्रश्यते पुनः ॥

There are some who have put away lust and anger. These  
selfless people have no axe of their own to grind. They are of noble  
vows and are firmly set on moral principles. Seek their company  
and take counsel with them.

To them Duty is neither a matter of mere talk nor an  
incentive for fame. They do it, O, Yudhishtira, because they  
strongly feel it needs be done. Their physical activities too result  
from this ethical imperative.

There is in them no room for fear, anger, vacillation and  
grief. Their religion is not a flag to invite public gaze; at the same  
time they are not encircled in any mystery whatsoever.

Greed and delusion have no sway over them. They stand by  
truth and are upright in behaviour. For once they swerve not  
from their firm-set character. O, son of Kunti, make friends with  
such souls.

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER

By Swami Saradananda

[The Master's thorough knowledge of the laws governing spiritual moods, their advantages and pitfalls, is illustrated herein with reference to striking events in his life.]

*An illustration in this regard : the devoted youth who was brought to the Cossipore Garden*

**I**NDEED how numerous were the instances of this kind that we came across while in the Master's company ! One day, when he was residing in the Cossipore Garden, some Vaishnava devotees brought with them a young man who seemed quite unmindful of his surroundings. We had never seen these people coming to the Master before. The reason of their coming was to show the young man to the Master and consult his views regarding the spiritual state that the youth had suddenly entered into.

We found the devotee, with his chest and countenance flushed red, sprinkling on his person the dust from the feet of one and all in an attitude of great humility. His body was frequently subjected to tremors and the hairs rose on their ends while he was taking the name of God. On account of the continuous flow of tears, his eyes had turned red and were also swollen a bit. The body was of light-dark complexion, neither very fat nor lean ; the face and the limbs were comely and well-built. There was a tuft of hair on the crown. He had on his person an unwashed cloth, and the upper part of the body was, most probably, without any covering. The feet too were bare. He seemed wholly indifferent towards physical cleanliness or even

towards the maintenance of the body. This excited state of mind, we came to know, had suddenly appeared one day while he was singing the praise of God. Since then he was taking no food practically ; sleep had left him completely ; and he was weeping and wailing and rolling on the ground day and night for not having realised God. This state was continuing for some days.

*The Master's skill in recognising the physical and mental changes brought about by spiritual states of great intensity. A guru is really a physician for the disease of the round of births.*

Nowhere else have we noticed such extraordinary development of the power of recognising the changes brought about by intense spiritual states, as in the case of the Master. In Scriptures like the Guru-Gita, the Guru has been called 'the physician who cures the diseases of the round of births.' Little did we understand that there was so much meaning hidden in that term before we gained the holy association of the Master ! We had no idea whatever of the fact that the Guru is actually a healer of the mental diseases, that he can promptly recognise the symptoms appearing in spiritual aspirants at the onset of different spiritual moods and that he can prescribe to them measures to eliminate these symptoms gradually without much harm in case they are

of an uncongenial nature, or to retain them, make them normal and utilise them for still higher developments in case they are manifestations of a helpful and healthy nature. We have become firmly convinced of this only by seeing the Master's powers in this direction almost every day. When the revered Swami Vivekananda attained the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, (or the state of absolute non-duality), the Master prescribed to him, "Now, for some days you should not take any food cooked by others. Cook your food by yourself. At this stage one can accept things cooked at most by one's own mother. Any deviation from this rule is sure to lead to the loss of this state. There is no fear of danger any more when it becomes normal with the aspirant after some time." Noticing the physical discomfort of 'Gopal's mother' (a lady-devotee of great spiritual eminence) caused by nervous tension, the Master would suggest, "Well, this nervous tension is brought about by love of God. If it disappears, what else will be there to sustain you ? So it must remain. However take some food when you feel too much inconvenience on this account."

Another devotee was too much attached to physical cleanliness. Because of this his mind could not rise above body-consciousness and be concentrated on God. To him the Master's private advice was, "Pray to God one day after smearing your forehead with the clay taken from dirty places." Another day the Master noticed that during devotional music the same devotee used to display physical expressions of devotional feeling in rather too prominent a manner. This was an impediment

to his further progress. Therefore the Master scolded him in the following manner : "The fellow has come to display his ecstasy before me. But can it be like this when it is genuine ? In real ecstasy one dives into the deeper realms of one's being and becomes perfectly still. But what do we find here ? Be quiet ; compose yourself. (To the others present) Do you know the nature of this ecstasy ? It is like the boiling of one ounce of milk in a big pan. The pan seems to be full of milk but remove it from the stove and you will find not a single drop even. The little quantity that was there has all stuck to the pan." Knowing the attitude of another, the Master remarked, "Well, my good man, eat, drink, and make yourself merry in every way, but not in the name of religion ;" and so forth. The instances are too numerous to be cited exhaustively.

*The Master's conclusion regarding the state of the youth.*

At the very first sight of the young man, the Master said on this occasion : "Indeed ! It is preliminary to Madhura-Bhava.\* But it will not last long ; he will not be able to retain it. It will disappear, and that for good, the very moment he will touch a

\*In Brindavan Sri Radha, the greatest devotee of the Lord Krishna, used to have on account of her intense devotion twenty-nine kinds of physical symptoms, such as laughing, wailing, tears, tremors in the body, the standing of the hairs on ends all over the body, perspiration, loss of outward consciousness, etc., which have been collectively termed the Madhura-Bhava (or the Sweet Attitude) in the Vaishnava Scriptures. The culmination of this Madhura-Bhava is called Maha-Bhava (or the Supreme Ecstasy). It is in this Maha-Bhava that these twenty-nine kinds of physical changes appear. It has been said that ordinary souls cannot have this Maha-Bhava in its fullest manifestation.

face to face with God. For this she has produced and supported various orders of monks and ascetics whom the society is expected to maintain and leave in leisure in order to devote themselves wholly to disciplines for the realisation of the Supreme.

### A Saviour of the Racial Soul

A resuscitation of India's spiritual life required that this ideal of realisation should be held aloft before the people, and be emphasised and embodied in a life lived before the very eyes of modernised society. Nothing short of it could adequately counteract the dire effects of atheism and the zealous propaganda of Christian missionaries. The life of Sri Ramakrishna was a response of the Indian soul to this deep felt need of the times. God-realisation is the centre round which the whole of that life turns. There is, therefore, a complete absence in it of other interests—social, political or academic. His reputation for saintship and his demand for India's allegiance do not depend in the least on services rendered in fields other than what is considered purely spiritual. Of learning he had little, of wealth still less, and of reputation as a social or political leader he had nothing to boast of. He impressed his contemporaries, and still continues to impress us of later times, as one who was God-centred, as one whose whole life was a flaming passion of God-love and an ever-renewing process of God-realisation. One who accepts God as a reality and God-realisation as a possibility cannot but be struck by the towering peaks of spiritual grandeur that constitute his life-history.

### The Significance of the Centenary to the Modern Conscience

To us who are earthly in our outlook, what does God mean more than the mere spelling of that word? Perhaps some of us may consider it both convenient and expedient to give him the benefit of a doubt, so that when everything else fails us in life and all our calculations are upset, we may not be debarred from possible sources of help from that unknown agency. And to still others He is a far off person useful as a purveyor of meat and as a protector in distress, a being of easy moral standards whose services are to be secured by flattery, bribe and ceremonial observances. Like the eagle we fly aloft on the wings of words, but our vision is fixed in search of carcasses lying below. Like the parrot we utter the name of Rama incessantly in normal circumstances, but when the cat of adversity approaches us, we forget Rama and indulge in our native cry.

To us, therefore, beset as we are with doubt and scepticism, Sri Ramakrishna's life comes as an example of robust faith and unwavering conviction—a veritable balm of life to our lacerated heart, a refreshing shower of rain for our languishing spiritual faculties. For in him, more than in the life of any other great man of our age, we find this all-consuming and disinterested love of God, this never-failing consciousness of His presence which we so sorely need to bring harmony and peace into our lives, both individual and collective. No politician, however great, can accomplish this task of re-kindling the extinguished flame of faith in the heart of humanity. No captain of industry, however clever in re-organising the methods of production and

distribution, can give a drop of these spiritual waters to soothe the parched throat of mankind. No scientist, however versatile and inventive, can ever enthrone God in the hearts of men, or restore to them their spiritual patrimony which they have squandered in their ignorance and carelessness. The gift of Sri Ramakrishna unto mankind consists in this restoration of its spiritual heritage. This he has accomplished, not by writing learned books or through organised propaganda. Men of to-day know these methods only too well, and are not going to be impressed by a spirituality wordy in structure or pontifical in tone. His claim to the gratitude of humanity rests on a life rich in the romance of the soul and the realised certainty of Divine Presence. God is real and the world is unreal—declares the couplet well-known to the Hindu mind through the ages. God is real; therefore the world too is real—declares Ramakrishna from the fullness of his spiritual experience. Having realised the Supreme as the transcendental Absolute, he experienced the same Being as having manifested into the Supreme Personality and the Universe of Jivas and Jagat (souls and matter). Hence the world was for him inseparable from God as it was for the Rishis who exclaimed "All this is Brahman" or "Whatever that moves and whatever that does not—all that is permeated by Brahman."

"Do you know what I see!" he declares, "I see Him as all men and other creatures,—they appear as veritable figures skin-bound—with the Lord within,—shaking the head or moving the hand and feet! I had once a like perception—one substance, I felt, had taken the form of the cosmos with all living creatures; like

a house of wax, with gardens, roads, men, cows and the rest, all made of wax and nothing but wax! I see, I realise, that all the three come from one substance—the victim to be sacrificed, the block for sacrifice and he who cuts down the victim for sacrifice." Thus in every experience of life, trivial as well as great, good as well as bad, pleasant as well as unpleasant, he felt the intimate presence of the Deity and imparted the same experience to those who came in contact with him. The plays of his boyhood were divine, the passion of his youth was godly, the instructions of his mature years were god-centred and the agonies of his death-bed too were only a set-off to the perpetual bubbling of divine joy in him. In this unfailing consciousness of God in all phases of life is a lesson to the modern conscience, and this lesson it can nowhere find inculcated and embodied in so forceful and concrete a manner as in the life and teachings of Ramakrishna.

### The Work Done

So the Centenary of this great benefactor of humanity falls on 24th February 1936, and will be celebrated in different places between that date and February 1937. The Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur have drawn up a scheme for celebrating this holy occasion in an adequate manner, and are besides organising committees for doing the same in other parts. We give below a report of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee containing a short account of the arrangements that are being made in India and abroad:

A fairly good number of meetings have been held in different parts of India in which distinguished men have spoken on the life and mission of Sri Ramakrishna and stressed the importance of a fitting

celebration of the Centenary all over the country. Of these the activities of the Centenary Committee of C. P. and Berar and of the Sannyasins and general public of Benares and of the Professors and students of the Hindu University deserve special mention. We are glad to announce that Mandaleswar Srimat Swarupanandaji of Mritunjay Math, the leader of the well-known Giri sect of Sadhus, has kindly consented to join the panel of Vice-Presidents of the General Committee. His Highness Maharaja Sri Aditya Narain Singh Bahadur, Kt., K.C.S.I., of Benares has been kind enough to preside over the meeting of the citizens of Benares; he has also consented to be one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Committee as well as to be the President of the Local Committee. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Hindu University and Mahamahopadhyaya Pramathanath Tarkabhushan were elected Vice-Presidents of the Executive Committee for the Benares Hindu University. In C.P. and Berar distinguished gentlemen like Messrs. M. S. Ancy, Ganashyam Singh Gupta, N. B. Khare, S. G. Patwardhan, W. R. Puranik, Pt. Kunjibharilal Agnohotri and others are taking great interest in the celebration. In Patna too a general as well as a Working Committee has been formed with some of the distinguished men of the Province as members.

The activities of the Foreign Celebration Sub-Committee have been published in the papers from time to time. First we have got in touch through correspondence with several distinguished men and women of European countries, who have become members of the Foreign Celebration Sub-Committee and are trying to make the celebration a success.

Secondly, we have sent Centenary and Mission literature (in pamphlets) to nearly 30 Universities in Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Jugo-Slovakia and other countries.

Thirdly, Swami Yatiswarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission who has been sent to Europe on missionary work and is touring through Germany, Switzerland, France and other countries, has been asked to organise the celebration work in Europe. He is getting in touch with noted people through correspondence and personal interviews and is lecturing and organising small

celebrations wherever he is going. He is about to publish several books, mostly translations of Swami Vivekananda's writings in German, French and Swiss. This we believe would lay the foundation of a more permanent work.

In England too there is a Swami of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Apyaktananda, who has recently opened a centre in London and is giving lectures and interviews to the public. He is organising the celebration work in England. The London Celebration Committee has already been formed with some of Swami Vivekananda's friends and admirers in it.

In America, the Swamis in charge of the 10 different centres are taking an active part and Celebration Committees have already been formed in New York and other places. Besides, nearly 150 important people in Ceylon, S.S., Siam, China, Japan, Aden, Fiji, Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, Tanganyika, S. Rhodesia, S. Africa, Mauritius and S. America have been approached through correspondence and literature.

We give here some of the names of distinguished persons who are taking very keen interest in the celebration: Mr. Deona Smith of San Francisco, Prof. H. V. Glassenopp of Konigsburg, M. Maurice Magre of France, Prof. O'Stein of Czecho Slovakia, Mlle. M. Chovine of France, Mrs. G. T. West of California, Mr. Kathedren E. Davis of San Francisco, M. Alphonse de Chateaubriant of France.

### The Programme

Besides organising the celebration in several parts of India, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur have drawn up a scheme that is of all-India importance. The chief object of this is to do something useful that may stand as a permanent memorial of this holy occasion and help to propagate the message of the Great Master. We give below a brief account of the programme:

*Permanent Memorials:* (1) A nucleus of a Central Fund under the Ramakrishna Mission will be established with a view to helping forward humanitarian activities such as (a) Relief Work during flood,

famine, pestilence, etc., and (b) Mass Education—if possible, on vocational and industrial lines. (2) An Institute of Cultural Fellowship under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission will be established in Calcutta for the promotion of mutual understanding and goodwill among all sections of people in India and abroad. Harmony of faiths will be its central theme. It will have a house containing a spacious hall, a select library of useful books on cultural subjects and a reading room, and will arrange regular classes and lectures on Religion, Philosophy, Arts and allied subjects by Eastern and Western scholars invited for the purpose. Extension lectures will also be arranged from time to time in different parts of India and abroad as far as possible. The membership of the Institute will be open to all. (3) A Centenary Memorial Volume will be published on lines approved by the Centenary Publication Sub-Committee. It is to be a work of permanent value dealing with the evolution of Indian thought and culture in their diverse aspects from the Vedic times, written by distinguished Indian scholars, and is likely to cover about twelve hundred pages. An important section of the work will be consecrated to the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda as well as the activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission at the present moment in India and abroad. (4) A Centenary Album will be published containing pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and the disciples of the Master. It will also contain pictures of important centres of the Math and the Mission with brief explanatory notes. (5) Specially designed Memorial Medallion will be struck to commemorate the Centenary. (6) A suitable Memorial of Sri Ramakrishna will be erected at his birth-place, Kamarpukur, and steps will be taken to make the place easily accessible. (7) The Centenary Celebrations will have a fitting termination with the opening of the Temple of Sri Ramakrishna at the Belur Math amid appropriate religious festivities.

Besides these works of permanent importance a Convention of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order and others interested in the movement, a Convention of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain monks, a Parliament of Religions, a Conference of women admir-

ers and devotees, lectures and essays to propagate the message of Sri Ramakrishna and pilgrimages to important places associated with the life of Sri Ramakrishna are among the other important items in the programme of celebration.

### Appeal to our readers

The programme, as will be seen, is a very comprehensive one, and it will require about ten lakhs of rupees, if it is to be fully carried out. The amount may look too huge, but it is not really so considering the size of India, the number of men and women who have been influenced by the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and the importance of the occasion that is to be celebrated. Besides, in addition to the items that are of purely religious and cultural interest, there are others like the stabilisation of the Relief Work and mass educational activities of the Mission, which every lover of humanity will appreciate. If we but remember that Sri Ramakrishna is a saviour of men, one whose life and teachings can alone restore the lost spiritual balance of mankind, we shall not grudge to make the sacrifice that is required to do honour unto him on this occasion. If again we remember that since the time of the Buddha no other religious leader of India has received such recognition and reverence as Sri Ramakrishna has received from people outside our country, and that in the short period of a century, we shall feel it a privilege to do our best for commemorating his Centenary. It is certain that none of us of this generation will live to witness another Centennial Celebration of the Great Master. The present occasion is therefore a unique opportunity of divine service for us, which, if lost, we can never hope to regain. Therefore in the name of all

that we deem holy and blessed in life, in the name of the Divinity that is in all, we appeal to you, reader, whoever you be, to come forward with liberal contributions for the Cente-

nary Fund and thus be blessed yourself and help others be blessed.

All contributions towards this fund may be sent to the Vedanta Kesari address.

## REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

*By A Disciple*

**I**T was the day of the Lakshmi Puja. Early in the morning I went to see the Holy Mother with my sister. The children were also with us. The Mother was peeling fruits in the Shrine-room. As soon as she saw us, she said, "Hallo! Come in and sit down." Two women devotees came for initiation. Learning of their desire, the Mother said, "Yes, there are two boys waiting for initiation as well." Presently another woman devotee came and expressed the desire to be initiated by the Holy Mother. The Mother said, "Very well, there are quite a number of them."

Sumati, my sister, dreamed that she had worshipped the Holy Mother as Chandi\* and given her a sari\*\* with a red border. Accordingly she brought a cloth for her; but her shyness prevented her from expressing her desire to the Holy Mother. "Sister, you tell her about it," she whispered to me. I narrated the incident of the dream to the Mother. The Mother said with a smile, "The Divine Mother of the Universe—Jagadamba—directed that dream. What do you say, my child? Where is the cloth? I must wear it." And she put on the cloth with the wide red border. She looked so beautiful.

\*An epithet of the Divine Mother of the Universe.

\*\*The wearing cloth of a woman.

With wistful eyes we gazed on her. Our eyes were moist with tears. Sumati said, "It would be nice if we could put the vermilion mark on her forehead." The Mother assented with a smile. But we had not taken vermilion with us. It was time for us to return home, and we all bowed down before her. The Mother said to me, "Are you also going with them?"

Devotee : Yes, Mother. I shall have to do some extra cooking at home.

Mother : Do come again.

Devotee : Yes, I will come in the evening.

The Mother offered a large quantity of sweetmeats before the Shrine. These were distributed among the children. We bade her good-bye.

In the evening I took with me some sweets made out of cocoanut kernel. The Mother said, "To-day is the Lakshmi-Puja\*, therefore you have brought these sweets." Gradually many women devotees arrived there with various sweet offerings. After the evening service, all these were offered to the image of Sri Ramakrishna. The Prasad was distributed among the devotees. A woman devotee had brought all the articles of worship for the Goddess Lakshmi with her, and with these worshipped

\*Lakshmi is the name of the Goddess of Luck.

the feet of the Mother. She prostrated before the Mother and offered one anna at her feet. The Mother said to us, "Alas! She is in great trouble.\* She is so poor." She blessed the woman.

I asked her if that European lady had come to see her on Tuesday. The Mother answered in the affirmative. The Mother had shown special favor to the lady and initiated her; and her daughter was also cured of her illness.

As it was late at night, I took leave of the Mother.

The Holy Mother had been absent, staying in her country home at Jayrambati. After about a year she returned in the spring to Calcutta. She was extremely unwell, having been in the grip of malarial fever for a long time. I prostrated before her and she blessed me by placing her hand on my head. She asked me how I was. I gave her a little offering for her expenses and she accepted the money. At the sight of her emaciated body, I lost all power of speech. I looked at her face wistfully and thought, "Alas, how pale and weak her body is!" My sister's maid-servant was with me. She was about to touch the Mother's feet in salutation, but she said to her, "You may bow from a distance." The maid bowed from near the door-sill and went away.

The Mother was so weak that she felt it painful even to utter a word. I was seated on the floor. In the meantime Rashbehary Maharaj came

\* Her only son, a graduate of the University, had gone insane and left home for an unknown destination. Her husband, through grief over the son, was also half mad.

up and asked me not to talk much with her; but the Mother now and then asked me about various things. I gave her very short replies. Then Radhu came with her child. I took him into my arms and gave him a little present. Radhu insisted on his not accepting it. The Mother said, "What is this, Radhu? She is your sister. Why should you not accept the present when she gave it with so much love?" The Mother accepted the money herself. She felt so sorry for the suffering of the child on account of his mother's and grandmother's negligence. Radhu protested in bitter words. The Mother said, "There is no use talking to her," and kept quiet. After a while Sarala and a few women devotees came there to see the Mother. She was lying in bed and began talking with them.

After five or six days I went to pay my respects to the Holy Mother. It was time for the evening service. The Mother lay on her couch. As I stood near her, she sat up. After my salutation, she asked me to take a seat. Some women devotees were making their Japam in the room. I had taken some Sandesh\* with me. After the evening service was over, the Mother asked Bilash Maharaj to offer the sweets to the image of Sri Ramakrishna. He asked if it could be done later. The Mother said, "No, do it now." Her order was carried out. Bilash Maharaj brought some Prasadam of the Divine Mother, Kali. It was distributed among us. The Mother asked us all how we were. "I have had no fever," she said, "for the last two days. But on account of Radhu I am going to lose everything, my health, my spiritual-

\*A Bengali sweet-meat.

ity and my all. She is going to kill her child. Now Sarala has taken care of him and that will save him from premature death. Dr. Kanjilal is treating him. He said emphatically that he would not treat the child if Radhu were to look after him. I do not know Sri Ramakrishna's will. Why should a child be given to her, when she does not even know how to take care of her own person? Now she has a new disease. Dear me! I can hardly bear them. To what torture they subjected me in our country home! Did they even care for me?"

Some one came up and said that Dr. Kanjilal was there. We retired into the next room. The physician was examining the Mother when Radhu came there and said, "Please examine my arm. It bumped against

the iron post and is swollen. There are bruises at different places and they are bleeding too." The arm was bandaged with a piece of dirty linen which had been soaked in raw castor oil. Dr. Kanjilal said, "Please remove the bandage at once and wash your arm with soap. How can anyone put on such a dirty bandage? There will be infection in no time. There is poison in the very air of Calcutta." The doctor left the room. The Mother said with great sorrow, "Ah, how badly hurt is my child! It pains me to death. She is a born sufferer. Her body is so weak! Please ask Kanjilal to prescribe some medicine. Oh, Doctor, please cure her." The devotees left the room one by one. After a while someone reported that Radhu's arm had been properly washed.

## RELIGION AND HUMAN PROGRESS

P. T. Raju, M.A., Sastri

[Mr. P. T. Raju is a Lecturer in Philosophy. In this brilliant article he pleads for a religion that steers clear of a personal conception of God on the one hand, and the mere substitution of an apotheosized society in place of the Deity on the other. In Advaitism he finds a religion of this type.]

Many pious readers may be shocked at the vigorous attack of Mr. Raju on the idea of a Personal God. To such we point out that in India attempts have been made from time immemorial to devise systems of religion assuring the conservation of spiritual values without however postulating a God. Certain trends of thought in the Upanishads, the Swabhava Vada, Samkhya philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism are some of the striking developments of this tendency in this country. If some modern minds want a religion of this type, no Indian theist need grudge it or feel shocked at it. In Advaitism itself there is one school of thought that minimises the importance of a personal God, and grants Him a place in their system only as a figurehead or as a concession to the popular prejudice, as Mr. Raju puts it. But in Advaitism as developed in the Tantras and the Bhagavata Purana we find a full reconciliation between Theism and Absolution in the conception of an Impersonal Personal Deity. The life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna also fully sanction the validity of this development of Advaitism. Sri Ramakrishna views the problem from the purely spiritual and not the academic point of view, and opines that while spiritual development is possible for certain minds without practising devotion to a personal God, it is neither reasonable nor desirable for an Advaitic philosopher to deny Him as long as he is entrenched in ego-consciousness. So long as the ego is a fact, He is neither a myth, nor a mere concession to popular prejudice. He is the real of real entities and can be experienced by the perfected devotee in his purified consciousness.

Spiritual experience is real—at least as real as our ego and the every day world are real. As for the difficulty encountered by Theism due to the presence of evil in the world, it must be remembered that there is also much that is good in it. It is not therefore legitimate to infer that the Deity is either good or bad in exactly the same sense we attach to these words in ordinary parlance. A man who sees a masterpiece of painting revealed only in parts and in patches takes it to be ugly and meaningless. A child, ignorant of the benefits of education bewails his lot when he is put to the hard task of learning. So are we limited in our vision and distorted in our out-look until spiritual realisation gives us the correct perspective of the cosmos and the true nature of the Deity. Let us therefore yearn, pray and strive for that realisation. Till then it is quite legitimate on our part to take our ordinary experience of goodness as more fundamentally related to the nature of the Deity than our conception of evil.

This note is to be read also along with the article "Life is Real" and the foot-notes attached to it, appearing elsewhere in this issue.]

AT no time in its history was religion so much regarded as an enemy of human progress as at present. There are some who think that, had there been no religion, mankind would have been much better off than now. It is often called the thousand-year old enemy of culture and civilisation. Some identify it with conservatism,<sup>1</sup> and conclude that religion constitutes the recidivous factor in human progress. Another type of criticism holds that religion is reactionary, for is not Shintoism revived in Japan in order to strengthen imperialism, and check the influx of democratic ideals?<sup>2</sup> Again, did not the church-fathers and theologians support kings whenever they asserted their so-called divine right as against the wishes of the people? Do not stagnant thought and superstition mark the nearly twelve centuries of the Dark Ages when religion reigned supreme? Religion is the opium of the people that keeps them contented with their miserable lot, instead of exhorting them to strive for a better life. It

helped the Tsar in checking and controlling his clamorous subjects by giving them the false hope of happiness in the other world if they would forego it here.

But an equally large number of facts and arguments can be arrayed to show that human progress is due to religion. How can religion be identified with conservatism, when every founder of religion is a rebel in his own age? Was not Christ crucified because he violated tradition? How much persecution did the Prophet Mohammed suffer at the hands of his contemporaries? Buddha's preachings were a reaction against the gross superstitions and inhuman sacrifices prevalent at the time. The influence of Christianity in civilising the barbarian hordes of Northern Europe cannot be over-estimated. The life of Asoka is an outstanding example of how a religion like Buddhism can work for the good on the mind of a blood-thirsty conqueror. Does not the Islamic culture owe its greatness to its religion? Did not even the Dark Ages succeed, where others have failed, in completely harmonizing instinct, intellect and emotion, and give the individual a peace that is especially not possible in the present?

<sup>1</sup> See Gerald Heard: *The Social Sub-stance of Religion*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> See C. S. Braden: *Modern Tenden-cies in World Religions*.

Moreover, the evil effects of religion are due to its abuse, not to its good use. The Russian Church might have associated itself with the Tsar and his government in trying to perpetuate tyranny and injustice, but its action is an abuse of the power it wielded over the minds of the people, and of their confidence. Similarly, theologians and priests might have helped kings in proving and establishing their divine right, but theirs is an instance of corruption, not of deduction from Christ's teaching. In what other fields did the learned not support their pay-master, and invent elaborate proof, hunt up obscure instances of history, in order to demonstrate a grossly unreasonable theory, a silly fad, a treacherous act, or a wicked policy? In the name of culture and civilisation how many inhuman acts have not been perpetrated? Is it not a mere matter of policy that the State patronises one religion in preference to another, that even the greatest educationists and ministers of State encourage one professor and discourage others? It is certainly a sign of decay and degeneration that policy rules principle. Mussoloni's attempt to turn the whole of Abyssinia into a slave nation is the standing example of the abuse of the noble ideal of the abolition of slavery. If so, why not treat culture and civilisation, and such great ideals as the emancipation of slaves, as the enemies of humanity?

So we have to conclude that it is not religion, that is the enemy of humanity, but a religion corrupted, and a religion that suited a particular place and time but is not universal and now unsuited and dangerous. A religion that prostitutes itself to the furtherance of a man's interests, or

to the consolidation of party's power, can no longer remain religion, because the sphere of usefulness of true religion is universal. Centuries of experience have taught mankind that the so-called dictates of God in morals and politics are fallible, if not arrant nonsense. God could not have commanded the Muslim to marry many wives, and the Christian only one. He could not have established a republic in one place and a monarchy in another. It could not have been a pleasure to him to see the rich enjoy and the poor suffer. The massacres committed in the name of religion could not have appeased his hunger. The sacrifice of a human being or a living animal does not seem to have pleased him more than a timely charity or a fervent prayer. Sometimes neither prayer, charity, nor sacrifice seems to be heard or noticed. We have no satisfactory evidence to say that God took the initiative in helping any individual, tribe or nation in the past. The British fleet sent in the time of George III to invade the new continent might have been destroyed in the storm. But also the noble efforts of Brutus and his comrades have been frustrated by their defeat. In every branch of life we find mal-adjustment and re-adjustment, and this phenomenon seems so natural that the introduction of God to explain it seems superfluous. If "God helps those who help themselves" is to be taken seriously, we have overwhelming evidence, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*, to disprove His existence. What is the use of God if we are to help ourselves? What about the failures even when we help ourselves? When the orthodox writers in Sanskrit insist on introducing a book with a benedic-

tory verse, they maintain that without the verse the book cannot be completed. But when asked: How could those disbelievers like the Baudhas complete their works without writing the benedictory verse, they reply that in their past lives they must have amassed merit which helps them now. Such replies are easy, but are the least convincing. One may point to saints and devotees, holy men who are said to have felt the presence of God and his directions, as proof for the existence of God. But who is to guarantee that they are not deluded, that what they speak of is nothing more than a wish materialised, or an inarticulate thought made explicit, which many times has no effect on any other than on the dreamy life of the supplicant and the equally dreamy and credulous lives of his followers? We may be reminded of the saying *Samsay-atma vinasyati*, the doubting soul perishes. One may threaten that God does not like questions and doubts, and that our duty is to obey but not to question. We are ready to obey. But whom and how long? He, the God whom we are to trust and confide in, is from the very beginning unknown. And there is no limit to the application and obedience. When our cries of agony go unheard, are we not to question? If God is such a tyrant, better not live in His kingdom. If there is no place over which His sway does not hold, then we may accept His presence as we accept the presence of the earthquake that can split the earth and bury us alive. But we should not be hypocrites, and say in fear what we disbelieve in truth, viz., that God is loving and merciful as are the father and the mother.

So the defence of a personal God is beset with insurmountable difficulties. The conception of Him as a father who cares for his sons, who makes them happy in spite of themselves, is without support. In face of the great evils that we find around us—the deadly diseases and the loathsome deformities, the losses and disappointments that chill whole lives and turn them into dreary and miserable existences, beautiful lives sensitive to the best and the noblest in the world but taken away before they have sweetened their own lives and the lives of others—it is difficult to believe in a personal God who is good and loving. The steam-roller of Nature seems to roll its way, crushing everything that lies before it, the best and the worst alike. This is what we see. Yet we are asked to deny in faith what we affirm in experience.

Though the conception of a personal God has to be given up, we cannot do without religion. One of the chief accusations against religion is that it divides the world into the natural and the supernatural and exhorts man to seek elsewhere what he has to seek here. Religion might be wrong in encouraging inactivity, but the sense of a beyond seems to be essential for it. Whitehead's definition of religion that it is what one does with his solitariness is oft quoted.<sup>3</sup> The sense of this solitariness is the sense of universality, the feeling of detachment from the particular. Each one of us can experience some sort of detachment even from our own bodies, not to speak of our environment. This feeling is nothing but the sense of the beyond. But the mere feeling of it does not guarantee that what we

<sup>3</sup> See his *Religion in the Making*.

renounce here can be obtained elsewhere. Nor does the beyond mean a beyond unconnected with the here, for the very fact that we sense it repudiates such a conclusion.

The defence of the sense of the beyond will be very distasteful to some of the leading thinkers of the present day. It is an incubus, from which, they say, we are to be free. It is a legacy of the old religion left for our generation, but being a legacy of disease the sooner it is disowned the better. Now to doubt the beyond in spite of our experience of aloofness from the particular is in a piece with the tendency of our times. Those days seem to have gone when the importance of the spirit has been felt. The intensity of feeling that marked them is now becoming less and less possible. Life has become shallow, though it has gained in width. The intensity of love, for example, between the lover and the beloved, that carries them above the mere physical, is looked on as a folly. The sanctity with which it was regarded is now a superstition, and the great purpose it served viz., the sublimation of the sensual, the turning of the material into the spiritual in which the material pales into insignificance, is apt to go unrecognised. Love means nothing more than the physical. It is a bodily want like hunger, which can be satisfied with one thing or the other, in one way or the other. It is overlooked that there are realities that are not our manufacture, and which demand recognition in our practical life. There are ways of activity from which we cannot much deviate. It is no wonder, therefore, that any talk of spirit and the beyond is resented and dreaded, or at the most treated as an excusable folly. But the shallowness of

life that is at the root of this attitude is certainly not a healthy feature.

Professor Sellars says that science has once for all solved the body-mind problem,<sup>4</sup> and as it has proved that there is no mind without body the sense of the beyond is objectless. But the work of Sir Oliver Lodge and his followers is a direct repudiation of such a view, and it is too presumptuous on the part of science to deny the beyond. Science may not be able to fathom its depths, its methods and apparatus may be too crude to handle its delicate intricacies, but this fact is no ground to deny it. It is not a beyond with an unbridgeable gulf between it and this world, but it is a beyond in the sense of a better of everything extending infinitely upwards. It is that which makes us yearn for something always higher.<sup>5</sup> Professor Sellars wants to substitute the religion of Naturalism and Humanism for the existing religions. And he thinks that this substitute will be the religion of the philosopher. But whether all philosophers agree here is doubtful. That the existing religions need modification none can deny. As a matter of fact, they are undergoing modification. But we feel doubtful whether the religion of Naturalism and Humanism can be a satisfactory substitute. The sense of the beyond is the sense of the extension of ourselves beyond the world of time and space. And we feel through that sense that something continues with us in the beyond. But Naturalism tells us that, when our body perishes, there is an end of ourselves. If it is true, the question cannot but arise why we should not

<sup>4</sup> See his *Religion Coming of Age*.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. *Bhagavad Gita*, X, 20 ff.

make the best of our momentary existence. The talk of ideals, like service of humanity, would be meaningless without any basis in the nature of things. As Humanism teaches, man may be the centre of the universe. But then every man would be the centre of his own universe, and his interests would be the interests of the universe. If one confronts him with the question—Why should I waste my life in pursuit of an unselfish ideal? or if the soldier in the battle-field asks us why he should meet death for his country?—the humanist has no answer. Can he say that what the questioner stands for, what he lives for and dies for, is a value that would be conserved for him, not for the generations that succeed him? But if there is a beyond where he continues to live, we can assure him that in this life he has earned a value which follows him to the next. Of course, the generations that follow derive benefit from him. Yet he too has achieved something for himself, which he would never lose. The indispensability of the beyond is shown by the fact that even in Russia, the inveterate enemy of religion, the emphasis from a present perfect society is being shifted to a future one. "The paradise offered in Russia is the Communist State of the Future"<sup>6</sup>

But how can this future heaven satisfy the present sufferer? He may be compelled at the point of the bayonet to work and die for the society. But what moral justification would there be for exacting work from him if he is promised in return

<sup>6</sup> See Edwin R. Embree: "The Rebirth of Religion in Soviet Russia", in the *International Journal of Ethics*, July, 1935, p. 427.

nothing but suffering and in the end utter annihilation? He wants a promise of the conservation of value. And belief in such conservation, as Hoffding says, is religion. It is not enough if this value is inherited by the succeeding generation and preserved in them. There is a line of thought among moral philosophers that is akin to what is being criticised. Accretion of value through perishing species and generations is the way of progress until a perfect world evolves like Professor Alexander's Deity. This Deity or the perfect order of society is a future event like the Communist State. In it will be borne people, who, sitting on the dead bones of their ancestors, will enjoy the fruits of their struggle in creating and contributing to the value of the Deity. But this is a conception which is not morally attractive. Are those who contribute to the Deity to be nothing? Is their struggle to be of no use to them? Does the increasing purpose that runs through the ages treat the individuals as mere tools for its increase? Even Professor Mackenzie, who is inclined towards the view of an increasing purpose that runs through evolution, admits that this view implies "a degree of confidence in the evolutionary forces that are to work in the course of human history that it is not always easy to justify."<sup>7</sup> There is evolution. But it is a continual dialectic—though not necessarily of contradictories—of maladjustment and readjustment, of want and its satisfaction, and of the disturbance of order by the unexpected appearance of a novel factor and the re-establishment of order. Where this dialectic will end, and how it will end,

<sup>7</sup> *Manual of Ethics*, p. 209.

if it is to end in Nature itself, is beyond our comprehension to understand. Natural evolution until it culminated in the life of man seems to be amoral. Adequate evidence is lacking to attach moral significance to it. As Sir Herbert Samuel says, the species that underwent it made no conscious contribution to it.<sup>8</sup> But after consciousness has evolved, we cannot understand what other evolution than the cultural and the spiritual can there be afterwards. But if the end of evolution is Deity or a perfect society that is to appear in the indefinite future, then the individuals who pass away before that event must certainly be deprived of the bliss in bringing about which they give up their lives. "Make the best of the moment," will therefore be not an unreasonable and immoral advice to them.

It may be tempting to press here that the contributions which these individuals make to the evolution of the future heaven cannot but be conserved, and therefore the value for which they live cannot be lost. But it is lost for *them*, though not for the succeeding generations. That we live in our future generation is only a metaphor which we are not inclined to extend overmuch in cool moments of consideration. If I am lost, everything is lost for me. I should not be lost, and with me should continue the value I live for. This is what religion has to guarantee for me. This guarantee again is not identical with what science vouchsafes, viz., that no matter is lost, that what is called destruction is only dissipation into constituent elements. Man dies, and his body becomes one with the universal matter. But the fact does

not afford comfort. What we want is the continuity of consciousness, a sense of identity, and along with it the value we appraise.

Yet one grave doubt remains. It may be a good wish, a dream of the heart, a cry of desire, that there should be such a beyond. If there is a beyond, it may guarantee the conservation of value for us. But who is to guarantee the reality of the beyond itself? The vague feeling we have of the continuation of consciousness beyond the mundane, the feeling we have of our aloofness from the particular is not conclusive evidence. It may be that the universe is indifferent to human values, that our death is a return to dust. But besides the recent psychic experiments, our sense of the beyond cannot be dismissed as of little value. It is the doorway to infinite possibilities in the spiritual realm, which can only be *experienced*, but not proved. If the ideal state of life is a future event for Humanism, Socialism, and Evolutionism, if it cannot be prophesied when exactly that state can come into being, and if that state is as much open to doubt as the beyond, these views have no right to declaim against another for an inability from which they themselves are not free. There are systems of philosophy which prove the reality of the beyond. If its reality is essential for religion as support for the human individual, if our world-view has a place for it, and if our experience points to it, it would be too presumptuous to deny its truth.

What should be the nature of religion, then, that would meet the demands of the present day? It must dispense with the personal God, who interferes with everyday affairs, and dictates in conventional matters. Thus

we shall not only be not obliged to write a theodicy, but also shall not give an opportunity to those that seek self-aggrandisement by taking His Name. The supernatural dread that by disobeying His so-called dictates we invite his wrath upon us will be known to be a fiction, by the spell of which we have been so long blinded to truth. That man is the maker of his own destiny will be realised to be truer than it was when God was taken to be the disposer of every thing. That the forms of moral and political institutions have only a relative worth, and have been set up by man in his attempt to obtain the highest value of his existence will be brought home to us more convincingly than ever.

Though this religion does away with God, it should treat the world as spiritual. Neither matter nor space-time is the truth of what we see. The world as we see it is the manifestation of spirit that extends far away beyond the present world. This spirit has a set course for the individual to follow, and it is his duty to discover what exactly it is and follow it. Individuals and nations, and even humanity at large, might have erred in discovering the true course, but they have to know it. There have been fortunate individuals who have known it, but failed to communicate it aright, and hence the blunders of past religions. It is not necessary for individuals to wait hoping for universal salvation, because the spirit is his who knows it at any time. Its eternal presence precludes the miserable prospect of utter annihilation and unrealised value, which the evolutionists hold before us.

Now remains the question of the continuation of one conscious identity

and the conservation of value realised here. The continuation of our identity can be assured only if the beyond is in some way identical with our self. And the conservation of value can be secured if there is something in the beyond that is identical with the value realised here. And the value must be something which is capable of being carried over. If this value is a material good, it cannot be so carried. So what is of value must be a state of man's self which as having realised that value must be more valuable than it was when it did not realise it. It must, again, guarantee the realisation of value unrealised in this world in spite of man's efforts. Such a beyond can be no other than the Universal Self of which the Upanishads speak. Its eternal presence vouchsafes the individual perfection and salvation at any time without the necessity of waiting for the future consummation of human existence. Only, one has to try and know the way to perfection. It can be experienced here as well there, because it is continuous and identical with our selves.

In spite of our repetition, we have to warn again that the beyond should not, and does not encourage idleness and lethargy. That perfect state is not guaranteed to the man who is not seriously after it. The desire for it must be a desire for experience, not merely an intellectual curiosity to know what it is like. Its eternal presence is not reason for inactivity, just as the distant presence of water is not a reason for man's not going to it in order to quench his thirst.

Such a beyond as meets our present demands is found only in Advaita philosophy. Its religion is a philosophical religion, and therefore satisfies

<sup>8</sup> See his *Practical Ethics*.

the philosopher. It does not admit God, except as a concession to popular prejudice, and so gives no opportunity to the bad uses to which the idea is put. It satisfies the craving for the spiritual by regarding the world as the manifestation of the spirit. It admits the truth of Naturalism, because it recognises no God who interferes with natural phenomena. It contains the essence of Humanism by treating the Self as the truth of the universe, and as the ultimate value to be realised. Of course, as expounded in times far remote from ours, it overemphasised renunciation in its crudest sense, as if it forgot that the world is the manifestation of the spirit, and that it is in and through this world that the spirit has to be realised. When the higher is reached through the lower, the lower as such has to be renounced. But if the lower is renounced before we even know what the higher can be like, before we are seriously after the higher, that renunciation will not make for ascending to the higher, but only to descending to the still lower. And this renunciation cannot be an integral part of Advaita philosophy and religion. Renunciation and inactivity preached by Advaita are not meant

for the brute who is ignorant of the values this world possesses, but for one who has already experienced them and wants something higher.

Buddhism also does not recognise God. But it is generally regarded as nihilistic, recommending complete annihilation of one's self as the goal. So the two sources of consolation which religion is to provide, the continuation of our conscious identity and the conservation of value, cannot be obtained from it. If it can give us these two as required above by undergoing the requisite modification, it will differ very little from Advaita. In fact, all schools of Buddhism are not nihilistic. And it is even doubted whether Lord Buddha is a nihilist. On the other hand, Sankara, the founder of Advaita, is called a Bauddha in disguise, *prachchanna bauddha*. However, Advaita contains a system of thought that possesses the possibility of a great future. But the essential truth of that system has to be extricated from much that is temporal and provincial. Then it will be a religion that makes for human progress by insisting upon the individual's own activity, teaching him that he himself is the master of his destiny.

## SYNCRETISM AND CHRISTIAN THINKERS

*By An Observer*

[Christian religious dogma is one of the most uncompromising and unyielding of its kind. Our anonymous contributor tries to show by means of these extracts the reactions of this dogma to the liberal religious ideas of Hinduism.]

### I

THE following is an article contributed by the Rev. L. P. Larsen to the *Student World* under the heading "Syncretistic Tendencies Today":

For the last forty years a type of Indian religious teaching has been spreading in the West. In the beginning it was generally spoken of as Neo-Hinduism; and the work of spreading these ideas was for some time limited to America. Now these activities are better known by the name of the Ramakrishna Mission, and are not confined to the New World only. A report was recently published of the promising work done within the last year in several countries on the continent of Europe.

The basis of all the work of the Ramakrishna Mission is the conviction that all religions are fundamentally one, this statement being primarily applied to Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. When men come close enough to each other to get behind the words and forms which at first are felt to be barriers and causes of conflict, the underlying unity of longing and striving, of need and of aim, becomes increasingly clear. Those who have never been intimately acquainted with the people of any other religion or Church than their own are not troubled by questions of this kind. It is only when different religionists come close enough together, and begin to know each other more intimately, that syncretis-

tic ways of thinking begin to suggest themselves. And they are not prompted merely by growing acquaintance and better understanding. There is also behind them a strong consciousness of the harm that has been caused in human lives by religious conflicts.

One does not necessarily agree with syncretistic teaching because of the fact that one realises what forces have been at work in it. But it continues to be true that error lives only by the element of truth that is in it. And syncretism, as we meet it so strikingly in the work of Ramakrishna Mission, has in it elements of truth which we cannot afford to ignore. We must come to understand one another better where disturbing and harmful differences are felt. Ignorance is a poor foundation for friendliness; but it is also a very regrettable ground for conflict and strife. Those who have come to know at close quarters some of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in India cannot fail to think of them with respect and admiration, even if it is not possible to answer satisfactorily all the questions one is thereby forced to consider.

Among the Hindus, such elastic and comprehensive attitudes in religious questions have from very old times been common phenomena; and one can see, in a measure, why it has been so. But it is not from Hinduism alone that syncretistic activities are at present proceeding. The Bahai

Movement has grown up within the world of Islam. Its followers may not be regarded by orthodox Muslims as real followers of Islam, just as some strictly orthodox Hindus would doubtless shake their heads at the Ramakrishna Mission type of Hinduism. But the Bahai Movement in its own way, just like the Ramakrishna Mission in its way, is trying to offer to torn and distracted humanity a religious way which all may follow, a way where differences are not felt to be a source of sufferings and loss. And there are men in many parts of the world who listen to the Bahai teaching because they are tired of quarrelling with others over their religious differences.

Recently word has come from India of an address given by a great representative of Burmese Buddhism to representatives of orthodox Hinduism on the essential unity of Buddhism and Hinduism. The close connection between these two systems is a plain historical fact. And the question of the connection between them recently became more prominent, when the place that is associated with the memory of Gautama's enlightenment, after being managed for many years by the Hindus, was given back again to the Buddhists. The presence of Rev. Ottama from Burma as president at the meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha had doubtless more of political than of religious motives behind it. And it has not by any means been approved by all Hindus. Yet it is characteristic of the strong present-day tendency to overlook religious differences.

But is not this tendency something that we all have reason to respect and to rejoice at? Do we not need to strengthen all the forces that make

for friendliness and co-operation among men. If it is such things as these that are meant by syncretism, will it then not be a serious matter if Christianity in all its missionary activities thinks of it only as an error and a danger? That is what some people are seriously feeling.

And is not the Apostle Paul, they may add, pointing us in the same direction when he speaks of his being "a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks" as a necessary condition of his being able to do aright the work he has been sent to do?

When we know the man who said this, there is no room for doubt that he did not thereby wish to describe a shapeless and wobbly life, that had no character of its own, and could be entirely different things in different places. That was not the kind of man the apostle Paul was or strove to be. It is plain that what he is describing in these words, as a necessary qualification of a messenger of Christ's Gospel, is the mind that is anxious not to be an outsider or a stranger among the people to whom he wants to commend the Gospel. He realised that the work which Christ's servants are sent to do can succeed only if the hearers look upon them with such confidence and openness of mind as are nowhere shown toward those who are regarded as foreigners.

It was a desire of the same kind that made the Saviour use the name, "the Son of Man," about Himself. It is very striking that His disciples never used it about Him, though He called Himself constantly by that name. There were many things that made Him different from those around Him. It was not the kind of differences which separates the white foreigner from the people of India.

But the differences were not less real; and they were not less liable to put a distance between Him and those around Him. But unless men came to Him with the free and open and confident mind which we have only among our own people, He knew He could not get the truth of God commended to their hearts and consciences. Therefore He kept saying: I am one of you, the Son of Man. When Christ uses this term, and when the Apostle Paul wants to be a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks, it is a matter that has nothing to do with syncretism. The words refer to a very important matter indeed. But it is a question, not of the testimony to be borne, but of the way by which alone the testimony can reach "the conscience of every man."

And on this side the work of Christian missions has had such great defects that it is not strange if some are inclined to give all their attention to avoiding the danger on that side of the path. And all the fear of syncretism—which we do not wish to minimise—must not be allowed to lessen our desire to get so close to the people among whom we are to work, in mutual understanding and frankness and confidence, that the way is open from heart to heart. For then only does it become possible to commend the truth to every man's conscience.

It is a serious matter that the work of evangelism has been done by "foreign" missions. As long as we are foreigners in the eyes of the people, we are not fully qualified to prepare the way of the Lord. The messengers of the Gospel must be so near to the people to whom they wish to proclaim it that the feeling of foreignness disappears. For that calls

forth, if not definite opposition, at least cautious reserve, and where that prevails the way to the conscience is blocked. To be a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks is everywhere a vital question to the evangelist.

## II

We shall now give the views of another responsible Christian ecclesiastic on the subject of syncretism. Some time back by way of comment on Mahatma Gandhi's request to the Christian missionaries to give up their conversion activities, His Grace Dr. L. Mathias, the Catholic Archbishop of Madras, made the following remarks:

The statement made once again by Mr. Gandhi on missionary work takes one's breath away. We note that in his new attack the Mahatma brings forward his own 'detached view' while we missionaries following the commands of Christ, cannot consider the order of God as a view at all. The preaching of the Gospel is a duty imposed on us by the Divine founder of Christianity. We shall be false to that duty if we do not discharge it to the utmost of our capacity. We do not believe in conversion by force or fraud, or by means of material inducements, which unfortunately many Hindus believe to be the secret of our success.

Mr. Gandhi's declaration that "all the great religions of the world are true" is only an unfortunate and flippant expression of the spirit of that dreadful indifferentism so widely prevalent at the present day. A little reasoning will convince any impartial and sincere inquirer that all religions cannot be true. Truth is one and indivisible. Since the various religions are at variance, it naturally follows

that wherever they are in conflict, if one possesses the truth the others must be in error. The great religions of the world do differ fundamentally in their respective creeds, cults and moral codes. All these irreconcilable beliefs and practices cannot be equally pleasing to God, who is the way, the truth and the life, unless one is prepared to admit that the Supreme Being is indifferent to truth and error. We can understand that, being a politician, Mr. Gandhi may be little interested in inquiring after religious truth and less inclined to perceive what is right and wrong in his own religion.

The Mahatma would have us confine our activities to 'humanitarian service without the ulterior motive of converting India!' We do not make any secret of the fact that our first and chief motive, and not merely an 'ulterior motive,' is to conquer India for Christ; not only the 'unsophisticated villagers' but 'all men of good will.' The main object of the Christian mission is to lead souls to God and show them the way to life eternal. We cannot confine our work merely to social service without being guilty of a grave dereliction of duty. The fact is that, as Christians believe, God has vouchsafed mankind a revelation, embodying a definite religion. If He, the Truth, revealed a religion, it follows it must be true, and that all other religions that disagree with it must be false. If He did reveal a religion, it must be accepted by all those to whom it is adequately presented under the grave responsibility of closing their ears to Truth.

The Divine Founder of Christianity commissioned his Church to carry the Gospel to the farthest confines of the earth, not excluding India. The

messengers of the Gospel are, therefore, bound in duty to spread the truth everywhere. But no one is compelled to accept the teachings unless he is convinced of its truth.

We quite agree with Mr. Gandhi that 'whether we wish it or not what is true in the Hindu faith will abide, what is untrue will fall to pieces.' Christ has solemnly proclaimed that 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' Every creature will pass away, even Mr. Gandhi, but Christ is to-day yesterday and forever, and His command shall remain.

### III

The extracts given in the preceding sections represent two interesting points of view in modern Christian thought—the first a hesitant tendency to recognise at least something good in other forms of religious experience, and the second that offensive dogmatism and swaggering aggressiveness of the Catholic type of Christianity. Regarding the latter we need not say much here. Truth is one; all religions differ; hence only one of them can be true; this true religion is Christianity, perhaps only the Catholic form of it. Very logical to be sure, but does this view show any spiritual insight? It represents the spirit that begot the rack, the thumb-screw and the Inquisition in the past. The genius of this brand of religion is embodied more in the personality of Mussolini than in that of Jesus Christ.

The Rev. L. P. Larsen who writes on syncretism seems to be struck by the cordial reception that several spiritually minded people in Europe and America are extending to the idea that the central truth of all religions is the same. He is, however, at one

with the Catholic ecclesiastic quoted before, in his conviction that one religion alone can embody the spiritual Truth, but the success of the opposite idea makes him pause and think. An error cannot in itself succeed; it must therefore have some element of truth, and it is on the strength of this truth that this erroneous idea flourishes. The truth in syncretism is a mask of its essential error. A veritable ass in tiger-skin is syncretism—so thinks the Rev. L. P. Larsen.

All these critics fail to understand the spirit of genuine syncretism, when they lose sight of its fundamental postulate that religion is not dogmatising but realisation. It is not that syncretism has been propounded by a few clever brains as a useful device for easing strained religious situations. According to Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of syncretism in modern India, the Truth of God is a matter of experience for the really spiritual man. The highest types of these illumined souls perceive that even where differences in experience are reported, they spring from partiality of knowledge and illumination, and not from any absolute falsity of the experience. The blind men, experiencing the elephant through the sense of touch, describe it as a pillar, a wall, a spear, a snake, etc., according to the limited views of the animal that they have gained, and go on ferociously fighting to maintain the truth of their own respective views. The man with vision, however, perceives that they have all come across an elephant and that their descriptions are true as far as they go; but neither their experiences nor their descriptions of the elephant exhaust the nature of the animal. So too people who see a chameleon occasionally,

may fight over its colour, but the man who lives at the foot of the tree on which the chameleon lives and has seen the creature put on varying colours perceives the truth as well as the error in the positions of these fighters. The error does not consist in the falsehood of their claim to have seen the creature or even in their description of it; it consists in their mistaking a phase of truth for the whole of it and as a consequence denying the possibility of other views. Religions of the world are only such partial truths. To say that the essence of any religion is a mixture of truth and error will be wrong and misleading, as logical brains like the ecclesiastics quoted above will take error to be the contradictory of Truth. All religions are true, because they embody the experiences of the seers of God and lead their sincere followers to those experiences of Him. But they go astray when they assume they have exhausted His Being, and begin to dogmatise and fight on that assumption. For even the great seers are like tiny ants who can carry but a small grain from the huge sugar-heap which is the Deity. Therefore stop fighting, dogmatising, and reviling each other in the name of religion, says Sri Ramakrishna, but try to realise the Deity as conceived by your religion. If it pleases Him, He will give you even the highest form of illumination, namely, *Vignana*, in the light of which you will realise the Truth of all religions. Meanwhile be like a daughter-in-law in a joint family in your attitude towards the different religions; she loves her own husband intensely, yet does she entertain affection and regard for the other members of the family.

If the syncretism preached by Ramakrishna is finding acceptance among sincere religious aspirants, it is because of this insistence on realisation as the essence of religion, and the broadness of outlook resulting from it. For thoughtful men all the world over are beginning to perceive that ignorance and selfishness are the parents of dogmatism, narrowness and fight, and that breadth of vision

and sympathy of outlook are the sure indications of wisdom.

Regarding Rev. Larsen's conception of Christian syncretism, namely, to free the stamp of alienage from the methods of Christian propaganda, we need only remark that it may be a better way of attracting Indians to the Christian fold, but it is no syncretism at all.

## LIFE IS NOT A DREAM

By D. Subramiah

[The following is a criticism of Mr. C. Mahadeviah's article under the caption "Is our Life a Dream?" published in the November issue of the *Vedanta Kesari*. The foot-notes form Mr. Mahadeviah's rejoinder to the criticism. The important question of the place of God in spiritual life is raised in this controversy. Our views on the question have been given in the note on the article "Religion and Human Progress" printed elsewhere in this issue.]

WE have been treated to a valuable article on this interesting topic by Mr. C. Mahadeviah in the November issue of the *Vedanta Kesari*. He has come to the conclusion that there is no difference between the waking state and the dream state and that therefore both are unreal—a conclusion diametrically opposed to that arrived at by Visishtadvaitins, who while holding that both states

are similar yet conclude that they are real. Longfellow is also indirectly made a target of attack, as he seems to be a Visishtadvaitin in this sense, and the writer brings the poet's negative words "Tell me not in mournful numbers that life is but an empty dream" as well as his positive words "Life is real, life is earnest" into his criticism.<sup>2</sup>

In noting the similarities and the dissimilarities of the two states, the writer has failed to note—we make bold to point out—one more aspect in

2 Visishtadvaitins may say that dream is as real as waking. But this is clearly contrary to universal experience; and as Shankara says, "Even if a hundred Shrutis were to say that fire is cold and dark, they cannot be considered to be authoritative" (Commentary on the Gita 18, 66.) Also it must be pointed out that Longfellow is not a Visishtadvaitin in this sense. For he emphatically protests against calling life which is "real," an "empty dream." The implication is clear, viz., that dream is unreal.

1 At the very outset I have made it clear that there is, and must be, some difference between waking and dream; for otherwise the two words would become unnecessary to denote them. I have further explained the difference by stating that waking is a present state and hence unshakable, whereas dream is a past state already stultified. This difference does not, however, guarantee any 'reality' to waking. For on further examination both the states are found to possess the common characteristic of transiency as contrasted with the witness which is permanent (See Shankara's Commentary on *Brahma Sutras* 2, 1, 9.).

each category. The *Mandukyopani-shad* and the *Gaudapada Karika* thereon which treat of this subject point out that both the dream state and the waking state are similar in so far as they are both pervaded by the Primeval Ignorance (*Thamas*), and the seer (witness) sees a second object (*Dvaita*) in both.<sup>3</sup> These two states are distinguished from dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*), as in the latter state the seer (witness or more correctly subject) does not see any second thing but enjoys himself, though pervaded by darkness or *Thamas*; and hence this state is said to be akin to Advaitic experience. A fourth state, that is, *Thuriya* is described as being one in which the subject is neither in the waking nor dream state, as he does not see a second thing; nor in the *Sushupti* state (dreamless sleep), as he is in a flood of light and is not pervaded by darkness or *Thamas*. Swami Vivekananda, in noting the difference between *Sushupti* and *Thuriya*, states that one who comes back from *Samadhi* returns a wiser man than he was before *Samadhi*, while one who wakes up from dreamless sleep returns the same man, if not a fool.<sup>4</sup>

3 I have pointed out that there is in dream, as in waking, a complete universe. Is this not enough to show that the seer sees a second object in both?

4 It is a mistake to identify *Thuriya* and *Samadhi*. *Samadhi*, whatever else it may be, is a state which is experienced, whereas *Thuriya* is the *Atman* itself, the experiencer, the witness and the substratum of all states. Whatever may be the differences between *Sushupti* and *Samadhi*, they are one in that the mind is quelled in both. Hence for purposes of Vedantic enquiry they stand on a par with each other. सुषुप्तिसमाध्यादौ, in *Sushupti*, *Samadhi*, etc., is a common phrase in Shankara's writings.

Coming to the dissimilarity of the waking state and the dream state we need not point out the so very common experience of everybody that one who dreams sees all the objects therein in his own mind or body, while one who is awake sees objects outside his body except when he is absent-minded and is in a state of "day dream" or "waking dream."<sup>5</sup> Though one may be sleeping at Madras one may dream as if one is bathing in the Ganges at the Hanuman Ghat at Benares. This difference of "inside and outside" is perceived so long as the primeval Ignorance is not cast off, that is, so long as the mind has not become "no mind." Speaking of this seer (witness or *Upadrashta*) Shankara in his *Gita Bhashya* 13:22 says, "The body, the sense of sight, *Manas*, *Buddhi* and the self are the seers. Of these the body is the most external seer, and viewed from the body inwards the Self is the innermost and nearest seer and beyond him there is no seer in the interior. This being the nearest seer He is spoken of as *Upadrashta*." The seer and the seen must be coalesced into a single consciousness for realising the supreme Reality. This Reality cannot be a subject of talk or discussion but has to be experienced and this can be done only by very few, i.e., not even by one in a thousand, as Lord Sri Krishna says in *Gita*.

सन्नुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मविति तत्त्वतः ॥ 7.3.

"Among thousands of men one perchance strives for perfection

5 The critic has missed the important point that the dream body is independent of the waking body even as the dream world is independent of the waking world. Even as one sees objects outside his body in waking, one sees objects outside his (dream) body in dream.

and even among those who strive and are perfect, only one perchance knows Me in truth." There is, therefore, no use in speculating upon a Reality which is of no avail for us who are dogged by this primeval ignorance or Thamas at every turn, and are therefore forced to take refuge under the three kinds of realities, viz., Vyavaharika, Pratibhasika and Paramarthika realities for purposes of satisfying our limited understanding.<sup>6</sup>

"Anything less than real must be unreal. We cannot speak of a thing as half real or three-fourths real. In this sense compared with the witness, waking is as unreal as dream"—so says Mr. Mahadeviah. But the reality of the witness cannot be conceived so long as we are thinking or seeing with our mind which cannot think of any reality without an unreality, and in fact the so-called "full reality" cannot but be a fractional reality. The Gita describes the self as neither Being nor non-Being and as that which is the Being, non-Being and what lies beyond. It is something of which we cannot form

<sup>6</sup> In speaking of reality as 'speculated upon' the critic has missed the essential characteristics of the *three-states* method of enquiry which distinguishes it from all speculative methods. The reality which is grasped by a rigorous enquiry into our experience of the three states, is a reality which is intimately experienced. It is our own self which is revealed as the ever-present witness on which, as substratum or Adhistanā, the states of waking, dream, and sleep, appear and disappear one after another. It is exactly what the critic calls 'primeval ignorance' that prevents men from grasping this reality which is their own Self, although they are constantly experiencing the three states. And let the critic note that it is only for "us who are dogged by this primeval ignorance" that this understanding is necessary, and not for men who are free from its sway.

any conception by thought and words, and hence mere logomachy about it does not help us any the least.<sup>7</sup>

We have to confess that since Sankara and Ramanuja, Indian philosophy has not advanced a bit further, and we are not therefore competent to sit in judgment over them and to decide as to whose views are correct. But we find the charge often made, though wrongly, that the Jaganmithya (world-illusion) theory of Sankara is responsible for our present state of being a lazy and good-for-nothing people. We, being what we are at the present day, must therefore take inspiration from Longfellow and Ramanuja and serve humanity leaving the capable few to realise Sankara's Advaita, that is the Ultimate Reality. Until we dissolve the physical consciousness, the vital consciousness, the mental and the intellectual consciousness into the supreme consciousness, that is to say so long as we are in the stage of aspiration

<sup>7</sup> The idea seems to be that the "full reality" cannot be conceived by the mind which can indulge only in "mere logomachy." It must, here, be pointed out that mere experience of a state where the mind is quelled but consciousness is still aglow, is not enough to produce the knowledge of the Self as the witness and substratum of the appearance of worlds. This knowledge can arise only as the result of an enquiry into the nature of the different states. It is clear that such an enquiry is possible only when the mind is working. But when once such knowledge arises as the result of such enquiries, it (knowledge) is realised to be of the nature of intimate experience and not of external speculation and logomachy. If one should still call this a knowledge of "fractional reality" he shall have to show how he got the idea of "full reality;" for without an idea of a 'full' no idea of a 'fraction' can arise.

and struggle, we have to learn lessons not only from our own Acharyas but also from Western writers including Longfellow.

We cannot better close this subject than by quoting Sankara's Dakshina-murti Stotra:

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमानं नगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं  
पश्यन्मात्मनि सायया बहिरिन्द्रोद्भूतं तथा निद्रया  
यः साक्षीकुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवादृत्यं  
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

I bow down with all reverence to the Southward-faced Lord (Dakshina-murti) embodied as the venerable teacher who perceiving in his own Self, like a mirrored reflection of a city, within himself, the universe sprung up to objective existence as if through an illusion, experiences as when asleep at the wakeful state his Self alone without a second.

Until we realise with Sankara that what we see before us as the world is

nothing but our own self and until we discipline ourselves to reach that state of spiritual maturity, we have to hold fast to Longfellow's view that life is not a dream but is real and earnest. We have to posit an Isvara or God whose Visvarupa is the world we see before us and serve Him to the best of our capacities, each in his own humble sphere without resorting to Sankara's Advaita to justify our physical laziness or intellectual dullness.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> No one need be anxious that 'we have to hold fast to the view that life is not a dream but is real.' For that is the view of the common man to which he sticks like a leech. As for positing Isvara and serving him, let those who can take such things on trust do it. But, if we believe that such a position is not ultimately true and that truth is something different from it, it is our duty to exhort men to leave their false positions and rise to Truth, the attainment of which is alone the supreme end and aim of life.

## THE CLASH OF CULTURES

By Swami Ghanananda

[The following is a part of the writer's introduction to his forthcoming book entitled "Sri Ramakrishna and the Harmony of Religions," which he has written as a tribute to the memory of the great Master on the occasion of his Centenary.]

WHEN Columbus and Vasco de Gama gambled with luck and sailed by the stormy seas, little did men know that Modern Europe was in the making. The age of navigation was to shift the centre of commerce and civilisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic; the countries bordering on the latter were to become the leading nations of the earth; and the forces awakened by the creative urge that had broken through Mediæval limitations and was expressing itself through the Renaissance were to reinvigorate

Europe and confer on her the leadership of the world. Time was when the East had played her role and Greece and Rome had to struggle with Oriental Empires, and Europe had to contend against the Huns and the Arabs, the Mongols and the Ottoman Turks. But the course of history was reversed in the fifteenth century when Europe was being born anew, imbued with fresh vigour and vitality. In a few centuries she attained mastery over the East, nay took the world by storm; the political expansion and consolidation that

followed gave a definite turn to the social and economic life of nations. By the end of the nineteenth century which saw the age of applied science and industrial enterprise on a stupendous scale, she had left her impress everywhere on the world. Canada and Australia—the daughters of England—as well as the United States are replicas of Modern Europe ; some one or other of the European powers owns, controls or influences large countries and territories of Asia, Africa and South America.

Such world-wide conquest and wide-spread commerce have promoted intercourse between races and peoples. It is a fact of unique importance in the history of the world to-day that all its races and peoples have been brought together as they had never been before. The miracles of science and the marvels of organisation have broken down the physical barriers that once separated towns and cities as well as countries and continents from each other. The railway and the steamship, the telegraph and the telephone, the wireless and the aeroplane have annihilated distance and reduced the dimensions of the earth into those of a single vast city ; an ever-increasing industry, an ever-expanding commerce and a system of international banking have almost converted the world into one large workshop.

## I

The breakdown of the physical barriers that once separated the different parts of the globe has but brought into bold relief the conflicting forces and elements in the world to-day. It has presented more vividly than ever before the lurid spectacle of the clash of the various branches of the human

family,—the Aryan and the Dravidian, the Mongol and the Semite, who have all been thrown together in the melting pot of humanity, there to remain seething, bubbling, boiling, but never uniting. The dark and the fair, the brown and the yellow races of mankind formed, with the lapse of time, into nations living in different parts of the world, and when differences among them arose and could not be settled, wars were waged. These were originally fought to tickle the ambition of some king or emperor who wanted to see his kingdom or empire extended before his death, but in latter times for political reasons or economic interests, or for the expansion of commerce or the spreading of industry. So terrible have these wars been that the description by the Victorian poet of "Nature red in tooth and claw" might well be applied not only to the world of animals but also to the world of men. It is no wonder that Emerson characterised all history as "old chronology of selfishness and pride," and observed, "We think our civilisation near its meridian, but we are as yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star."

Even colonisation, the outcome of the so-called healthy spirit of expansion, is but slow battle, more subtle and therefore less perceptible. By force and by desire for trade and loot, the colonisers have imposed their will upon the weak. Rightly did George Peele say, "European history and homicide are indistinguishable." As aptly remarked by Van Loon, the historian, "A human being with the mind of a sixteenth century tradesman driving a 1921 Rolls-Royce is still a human being with the mind of a sixteenth century tradesman."

## II

It seems as though the enmity between man and man cannot end with the severe outbursts of violence during wars or the blows of silent death dealt by colonisers on innocent men and women. For there is a conflict of cultures and civilisations as well. It has been brought about by a lack of sympathetic understanding of their differences caused by ages of distinctive growth and development and their variations in outlook and philosophy of life. It is therefore inevitable like wars of the nations. Even what is known as the colour problem,—the struggle between the white and the non-white races of mankind—is resolvable partly to the conflict of cultures. The collective mind of a people moving along distinctive lines of thought and traditions, marked off by its characteristic culture and civilisation, revolts against the idea of association and comradeship with men of alien cultures and civilisations. This explains General Smuts remarking to Mahatma Gandhi in some such words as these : We are not afraid of your people, but we are afraid of their culture. When one country captures another, the right to hold the conquered people under subjection alleged by the victor, is cultural superiority. That is why we hear of "the White Man's Burden" of civilising the non-white races of the earth. Such a burden means not only the heartless exploitation of the natural resources of the conquered countries, but also the duty of raising them to the level of the rulers in culture and civilisation,—in mental, moral and spiritual attainments.

It may be asked, "Why do cultures and civilisations clash?" The

answer is simple. Man is neither able nor willing to recognise that there are cultures and civilisations other than those to which he belongs, and that these have a value and are as good and necessary for others as his own is for himself.

Cultures and civilisations are the expressions of the collective mind of peoples in differing moods and depths. Every nation, every race, has erected its own magnificent edifices of thought, beautified by the bright and beautiful blossoms of the various arts. The great men of all climes and ages in the past, with their intellect sharp like a sword, have cleaved through nature, probed into her secrets, and discovered both the exact and the experimental sciences. They have conquered the domain of psychology and metaphysics. They have dived deep into the innermost recesses of the soul and given out systems of religion and philosophy. They have enriched civilisation by their treatises on law and polity. They have expressed the joy of life not only in the melody of music, but also in the rhythm of colour. They have wrought poetry not only in prose and verse, but also in silver and gold, in marble and tapestry, in the language of the soul crying for God and its rhapsodies.

Man is apt to forget that systems of cultures have developed through centuries and they present a rich variety of types. The Hellenic and Hebraic types, for example, differ in their background,—in their outlook and ideals. The one looks for the joys and pleasures of life ; the other shuns them for the sake of the joys and pleasures of the soul. Every system of religion has built round itself consciously or unconsciously a system of culture and a system of

civilisation which appear like its halo. These have drawn their inspiration from a central religious impulse and have been moulded by one single spiritual idea. In this manner have arisen and grown the Hindu and Buddhist, Christian and Islamic types of cultures. They all have a general religious setting and show a spiritual trend, moving towards a definite goal. The thought-currents in these types have emanated from their respective religions. With the weakening of the central religious impulse, a type of culture and civilisation may be invaded by extraneous elements, which in course of time may tend to change and even definitely alter the type itself. In Europe the Christian culture which grew and developed under the inspiration of the personality of Jesus and the influence of the Church held sway for centuries, but it became impaired by Hellenic thought which began to slowly penetrate and eventually dominate European life. Though Greece is now no more, she speaks through the voice of Modern Europe, and lives through her arts and literature, culture and civilisation. When, however, the original culture of a nation or country has struck its roots deep into the soil, no new culture or civilisation alien in character or contrary in trend can seriously affect it. The history of India in the nineteenth century furnishes an instance to the point. The condition of the country at the time was different from that of Europe during the period of the Renaissance. India was passing through a period of cultural and intellectual decline, during the British conquest. Her people were dazzled for a time by the glamour of Western culture and civilisation. The soul of the indigenous cul-

ture with its traditions, outlook and ideals was being threatened with extinction. But the alien culture could not get a permanent hold on the country, nor destroy the ancient culture: for in the reaction that followed the advent of the alien type, a great cultural and religious revival came, restoring the original vigour and vitality of the national culture.

The forms and setting through which a system of culture expresses itself vary. Such variation is seen more in the arts and poetry which are its typical products. Taking music, for example, we find that the Indian music and the music of Wagner differ so much that the songs of one school have no charm for the followers of the other, but both are expressions of the cultural soul of their respective nations. If the genius of a language is something which inheres in it and does not lend itself to translation, the genius of a culture is still more inexpressible. Variety is the law of nature and the diversity of the several types of cultures and civilisations, is as inexplicable as the diversity of natural life, of fauna and flora. But behind all this natural diversity a grand unity and commonness of purpose is discernable. All great systems of civilisations contribute to the pleasures and amenities of life, and all great cultures conduce to its refinement. The one improves the objective world and makes nature subservient to man who derives both profit and pleasure from a mastery of her secrets; the other chastens the mind and purifies the soul. They both reflect the yearnings and aspirations of men, their struggles and successes in the march of life.

Culture is like food which we consume not merely for its nutritive

value, but also for its agreeability. A system of culture suits the race that has evolved it more than any other, and the forms of its expressions like poetry, music, and other arts appeal less to other races, if at all. It prepares the environments in which the minds of the men belonging to it are able to grow and blossom with ease and vigour. When a person belonging to one type of culture by birth and tradition is under the environments of another system of culture, he shares the fate of the tree that is transplanted from an alien soil and an alien climate. That is why a foreign system of education and culture like the English system is unsuited to a country like India possessing a highly evolved culture from time immemorial. Genius flowers best on its native soil. Education and culture are an expression of the soul of a nation, its Samskaras and Vasanas, or what Sir John Woodroffe calls the Seed of the Race.

The cultures which have survived are the outcome of centuries of growth and development, and possess a remarkable power of endurance and

vitality. Some systems of ancient culture died like the little threads of water or brooklets that become lost in the soil after years or even centuries. Others became absorbed by more powerful cultures that had great assimilative capacity, like the streams that add to the volume and contents of some mighty river rolling down in their vicinity, of which they become the tributaries. The cultures of to-day are those which have lived on for ages in the past without losing themselves in the onrush of invading hordes or failing to grow by adaptability or assimilation. It is but natural that they exhibit distinctive characteristics of their own, and so long as these are retained, they are bound to survive in the future as well. Interaction between them, however, is bound to exist, especially in the modern era which precludes the possibility of isolation; they may exercise the power to absorb each other, but types of culture and civilisations that have had the inner strength to stand the wear and tear of time cannot be attended with the evil of studied neglect, and much less with the danger of wanton destruction.

## SWETASWATARA UPANISHAD

By Swami Thyagisananda

ज्ञात्वा देव सर्वं पाशापहानिः क्षीर्णः क्लेशजन्ममृत्युप्रहाणिः ।  
तस्याभिधानात्तृतीयं देहभेदे विश्वेश्वर्यं केवल आप्तकामः ॥

ज्ञात्वा = knowing देव = God सर्वपाशापहानि = the falling away of all fetters क्षीर्णः = waning क्लेशः = by misery resulting from ignorance, etc., जन्ममृत्युप्रहाणिः = cessation of birth and death तस्य = His अभिधानात् = by meditation तृतीय = third state देहभेदे = getting beyond the consciousness of the body विश्वेश्वर्यं = universal lordship केवलः = one without a second आप्तकामः = whose desires are satisfied.

With the knowledge God, all fetters fall off. With the waning of ignorance birth and death cease. Going beyond the consciousness of the body by meditation on Him, one reaches the third state, viz., the universal lordship. All his desires are satisfied and he becomes one without a second. (11)

*Note :* The verse describes the various stages of realisation. The first line refers to the first stage when ignorance vanishes. 'Fetters' (पाश) refers to the limitations of intellectual perception and worldly enjoyments. The second line refers to the escape from the effect of Karma, namely, reincarnation क्लेश (Klesa) is a technical term meaning (अविद्या) or ignorance and its manifestations. Cf. Patanjali's Sutra (अविद्यास्मितारोगद्वेषाभिनिवेशः क्लेशः) The third line refers to how, by continuous meditation on God, one gets beyond the body consciousness which had till then kept him separate from the rest of the world. The last line refers to his becoming one with the ultimate principle.

एतज्ज्ञेयं नित्यमेवात्मसंस्थं नातः परं वेदितव्यं हि किञ्चित् ।  
भोक्ता भोग्यं प्रेरितारं च मत्वा सर्वं प्रोक्तं त्रिविधं ब्रह्ममेतत् ॥

एतत् = this नित्यं = eternally आत्मसंस्थं = existing in one's own self  
एव = only ज्ञेयं = is to be known अतः परं = beyond this न किञ्चित् = nothing  
वेदितव्यं = to be known हि = indeed मत्वा = as a result of meditation  
भोक्ता = enjoyer भोग्यं = the enjoyed प्रेरितारं = that which brings about  
the enjoyment सर्वं = all एतत् = this त्रिविधं = threefold ब्रह्म = Brahman  
प्रोक्तं = is declared.

This is to be known as eternally existing in one's own self. There is nothing to be known beyond this. As a result of meditation, the enjoyer, the enjoyed and the power which brings about the enjoyment all are declared to be three aspects of Brahman. (12)

*Note :* The state attained by the knower of Brahman which is described in the previous Mantra is natural to one and exists in oneself even before realisation; only one is not conscious of it on account of one's limitations. So meditation should be on the eternal truth existing in one's own self and should not be on anything which is separate from it. The second line refers to the fact that when consciousness of unity is reached, knowledge cannot proceed further, as all science attempts only to find out this unity behind diversity. The next two lines, more or less, repeat the idea mentioned in Mantra 9. The word मत्वा refers to reflection and meditation and प्रोक्तं refers to declarations contained in the Vedas. We are reminded of the fact that the declarations of the Vedas about the unity behind diversity, which the aspirant studies in the Sravana stage of his Sadhana, record nothing but the experiences of the Rishis in Samadhi.

वर्धय्या योनिगतस्य मूर्तेर्न दृश्यते नैव च लिंगनाशः ।  
स भूय एवेन्धनयोनिगृह्य स्तद्वोभयवैप्रणवेन देहे ॥

यथा = as योनिगतस्य = latent in its source वर्धः = of fire मूर्ति = the form  
न दृश्यते = is not seen न च = and yet लिंगनाशः = destruction of its subtle  
form सः = he भूयः = again and again इन्धनयोनिगृह्यः = capable of being  
perceived, when that piece of wood is brought into contact with  
another piece of wood एव = surely वा = similarly तद्वोभयं = both those  
प्रणवेन = by means of Pranava देहे = in the body.

Fire is not perceived in its cause, the fire-stick, till it is ignited by percussion. The subtle essence of fire, nevertheless, is not absent in the stick; for fire can be obtained from the source, the fire-stick, by striking again. Like both these states of fire, latent and visible, Atman too, not manifested before, is perceived manifestly in the body through meditation on Pranava. (13)

*Note :* The verse introduces an illustration to convince, even a layman, of the eternal existence in himself of the glory which he subsequently realises as a result of meditation and Japa. The illustration of producing fire from a piece of dry wood by churning it with another piece of wood was most appealing to the ancients who were in the habit producing fire in this way for their sacrifices. That which manifests as an effect in a gross form must have naturally existed in a subtle form before the manifestation. All the glory of the Atman which one realises as a result of meditation must have been existing in oneself in a subtle form, although one is not conscious of it before its gross manifestation.

The verse gives through the illustration a subtle suggestion of the symbology of Vedic sacrifice itself. The fire in the sacrifice is representative of the highest spiritual knowledge and the act of Homa which is interpreted as 'देवतोद्देशनद्रव्यत्यागः' 'giving up of material objects for the sake of Devata,' is representative of self-sacrifice and destruction of Maya. The external ceremony of producing the fire by the churning of the two sticks is representative of the production of this Atmajnana through meditation and Japa.

Fire as a symbol of God and Atman is as old as humanity itself. We find it in the oldest as well as the youngest of all religions. Cf. the famous Christian hymn "Lead kindly light, etc." Several ideas are suggested by the comparison of Atman to Agni. Its innate purity, self-effulgence, capacity to destroy ignorance, its natural tendency to rise up, the habit of consuming the very basis of its existence, its natural opposition to the coldness of death, its dependence upon Upadhis for manifestation, etc.,—all these seem to be suggested.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### Vitamin Theory as a proof of God

Dr. George Sperti, Director of Basic Research Laboratory of the University of Cincinnati, declares in an article contributed to the *Newman News*: "I should feel it a privilege and an honour to attempt to prove to any man that science in no way interferes with a belief in a God of supreme intelligence, but on the contrary furnishes most convincing evidence in support of His existence." The argument he advances in support of his contention is the age-old design theory, namely, that the existence of an elaborate plan in the universe naturally points to a supreme intelligence behind it. He says: "Students of science, having studied and observed the almost unbelievably intricate design of nature, begin to perceive that this universe of ours from the infinitesimal unit of matter, the atom, to the complicated galaxies, is so well planned and so well organised that it could not possibly have been made by any force other than that of a Supreme Intelligence."

But a particular scientific illustration that he utilises in this connection is rather novel and interesting. Our readers may be surprised to know that the Professor has enlisted the support of the vitamin theory on the side of the greatest dogma of religion, namely God. He says: "In connection with discoveries in the vitamin work, sunlight, and in particular ultra violet light, was found to have the same beneficial effect as food containing the vitamins. The question of the inter-relation of vitamins and sunlight led to the discovery that the formation of Vitamin D is effected by sunlight. It is an established fact that specific wave-length of light promotes the formation of Vitamins while others destroy them. Radiant energy on leaving the sun contains not only the beneficial wave-lengths but also the harmful ones. Were these wave-lengths to reach the earth,

according to the vast plan on which this system of light in relation to the vitamins is built, not only would the vitamins be destroyed but also many other essentials to life.

"One naturally asks the question: How does it happen that these harmful radiations do not find their way to the earth and destroy all life as we know it? We might guess that the oxygen, nitrogen, and other elements composing the earth's atmosphere would remove or filter out the harmful wave-lengths. However, an investigation into the ability of the elements to absorb the undesirable radiations reveals the fact that the atmosphere close to the surface of the earth has practically no ability to absorb harmful light waves. A more careful investigation reveals the fact that ozone has the quality we have been seeking, namely, that of selecting the correct wave-lengths to an accuracy of a few hundred millionths of an inch. What is the origin of this layer of ozone so helpful to mankind? If we pursue our investigation further we find that a certain portion of the harmful radiations in the sun-spectrum has the ability to convert the oxygen of the air into ozone. We see that the sun contains a certain band of harmful radiations which convert a portion of the oxygen of the air into a perfect filter for the removal of all undesirable radiations, but at the same time this filter has the property of transmitting the precise wave-lengths which are essential to life on earth.

"The minute accuracy and intricacy of the wave-length selection is almost unbelievable. But when one realises how drastic would be the results if this specific wave-length selection should shift in the slightest degree, it is apparent to the thinking man that the cosmos has a Director of more than human intellect whom we know to be an Infinite creator who has laid definite plans for our survival."

We dare say when the point is explained, there is nothing so wonderful in the illustration as it would at first seem. Intelligence and purposiveness are amply evident even in many of those adjustments of nature that are visible to the common man, and if one were therefore prepared to bring the proper outlook on the question, one can arrive at the intelligence behind the universe even without a knowledge of the mysteries governing the conversion of harmful wave-lengths into beneficial ones. But we feel that this particular outlook is the result of one's temperament and innate tendencies, and it is doubtful whether any amount of scientific study can in itself produce it. One endowed with this outlook will no doubt see the glory of God in every bit of knowledge that the investigation of Nature reveals, but in the absence of it the human mind is not likely to arrive at any self-transcending significance behind the revelations of science, however, astonishing they might be.

### A Symbol of Indian Culture

It is often said, and with a good deal of justification, that women are the conservers of the higher values of a civilisation. From the point of view of dress, this statement receives ample support with reference to the culture of our own land. It is a well-known fact that Indian men, when they go abroad, invariably put on European dress. Even in India many of them go about dressed like Europeans. In contrast to this it is practically impossible to see any Indian woman, whether in India or abroad, who abandons her national costume, the sari, and adopts the dress of her European sisters. Is this not symbolic of woman's importance in preserving the great traditions of a civilisation? Not only that, the sari or the Indian woman's dress is from the point of beauty, taste and refinement unsurpassed by the similar costumes of any other nation, and this is a fact that has received very wide recognition. This artistic superiority of the sari may be another rea-

son for its survival in the midst of foreign fashions.

It may be interesting to our readers to know some facts about the origin and growth of this beautiful form of dress. We shall therefore give below a brief account of it on the basis of an interesting article appearing in the *Asiatic Review* from the pen of Mrs. Pratiba Devi. She points out that in the pre-Aryan civilisation of the Indus Valley women used to wear only a band about the loins, as it can be gathered from some female figures that have been excavated. But when we come to Ajanta paintings (200 B.C.—600 A.D.) we gather from pictures that women had begun wearing two pieces of cloth—the 'rai' for the upper body and the 'mekhala' for the waist. Especially the upper band of cloth was more of an ornament or a decoration than a dress, since it used to be highly decorated with pearls and embroidery, especially in the case of aristocratic ladies. In early Buddhist period the 'Mekhala' or the lower cloth was extending up to the knee, and in the later Buddhist period we learn on the authority of foreign travellers that it was fashion to put on a Chudder or upper cloth over the Rai and the Mekhala. Yuan Chwang, the Chinese traveller of the 7th century A.D., describes Indian dress, both male and female, as follows: "The inner clothing and the outward attire of the people have no tailoring; as to colour a fresh white is esteemed and motely is of no account. The men wind a strip of cloth round the waist and up to the arm pit, and leave the right shoulder bare. The woman wear a long robe which covers both shoulders and fall down loose . . ."

Under the influence of more luxurious habits the 'Rai' transformed in the Middle Ages into elaborate bodice with short sleeves. After the Moghal invasion Persian influence set in, and the Mekhala developed into wide transparent skirt, as one can see in Indo-Persian miniatures, revealing the 'Pyjama' which made its first appearance in India during this

period. In other parts of India like Bengal and Orissa, the Mekhala developed no skirt, but became wider and longer and took the shape of a drapery which forms the sari of to-day. The writer opines that the fashion that developed in these parts conquered the rest of India gradually. She also points out that there are at present four or five principle styles of draping the sari—the Parsi or Gujarati, the Mahratti, the Bengali, the Nepali and the Madrasi, of which the last, according to her, is the most popular at present in India.

She concludes the essay with the following remark: "The sari has conquered, as we have already said, the whole of India; it is on its way to conquer Asia and Europe. Its beautiful folds and its classical perfection give it an eternal beauty which will never age, just as the Egyptian garments, the Greek Chlamyde and the European drapery of the Middle Ages that we see in the museums have an unchangeable nobility above all fashions."

#### A New Smriti for the Age

The *Social Reformer* publishes the report of an interesting lecture on the necessity of a new Smriti for the age, by Mr. S. D. Nadkarni, the founder of the Hindu Sabha at Karwar. Relating the circumstances that led him to the idea of issuing a new Smriti, Mr. Nadkarni points out how in the course of his own activities for the removal of untouchability, all the quotations in favour of this necessary reform that he could hunt out of existing Smritis have proved useless in satisfying the anti-reformers; for the latter are experts in twisting the texts out of their plain meanings to suit their own views and in wrangling over prepositions and terminations. "This led me to think," continues the speaker, "that I had better put down my own thoughts in the form of precepts and injunctions unequivocally in Sanskrit verses on the subject of untouchability and all other matters in which Hindu Society stood in need of re-

form. So I drew up a draft. But subsequently a doubt assailed me. What would be its use? But it is written: 'The secret of faith lies in the cave' (धर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायां)

And by 'cave' here is meant, of course, the human heart. But supposing one were to take the text literally and even to say that the spirit of old Manu, the law-giver, beholding the sorry plight of his progeny in these days, incarnated itself on the shore of the Western Sea and, leaving a new Smriti composed by him in a cave of the Western Ghats near my town for the well-being of his progeny, vanished;—now supposing one had tried to push forward the claims of one's Smritified composition with such legends, the questions would still have remained,—first, whether and how far the attempt would succeed in the critical wide-awake age, and second, whether even if the device did succeed, it would be desirable."

We may, however, assure the speaker that the age is not so critical as he considers it to be, and that there will be many in this country for whom the concocted story of Manu will be a much greater credential of the genuineness of his contemplated Smriti than the democratic procedure he describes subsequently. For he continues: "So I resolved that if at all a new Smriti should see the light of day in these democratic times, it should make its appearance only by ways familiar to democracy. So I decided that copies of the draft Smriti with a comprehensive questionnaire should be circulated to men and women of light and leading throughout the Hindu world, in order to elicit their suggestions and opinions and that these should be placed before a Committee to be elected by those leaders for the purpose of settling the final form of the draft. As soon as the draft is settled, it should be put into Sanskrit verses and also rendered into all the vernaculars and into English also and published simultaneously in all these languages with the imprim-

matur of Hindu leaders of different castes and creeds and drawn from all provinces." He also proposes that suitable texts from the old Smritis should be culled out and attached to the new one as an Old Testament.

We must remark in this connection that more than all the democratic procedure contemplated by Mr. Nadkarni, the suggestion that the new Smriti should be put into Sanskrit verse is likely to further the object he has in view; for in this country a verse in Sanskrit still carries more weight than cart-loads of common sense and reasoning. In spite of the

force that the Smriti may receive from its Sanskrit garb, it is, however, doubtful whether it will gain the recognition, in part or in entirety, of the so-called Sanatanists of India for the reason that there is no Vayasa, Yagnyavalkya or Parasara to put his imprimatur to this document; for no modern man, however great, can take this place according to this school of thought. But in spite of this deficiency the formulation of the modern views on these questions in the accepted form is a great desideratum, and is likely to have much influence in course of time.

#### REVIEWS AND NOTICES

TEACHINGS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA: (with Translation, Introduction and Comments). By Hari Prasad Sastri, D. Litt. Published by Luzac & Co., 46, Great Russell Street, London, W.C. 1. Price 2 shillings.

The book under review is a worthy addition to the numerous translations of the great Hindu Scripture. Unlike many translations of its kind Prof. Sastri's rendering is faithful both to the original and to English idiom. The translator has pruned away those few passages of the Bhagavad Gita that are of local or temporary interest, and thus places before the reader the main body of the Gita teachings with its spiritual beauty and fervour for the most part intact. He has also added supplementary words and remarks so as to make the meaning clear and unambiguous. The style too is simple, forceful and idiomatic. While remaining true to the spirit of the original, it is at the same time free from the defect of literalism which vitiates many translations, rendering them almost un-understandable without consulting the original. "To know the Gita is to know all that is best in the philosophical teachings of India, China and Japan"—remarks Mr. Sastri in his introduction. By this excellent translation of the Gita, the author has opened the

way for this understanding to non-Indians who do not know Sanskrit.

CALLING BACK THE SOUL: By Philip Robinson. Rider & Co., Paternoster House, Paternoster Row, London, E.C. 4.

The thoughts in verse and prose contained in this booklet of 63 pages are the experiences of a mystic. The ideas are those common to mystics of all lands, and the beauty of the ideas will appeal to all, whether Eastern or Western, whose desire it is to love perfectly and by love to become one with love.

THE GITA IDEAL OF DEVOTION: (with Translation and Notes on Chapter XII of the Gita). By Divan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri. Pp. 38. Price 4 annas.

SANDILYA BHAKTI SUTRAS: (with Translation and Notes). By the same author. Pp. 24. Price 4 annas.

FUTURE OF THE BRAHMIN. By the same author. Pp. 18. Price 2 annas.

MANU, THE FRIEND OF MAN: By the same author. Pp. 78. Price 8 annas.

In the first two of these booklets, the chief features of the Path of Devotion, *Bhakti Marga*, are clearly and tersely set out. The Gita is the main basis on which Sastriar and Sandilya proceed. Sastriar's notes are brief and

apposite. Devotion appeals to all classes; and Sastriar's forcible presentation of his subject and the low price will probably introduce Sandilya to many and deepen their devotion.

The third book comprises the presidential address at the last Tanjore District Brahmin Conference on 30-12-1934. Sastriar tries herein to stir up Brahmins to improve themselves and return to their old leadership in religion, social organisation and education, and has offered some practical suggestions to them for adapting themselves to modern conditions, science and culture without losing their individuality and their national ideals.

The fourth book deals with the laws of Manu. Manu's Code of Hindu manners, customs and laws is world famous; and a selection of its best and most characteristic portions with an English translation needs no apology, explanation or commendation. There is, however, a special reason for this publication. Latterly, in Southern India, communal wrangles have taken an unfortunate turn. In decrying Brahmins and Brahminism of the present day, an attempt has been made, in some quarters, to attack the entire edifice of Hinduism together with its time-honoured foundations, the Vedas, Manu's Code, etc. Sastriar therefore tries, in these selections, to show that many things of great worth in Hinduism are described and ordained in and founded on Manu, and that persons who are anxious to maintain and improve India's material and spiritual welfare will do well to mark, read, digest and act on these passages, instead of blindly attacking anything and everything in that code. Sastriar admits that various parts of it are obsolete and unsuited to present day conditions, but hopes that wise conservative reformers would come forward with their reforms to ensure progress without destroying either our national characteristics or the valuable

achievements of the past. Sastriar's opportune publication is fairly cheap and will be appreciated by the unprejudiced public.

All the above books are by Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri and can be had of the Author or at 47, Swami Naick Street, Chintadripet, Madras.

SONGS OF MIRABAI : Translated by R. C. Tandan, Hindu Mandir, Allahabad. Pp. 72. Price Re. 1.

Mirabai is a name to conjure with. No *bhajana* party nor *Bhajanavali*, in Northern India, is complete without some of her heart-entrancing and soul-thrilling Hindi songs. Those who know that language will care little for an English translation which can never thrill and charm like the original. But those who are not so fortunate might get some idea of the soul of that devotee-singer through this book, wherein Mr. Tandan has rendered fifty of her songs into good English prose.

ISA, KENA, KATHA, PRASNA, AND MUNDAKA UPANISHADS (HINDI) : Published by Gita Press, Gorakhpore. Price 3, 8, 9, 7 and 7 annas respectively.

The Gita Press of Gorakhpore is rendering signal service to the Hindi-knowing public by bringing out cheap and beautiful editions of important Sanskrit scriptures with translation. In the present edition of the Upanishads, comprising the above-mentioned Upanishads with Sankara's commentary, the original of the Bhashya is divided into paragraphs under proper headings and printed face to face with the Hindi rendering in parallel columns, reminding us of Lobe's Classics. The translation is direct, accurate and clear. The translator has added a few foot-notes which will surely help the ordinary reader. The coloured plates, and the excellence of the printing and the get-up make these volumes all the more attractive.

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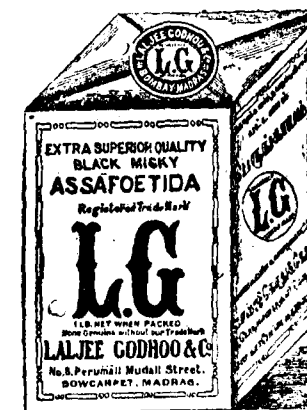
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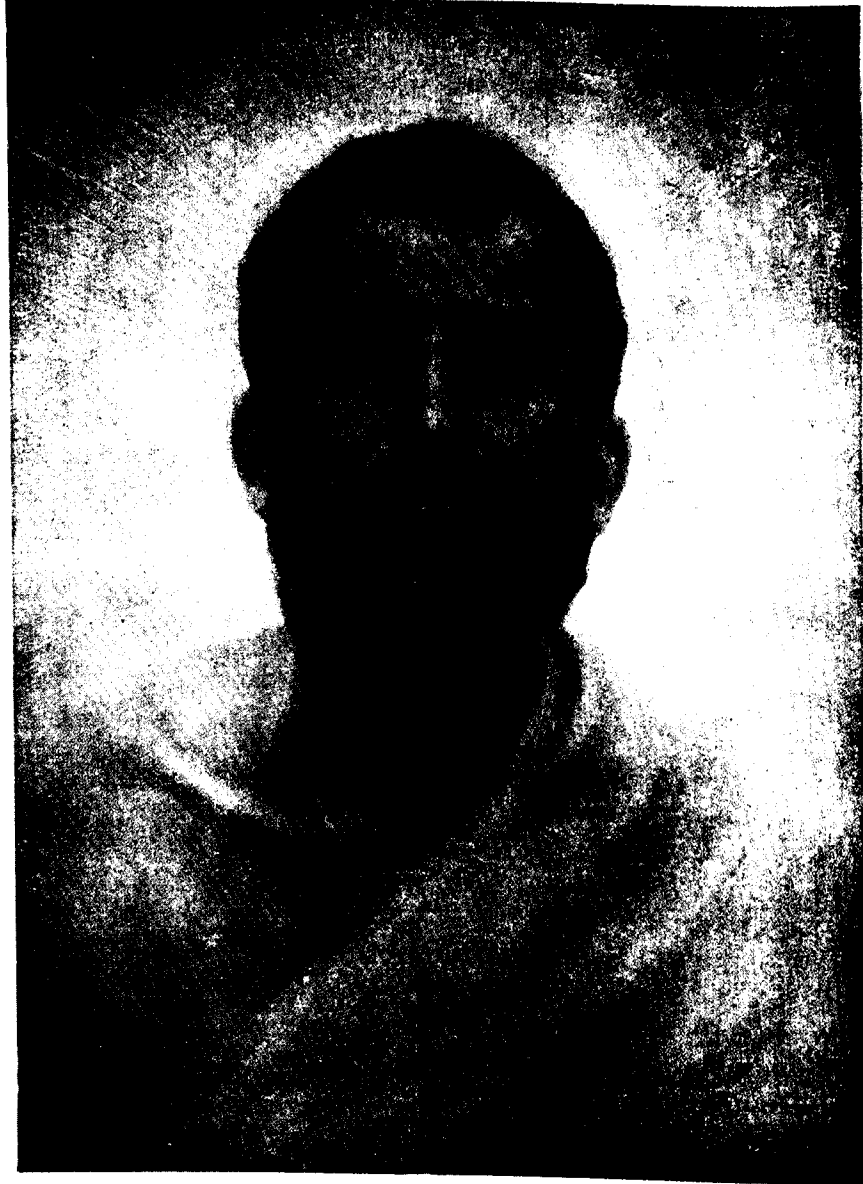
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From the painting by Bankim Chandra



Let me tell you, strength is what we want, and the first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads and believe that "I am the Atman."

—Swami Vivekananda

## THE VEDANTA KESARI

(SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY NUMBER)

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[Nos. 10 & 11

### TO THE INFANT RAMAKRISHNA

*By Girish Chandra Ghosh*

(Translated by Mrs. Elizabeth Davidson)

In the arm of a poor Brahmin woman reposing,  
Who art Thou that liest shedding light on the earth?  
Who art Thou, so naked, to the poor hut descending?  
O darling, who art Thou that hast taken birth?

Seeing man thus afflicted with sorrow and suffering  
Hast Thou come, priceless jewel, with compassion for all?  
To the heavily-laden Thyself Thou revealest,  
Unknown hast Thou come here to answer their call.

Thy face is aglow with celestial kindness;  
For whose sake Thy laughter, for whom Thy tears start?  
Thy dazzling beauty enthralleth and binds us—  
O remover of sorrow, let me hold Thee to my heart!

## HEAR YE, DEVOTEES OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA!

By Swami Vivekananda

[The following is an inspired writing of Swami Vivekananda, that has not been published till now. It speaks of the glory of spiritual realisation, and is therefore most appropriate to the occasion of the Master's Birth-Centenary; for Sri Ramakrishna lived for the one idea that religion consists in realisation of God and not in propounding dogmas and theories.]

IT is only just that I should try to give you a little of my views. I fully believe that there are periodic ferments of religion in human society, and that such a period is now sweeping over the educated world. While each ferment, moreover, appears broken into various little bubbles, these are all eventually similar, showing the cause or causes behind them to be the same. That religious ferment which at present is everyday gaining a greater hold over thinking men, has this characteristic that all the little thought-whirlpools into which it has broken itself, tend in one single direction—a vision and a search after the Unity of Being. On planes physical, ethical, and spiritual, an ever-broadening generalisation, leading up to a concept of Unity Eternal—is in the air; and this being so, all the movements of the time may be taken to represent, knowingly or unknowingly, the noblest philosophy of unity that man ever had—the Advaita Vedanta.

Again, it has always been observed that as a result of the struggles of the various fragments of thought in a given epoch, one bubble survives. The rest only arise to melt into it, and form a single great wave, which sweeps over society with irresistible force.

In India, America, and England (the countries I happen to know

about) hundreds of these are struggling at the present moment. In India, dualistic formulæ are already on the wane, the Advaitists alone hold the field in force. In America, many movements are struggling for the mastery. All these represent Advaita thought more or less, and that series which is spreading most rapidly approaches nearer to it than any of the others. Now if anything was ever clear to me, it is that one of these must survive, swallowing up all the rest, to be the power of the future. Which is it to be?

Referring to history, we see that only that fragment which is fit will survive, and what makes one fit to survive but *character*? Advaita will be the future religion of thinking humanity. No doubt of that. And of all the sects, they alone shall gain the day, that are able to show highest character in their lives.

Let me tell you a little personal experience. When my Master left the body, we were a dozen penniless and unknown young men. Against us were a hundred powerful organisations, struggling hard to nip us in the bud. But Ramakrishna had given us one great gift, the desire and the lifelong struggle not to talk alone, but *to live the life*. And to-day all India knows and reverences the Master, and the truths he taught are spreading like wild fire. Ten years ago, I could

not get a hundred persons together to celebrate his birth-day anniversary. Last year there were fifty thousand.

Neither numbers, nor powers, nor wealth, nor learning, nor eloquence, nor anything else will prevail but *purity, living the life*, in one word, Anubhuti, realisation. Let there be but a dozen such lion-souls in each country, lions who have broken their own bonds, who have touched the Infinite, whose whole soul is gone to Brahman, who care neither for wealth nor power nor fame, and these will be *enough* to shake the world.

Here lies the secret. Says Patanjali, the father of Yoga: "When a man rejects all the superhuman powers, then he attains to the 'cloud of virtue'." He sees God. He becomes God, and helps others to become the same. This is all I have to preach. Doctrines have been expounded enough. There are books by the million. Oh, for an ounce of practice!

As to societies and organisations, these will come of themselves. Can there be jealousy where there is nothing to be jealous of? The names of those who will wish to injure us will be legion. But is not that the surest sign of our having the truth? The more I have been opposed, the more my energy has always found expression. I have been driven away without a morsel of bread: I have been feasted and worshipped by princes. I have been slandered by priests and laymen alike. But what of it? Bless them all! They are my very self. And have they not helped

me by acting as a spring-board from which my energy could take higher and higher flights?

I have discovered one great secret—I have nothing to fear from *talkers* of religion. And the great ones who realise—they become enemies to none. Let talkers talk. They know no better! Let them have their fill of name and fame and money and woman. Hold we on to realisation, to being Brahman, to becoming Brahman. Let us hold on to truth unto death, and from life to life. Let us not pay the least attention to what others say, and if, after a lifetime's effort, one, only one, soul can break the fetters of the world and be free, WE HAVE DONE OUR WORK. Hari Om!

One word more. Doubtless I do love India. But everyday my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree?

There is but one basis of well-being, social, political, or spiritual—to know that I and my brother are *one*. This is true for all countries and all people. And Westerners, let me say, will realise it more quickly than Orientals who have almost exhausted themselves in formulating the idea and producing a few cases of individual realisation.

Let us work without desire for name or fame or to rule over others. Let us be free from the triple bonds of lust, greed of gain and anger. And the truth is with us.

## REFLECTIONS ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTH-CENTENARY

**T**HIS month, a century ago was born in an obscure corner of Bengal a soul enlivened by the touch of the Holy Spirit, who has come to be known as Sri Ramakrishna by the world at large. Unknown to name and fame, unconnected with political and social upheavals of his days, he lived for fifty years in our midst, spending his time in quiet contemplation and unostentatious service. He courted obscurity, and shunned publicity and self-assertion; yet the subtle dynamism of the spirit enshrined in him was such that like the gentle dew which though unseen and silent in its working yet brings the fairest blossoms to the light of day, his advent inaugurated a new era in the spiritual history of mankind through the efforts of a band of young men headed by Swami Vivekananda, whose lives were transformed by his divine touch. "The full-blown lotus never goes in search of honey-sucking bees," he has remarked with reference to the spiritual men, "they come attracted by its beauty and fragrance". So has it been with him. The sweet aroma and the divine halo of his transfigured personality combined with the artless wisdom and spiritual power of his words have attracted to him men of all stages of life and culture—boys in their teens as well as men in the evening of their life, unsophisticated village women as well as learned savants, penurious workmen as well as rich aristocrats.

In the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna were embodied the

universal principles of religion and spiritual life which mankind is in sore need at the present time. He has demonstrated in his life that soul and God are not mere objects of speculation or idle fancy but facts that can be felt and realised in a more convincing way than the ordinary experiences of the world. In his life of perpetual God-consciousness is the remedy for the gloom of scepticism that envelops the modern world. In his realisation of the fundamental unity of all religions and the underlying Divinity of all men is the solution of the religious antagonism, and the racial and national animosities that threaten the well-being of human society at the present time. In his doctrine of worship of God through the service of all is the reconciliation of the conflicts between religion and secularism characteristic of the modern age.

By a life of perfect love, purity and catholicity, by the harmonious cultivation of Jnana (wisdom), Bhakti (love), and Karma (action), and by an unprecedented ardour in the practice of renunciation and spiritual disciplines he has placed before us an example of holiness and God-realisation that transcends all limitations of time and nationality.

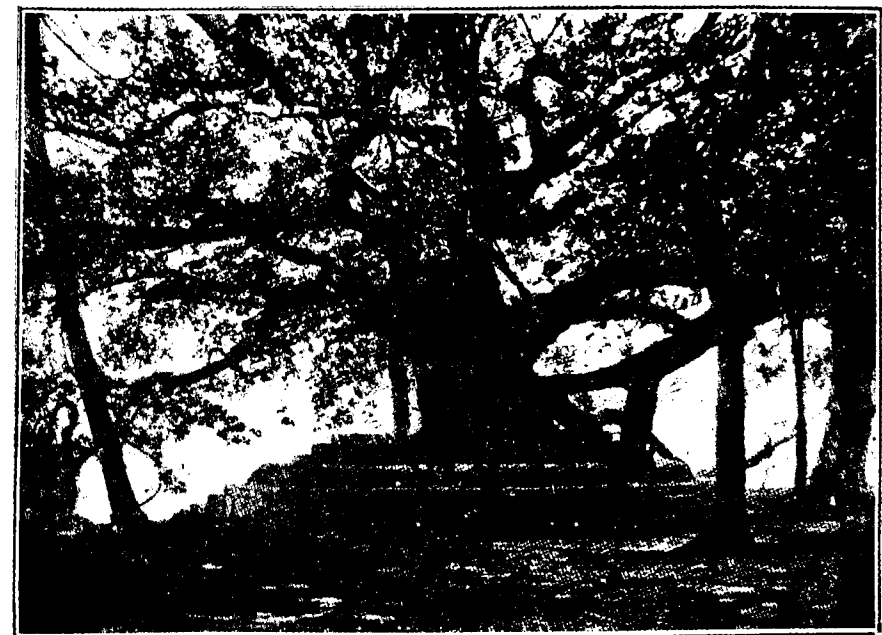
On the auspicious occasion of the Birth-Centenary of this God-man, let us raise our hearts in prayer to the Supreme Spirit that was embodied as our Great Master, invoking Him to shower the blessings of wisdom, love and peace on all men. In his own life-time Sri Ramakrishna sometimes used to stand on the top of the



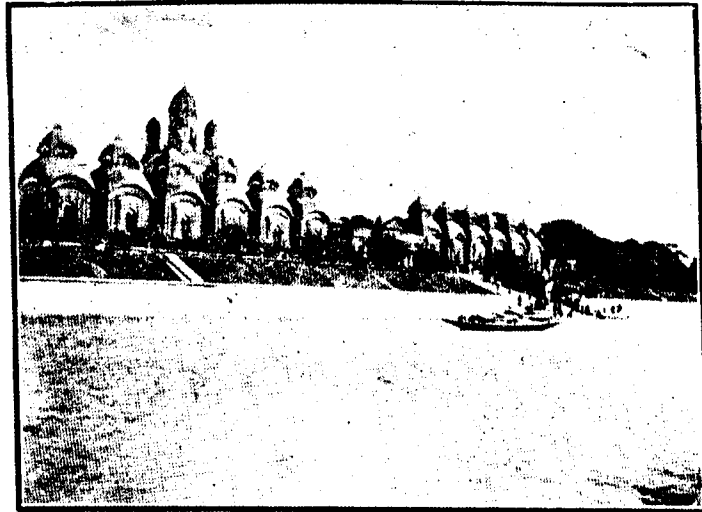
Sri Ramakrishna



Swami Vivekananda



The Panchavati  
(The place where Sri Ramakrishna performed his Sadhanas)



Dakshineswar temple as viewed from the Ganges



The Kali Temple at Dakshineswar

terrace at Dakshineswar and cry out with a longing heart, inviting all who hungered for God and illumination, to come and partake of the rich spiritual repast that he had prepared for all. His is the eternal call of God to Man. Even though he is no more in flesh, he survives in his divine form and with out-stretched hands calls upon the weary and heavy-laden to

seek the haven of rest that his message offers unto them. May the world make this occasion an opportunity for a deeper study of the Master's life and teachings! May the Divine Spirit endow humanity with a new moral earnestness and spiritual ardour—the creation of which was the object of the Master's advent on this planet of ours!

## YOUNG BENGAL AND THE ADVENT OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

(THE PRELUDE TO THE IMMORTAL LIFE)

*By K. C. Chaudhury, M.A.*

[Mr. K. C. Chaudhury occupies a high position in Government Service. He is also an ardent admirer of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. His masterly sketch of the growth of intellectual and religious ferment in Bengal after the establishment of British rule, helps one to understand the life and personality of Sri Ramakrishna in the perspective of history and appreciate his valuable contribution to the making of Modern India. We wish to supplement Mr. Chaudhury's article with the remark that though in other Provinces the religious reaction to modern influences did not take the shape of Brahmoism, the intellectual and religious outlook was more or less the same as in Bengal, and that the personality of Sri Ramakrishna therefore has an identical significance in their case also.]

A meeting of the East and the West such as took place in India at the beginning of the British Rule could not but produce a ferment. The renaissance in modern India is the result of that ferment. The Deccan peninsula where the first European adventurers came could well be the birth place of the renaissance. But, perhaps, because of the fact that the early European adventurers in the Deccan were mere marauders, and the British power was first consolidated in Bengal, the renaissance had its beginnings in Calcutta instead of in the Deccan. Besides, one must recognise that there is always some mystery about the "bursting" of new ideas. While outward events and circumstances may stimulate new

ideas, and a new spirit, it is equally true that it is the new spirit already awakened in man which discovers new meaning in old facts. "In the history of discovery", says Emerson "the ripe and the latent truth seems to have fashioned a brain for itself." The spirit of 'Young Bengal' seems to have fashioned several such brains for its manifestation in the early part of the nineteenth century.

First, we shall trace the course of the intellectual movement. The introduction of English education in Bengal was due to private effort. The citizens of Calcutta wanted their children to learn English in order that they might find favour with the new ruling power. Some Eurasians took advantage of the situation and started

schools for imparting a working knowledge of English. But it is obvious that the learning of English from such purely mercenary motives could never have led to a renaissance. An indomitable spirit of enquiry which is the soul of every renaissance was already abroad. The spirit of renaissance is a force which works from within; it cannot be imposed on a people from without. In the East India Company's charter of 1813 it was stipulated "that a sum of not less than a lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart, and applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the territories of India." Nothing, however, was done till 1823 when a Committee of Public Instruction was set up for deciding as to how the money should be spent. It is noteworthy that the authorities were definitely in favour of encouraging the traditional system of education through the Sanskrit and Arabic Schools. The Calcutta Madrasah had been founded by Warren Hastings in 1781, and a Sanskrit College was founded at Benares in 1792 through the efforts of Jonathan Duncan. The Committee of Public Instruction could think of no better use for the educational grant which had accumulated since 1813 than to spend it on more Sanskrit Colleges in Nuddea and Tirhoot, and on the printing and publication of Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts. But Young Bengal had already made up its mind in favour of the European sciences and philosophy and against the satisfaction to be derived from the knowledge that was imparted in the Sanskrit and

Arabic Schools. On the 20th January, 1817, was founded the Hindu College through the efforts of David Hare, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Sir Hyde East, and other leading citizens of Calcutta who were inclined towards English education. The money came through spontaneous subscriptions, which showed the eagerness of the people for English education. In 1818 came into existence the School Society for the purpose of establishing new English and Vernacular Schools. Thus, while the Government was vacillating, the people themselves had already made their choice. In his historic letter to Lord Amherst Raja Ram Mohun Roy openly espoused the cause of Western education. It is said that he turned the face of the people from the East to the West. The authorities were not immediately won over; but they sanctioned a grant-in-aid for the Hindu College which became the citadel of the New Learning. The man under whose inspiration the youths were to be fired with the idea of free thinking, and under whose influence they were to deny 'authority' and to recognise nothing but 'reason' in every sphere of life—was appointed a teacher of the Hindu College in 1828. The name of Henry Vivian Derozio must always remain immortal in the history of Young Bengal. Born in a family of Portuguese origin he received his education under a Scotsman named David Drummond who instilled in Young Derozio the ideas of the French Revolution. When in his turn Derozio became a teacher, he succeeded so well in implanting all these ideas on the minds of his pupils that it produced most far-reaching results. In April, 1831, Derozio was removed from the College for the

offence of preaching revolutionary ideas, and he died a premature death in the following December. But in the course of his brief association with the Hindu College he had touched with his magic wand enough number of boys who would bring about a social revolution in Bengal.

The administration of Sir William Bentinck came as a god-send to the partisans of English education. The leading men were divided into two camps at the time. One was called the school of Nayi Roshni, (*i.e.* New Learning), and the other was called the school of Purani Roshni (Old Learning). David Hare and Ram Mohun Roy with their friends and followers, as well as all the Hindu College men belonged to the Nayi Roshni; but the important officials were all in favour of the Old Roshni. It is said that ever since the example set by Sir William Jones it became almost a fashion for the educated Englishmen in India to learn and admire Sanskrit. The Purani Roshni had amongst its adherents such stalwarts as Colebrooke, Wilson, James, Shakespeare, and the Prinsep brothers. With the advent of Bentinck official patronage which had leaned so long to the Old Roshni changed sides. Hitherto it had been thought that the East India Company's educational grant could be spent only for the purpose of reviving and encouraging "native", *i.e.*, the indigenous system of learning. But Macaulay the Law Member of Bentinck's Council gave it as his opinion that there was no legal bar to the grant being spent on the teaching of European arts and sciences. In March 1835 Lord Bentinck declared that the Government grant would thenceforward be spent on the teach-

ing of European sciences and arts through the medium of English. Macaulay's Minute is a historic document. His sneers about Arabic and Sanskrit literature, his hyperboles, and invectives could not fail to exasperate the men of the Old Roshni School. As a protest against Macaulay's remarks and the new policy of the Government, Shakespeare and Prinsep resigned from the Committee of Public Instruction. But Lord Bentinck was not to be daunted; he appointed Macaulay to be the new President of the Committee. The Hindu College men all ranged themselves on the side of Bentinck whose administration also saw the abolition of the Suttee and the establishment of the Medical College at Calcutta. Under the patronage of Bentinck 'Young Bengal' saw the complete triumph of its ideals. But what was that ideal?

The ideal of "Young Bengal" was only a destructive iconoclasm for every social and religious institution of India—a contempt for everything 'oriental.' The historian of the Renaissance in Bengal writes: "From the day on which Macaulay declared that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'—Kalidas yielded place to Shakespeare in the estimation of Young Bengal, Edgeworth's Tales took the place of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and the Bible easily replaced the Vedas, the Vedanta, and the Gita. . . . . Young Bengal had three gurus, namely, David Hare, Derozio, and Macaulay. All the three taught one and the same lesson—namely that everything oriental is bad and everything occidental is good." The representative man of

Young Bengal was Michael Madhusudan Dutt who is said to have been wayward as a son, wayward as a father, wayward as a husband, wayward as a poet—in fact, wayward in every respect.

So much for the intellectual movement. We now proceed to examine its religious and social repercussions. Amongst a people essentially religious in their ideas there could never be a purely intellectual movement. Just as the Italian renaissance was transformed into the Reformation as soon as it reached the Teutonic world, so the renaissance amongst the Hindus automatically and immediately gave rise to a movement of religious reformation. The impact of Christianity helped the process. The reformation took the form of Brahmoism, i.e., Unitarianism. The first reformer was Raja Ram Mohun Roy whose mind had become liberalised even early in life by a comparative study of Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu Theology. Later in life he studied Christian theology from the Greek and Hebrew texts as well. He inveighed against Hindu idolatry and against Trinitarian Christianity. He preached Unitarianism taking his stand not only on reason but also on the texts of Hindu philosophical literature. He was an ardent supporter of English education and of social reform movement. In 1815 he founded the Atmiya Samaj wherein he preached and discussed his ideas. In 1828 he founded the Brahmo Samaj; but when he went to England in 1830 the Samaj ceased to flourish. Meanwhile the Christian missionaries who had received permission to preach within British India launched a

vigorous attack on Hinduism.\* Their ambition was no less than to convert the whole population into the Christian faith. At first their efforts at conversion did not meet with any success amongst the upper classes; but in the thirties the famous missionary Alexander Duff succeeded in converting some "educated" Hindus. The news of the conversion of a few "Hindu College" men greatly agitated the minds of the people, and there was raised the cry of 'Hinduism in danger.' But unless there were some form of Hinduism which could appeal to the *reason* of the English-educated people, and which could appear to them as free from all superstitions—nothing could stem the tide of wholesale conversion. Brahmoism supplied that need and saved Hindu Society at this hour of crisis. In 1838 Devendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath Tagore, founded the Tattwabodhini Sabha for preaching the Upanishads which declare the oneness of God. In 1843 Devendranath Tagore openly embraced Brahmoism. By his saintly character and the moderation of his views, Devendranath Tagore commanded universal respect, and he succeeded in reviving Brahmoism

\*The East India Company was not kind towards the Christian missionaries at the beginning. Their solicitude for the retention of the territories which fortune shook into their lap made them scrupulously respect the prejudices and religious observances of the native population. The authorities were always apprehensive that the Christian missionaries might ruin the prospects of an empire by exasperating the people through imprudent attacks on Hinduism and Islam. The earliest organised attempt for the preaching of Christianity was made from Serampore, which was a Danish possession at the time.

from its moribund condition. Many of the "Hindu College" men became Brahmos besides others who possessed great genius and intellectual powers. The movement gained strength from day today, and Brahmoism also became identified with all social reform movements. Devendranath Tagore and his followers also tried to give reasoned reply to the criticism of Hinduism by the Christian missionaries. Raja Ram Mohun Roy had done the same thing. There were attacks and counter-attacks. The two parties tried to discover and hold up to ridicule the weak points of each other; but it must be admitted that whereas the Christian missionaries were guided almost exclusively by the desire to villify Hinduism, Ram Mohun Roy, Devendranath Tagore, and most of their followers were genuinely anxious to learn and appreciate the truth in Christianity. The light was also turned inwards. One of the main subjects of discussion was the revealed character of the Vedas. Babu Akshayakumar Datta, a stalwart of the Brahmo Samaj, declared that the Brahmos could not accept any literary composition as "revealed." Devendranath Tagore was also won over to this idea. This development of the Brahmo faith is noteworthy inasmuch as the most radical philosopher who called himself a Hindu had never before impugned the Vedas.

In the fifties there came to the Brahmo Samaj a man who by genius, enthusiasm, and oratorical powers was a born leader of the people. Keshab Chandra Sen joined the Brahmo Samaj about the year 1860, and under his leadership Brahmoism reached the high watermark. From many a platform Keshab addressed

and exhorted the young and the old, women and children, and wherever he went the educated men flocked around him. Keshab was not a cold theologian, he was not a mere deist or unitarian—he was essentially a preacher of the Bhakti cult. His leaning was towards eclecticism. At one time he imbibed so much the ideas of the sin of man and the need for repentance that he could easily be taken for a devout Christian. All these years the Brahmos had pressed forward with various social reform programmes till they began to advocate inter-caste marriage. This at once brought about a crisis. The legality of such marriages was questioned. Legal opinion was that even marriages within the same caste performed according to Brahmo rites were invalid in the eye of law. The Government introduced a bill called the "Native Marriage Bill" to regularise the position; the title was subsequently changed to "the Civil Marriage Bill." But the new law was to be applicable only to such people as would declare themselves to be not belonging to Hinduism or to any other recognised religion. Devendranath Tagore, Rajnarain Bose and some other leaders refused to accept this position;—they emphatically declared that the Brahmos were Hindus. But Keshab Chandra Sen accepted the provisions of the new Bill. This produced a schism within the Brahmo Samaj. Devendranath Tagore, Rajnarain Bose and others called their Samaj the Adi Brahmo Samaj whereas the liberal Brahmos who had broken with Hinduism founded the Bharatbarshiya Brahmo Samaj, and set to work with a new zeal. They sent preachers to other provinces and succeeded in establish-

ing centres even in far-off Sind, Bombay, and Madras. Later on there was disagreement again between Keshab and some of his followers. Keshab founded the Navavidhan or New Dispensation Samaj whereas the latter founded the Sadharan (Democratic) Brahmo Samaj.

Brahmoism really fell from its pedestal in 1871 when the majority of Brahmos under Keshab's leadership declared themselves to be non-Hindus. A new spirit of nationalism—a new pride in the religious and social institutions of the land was gradually rising within the minds of the people as a reaction against excessive Westernisation. This new spirit was finding expression in literature and antiquarian research. The declared break with Hinduism at such a time was fatal to the popularity of Brahmoism. In defence of the Adi Brahmos Rajnarain Bose delivered in 1871 his famous and historic lectures on the "Superiority of Hindu Religion." It is said that from that year Young Bengal turned its back on Brahmoism.

But to win over Young Bengal to the ancient spiritual ideal of Hinduism it was not enough to make an intellectual dissertation on its supe-

riority over other forms of religion. Hinduism is an elusive thing, it cannot be defined, it comprises all varieties and gradations of faith. Brahmoism is an eclectic religion whose founders tried to select the best from every religion, and combine it in Brahmoism. Such eclecticism is surely not Hinduism. There was need for some one to illustrate what Hinduism is—how the apparently divergent forms of it can be reconciled one with another, what its relation to other religions is, how in spite of its divergent and everchanging forms it has retained its unity from age to age as the Sanatan Dharma, and has satisfied the cravings of the most intellectual minds. The Immortal in mortal frame who was to reconcile all apparent divergencies, who was to solve all puzzles, who was to wed the new to the old—was quietly doing his *Sadhana* at Dakshineswar. When at last he spoke, his language was equally intelligible to the simple villager as well as to the refined citizen, to the illiterate as well as to the most learned, to the Sanskritist as well as to the 'Englishmen.' The gathering of Keshab and Naren to his feet was symbolic of the conversion of Young Bengal to the ancient faith of the land.

## A BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

By Swami Tapasyananda

[The following very brief outline of Sri Ramakrishna's life is meant to help the reader, who has not read his detailed biography, to form some idea of the general trend of his life.]

**J**UDGED from the external point of view the life and personality of Sri Ramakrishna had nothing in them to impress his contemporaries. He was not gifted with the power of

oratory or the capacity to write epoch-making books, to lead political movements or to work out schemes of social welfare and industrial organisation. Unimposing in appearance,

uneducated in the lore of either the East or the West, possessing the favours of neither fortune nor power, he was for all outward appearance nothing more than one among the countless Hindu devotees who spend their quiet and uneventful life in the sacred precincts of a temple of God.

His life is in fact bereft of striking events as that of any other of this class. Born of a pious Brahmin family on the 18th of February, 1836, he spent the early part of his life till the age of seventeen in his village home at Kamarpukur, helping in the household duties, doing the family worship, enacting village dramas, organising groups of boys, outraging the superstitious susceptibilities of the old village folk—engaged in fact in just those occupations which one may naturally expect of an intelligent, spirited and well-behaved village boy. Being absolutely negligent of his studies, Gadadhar, as he was then called, was taken to Calcutta for education at the age of seventeen by his brother Ramkumar, himself the head of a school of Sanskrit learning in that city. His utter disgust for secular education, because of its purely utilitarian objectives, stood in the way of his making any progress in that direction even under the more favourable environment which life in Calcutta offered. Shortly after the opening of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, on the 31st of May, 1855, he was appointed a priest there, at first to assist his brother Ramakumar who was the chief priest in the temple, and a little later to officiate as the chief priest in place of his brother.

Then came a revolution in his character. A divine madness seized

him, and he spent many years in an apparently unbalanced state of mind, panting for God and practising various forms of spiritual disciplines under the guidance of adepts in them. After a period of nearly twelve years spent in strenuous spiritual strivings, his mind emerged from those tempestuous regions of the spiritual realm in which it had been caught for many years. But then he appeared before men with his whole being transformed—his ignorance replaced by illumination, his doubts dispelled by the certainty of God-realisation, and his unimposing personality vitalised by the fervour of a strange and fiery faith. Thenceforth he spent his time in divine communion and spiritual ministration, in the experience of passionate God-love and Samadhi followed by illuminating conversations on topics divine for the benefit of people who gathered round him for spiritual inspiration. After more than a decade of active spiritual service unto men, he fell ill of cancer in the throat. Then followed a year of intense physical suffering and very active spiritual service for the benefit of earnest enquirers, until the physical frame, unable to bear the strain any more, broke down, and he passed into Maha Samadhi on Sunday, the 15th of August 1886.

This is the bare skeleton of his life, and it will be seen that there is no wealth of events and striking achievements in it that we are generally accustomed to associate with great men. Especially the age in which he lived was noted for the many celebrities it produced in the field of religion and social reform. There lived a few years before him, the great Ram Mohun, hailed as the morning star of Indian Renaissance,

a master of several languages, an heir to the best cultures of both the East and the West, a patriot, social reformer and spiritual leader in one, whose virile thought could grasp within its sweep every national and social problem confronting his country. And among his contemporaries there was the famous Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, a prototype of the ancient Rajarshis, before whose aristocratic dignity and mature wisdom, an uneducated, frail plebeian like Ramakrishna must pale as a star before the moon. Again, among his own intimate friends and admirers there was Keshub Chandra Sen, the renowned Brahmo leader and Bhakta, whose soul-stirring eloquence and majestic power of personality thrilled both the East and the West, and made him the idol of the Indian youth of his times. It is pertinent to ask, how, surrounded by a galaxy of such great men, Ramakrishna, the humble priest of Kali, whose education did not go beyond the three R's and whose knowledge of men and matters was circumscribed within very narrow limits, could make such tremendous impression on the minds of his countrymen that while his great contemporaries are already, or are in the process of becoming, mere memories in the minds of the new generation, his name and personality are growing into a force in the lives of

an ever-increasing circle of men with the progress of time. The secret of this lies in what is described in ordinary parlance as God-realisation, that state of mind and personality in which the Deity is no longer a mere name or an intellectual conception but a fact of experience more real and substantial than the common objects of daily life. In his life was reflected, more than in that of any of his contemporaries, India's unquenchable yearning for the Infinite and her triumphant sense of God-realisation. Hence this impetuous and irresistible yearning for God, the mighty upheavals of mind that came upon him in its wake, the disciplines that he passed through with remarkable zeal, and the final state of harmony and illumination that dawned on him—these form the main points of interest in the study of his life and personality. If the lives of great politicians, generals and social leaders are full of great efforts and achievements, his life too was so from the spiritual point of view, crowded as it was with striking events, struggles and realisations that will arrest the attention of the historian of man's spiritual strivings. His short life of God-realisation, extending over a span of fifty years, can in brief be described as an epitome of man's spiritual history from the very birth of civilisation.

## THE HOLY FLAME OF GOD

By Prof. Mahendra Nath Sircar, M.A., Ph.D.

[Dr. Sircar, the well-known philosopher and thinker of Modern India, is the Professor of Philosophy in the Presidency College, Calcutta. He is the author of several valuable books, of which the latest are "Hindu Mysticism" and "Eastern Lights" the first being a study of Upanishadic thought and the second the lectures he delivered recently in European Universities. Prof. Sircar combines in himself vast erudition and a profoundly spiritual outlook. His philosophic method is therefore more intuitive and psychological than merely intellectual. The following penetrating study of Sri Ramakrishna is an excellent example of Prof. Sircar's method and its usefulness in expounding philosophy from the spiritual and mystical point of view.]

THIS month the admiring devotees and followers of Sri Ramakrishna celebrate the centenary of their great master in order to commemorate the occasion when the Holy Spirit descended upon earth to create a new cycle of expression in wisdom and faith. To understand Sri Ramakrishna is really to appreciate and to envisage the functioning of the Holy Spirit in earth consciousness; for in the light of Spirit the subtle connection between Earth and Heaven always lasts, and at times the divine influence is scattered through the chosen instrument of God. Ramakrishna was such an instrument. To understand Ramakrishna requires a spiritual sympathy, without which intellect may repeat formulas but cannot enter into the deeper implications of spiritual life.

Intellect may understand the eternal truths of religions dispassionately; the understanding of them helps their intimate and intuitive realisation. But intuitive understanding is not enough for spiritual life—it may satisfy the philosophic instinct in man; but intellect is internally incapable of completely comprehending the dynamics of spiritual life. Spiritual life is not only a philosophic comprehension, an opening in thought,

with its new perspectives in some relational forms, but is essentially the vivid realisation of the formative spirit that is expressed through the graded universes and existences, filling all with life, sentience, movement, joy, beauty, harmony, and at the same time transcending them in its supreme Puissance and Plenitude of Being.

The true spiritual realisation has been, therefore, distinct from philosophic comprehension. Philosophic comprehension gives silent intuition the dignity of existence, and finally gives that intuition (intellectual) which appraises Reality *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is, indeed, the finest philosophic realisation which transcends the consciousness of modes and forms of existence and enters into the world of Transcendence. Such has been the philosophic inspiration and philosophic realisation.

In mystical life, this ascent is supposed to be the beginning of the life divine; for the divine movement in life cannot be appreciated unless the foundation of life is understood to be divine. Philosophy generally lays stress on the realisation of the summit of being, but philosophy cannot further trace the finer movement of Spirit in life unless our inner being is responsive

to the finest currents of Spirit through the movement of life. In spiritual life the fuller expression emerges when the dynamism of life is conceived to be the dynamism of Spirit. And to the ordinary philosophic insight this dynamism of Spirit is not so clear a fact. Philosophy has, therefore, always sought transcendence and the philosophic vision has been satisfied with the *intellectual intuition of the whole* in a rare moment. The super-sensible, beyond the creative expression of Spirit in the sensible world, has been the search of the philosophic mystic.

But this appears to many as a one-sided realisation of spiritual life, which cannot envisage the divine play of Spirit through life. The mystics discover the movement of life not in ignorance, but in delight, and enjoy the flute of Krishna through the eternal dance of life.

They see God in actuality in the creative urges and the creative harmony through which Spirit affirms itself against the obstructions of matter. The mystic is responsive to God in his super-conceptual transcendence or, as Professor Whitehead puts it, to God in His eternal conceptual nature, as well as to God as a creative, redemptive, and remoulding force, in other words to God as actuality. The conflicts in life have often blinded us to this side of the divine consciousness and prevented us from seeing the beauties and dignities of the divine life in the cosmic play. The mystics see the play far better than the scientists or the metaphysicians. The scientists cannot see the divinity of the creative force, the metaphysician sees the formal functioning of it and none can probe into its divine nature and significance. The mystic insight

goes deeper and sees in the movement of life the expression of divine beauty, love and power.

The mystic, therefore, has the vantage ground to understand the divine life in its silence and in its play, and thus envisages the integral existence not only *sub specie aeternitatis*, but also *sub specie diuturnitatis*. The movement of life is to be divined, before life's complete blessings can be understood and enjoyed. Here, the difference arises between the souls that are immersed in the Transcendental beatitude and are cut off from the movement of life, and the souls that can see the play of the Divine through the different layers of existence and at the same time can be consciously aware of the Truth that is beyond all light and darkness. This sympathy with the play of Spirit in life is a consummation that is possible when the psychicisation of our being is established. This alone could impress us with the divine striving of life, without which it is natural to ignore divine life in its cosmic play.

The great creators of thought generally differ at this point from the great founders of religion. The calm intuition confines the vision of the seer to the perception of the Eternal Truths, and even if they are dynamic their dynamism is confined to the expression of Truth and the relations of life in intellectual terms. They lack the force of life. They are the detached observers of the play of forces from which they keep themselves off and do not appreciate their spiritual value and worth. But with the descent of the Holy Spirit in man, he begins to feel the sacredness and divinity of life and sees profound beauty and meaning in the cosmic expression of Spirit and the holiness of life. The Holy

Spirit is an important conception in the spiritual life, for it is practically the flame that burns out the dross from life and reveals its grandeur, sweetness, radiance, beauty. The Holy Ghost is really the spirit of the Divine which takes charge of the aspiring soul and helps to realise its essential divinity and the unfailing unity with the Divine. In Indian Mysticism the indrawing and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit is a recognised fact, and when one surrenders oneself to the care of the Holy Spirit, the divinisation of his being is assured. The touch of Holy Spirit has the fruitful effect of installing us in the Divine and of bringing down the Divine Spirit on earth. It fills up the creation with divine beauties and adds divine Amour to everything. It is the irradiating centre of the divine currents of power, life and wisdom. Where the Holy Spirit establishes itself fully, there is the direct current of divine life.

In the dynamism of spiritual life the power and the function of the Holy Ghost is evident. And spiritual life cannot completely be understood and its mysteries fathomed, if the direct touch of the Holy Spirit is not felt.

It is difficult to understand Ramakrishna, unless the truth and the potency of the Holy Spirit is realised and its moulding power is understood. The spirit of God descends directly upon man. Naturally men are satisfied with a seeking and a surrender and with an effort at a spiritual discipline which may pass into a spiritual habit touching life as a whole, helping intellectual flowering and unselfish movements. But the most complete spiritual consummation cannot take place unless there is the direct descent and intervention of the Spirit

which can alone make us fit for the finest realisation. This truth is to be fully comprehended before one can understand Ramakrishna.

The Tantricism and the Vaishnavism of the Hindus fully recognise the instrumentality of the Divine Sakti for the full flowering of life. And it is the Divine Mother, Sakti, that moved Ramakrishna from within to realise the dynamism and the silence of Spirit. Ramakrishna was charged with the descent of Spirit, and he had, therefore, many movements in his life. His psychic nature was in direct touch with the Divine Power which could easily give infinite expressions through his being. To characterise Ramakrishna in intellectual terms is to minimise his importance; for intellect may demand a decision regarding the ultimate theory of Reality or life, but life unfolds infinite movements which are not possible for intellect to understand, appraise and evaluate.

Unless the psychic centre in man could be unearthed, and made active, the divinisation of life's movement could not be comprehended. When the psychicisation becomes complete, the direct touch is established with God; and man then moves consciously under the divine impulse. And this makes the ordinary adept so different from the dynamic spiritual characters. The latter do not see and enjoy the perspectives of life from distance. They can feel the divine touch and the control of life in its every movement. Such types of men become wonderfully introverted, because their indrawnness in self and their outdrawnness in active life are both the movements of divine life.

Ramakrishna was intensely active in radiating spiritual influence, because the spirit of God never left

him, and his influence and inspiration was so powerful because he drew them from the Divine Force. He was possessed by the spirit of Maha Kali which made him so vigilant about the movements of truer nature in man, which helped transformation of his being to make it a fit vehicle of expression for the Divine. His command over details of life and his spirit of creativeness showed the functioning of Maha Saraswati in Him. His surrender, the exquisite aroma of peace and harmony that he used to scatter showed that Maha Laxmi was equally active in him. In fact in the finest flowering of spiritual life these forces become spontaneously active, for they begin to function when the psychic nature in man opens itself up to the Divine.

Ramakrishna as a centre of dynamical spirituality was active, for the richness of spiritual life unfolds in the dynamic currents of the soul when one can enjoy the direct divine touch and move in the divine awakening of life. It is easy to reach transcendence in the process of ascent, but it is infinitely more difficult to saturate one's being with divine energy and make oneself the divine instrument on earth.

Every man in some way is the divine instrument, but he is unconscious of that, and therefore, he cannot be effective in that way. The direct descent of Divine Power must be consciously felt, for it is not the magnification of one's energy and power, which is sometimes the result of mystical life. It is really the feeling of the divine working. A man of genius has a natural talent of wonderful perception and fine constructive powers. The divine man is far above this, for it is not in the flowering of

faculties—which is of course the natural sequence of spiritual opening—but in the consciousness of the direct touch that the divinisation of life can be made possible. It is the installation of the Divine in all parts of our being. In the supreme fulfilment, the Divine influences and inspires every part of being. It is felt in our thought, contemplation and action. The sense of I is withdrawn and the Divine fills its place. This divine filling up of our being is what makes man the divine man.

It is difficult in all ages to understand such men, for they are so open in their lives and they see Truth so directly in them that it is not possible to fathom them completely. Truth is simple, and when it emerges out in the saying of great teachers, it becomes highly suggestive and potently significant and it takes sometimes centuries to understand their deeper implication in the terms of intellect. The parables of Christ have been the inspiration of the Idealistic philosophy in the West, the dialogues of Buddha have inspired sublime philosophy. Spiritual experiences and insights are dynamical and effective in every sphere of life. They inspire philosophy, they inspire action, they inspire life. The world has witnessed the effective force of creative spiritual personalities. The most silent and the most gentle are in the highest degree effective and inspiring. They reflect in them the future movement of civilisation for centuries.

Ramakrishna was such a man. He was great, but he was unconscious of his greatness. But the Divinity was shaping and moulding him in a way which made him a great radiating centre of spiritual influence. Spiritual influence can be better felt than under-

stood, and it scatters its power and influence in a way almost mysterious. But it is seen positively when the finest intellectual men are won over by their influence. Whatever they touch, becomes transparent; the ignorant become learned, the wise become sensible. Such is the majesty of the spiritual force. Ramakrishna gave enough evidence of this, because by his contact characters wonderfully changed. This transformation has been the secret of the influence of spiritual men, for they touch the central part of being and wake up a flame there which dispels doubts and establishes the divine connexion.

The greatness of a spiritual genius is to be measured by the capacity of infusing divine life in others and of waking up the sweetness of life in the struggling souls. Their superiority is there; they touch life direct, they elevate it from inertia and ignorance, and help to manifest its divine nature and beauty. The true spiritual genius, therefore, does not care to give any systematic thought, for his being is so rhythmical that he perceives eternal Truths directly and not through the mediation of thought. He dives deep into life and sympathetically inspires life. Ramakrishna thus used to inspire men by the touch of his highly strung soul. He used to give light that can never fade, life that can never lose its grace and beauty. He has not given a spiritual code, he has given a life that used to thrill men, that still thrills many to-day.

His work was to make divine life descend and establish itself on earth. The work has begun splendidly and let not the spirit of Ramakrishna be lost upon us. His mantle fell upon shoulders that are one by one passing away; but the spirit that was revealed

at Dakshineswar cannot be lost unless it has done its work completely—the saving of humanity from ignorance, suffering and miseries. Did not the Master chasten the disciple for his anxiety to pass into Nirvana by neglecting this suffering humanity?

Humanity to-day needs more than anything else the catholic spirit of Ramakrishna. The squabble between religion and religion, between race and race is to be dispelled before civilisation can be given a new orientation. Humanity is moving for a cosmic understanding and cosmic fellowship, and this cannot be seriously possible unless the inner man, which is the man of wisdom and faith, can appreciate the spiritual truths of all religions and the dynamic forces of all faiths. Ramakrishna helps this understanding by his example, and he goes down to posterity as the cementing truth of all credos. His intensive regard for all faiths and his direct realisation of their equal fruitfulness show the greatness of his genius, for he must have gone the whole length of spiritual realisation before he proclaimed the efficiency of different faiths. Every faith has two sides, the outer intellectual appeal and the inner dynamic appeal. The revelation through faith is almost the same everywhere. Faith really moves life to realise the direct touch of God and to get His impress upon one's being. And in this realisation two more things stand clearly prominent, the silence of the Divine Puissance and the movement of the Divine Power. Spiritual life is nothing if it is not this.

The work which Ramakrishna began still stands unfinished, and may we not hope that his spirit is still active in men to make them more catholic in life, more responsive to

the divine currents in life, and see and feel the Divine in the downtrodden and in the suffering humanity and to serve them and raise them up? Ramakrishna is an appeal for widening our being and making it sensitive to the Divine in every man, so that civilisation may be established upon the consciousness of the divinity of man. It will

indeed usher in a new civilisation if this truth of the divinity of man is more clearly realised in the light of the teachings of Ramakrishna. May the guardians of humanity send to it light enough to realise this immortal truth! The world needs to-day a Peace based upon this understanding. Ramakrishna gives us this peace.

## SEEING GOD

By Mrs. Gwyneth Foden

[Mrs. Foden is keenly interested in Indian thought and spiritual ideals. In her following appreciation of Sri Ramakrishna's message she draws pointed attention to his insistence on realisation as the essence of religion.]

**M**AN'S mission in life is to see God, perceive God, hear God, realise God,—through a struggle for divine oneness with the Lord and Master of the Universe, to attain a perfect spirituality, a perfect saintliness, a wisdom and a loveliness that shall transcend all material things, rendering them like dross in the alchemist's melting bowl. There will be limitations to the success we shall achieve, there will be set-backs, risks, disappointments, doubts, temptations, failures. We must weigh ourselves against them. Then will we be proud of our spiritual perfection.

We make allowances for different situations and different capacities. But that must not prevent our striving for the ultimate goal, the goal which will enable us to throw ourselves down at the feet of God, and whisper "At one with Thee, my God." Even those who fail are equal to the eye of sanctity. Everyone's road is different, each mortal awaits his moment—for he is the keeper of his own conscience. Many souls experience a sort of famine, a feeling of emptiness all

around. But where the spirit of God works, there are always two things found—conviction in the conscience and feeling of attraction in the heart. The latter is really the revelation of God to the soul, and God is light, and He is love. As light, He is conviction produced in the soul, but as love He is attraction of goodness. If we realise God, we feel the sweet odour of His presence. He manifests himself in a perfection which never belies itself. The love of God need not, like Human Society, protect itself from that which laid it too bare. It was ALWAYS ITSELF!

We discover from time to time a divine mine of touching, exquisite thoughts, a depth of truth, which reveals a soul in intimate communion with the infinite love and perfection of holiness. This applies to the life of Sri Ramakrishna—the holiness of his soul made opportunities for the manifestations of infinite love. Or, rather, it was the love of God, a love clothed with grace which, by its very humility, placed him within the reach

of all by his saintliness and God-consciousness. His life throws a divine light on MAN'S MISSION and MAN'S DESTINY. He renounced everything for the sake of God. In his spiritual quest, there poured forth a true humility and wisdom in a ceaseless stream which, as his life revealed itself, became a strong river of convincing truth—truth that dawned upon him as a conviction that all GODS ARE ONE GOD, in whatever form you worship Him; for He manifests himself in any form according to the wishes of the devotee. Men find the good they seek in the spirit of pure love. Show in your lives, he says, that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but it means spiritual realisation. Only those can understand who have felt; only those who have attained to spirituality, can communicate it to others, can be teachers of mankind. They alone are the power of light.

His language is beautiful because it is simple, fragrant; because it mirrors the mind of a saint who had no use for lies, for deceit, and chicanery, and would tell his message of God, wherever its inception might be. We hear that from daylight to nightfall, he was always engaged in ministering to the needs of hungry souls in quest of God—because he knew that the soul that walked with God, was not hard but submissive, and that there was no Spirit softer than it. God exercises the heart in all things, we are in His hands, His love is better than our will. Our conscience may be quite at ease while we are far from God, and unawakened. But the moment we are

in the presence of God, we see ourselves revealed in His light. The veil is off, and then God is seen and His word searches the thoughts and intents of the heart. God, the compassionate, the merciful, takes away our fears. Sri Ramakrishna felt that God was closer than our breathing. He said—WHEN THE ROSE IS BLOWN AND SHEDS ITS FRAGRANCE ALL AROUND, THE BEES COME OF THEMSELVES.

Sri Ramakrishna not only based his teachings on the philosophy of devotion, but considered the needs of men as a whole as other Hindu prophets had done before him by showing the various paths. Cry to God with a yearning heart, says Sri Ramakrishna—then you will see Him. The rosy light of dawn comes before the rising sun, likewise a longing and yearning heart is a sign of God-vision that comes after. The realisation of God's presence in one's heart was this saintly man's ideal. He saw God is everything, everywhere. He saw God in everyone.

His devotees accepted his teachings that all religions are equally true and lead ultimately to the same goal; and that all men are ultimately one in God and by ministering to their needs and responding to their call one is actually engaged in the worship of the Divine. First realise God, and all things shall be added unto you. Wisdom may be crusted over by ignorance, but it is never dead. It is always a bright light burning for us if we care to seek it, because the truth for each of us is our own soul; nothing is worth anything compared with that.

## THE NEED OF THE HOUR

By K. S. Venkataramani, M.A., B.L.

[Mr. Venkataramani is a well-known writer and thinker. His books like "The Paper Boats," "Murugan the Tiller," "Kandan the Patriot," etc., have gained a great reputation both in India and abroad. The vigour of his style and the sublimity of his thoughts always make his writings both instructive and inspiring. In the present article he seeks to discern the purpose of the 20th century and finds in the highest ideal of Dharma and Nishkamakarma the true remedy for the ills of modern life.]

**W**ORLD affairs are drifting to conflict and chaos. The self-complacency of the nineteenth century had been violently disturbed even in the first decade of the twentieth. The Russo-Japanese war threw the first bomb on the fancied axiomatic superiority of the West.

But the twentieth century itself for all its rapid material progress and many-sided activities has not yet discovered its centre of peace, the increasing purpose of the century. The saying that works suited for one generation get fossilised in the next always holds good. Therefore till the twentieth century discovers its own line of rhythmic action by a thoughtful process of selection its activities however intense and sincere will not go towards the common weal.

So the century has got to discover its own prophet and thus unfold its increasing purpose. These thirty-five years it has not succeeded in doing so. But to a thinker who has tried to crystallise and focus the several lines of progressive activities both in the East and the West, it is evident that the century is slowly aiming at an economic equality, a regulated but intense production of wealth and a just and equitable distribution of the same according to the needs of the individual or of the community. Coupled with this, we distinctly discern a deeper spirit charging this

idealism for the social well-being of man, the slow development of a consciousness higher than that of the mind which seeks to give a new impulse to the motives of human action. This emphasis or movement in the progressive spirit of man may be summed up as spiritual, in its ancient and most exalted sense, an outlook which recognises the unity in the variety and the variety in the unity, and thus harmonises in one splendid vision the eternal conflict between matter and spirit, self-expression and self-realisation. As an ideal it is old as the hills but the century aims at a closer realisation of the same.

Coming to details, what afflicts more the twentieth century may be classified into three primary ailments. (1) Activity or expression of human energy is not on selected or approved lines. It is now cumulative, confused, repetitive, wasteful and conflicting under modern conditions. Selection is the law of life, the aim of evolution. And this inner urge for purity which leads to all refinements and progress has been clean forgotten under modern conditions of political organisation and conception of individual freedom. (2) Too much of the human energy is used up for the purely negative and non-wealth producing services of Government. Roughly, mankind sweats three months a year for the privilege of being governed in the

twentieth century. (3) On the economic side there is a real chaos prevailing at the sources of production, poverty in the midst of plenty. This chaos is inherent in the capitalistic and competitive conditions of our modern industrial and agricultural life, and this chaos becomes really intensified because of the political system based on a narrow and insular conception of nationalism, frontiers that parcel out the one human family into several titbits. It divides our life, breaks a continuous stream into a hundred stagnant pools. All this leads to a thorough mal-distribution of wealth inherent in the mode of production; less wages to the real producer and more to the distributor, broker and middleman. This yawning gulf in monetary reward between skilled and unskilled labour when the common needs of man are almost the same is the primary source of modern misery.

We can emerge out of this state of competition and chaos only by a planned economy of life in all our spheres of activities, political, social and economic. Planned economy necessarily implies a rule of selection and a code of values based on certain definite and impersonal principles. This really amounts to the highest conception of Dharma, which has its essential foundations not on the selfish longings of man but on the selfless conception of a higher life, not on the fleeting but the permanent.

Therefore in the truest sense the need of the hour is also the need of

the eternal. Indian renaissance which owes its power largely to the release of energy of great saints and souls like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda clearly understands this. It will fulfil itself only if this great ideal of a spiritual outlook on life, which is based on Nishkamakarma, is kept in view. Whether you take the individual, the nation, or the whole world, as the unit for your judgment, you will eventually find that the individual is the pivot. So no collective organisation which forgets the refinement of the individual will keep its vitality a long time. This has always been remembered, perhaps a little too much, in Indian History. But the most beneficent organisation is that which keeps the primary need of the individual in view and helps his development by giving him a suitable organisation—that which strikes the golden mean where the system helps the individual, and the individual blesses the system by his purity. The highest aim of evolution through the manifold channels of human activities is the gradual elimination of the Asuric type which acts for its own selfish pleasure, leading to the emergence of the divine type as outlined in the Gita. And one definite step in the emergence, in the long ladder of evolution, is the increasing purpose of the twentieth century. With courage and love we wait for the leadership. The caravan waits on the desert sand for yet another dawn.

## A FRENCH PILGRIM'S OFFERING TO SRI RAMAKRISHNA

(Jiva is Siva or the Living Being is God)

By Romain Rolland

[In the following paragraphs laid as an offering at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna on the occasion of his Birth-Centenary, the great French thinker places before us in brief the central message of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings from a point of view that is both positivistic and spiritual. To those who confound spirituality with barren other-worldliness, this article will be an eye-opener.]

IT IS related that when Sri Ramakrishna, in the first days following his great ecstasy, in the state of oneness with Brahman—and this was after Totapuri's departure—allowed his consciousness to return to earth, he saw two boatmen quarrelling in hatred. And because of this hatred, as from a wound, his heart was bleeding; and he screamed; the sufferings of the universe were torturing him. For all the pains of the world were imprinting themselves into the tender flesh of his reawaking consciousness.

What would he have felt, what would he have suffered, in these days of the present world, when the whole humanity seems given up to hatred, when war rages or smoulders everywhere under the ashes, between nations, between races, between classes!

But the mighty Swan (Paramahansa) had wings that enabled him to hover above life. If he did not try to detach himself from life, as so many mystics do, to avoid its sufferings, it is because universal love, which was to him a second sight, revealed to him, in a flash, in the presence of human misery, that "Jiva is Siva,"—that the living being is God,—that whoever loves God must unite himself with him in sufferings,

in misery, even in errors and excesses, in the terrible aspect of human nature.

We all know that he took away his great disciple Vivekananda from the fascination of the fathomless God in order to force him into the service of men.—And that is what you, following his example, have been able to accomplish, you whose monastic Ramakrishna Mission, like your emblem, the swan, covers the unhappy with its wings and helps them as brothers. You have carried out the pregnant saying of your Master: "If you want peace of mind, serve others... If you wish to find God, serve man!..."

The enfeeblement and the ruin of so many religions lies in the fact that they have forgotten this saying. They have forgotten man. And man, in his turn, forgets them. He has learned to help himself without God, (as one of our European artists, and one of the most religious too, Beethoven, proclaimed when he said to those who called upon God for help, "O man, help thyself..."). He has even learnt to help himself against God,—whom he identifies with those Churches which, too often, stand against the mass of the oppressed as the courtesans or the handmaids of power. Has not the Catholic Church, the most powerful of these Churches

in Europe, laid down the cynical rule of ranging itself on the side of any power that has victory, provided only that it respects the church privileges? Thus they associate themselves with the injustice set up by force. The churches should not then wonder that oppressed peoples in their revolt against unjust force, associate the former with the force from which they want to liberate themselves. Although not conscious of it, those seething peoples, even when they believe themselves to be without God or against God, are nevertheless, to be regarded as the living God, while in their fight for justice, in their ascent towards light. "Jiva is Siva" ... And we ought to recognise this truth.

We live in a world turned upside down. And, indeed, the masses have always been downtrodden. But they had not, up to this day, the knowledge and the consciousness of that universal oppression, which has been revealed to them by the increased means of communications and the progress of international solidarity. We may no longer remain indifferent to those people who are today making a desperate effort to break their chains and set up a more equitable and more human order. And this is no longer permissible especially to us, your friends in the Occident who do not happen to possess like you the faith in survivals (lives after death). Time is pressing us. The wave of men's sufferings is drowning us, like a tide. We must fly to their help. Even if we had before us the eternity of "lives after death", each one of these lives is a "living thing" which has its own duties and its laws corresponding to the particular time of its birth and the human surroundings in which it has its course. Each single life is

neither permitted to leave undone all the present good it is capable of doing nor to decline to fight, with its total might of to-day, all the iniquities of the time being. The Ramakrishnite of the West that I am, I do not admit that for one's own salvation, one should withdraw from action, when it is urgent to act in order to help the oppressed. I remember the holy anger of the great disciple when he exclaimed to one of his brethren who was endeavouring to avoid the tragedy of the present world in order to betake himself to the sweetness of divine contemplation: "Put off to the next life the reading of the Vedanta, the practice of meditation. Let this body of today be consecrated to the service of others!"

And this immortal prayer:

"Would that I could be born and reborn again and suffer a thousand miseries, provided I might adore and serve the only God that exists, the sumtotal of all souls, and, above all, my God the evil-doers, my God the unfortunates, my God the poor of all races!"

Oh! what an error, too common among religious God-lovers, to think that their love diminishes and that their soul is lowered in value on account of intercourse with men. On the contrary, it expands and is revived because of embracing the whole and entire Being, the innumerable Being, with its million forms ever in motion, ever advancing as they are, like a Ganges.

Doing thus, you will serve, by being wedded to it, each one of the forms of the living God; but without ever losing the feeling and the very presence of the all-powerful Unity, wherein these conflicting million forms find harmony. It is not doing a

wrong to the unchanging Divine Peace that hovers over the storms of Existence, if one holds out a hand to those who struggle in those storms. Vivekananda did not cease repeating to his Sannyasis that they had taken two vows, and that, if the first was "to realise the truth," the second was "to help the world" . . . "To help men to stand erect by themselves . . ." Let us help them, then, those peoples who, "by themselves and alone," heroically try "to stand erect!" Let us co-operate in their efforts! Even in this manner it will be possible for us afterwards to co-operate in the harmony of warring forces.

You are the bearers, in this storm-tossed world, of the Supreme Harmony wherein must blend and melt away all combats and opposite efforts. It is your proper role, your privilege, and your sacred duty, to radiate peace, order and unity in the chaos in which peoples are blindly at odds with one another. Be, like Sri Ramakrishna, the wide-spreading banyan tree in whose shade thousands of souls, weary and wounded in the fight, come for shelter and peace. Pour on them the balm of reconciliation, which is the fruit of reason, no less than of love. We know well that the most

wicked are but misguided. They know not what they do. The greatest leader of the liberated peoples, Lenin of the U.S.S.R., victim of a dastardly outrage, calmed the vengeance of his friends by telling them, with his intelligent smile, "What's to be done? Every one acts according to his knowledge."

The misfortune of the world comes from its want of knowledge. Let us then teach it to know. Let us enlighten it,—by preventing it from doing harm,—from harming itself. For he who harms his neighbour, does not know that it is himself whom he is harming. Another of our great men of Europe, the inspired poet Victor Hugo, speaking of those who wanted to harm him, uttered these beautiful words, so allied to the wisdom of India: "Oh! fool, who thinkest that thou art not I . . ."

It is the supreme miracle of Ramakrishna that in him "thou" is "I," that the whole world is not only reflected but incarnate in a man's heart,—that God is realised on earth, in his universality and his multiplicity . . . "Jiva is Siva" . . .

And Ramakrishna works in him—in us—this Divine Identity.

## PRACTICAL RELIGION

By Har Dayal, M.A., Ph.D.

[Dr. Har Dayal, author and lecturer, is a graduate of the Punjab University and the University of London. His published works include the well-known books: "The Bodhisattva Doctrine" (Kegan Paul) and "Hints for Self-culture" (Watts). He is a member of P.E.N., and also Hon. Director of Modern Culture Institute, Edgware, England. His pointed insistence on the function of true religion as consisting in social and cultural upliftment of man is symptomatic of the times—symptomatic that thinking men today are no longer satisfied with religions whose stronghold lies in post-mortem promises. But we feel it necessary to state that true religion has a distinctive function and an ideal of its own besides what it shares in common with humanism and socialism. For while it is no doubt helpful to the just and harmonious ordering of man's life in this world, both socially

and individually, it has also a world-transcending aspect which constitutes its distinctive spiritual content. The good life, understood in the secularist sense, is for it only a means to an end. If this non-worldly ((not other worldly) ideal encompassed by religion is lost sight of, there is nothing to distinguish it from the secularism of the Bolshevik State. But it must be emphasised that even the world-transcending ideal of religion, at least as Vedanta understands it, is not post-mortem, but positivistic in conception; for Jivanmuktahood (liberation in life), which constitutes the end of Vedantic discipline, is realisable even in this life and not in an after-life. This Vedantic ideal is the necessary spiritual complement of Dr. Har Dayal's pragmatic views on religion.]

I AM not interested in "religion" if that word denotes only a system or a theory for the attainment of bliss in Heaven after death or a happy re-birth or the ultimate liberation of spirit from matter. Such post-mortem dogmas do not appeal to me. I am also not keen on any philosophy or religion that only emphasises the duty of escaping from this changing world of sin, sorrow and struggle into a remote realm of eternal values. I judge every religious and philosophical system by the pragmatic test. "Does it help men and women to develop their personality?" "Does it make them healthier, richer, stronger, wiser and nobler?" "Does it produce just and enlightened citizens?" "Does it improve human life on earth in its material, cultural, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual aspects?" If it does not seem to do us any good here, then it is not likely to do us much good hereafter whatever its claims and pretensions may be. Reactionary or sterile religion must be rejected and discarded, but progressive and fruitful religion should be fostered and developed.

These are certain tests that should be applied to every religion or philosophy that is offered for our acceptance. The Vedanta too, must justify itself by its contribution to civilisation and human welfare, not by its theoretical metaphysics, which is admittedly meant only for monks and nuns. But there are several

million ordinary house-holders to one monk or nun in the world. If Vedanta does not assist the average man in the street, it is not of much value, whatever it may teach him for the salvation of his soul after many rebirths. We must be healthy, prosperous, well-educated and virtuous citizens before we can talk of "realising Brahman," etc.

Now all modern teachers,—Vedantists, Buddhists, Bahais, Theosophists, and others,—must declare for the unity of Mankind and condemn the caste-systems and class-systems that disfigure human society everywhere. "Brahman" or "God" or "Nature" knows nothing of lord and serf, Brahmin and Pariah, Sheikh and slave, master and servant. The unity of Mankind must be the fundamental tenet of practical religion in all its forms.

Unity implies equality. Equality is the very basis of all true ethics. We hear much of brotherhood and fraternity, but we sometimes forget that fraternity is meaningless without equality. Economic and political equality is indispensable for the maintenance of the spirit of brotherly love among the citizens. If some are rich and others are poor, there can be no genuine sympathy between the two classes. Some preachers speak learnedly on "Brahman" and "Atman" and "God" and "Dharma," but neglect the question of economic and political equality. They are

cowardly hypocrites and chatterboxes masquerading as "spiritual" guides. "Spirituality" without human equality is sheer humbug.

Equality of physical education and intellectual culture is also a necessary condition of social peace and development. Every true and useful religion must teach us the laws of hygiene and also inspire us to work for a better social environment. Vedanta or any other philosophy cannot be understood and realised by weak and sickly persons, and it cannot flourish in slums and dingy tenements. Religion must free us from disease and dirt, otherwise it is only a treacherous will-o'-the-wisp. It should also confer upon us the great boons of sound education and all-round mental culture. If a preacher is good and unselfish, but lacks knowledge and culture, then he is only a holy animal. Ignorant and saintly men have done much mischief in the history of the human race. True religion must be the ally of scholarship, research, adult education, and every form of intellectual activity. It must dispel the

darkness of Avidya, which produces superstition, frivolity and misery.

Practical religion must teach a noble and sound philosophy of the State, as Confucius, Plato and Aristotle attempted to do. The State is a fundamental institution of the greatest importance. This is a truism, but some "profound" metaphysicians talk only of the salvation of the individual soul, while they omit or under-estimate the claims of good citizenship. I believe that the citizens of a despotic, disorderly, corrupt or inefficient State cannot practise "spirituality" to any appreciable extent. True Vedanta, like all true religion, can flourish only in a democratic and free State, in which the people enjoy a very large measure of economic, political and cultural equality.

Thus the spiritual power that the example of Sri Ramakrishna bestows upon us should be utilised for the promotion of ethics, democracy, education, hygiene, economic reforms and social equality. This is practical religion for all.

## LOVE—THE CONQUERING PRINCIPLE

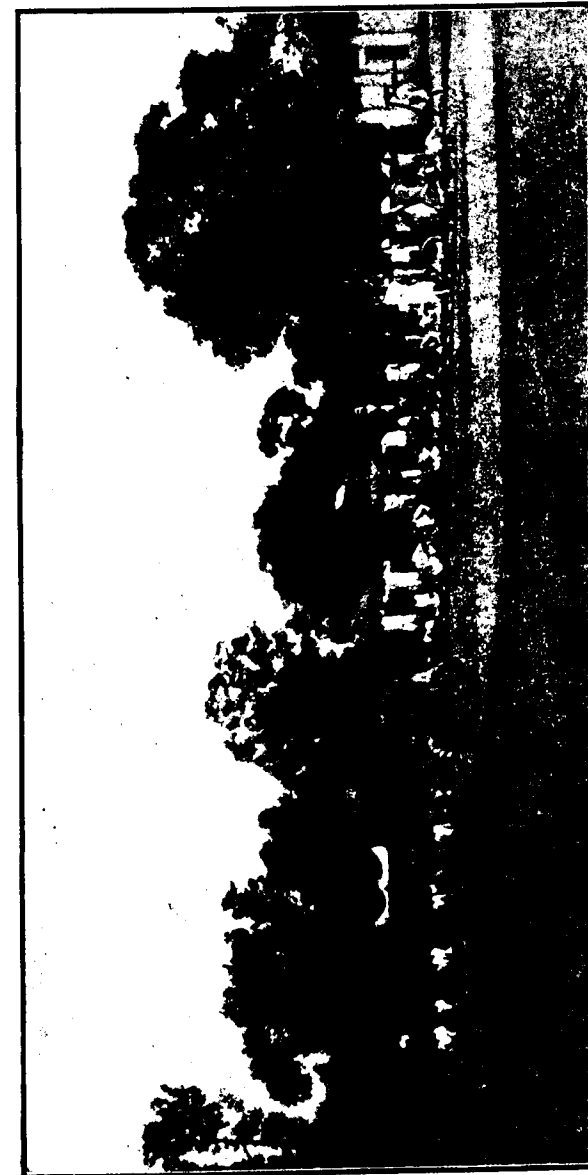
*By Hy. S. L. Polak*

[Mr. Polak is well-known to Indians as a great friend and helper of Mahatma Gandhi in his South African struggle. He is also a sympathiser of the Vedanta movement in England and is on the committee for the celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's Birth-Centenary in that country. In this brief appreciation of Sri Ramakrishna he points out how his message is urgently needed by the world to-day.]

**L**OOKING around the world to-day, with lesser men arrogating sole power to themselves, as though they were semi-divinities, and persuading vast masses of men that violence of thought, speech, and act is the true law of life, it is good to turn to those

great leaders and teachers who have sought in another direction than that of hate and force for the ultimate explanation of man's existence.

When the Buddha taught the Law and Jesus taught love, they both sought and found a doctrine that brought Peace for mankind. If, there-



Boys of the Vidyapith taking exercise



Open air Bhajana, Vidyapith, Deoghar

fore we have not ourselves found it, the explanation must be that we have not sought deeply and earnestly enough—that we have not learnt the Law or the meaning of love.

We have developed a wonderful technique of differentiation and distinction, and have lost sight of the concept of totality and universality. We have built up divisions and partitions, and if, at times, we have had a larger vision and have tried to lower or pull down the partitions, it has only been to emphasise new divisions and so raise new partitions.

Probably man will never be a wholly reasoning being. At least, let us hope so. But the fact that he is, for the most part, unreasonable, would have utterly destroyed him long since, had it not been that he contains within himself an integrating principle more powerful still than the disruptive forces of unreason, which fails to discern in life a law of cause and effect.

What that integrating principle is the seers, the mystics, and the prophets have all agreed upon, though they may have expressed themselves in language differing in terminology.

Ramakrishna, the Paramahansa, is one of those great ones, simple in his origin and his life, who observed and made his own this single integrating principle, and he called it Love. It was, as he saw it, all-embracing, universal, both static and dynamic, of Divine origin but fundamental to human purpose, and eternal. His example and his teaching were such as to draw to him the allegiance of so great a personality as Swami Vivekananda, who, with a unique eloquence, made his message known in the Western world, which is still wondering whether it has not, after all, mistaken its path, and whether the ancient teaching of Love and Peace might not be given a positive and a practical trial.

No more important celebration could be held, at this moment, than the centenary of this great teacher who came to restore a living faith in an ancient and timeless doctrine. It is to be hoped that, when men so badly need encouragement and renewed belief in themselves and their purpose, this centennial celebration will help to pour new energy into the channels of life.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA AS I UNDERSTAND HIM

*By Sir P.S. Sivaswami Aiyer, K.C.S.I.*

[Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer, K.C.S.I., is a noted lawyer, thinker and publicist of modern India. We are very glad to publish on this occasion his learned article on Sri Ramakrishna, giving a terse and effective account of what impresses him in the Master's personality and message against a background of India's cultural and spiritual traditions of the past.]

I HAVE been requested by the editor of the *Vedanta Kesari* to contribute to the special number of the magazine to be published in connection with the approaching centenary of Ramakrishna Paramahansa an article bearing on the life and

personality of Sri Ramakrishna. It is with great hesitation that I comply with this request, as I never had the good fortune to meet the great saint in life. Another handicap under which I labour is the very slight acquaintance I possess with the litera-

ture that has grown up around the personality of Sri Ramakrishna. Such knowledge as I possess is derived from Max Muller's "Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna" and from Romain Rolland's "Life of Ramakrishna." Both these works were largely based upon the accounts furnished to the authors by the disciples and admirers of the saint. While M. Rolland's work is inspired by a spirit of greater sympathy and understanding, the former claims to be critical and is written in a spirit of detachment by an eminent Sanskrit scholar who devoted his life to the task of making the sacred literature of the East accessible to the English world. Though strongly imbued with a natural conviction of the superiority of his own religion, Prof. Max Muller strove conscientiously to understand the spirit of Hinduism. The study of these two works, written as they are from somewhat divergent points of view and with differing mental attitudes, is helpful to an appreciation of the life and character of Sri Ramakrishna. I propose in this article to refer to those aspects of the life and personality of Sri Ramakrishna with which I have been impressed.

What was the secret of the great influence which was exercised by Sri Ramakrishna not merely upon his disciples, but upon the many educated men who came in contact with him, an influence which has endured even after his life and is still a living force, moulding the lives not merely of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission, but of a large number of others outside this circle? That Sri Ramakrishna was an ascetic or Sannyasin would not be enough to account for his influence, though a life of renunciation and austerity makes a great

appeal to the Hindu mind. There are many Sannyasins of learning and austere lives in India, but they have not exercised the same influence as Sri Ramakrishna who was an illiterate, poor Brahman priest without any knowledge of Sanskrit or English and without the advantage of a formal education in the sacred literature of India or its Sastras. Ramakrishna was a great Bhakta or devotee. But there are many in this country who have led a life of true religious devotion without commanding a tithe of the influence exercised by Sri Ramakrishna. Literacy and formal education are not essential to the achievement of greatness. The great Akbar, one of the greatest emperors whom India has known, is said to have been illiterate. That a man of humble origin without any claims to literacy or education should have cast a spell over the minds of all who came in contact with him and exercised an abiding influence upon all his hearers and even upon those who have only a second-hand knowledge of his teaching shows that there must have been something extraordinary about his personality and teaching. He owed his influence to a combination of spiritual gifts and traits of character. The singular charm of his disposition, the purity and simplicity of his life, his love for all his fellow-beings, his sympathetic understanding of the capacities, limitations and needs of others, his wonderful intuition and his personal magnetism contributed to it. The sayings recorded by his disciples reveal powers of shrewd observation, acute insight into human nature and deep spiritual wisdom, and withal an abundance of common sense and knowledge of the world not always to be found in men

whose lives are absorbed in religious meditation. His sayings and parables are full of telling and homely illustrations and can stand comparison with those attributed to the founders of other great religions. One is struck with a note of modernity in these sayings of Sri Ramakrishna which is undoubtedly due to the fact that he lived in the nineteenth century, and instead of leading a life of monkish seclusion, was accessible to all classes of people and mixed freely with them, endeavouring to understand their needs and aspirations and help them, whenever needed, by his advice and guidance. He lived in the world, though he was not of it. It is said that he had a wonderful gift of comprehension of the character of those who came to see him. He was willing to learn from anyone and everyone and from the exponent of every creed. A devout and unflinching searcher after truth, he strove his best to learn whatever was of value in the teachings of Christianity, Islam and other alien creeds. He mixed readily with the members of reforming sects of Hinduism like the Brahma Samaj. But his anxious study of other creeds and sects furnished no reason for a change in his own beliefs. He was a Hindu to the marrow of his bones and was deeply imbued with the spirit of the Hindu religion and philosophy. His catholicity of mind, his readiness to appreciate whatever was good in other religions and his spirit of toleration for other faiths are characteristics not often found in men of ardent religious faith outside the pale of Hinduism. He hated disputation and polemics and he won his disciples not by the Socratic method of argumentation, but by his love and sympathy, by the example of his pious

and holy life and his enthusiasm for the service of mankind. His was the spirit in which Hinduism and Buddhism, the great religions of Eastern Asia, secured their adherents and spread through the East. An aggressive and militant missionary spirit is the characteristic of the two great Semitic religions of Christianity and Islam. There have been occasions in the past when Hindu religious leaders have been actuated by a spirit of militancy. But this has generally been displayed in internecine disputes with rival sects rather than in attempts to convert followers of alien systems. The method which has generally found favour with Hindu missionaries in other lands has consisted in preaching the truths of their own religion and not in the persecution or vilification of other religions. Peaceful penetration has been the method usually adopted by the Eastern faiths.

One of the essential tenets of Sri Ramakrishna was that the fundamental truths of all religions are the same. It is this belief that accounts for his aversion to all forms of religious controversy, let alone acrimonious controversy. He believed in every man adhering to his own creed and was ready to grant to others the same liberty that he claimed for himself of following the Hindu religion.

I may now turn to the question of the contribution of Ramakrishna Paramahansa to the spiritual thought and uplift to mankind. As he was the founder of no new religion, so was he the founder of no new system of philosophy. He believed in the Advaita philosophy and he saw God everywhere in the universe. The doctrine of the immanence of God in the universe has not been acceptable

to Christianity. The chief difficulty felt by the followers of Christianity in accepting this view is in accounting for the origin of evil and in reconciling it with the doctrine of moral responsibility. On the other hand, those who deny the doctrine do not perceive the incompatibility of their view with the omnipotence and the omnipresence of the Supreme Being. To the Hindu mind it is a blasphemy to suggest limitations upon the power of the Almighty or His omnipresence, such as are implied in dualistic beliefs. But whatever may be the ultimate truth in the field of metaphysics, Hinduism has experienced no practical difficulty in reconciling its ethics and metaphysics. Sri Ramakrishna's own life furnishes a proof of the compatibility of the Advaita philosophy with an intensely devout and moral life.

The philosophy especially of the ascetics is often of a harsh, rigid and unbending type. Sri Ramakrishna did not believe in the suitability or propriety of renunciation as a rule of conduct for all and sundry. He recognised the claims of society upon the individual and did not encourage the neglect of the duties owed to society or the family. He shaped his advice to meet the needs of the different capacities, dispositions and stages of spiritual development of those who sought his guidance. He advised Keshub Chunder Sen not to abandon the world and told him that it mattered little whether he lived in the family or in the world so long as he did not lose contact with God. He perceived that the special mission of Vivekananda was to be a torch-bearer of truth and he advised him to disseminate the truths of Hindu religion, instead of adopting a life of seclusion

and Samadhi. It is a mistake to suppose that Hinduism inculcates a life of renunciation as the rule and aim of life for all persons. The Smritis declare that men are born with obligations to society which have to be discharged by the performance of various duties in the world. The precept that men should forsake all duties or Dharma and seek the Lord for salvation which is laid down in the Gita as well as the Bible has often been misunderstood and interpreted as justifying the renunciation of our duties to the world. The misunderstanding is due to our tendency to extract universal rules from the sayings of the religious leaders. We cannot expect the great religious leaders to be as circumspect in their utterances as the writers of systematic treatises, and to frame their precepts with the meticulous precision of a legislator. The founders of great religions have seldom been systematic thinkers or writers. The great function of the spiritual leaders of mankind is rather to guide the spiritual development of humanity by the example of their holy lives and to be a source and fountain of inspiration to a life of righteousness and selfless service to humanity.

What was the contribution of Ramakrishna Paramahansa to religious thought? Neither the teaching of Ramakrishna Paramahansa nor, for the matter of that, of other great religious teachers can claim absolute originality. The thoughts and ideas of the great religious leaders are generally the product of the culture of the age in which they live and of the ideas of the thinkers who have preceded them. The Advaita philosophy and the Bhakti cult in which Sri Ramakrishna believed have been

known to Hinduism for ages. The question would be legitimate in the case of scientists and others who work in fields where it is possible to add to the body of existing knowledge. But the fundamental problems of religion have engaged the attention of mankind from time immemorial and there is little that can be claimed as original in the teachings of any sage or prophet. They lay stress upon ideas and principles which men seem to be in danger of forgetting in the times in which they live. Their main function in life is to re-vivify mankind whenever it is in danger of forgetting its spirituality and the higher ends of life, and to infuse fresh faith and courage in men's minds in their struggles for spiritual advancement and for the uplift of humanity.

Sri Ramakrishna was a mystic and often practised Samadhi. That concentrated meditation on the Supreme Being may lead to some kind of spiritual communion with the Deity may be granted. But how far the experiences of men in a state of Samadhi can be regarded as vouching the ultimate reality is a matter upon which one may well entertain doubts. It would be difficult to distinguish the experiences of the mystics from those of hallucination.<sup>1</sup> For instance, I find great difficulty in accepting the

1. We wish to point out that we are not in agreement with the views expressed in the last paragraph regarding the ultimate reality of the experiences of men in a state of Samadhi. It is true that a flawless metaphysical criterion to distinguish hallucination from mystic experience cannot be given. But from the strictly theoretical point of view the same difficulty appears in distinguishing dream from waking or the common illusions of life from what are called its brute realities. Thus the problem of illusion comes up for discussion in all systems of philosophy,

account on page 250 of Rolland's "Life of Ramakrishna" as veridical. Sri Ramakrishna's account that during a Samadhi he entered the transcendental realm and saw the seven Rishis in Samadhi and that the luminous ether condensed itself into a child which declared its intention to incarnate itself on earth as Vivekananda admits of a perfectly natural explanation<sup>2</sup>

both Eastern and Western, and has never found anywhere a solution that can satisfy an acute critic. From the practical point of view, however, every one accepts the reality of experiences that are effective in life. This is the only test practicable with regard to mystic experience too, and we accordingly distinguish the fancies of a maniac from the experiences of the mystic and classify the latter as fundamentally related to the structure of reality by observing their *life-enhancing* value.—Editors.

2. Regarding the specific experience of Sri Ramakrishna mentioned in the article, the child referred to is Sri Ramakrishna himself, and what comes down to be incarnated as Swami Vivekananda is a part of the body and mind of one of the sages. This was the explanation given by Sri Ramakrishna himself about the experience. For a detailed account the reader may refer to page 250 of Romain Rolland's life of Ramakrishna and page 438 of the Mayavati publication entitled "Life of Sri Ramakrishna." The modern study of psychic phenomena like telepathy, thought-reading, pre-vision, psychometry, etc., by the Society for Psychical Research, among whose members are some eminent scientists like Sir Oliver Lodge and Hans Driesch, has proved that the so-called objective facts can be known super-normally, i.e., without the use of the senses or the reasoning faculty. When the modern scientific world is thus tending to recognise the capacity of even ordinary mediums to gain knowledge of facts in super-normal ways, why should we deny heightened powers of this type to spiritual men whose psychic being has been purified and sensitised by divine contemplation and arduous mental disciplines?—Editors.

honorary member of the Hindustan Association of America, and I have met a fair number of young Indians—students and businessmen—in my country. I get the impression that a considerable proportion of them have put off their religion as they have put off their Indian dress. Many of us in the West have been

brought up to believe that India is the stronghold of religion. I hope it is, but I am not so sure of its strength as I should like to be. Hence my gratitude to Ramakrishna, and my earnest hope that the Order which grew out of his flaming soul may communicate his spirit to more and more of his fellow countrymen.

## THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By Prof. P. N. Srinivasachariar, M.A.

[Mr. P. N. Srinivasachariar is the Principal and Professor of Philosophy in Pachaiyappa's College, the premier Hindu educational institution in the Madras Presidency. As an educationist and philosopher, the professor has an all-India reputation, and his two well-known books *Ramanuja's Idea of the Finite Self* and *Bheda-bheda* are read by every serious student of Indian Philosophy. He has been connected with the Ramakrishna movement from its very inception in Madras, and is one of the few persons in academic circles who have made a deep study of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. Equipped with a life-long study of Eastern and Western Philosophy and endowed with the deep Hindu piety of a Vaishnava, the professor sheds much light on a difficult subject in the following survey of Sri Ramakrishna's religious experiences.]

THE inner history of the world process, especially in its critical periods, is a witness to the continuous revelation of the workings of God in humanity through the instrumentality of its saints and prophets. The spiritual hunger of the modern mind cannot be appeased by rigid dogmatism and ritualism but only by a living realisation of God verified by the pragmatic test of intellectual enlightenment and solicitude for the welfare of humanity. The advent of Sri Ramakrishna is therefore not a mere accident but marks a significant epoch in the history of religious realisation and inter-religious understanding. The supernatural happenings recorded in his life like incarnational birth and the gift of Siddhis or psychic powers cannot be dismissed as the result of the 'dialogic process' incidental to such biographies. On the other hand these facts of his life

together with his spiritual adventures and intuitive realisations of God have a unique value to the student of comparative religion and mysticism. The integral experience of the Infinite carries with it its own irrefutable certainty and authority. The only adequate proof of the existence of God is the experience of Him, and Sri Ramakrishna with his genius for God attained a transcendental and incommensurable divine consciousness.

The intense religious practice of Sri Ramakrishna was not a Yogic Sadhana in its conventional sense but a spiritual storm that raged over his whole being and swept away all trace of sensuality and sin. Yoga is not only a self-training but also a trust in the saving grace of God. It is not a mere psychological or ethical method of self-salvation but a religious aspiration for the re-union between the self and God or Twam and

Tat. Yoga in all its aspects involves the three factors of self-renouncement (Vairagya), self-knowledge and the attainment of the unitive consciousness. The first is the negative method of self-stripping or separating the self or Aham from its semblance of Ahamkara (egoism) functioning mainly through the acquisitive and the sexual instincts represented in Sri Ramakrishna's sayings as Kanchana and Kamini. To get rid of the former Sri Ramakrishna would take a clod of earth in one hand and coin in the other and consign both to the Ganges. When once money was offered to him he felt as if somebody was sawing through his skull. The sexual instinct was rooted out by the deification of woman. The worship of every woman as the image of the Divine Mother was consummated in the Tantric ceremony known as the Shodashi Puja in which Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, who was both his wedded wife and nun-disciple in one, became the Deity and he himself took the place of the devoted worshipper. In the process of worship both were absorbed in deep Samadhi in which the Goddess and the worshipper were united in the transcendental unity of the Self.

In the second stage known as introversion the tumult of the senses is silenced and the self separates itself from its physical semblances and gravitates towards God. The practice of introversion at Panchavati in the Dakshineswar Temple was so intense that Sri Ramakrishna lost all caste and body consciousness. The hair was matted and birds would perch on the head; snakes would crawl over the motionless body and there was no wink of sleep for six years. The methodic practice of Yoga was

then transfigured into a restless yearning of the Mumukshu (seeker after liberation). The human instincts were sublimated and transformed into the instinct for the Infinite. This organic craving for God is the supreme condition or consequence of mystic consciousness, though it may be brought about by Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Jnana Yoga. Though the starting point may be psychologically accounted for, the goal is ultimately the same, viz., the realisation of God and the communication of Godliness to others.

Ramakrishna, the priest of Kali at Dakshineswar, was soon possessed by the irrepressible yearning to see Her. His faith turned into a frenzy and ceaseless outpourings of love which expressed itself in tears, tremors and trances. Owing to the rush of blood caused by excessive emotion his face and chest were flushed. In his desperation he one day seized a sword in the temple and was about to put an end to his life when he had a direct vision of the radiant form of the Mother, and his being was swallowed up in ecstasy. Religious faith was thus transformed into a soul-sight of God.

Superconsciousness is attributed by the medical materialists, who regard matter as the mother of the Universe, to the psycho-physical disorders of a highly wrought and hysterical temperament and also to auto-suggestion or self-hypnotisation. Extremes seem to meet but they are really poles apart, and God-consciousness is radically different from nature mysticism and psychic semblances and is easily recognised by its pragmatic expression in the form of intellectual illumination and beneficent service to humanity. The supra-rational is opposed to the irrational but is the fulfilment of the rational.

The frequent visions and voices that Sri Ramakrishna experienced were only the intimations of super-conscious Samadhi and not Samadhi itself. The occurrence of such phenomena may be the psychological concomitant of Yogic Sadhana, but are not essential to religious experience. They are mostly the expressions of the soul-sight, of the shock of supreme illumination, in terms of the purified contents and cultural patterns of the mystic's subconscious mind. The natural explanations which psychologists offer of such occurrences do not in any way invalidate the fact of spiritual experience.

Raja Yoga aims at the liberation of the infinite spirituality of Kundalini coiled up at the lowest extremity of the spinal column. When it is aroused, it mounts up with a tingling sensation to the Sahasrara or the state of superconsciousness. Sri Ramakrishna experienced the rising of the Kundalini in five ways, namely, the ant-like motion, the frog-like motion, the serpentine motion, the bird-like motion and the monkey-like motion. The Sahasrara is from the Advaitic point of view the seventh plane of expansive consciousness in which consciousness remains without its relativity. The sixth centre is that of the Personal God, and the Personal is ultimately self-transcended. The acquisition of supernatural psychic powers or Siddhis invariably accompanies Yogic developments but it is not essential to the Mumukshu (seeker after liberation). Sri Ramakrishna therefore rejected these powers given to him by the Mother.

The Tantric Sadhana in its highest forms is a grand synthesis of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Gnana. In some of its adaptations it inculcates prac-

tices which consist in transcending sensibility by fulfilling its demands but such a fulfilment often deteriorates into voluptuous license. Sri Ramakrishna who was the very pattern of Sattvic virtue practised only the Sattvic aspect of it, known as Divya Bhava which insists on absolute self-control and purity.

Bhakti Yoga is interested not in the dialectic analysis of the self-contradictions of relational thought but in the relation between the self and God which deepens into mutual longing and self-loss in the love of the 'other'. Bhakti has its own logic; it overcomes the idea that the self and God are mutually exclusive centres existing in their own solid singleness. The real omnipotence of God consists in His all-compelling love and eternal giving of Himself, and 'the most intense self-effacing love ministers to the intensity of the double fruition.' The Bhakta does not bargain with God; he seeks God only and not his gifts. Sri Ramakrishna was a second Chaitanya in his divine fervour which was disciplined into the varieties of Vaishnavite experience by the initiations he received from Bhairavi Brahmani and other Gurus (teachers) of the path of Bhakti (devotion). Bhakti is a ladder of love in the ascending order of divine intimacy known as Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura, and each stage has its own specific feeling tone or Rasa. Santa results from introversion and concentration on the inner quiet of Kaivalya or 'aloneness' but it should not lapse into quietism. The Dasya Bhava is absolute submission to the will of God as of an ideal servant to his master, and is typified in the love of Hanuman to Rama. With his usual thorough-

ness Sri Ramakrishna so identified himself with Hanuman in the practice of this Bhava that there was an enlargement of the coccyx. The idea of God as the Holy inspires reverence and not inner unity. True Bhakti is not, however, consciousness of the two wills but their confluence or union in one Spirit. The Sakhya Bhava is the fellowship with God resulting in the consciousness of divine accessibility. The Vatsalya form is the motherly tenderness and solicitude of Kousalya for Ramlala or of Yasoda for Sri Krishna. The Madhura Bhava perfected in the Maha Bhava is the fulfilment of the other Bhavas. It is a spiritual marriage in which the soul is caught up in the flame of love and inwardly embraced. Love develops into Rati and deepens into Prema or the intense longing of Radha for Krishna, the beautiful and blissful "Divine Dark," which burnt itself into Sri Ramakrishna's heart.

The agony of separation had its bodily expression in the suspension of the functioning of the senses and the oozing out of minute drops of blood from the pores of the skin. The Lord of love likewise longs for His 'other', and their separateness expires in the immortal ecstasy of communion.

To verify the truths of Islam and Christianity he identified himself with their followers and had a vision of Mahomed and of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jnana Yoga is a philosophic method of self-analysis and the withdrawal of consciousness from the subject-object relation to the transcendental state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This retreat from the surface to the centre is not a process of psychic stilling or lapse into quietism but the self-knowledge of the Absolute. Equipped with the four-fold discipli-

nes for Advaitic realisations, viz., discrimination of truth, renunciation of worldliness, ethical purification and intense longing for liberation, and initiated into the nature of Samadhi by his Guru, Totapuri, Sri Ramakrishna practised the 'Neti', 'Neti' method or *via negationis* by the isolation of pure consciousness from the distractions of sense-impressions and self-feeling, and soon realised the super-conscious state of Samadhi. Consciousness freed from its relational activities expands into infinity and shines in its own ineffable light beyond light and darkness. Even the beloved form of the Mother had to be dissected by Advaitic thought, self-transcended and dissolved into supra-personal Absolute. Saguna Brahman (Personal God) is Sat-Chit-Anandam (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute) personified, and in Samadhi it melts away as the iceberg at dawn and the salt doll immersed in water, and self-consciousness expires in the eternal bliss of Nirguna. For six months at a stretch he was lost in that state. Flies would enter his mouth and his hair was matted with accretion of dirt. Finally a terrible attack of dysentery dragged him down to the phenomenal plane, and in the interests of humanity he remained on the threshold of super-consciousness during the rest of his earthly life and spent himself in spiritual service and communication of godliness to humanity.

The prophetic advent of Sri Ramakrishna augurs well for the religious regeneration of the world and the reign of righteousness and peace in this mechanistic age. To him religion was not a dogma of the ~~heresy~~ hunting type or a special revelation to a chosen community but a direct realisation

of God and the fundamental unity of all the world religions. The uniqueness of his experience, which has already passed into history, consists in the universality of its religious appeal, and it has set free a rejuvenated form of Hinduism suited to modern democratic requirements. To him religion is not merely seeking and seeing God but a divinely ordained vocation governed by the motive of elevating the whole of humanity to the level of God. It thus harmonises the mystic quiet for eternal bliss and the needs of historic revelation—the personal and the impersonal, the spirituality of the contemplative and the activism of the altruist. Religions are not contradictory but complementary, and the theological deductions resulting from the application of formal logic to dogmatic presuppositions are the fore-runners of tragic fanaticism and are repugnant to religious wide-heartedness. Personal verification is indispensable in estimating the value of religious faith, and the effect of psychology on

faith is inescapable. Though religion is one, its experiences are varied. The Siddhanta or logical method of 'either—or' should be supplemented by the synthetic mystic insight contained in 'both—and'. The spiritual hospitality of Hinduism incarnate in Sri Ramakrishna is not a pantheistic or eclectic piecing together of bits of faith but is the recognition of their individuality influenced by the indwelling love of God in all religions.

The infinite possibility and suggestiveness contained in the life of this super-mystic and prophet was first brought out with apostolic fervour by Swami Vivekananda and is gradually unfolded and made explicit by the Math and the Mission bearing Sri Ramakrishna's name. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are the static and dynamic aspects of the New Dispensation. History repeats itself and the relative significance of the two lives compel comparison with that of Socrates and Plato, Buddha and Ananda, and Jesus and Paul.

## THE LIVING PRESENCE

By Sister Devamata

[Sister Devamata, the authoress of *Days in an Indian Monastery*, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples* and several other books, is well known to the readers of the *Vedanta Kesari*. American by nationality, she has devoted her whole life to the cause of Vedanta. In this article, written as a tribute to the one hundredth birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, the Sister places some of the most intimate and sacred experiences of her life before the readers. She makes her reason for doing so sufficiently plain in the course of the article. We for our part publish it for the reason that it will go to strengthen the faith of the numerous devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and reassure them that the Great Master is still a living personality in our midst, capable of being contacted by an earnest and prayerful soul. We request our readers to give a reverent perusal to this article.]

THE day is drawing to its close. The quiet of the twilight hour is upon my spirit. Evening shadows fall about me. Through a vista of

more than thirty years of active service as a member of the Ramakrishna Mission I look back over life in long perspective. What I write now, I had

thought to leave for ever unsaid. I shrink from setting down on the printed page experiences so sacred and personal that I have never voiced them save to one; but what pertains to the Great Ones of the earth cannot be hidden. It belongs to all men, not to an individual.

I remember when some years ago a letter was found telling of St. Paul. It was written by an obscure Christian to another unknown follower of the new faith. It told how the writer had waited all day by the gate of the city, watching eagerly for the coming of the preacher of the Nazarene. She expected to see him enter, a stately figure mounted on a charger, and deep was her disappointment and surprise to perceive in the multitude a small figure, bow-legged, hook-nosed and cross-eyed. This was the great Paul!

The author of the letter has dropped into complete oblivion, but the picture of the mighty disciple of the crucified Christ stands out still in undimmed relief. So, I hope will the seer of the living Presence be forgotten and only the Presence remain, to bear witness to the glory and bounty of the one who shone through it.

My task is not self-chosen. An oft-repeated urge, both from within and from without, compels me to it. A letter from Swami Shivananda, for many years the Head of our Order, also lends it insistence and definiteness. The letter reads:—

"MY DEAR SISTER DEVAMATA,

I was so pleased to get your letter of the 20th instant, the day after the thirtieth anniversary of your entrance into the work. Your letter speaks so much of the work and I am joyous to feel how unselfishly you love it. I know

what great a part you have played in it and still are doing with a frail body, but with a spirit which is getting stronger and stronger in conviction. Your connection with the work is not of thirty years existence, but I think your whole existence is related with it. Pioneers do not take birth, but they come along with the birth of a movement. The stage gets arranged, behind the curtain of birth. As it rises up, the characters come one by one to play their part in different climes and countries. You are one of such characters. Their distinctive features are: their heart impels them to join in the movement, and they share the vicissitudes and fortunes of it with full faith in the cause. So to my mind your association with the work and with Paramananda has taken place at the will of Sri Ramakrishna. You are a blessed one. You will live as long as his name will be honoured here."

Those who tell of a Divine manifestation are simple chroniclers, not makers of literature. Their duty is to preserve the tradition that the mighty Ones of God may live on in the hearts of men. This is my intent in giving out these visions. They were not psychic visions, they were not dreams, they were not imaginations, nor was the Great One who came in them an apparition. He was a pulsing Presence, a living personality. The warmth and radiance of his being were clearly perceptible; and in my being also, when the Presence came, there was a peculiar unaccustomed glow. It was as if a bright light was flashed on in every

atom of my mind and heart and even in the body. Sometimes the glow preceded the Presence, as if to herald its approach; sometimes it came with it; but always its influence lingered after for hours and even days.

If the Seers of ancient India, or the mystics of mediaeval Europe, or all those who have seen and heard, had locked their visions in the deep recesses of their hearts and kept them secret, the world would have been incalculably poorer. Even the witness of lesser devotees has value to strengthen the faith of men and lend them courage to go forward.

So now as the sun nears its setting, I break the silence of years and share this spiritual confidence of my life, in the hope that through it others may gain a deeper realisation of the spiritual grandeur and boundless mercy of one of the greatest among the Great Ones who have come to earth as Saviours of men.

# I

Holy Mother outlived Sri Ramakrishna by many years. When after his passing, she was removing her ornaments and her bordered *sari* to wrap round her the unbordered cloth of the widow, Sri Ramakrishna appeared to her and said reproachfully: "What are you doing? Do you believe I am dead?" Silently she replaced the bangles on her arms and wound about her once more her bordered *sari*. Her widowhood was ended.

To lesser souls also were granted proofs of this living Presence. Of some of these I would now tell. I had fled from the hurried life of New York to the calmer atmosphere of Boston and was spending my days in seclusion and silence. One afternoon, as I sat alone in my living room, troubling over my aimless future, suddenly two

figures stood before me. The face of one shone with a super-earthly smile, which seemed to shed an effulgence over his whole being. In quiet tones he spoke these words: "Do not grieve. You have work to do for me." Then both figures vanished, but the sense of their presence lingered for many days.

In the early spring I returned to New York and soon after became a member of the Vedanta Society, being put in charge of the Publishing Department. At that time books came out in rapid succession; my hours were very full and I was in frequent consultation with the head of the work. One late afternoon he called me to his private duty to talk over a new publication. As I entered the room, my eyes fell upon a photograph hanging over the mantel. I stood still, transfixed. It was the figure I had seen in Boston. I walked quickly across to the fireplace and asked almost abruptly, "Of whom is this a picture?" The head of the work replied quietly: "It is my Master, Sri Ramakrishna."

A year passed. The anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday came. It was observed very austere at the New York Society. Of the fifty or sixty members who attended the celebration, scarcely one tasted food or drank water from before sunset on the previous evening until after sunset on the evening of the birthday. This was done, not to mortify the flesh, but to give greater freedom to the spirit. All day we sat on the floor of the class room without mat or cushion, meditating, praying, or listening to the reading of sacred books. There were brief recesses, but a hush of holy silence was upon every heart and there was

little conversation—that little being in low undertones.

The atmosphere was charged with fervour. The last hour of prayer had come. We had been told that whatever we asked for in this culminating moment of the day would be granted. I could think of nothing for which to ask. No desire entered my thought, or rather only one,—to see Sri Ramakrishna once again. The stillness in the room was breathless. Something impelled me to open my eyes and there on the platform amid the masses of flowers, which had been brought in as offering, stood the living Presence.

It was the same figure that had come to me in Boston, yet not the same, for it was clothed in a single long white garment and both body and robe were so shining, so transparent that I could discern through them the faint outline of the flowers behind. But the smile on the face was the same and there radiated from it the same power, the same gentle benediction. The figure stood there for a few seconds with hands outstretched in blessing, then was gone. I looked about. All eyes were closed. Had no other seen?

# II

In the autumn I entered on a course of intensive spiritual training. It called for great regularity, careful diet and above all for firm resolution. I charted my day as a sea-captain might chart his voyage. I rose early, ate lightly, had fixed hours for spiritual practices; and stated hours for publication work, which involved much editing, typewriting and proof-reading. Some time was spent in the open, and some at the Society house, attending to book orders and other publishing business. I was full of en-

thusiasm and confidence, but in my heart there was one grievance.

The training which I had undertaken included the practice of posture, breathing exercises, an exercise in concentration, and a subject of meditation. This last was the cause of my grievance. It had been my habit, prior to my new plan of life, to make Sri Ramakrishna himself the subject of my meditation. The subject now given me seemed dry and mechanical. I bore with it for several weeks, then I made appeal to the head of the work, who was directing my studies, and he gave his immediate consent that I return to my old form of meditation.

I was living in a delightful apartment not far from the Society house. In it I had fitted up a private chapel. That night I entered this with a new eagerness. I took my place before the altar, went through my exercises, and was just beginning by meditation when Sri Ramakrishna stood before me—not the Ramakrishna of Boston or of the birthday, but a colossal figure made of pure light, with glistening garments. Over-awed, I fell on my face before it, crept slowly nearer and laid my forehead on the feet. I knew no more. When I returned to normal consciousness, I found I had been lying in front of the altar for more than an hour. What transpired in that hour I shall never know; but it left me with a new outlook on life, a new vision in my heart.

At the hour of meditation on the following evening Sri Ramakrishna came again, in his usual form, but surrounded by a glowing light. As I gazed at him in devout wonder, he cast off his body as he might a garment and stood clothed in light. He seemed, however, less overwhelming, less awe-inspiring than at the first

coming. A subtler tenderness lingered like a fragrance about him, taking away all sense of awe or fear.

A third day he came, again at the hour of prayer. He looked more like the photograph over the mantel, which had first told me of him; but his body seemed only a lantern, in which burned a dazzling flame, sending out broad beams of light all about him. No word was spoken—neither on this nor on the previous days; but from a silence that was radiant and charged with meaning, I had learned that whether clothed in an earthly body or manifest in super-earthly glory, Sri Ramakrishna was a living Presence, moving among men to aid and bless, to guide and shield, in the fullness of his love.

### III

Four months later, in February, I was asked to prepare a compilation of the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. It was to be done for the head of the work who had not the leisure to do it himself. No task could have been more pleasing to me. I set out on it with ardour. I went, column by column, through long files of old periodicals, searching for a word or a sentence that might have fallen from Sri Ramakrishna's lips and been recorded in some one's reminiscences.

I read carefully various small collections, some of them out of print. I exhausted every possible source and finally brought together nearly seven hundred sayings. To put these into a book in unordered sequence seemed to me unintelligent. I decided, therefore, to classify them into chapters with marginal headings and as far as possible to arrange them to make consecutive reading.

It was a long and arduous labour, yet one I was reluctant to leave even

for an hour. I rose at dawn and worked far into the night. I went back and forth through the sayings, each time culling out those that belonged together in a chapter or under a marginal heading. This classification had not been attempted before, so I was doing pioneer work. Day after day the glowing words burned deeper and deeper into my consciousness. I walked in their rhythm, I ate with them sounding through my thought, I slept with them on my lips, I was consumed by them.

The spring came. April was here and I had promised to have the new collection of sayings in print before the summer. The final copy of the manuscript was nearing completion. I was working on it busily one morning when I felt a tapping on my shoulder. I was alone in the apartment, so I thought that some moisture had condensed on the skylight overhead and was dripping down—my living-room was really a studio. I put up my hand to brush away the drops and went on with my type-writing.

Again the tapping came. There could be no doubt,—it was a human touch. Startled, I turned quickly and saw Sri Ramakrishna standing just behind me on the left side. He looked as in his picture and was impressively living. I seemed to feel the warmth of his hand as it rested on my shoulder. No light shone from him, only the radiance of his smile made him luminous. He was dominantly a living human Presence. He remained for a brief moment, then disappeared.

As it is not possible to surprise the opening of a flower or the unfolding of a leaf—the plant or tree keeps its secret; so I was never able to discern how the Presence came or how it went.

It was there and it was gone. The manner of its coming and going was never disclosed. These words of Avicenna best describe it. "It was like a flash of lightening shining over the meadow and disappearing as if it had never gleamed." But the gleam of the Presence lingered after.

### IV

My life became a wandering one. I moved from India in the far East to California in the far West, with long intervals of pause at intervening centres of the work. In 1923 Swami Paramananda founded Ananda Ashrama in the hills of the Sierra Madre range near Los Angeles. It was established as an extension of the Vedanta Centre of Boston, where I had served for a number of years as the Swami's assistant. It was now in the same capacity that I took up my residence at the new Retreat.

Gradually various buildings were erected, among them an impressive Temple dedicated to the Universal Spirit. I formed the habit of going to the Sanctuary of the Temple for a quiet hour of prayer after the household had retired for the night. Thus it was that late one night I mounted the steps to the upper terrace and unlocked the side door of the Temple. It seemed very big, very dark and very still, as I entered. I was glad to escape from this silent outer emptiness to the more protecting space of the dimly lighted inner Sanctuary.

I knelt before the altar and began repeating a sacred name. I do not know how long I had been kneeling there, when noiselessly and quite naturally the walls behind the altar rolled back. My eyes rested on the vista of hills beyond without surprise or wonder. It seemed in no way ex-

traordinary that I should see them. As my gaze lifted from hill to hill, it was drawn to a blazing light on the highest peak. In the centre of the light stood the living Presence. A long shawl fell about it, the colour of which was neutralised by the dazzling light; the face shone with a super-earthly effulgence and from the outstretched hands there poured a radiant blessing.

The figure stood thus for a moment, then began to descend towards the Temple. It did not follow the slope of the hill, but moved on a direct path of light. As it drew nearer, I could discern that the light which created the path came from the feet of the one who walked upon it. Downward the Presence moved on the shining band of light, majestic, silent, awe-inspiring, yet radiating such tenderness of love that all sense of fear or marvel melted.

It approached slowly, reached the Temple, entered the Sanctuary through the open walls, which rolled together and took its place on the right side of the altar with the hand resting on it. The transfiguring light dimmed and Sri Ramakrishna of the hilltop became the Ramakrishna of his earthly embodiment. He looked as when he walked visibly among men. He stood in smiling silence for a moment, then began to speak. What he uttered was spoken to the heart rather than to the ear and was meant only for the one who heard.

It was very late when I left the Sanctuary. The figure still stood beside the altar and for four days whenever I entered the Temple at the hour of worship I saw it there more real and glowing than those who knelt in prayer before the Sanctu-

ary gate. The Temple was charged with the power of its Presence.

Several years stretch between this and Sri Ramakrishna's next coming. The gap is in the narrative alone. Only a few salient experiences are included in it. To translate into the written word the close association of the Presence with my daily life would be impossible. It guarded my safety, guided my effort, enveloped me with a love that renewed, healed and sweetened. All it asked in return was the devotion of a humble heart.

I was still living at Ananda Ashrama. The winter nights in California are cold and often stormy. To avoid exposure to the occasional inclement weather, I was persuaded to abandon going to the Temple for the late hour of prayer and to fit up, next to my study, a private chapel. The room set apart for it was one of three in a wing of the cloister where I lived alone. It had served originally as the household Sanctuary before the Temple was built, and had been unused since the Sanctuary had been transferred to the Temple.

Ten years' residence in Europe had enabled me to gather many things to make a Chapel lovely. Among them was a rare hanging, several centuries old, which had hung in the chancel arch of a Spanish church. It had been woven by the monks of Salamanca and also embroidered by them. Even the embroidery silk was the product of their own silk worms. The hanging had taken form and served always in holy surroundings. Sanctity pervaded it, and it seemed to belong where we placed it—on the wall behind the altar.

When the Chapel was finished, it was so filled with uplifted beauty and power that I could not keep it for my-

self. I began to share it with others. Those who saw it asked to bring friends to its door. Others heard of it and begged the privilege of seeing it. So many came; but not one ever stood at its threshold for a moment of silent prayer who did not thank me with tearfilled eyes for the blessing received.

There were some in the household, however, who criticised me for showing it so freely. They felt that a personal Shrine should be kept for the person alone. Their thought troubled me not a little. I shrank from desecrating anything so sacred as was the little Chapel to me. I determined to let a higher Power decide it.

I went to the Temple and made appeal for guidance. No answer came; but later when I opened the door of the little Chapel, I was amazed to find it apparently empty of furnishings. Only the hanging remained. Before it stood Sri Ramakrishna, his face alight with that radiant smile which seemed a very part of him. He held out his hands as if in tender greeting and said to me: "This is the welcome I give to all who come here." I knew now why every one who came to the little Chapel felt there the power of a great Presence.

## V

Buonaventura in his Life of St. Francis of Assisi relates that when St. Francis received the Stigmata or Christ-wounds, he was troubled as to whether he should make it known. He called several of the closer Brothers of the Order and asked counsel of them. One Illuminates by name, replied, "Brother, not only for thine own sake, but for the sake of others, the Divine Myteries are made known to thee. Therefore, thou shouldst fear

to conceal this which thou hast received for the benefit of many."

The Divine is present in every human heart. It is the eternal part of man. The forces of Nature must be at its command, since to the Divine all things are possible. Why then could it not take form as a living Presence and become the daily companion of the devotee, who through intensity of devotion calls it forth. It may appear in different forms, it may bear different names, it may come in different ways. That is determined by the devotee's conception of Divinity, but that it comes, there can be no doubt.

To Santa Teresa of Spain it came as Christ; to Sri Ramakrishna as the Mother of the Universe; to Saul it was the Voice on the road to Damascus, to the *Zelanti* or "zealous ones" of the early Franciscan Brotherhood it took the form of Angels or the Crucified One. To my more modest vision it appeared as Sri Ramakrishna—not because I had abandoned Christianity, but because Sri Ramakrishna by the fervour of his catholicity had made all religious faiths and the one God behind them more real and vital to me.

I have never tried to analyse or explain the experiences recorded in these pages. A study of pure mathematics and of recent discoveries in physics and astronomy has taught me beyond all doubt that there are finer laws and subtler forces than those evident to our senses, or even to that sixth perceptive sense, the mind. In so well-ordered and highly evolved a universe as the one in which we live, even the most apparently impossible may become possible.

The appearance and disappearance of a pulsing living Presence is no more occult a miracle than the hidden func-

tioning of the human body or the growth of a towering tree from a tiny seed, or the blossoming of flower on a barren hillside. Nature does not need to break a law to perform her miracles, she has merely to obey a subtler law. She may seem to defy the visible, but it is only to call into play a more effective invisible agent.

All life is a miracle. Even our mistakes have an element of the miraculous in them, since through them we learn what otherwise we would never know. The future is a mystery to be solved; the present is another mystery which escapes us before we can lay our hand upon it. The workings of Nature remain always mysterious. She builds her laboratories in the hidden places to which she alone has access.

Scientists are pressing hard upon her. As they force her to reveal herself, they find they must deal with both the immeasurably large and the infinitesimally small—light-years on the one side, protons and electrons on the other. Astronomy and physics are in process of complete readjustment. Conceptions of time, space, distance, of ether, of the constitution and alteration of heavenly bodies, all hang in the balance. In this wide-sweeping reorganisation, undoubtedly room will be found for many hitherto unexplained and unaccepted phenomena.

The fundamentals of creation are being reduced to smaller and smaller particles; subtler and subtler forces are being released. Science is drawing close to the realm of spirit. The subtle acts silently and swiftly, it penetrates easily, gathers form and dissipates it quickly. Why then is it not possible for Christ to appear on

the battlefields of Flanders, seen by many; or for the light which blinded St. Paul to contain a Holy Presence that spoke to him; or for a celestial being to press the Christ-wounds on the hands and feet of St. Francis?

Man is uncovering more and more of life. The time is not far distant when he will uncover death—not by

trivial psychic manifestations, not by test tube or microscope, but by the revelation of subtler laws. In observing the working of these, he will learn that it is in no way contrary to nature that a Great Soul, highly spiritualised and highly sensitised, is able to walk the earth, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, a living Presence among men.

## AS MANY VIEWS, SO MANY PATHS

By D. M. Datta, M.A., Ph.D.

[Dr. Datta is the Professor of Philosophy in the Patna College. He is the author of the masterly book on the epistemology of Advaita Vedanta entitled "Six Ways of Knowing" which is the only book of its kind in English and is an invaluable contribution to the literature on Indian Philosophy. Sri Ramakrishna's saying that all religions lead to the same goal is to-day accepted by many due to an instinctive liking for the catholicity of that conception or due to the belief in the existence of saints and seers in all the great religions of the world. That this great saying is not merely a matter of faith or acceptable only on pragmatic grounds, but has deep metaphysical implications and logical justifications is the thesis of the learned Professor's contribution offered as a tribute of respect to Sri Ramakrishna on the occasion of his Birth-Centenary.]

**S**RI Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to teach people by simple epigrams of concentrated wisdom. One of these pithy teachings reflects the central principle for which he stood. It is—"Yata mat tata path." (Bengali) It means: As many views, so many paths.

None of his teachings requires greater emphasis than this at the present hour when India is passing through a state of communal jealousies and religious strifes. Almost all these quarrels and clashes are due to a lack of sympathy for the viewpoints of others and the refusal to respect the views of others as much as one's own. Fanaticism is inspired by the belief that one's own view is the only possible view and should be preserved at all cost. But this positive side of fanaticism is not so objectionable and dangerous, as its

negative side. For in this latter aspect fanaticism is inspired by the faith that as truth is one and one's own view is the only truth, all other views must be wrong and are, therefore, fit to be treated with contempt and, if possible, should be stamped out of existence. Contempt, persecution, quarrel and riot are the natural consequences of such an attitude. The Paramahansa would have us respect the views of others as our own views, for, he holds that there are as many paths to religious progress as there are different points of view.

But if truth is one, how can we justify different views of the same truth, and how can we, then, justify the different paths? Is not the teaching of the Paramahansa based on a faulty logic? Is not one justified in stamping out untruth in the cause of truth, unmindful of the consequen-

ces? We shall try to answer these questions here as briefly as possible and examine the soundness of the teaching—"As many views, so many paths."

The dictum "Truth is one" is glibly uttered and readily believed even by common people. But it is doubtful if the meaning and implications of it are always understood as clearly. The word truth is used in different senses and there is always the risk of ambiguity when we use it. It means, first of all, the quality of a proposition which is believed and is uncontradicted and which is, therefore, true. It is in this abstract sense that we speak of the truth (as opposed to the falsity) of a statement, theory, doctrine, view, etc. Secondly, it is used in a more concrete sense to signify that which is true. In this sense, we speak of a proposition—a theory, a view, a law of nature, etc., as a *truth*. It is in this sense, again, that we say—"Speak the truth." Thirdly, truth is used in a still more concrete sense to signify something the proposition about (the existence of) which is true. In the first sense truth is the quality of a proposition about reality, in the second it stands for that proposition about reality and in the third it is reality itself. It is in this last sense that truth is used to mean a fact, an event, etc., when we say, for example, that gravitation is a truth or that the death of Socrates is a truth. When God is spoken of as truth, this third sense is illustrated (if, of course, God is believed to be a concrete reality).

Distinguishing these three senses we may turn back to the question, "What is exactly the sense in which

we use the word truth, when we say—"Truth is one"?

If 'truth' is taken in the first sense, then the dictum can mean that the connotation of truth is the same everywhere. Truth is one, in so far as it carries the same meaning wherever the word is applied. For example, different propositions like 'The Sun is stationary,' 'The moon is a satellite,' 'The three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles', contain truth in so far as all of them possess the same quality, say, of being believed and uncontradicted. But such a view is too cold to supply any basis for religious emotion, far less for fanatical enthusiasm. This does not preclude the possibility of there being different points of view and different theories regarding the same problem—because different propositions can contain the same quality, truth, being equally believed and uncontradicted.

If truth is taken in the second sense, namely, as identical with a proposition that is true, then it is difficult to see how truth can be said to be one. There would be as many truths as there are propositions that are true. But it may be said that the dictum, in this sense of truth, might mean that there can be only one truth (*i.e.* true proposition) regarding any particular matter. It may be pointed out as an example that with regard to the question, "What is the colour of milk?" only one true position, namely, "The colour of milk is white" can be held and therefore, there is only one truth regarding this matter. Similarly regarding any other question, namely, the existence of God or the nature of God, etc., there can only be one truth or true reply. It is mostly in this

sense that truth is usually held to be one. Let us consider it minutely.

It is scarcely realised that when we ask an apparently simple question like "What is the colour of milk?" there are so many other things presupposed and understood without which no reply would be possible. A simple question conceals many other questions and an apparently simple reply would be true only subject to so many different conditions which are tacitly understood from the universe of discourse. To answer the above question one should understand from what point of view it has been asked. The colour of milk would appear to be of one shade during sunlight, of another during moonlight, it would appear to be yellow to the jaundiced and something else to the unjaundiced, it would appear to be something to a man with coloured spectacles, something else to others. In a word, distance, medium, nature of the organs, quantity of the milk, consistency of the milk, composition of it and many other facts, too many to be mentioned, will determine the nature of the reply to an apparently simple but really vague question like "What is the colour of milk?" Similarly the reply to the question, "What is the shape of a pice?" will depend upon the angle of vision from which it is observed. It may appear round, elliptical, etc., from different points of view. To say, then, that there must be only one truth, *i.e.*, true proposition regarding any matter is to ignore these logical difficulties. Almost every simple question turns out to be vague and indeterminate and calls for further and further qualification and determination, before any definite reply can be given.

In everyday life we ask vague questions and are satisfied with equally indefinite replies. Or it may be that the universe of discourse, though theoretically inexhaustible, is tacitly understood and questions and answers derive their significance from such understanding. Again in some cases though the conditions that make the question intelligible and answerable are not mentioned, they are understood to be normal conditions. With regard to our question, "What is the colour of milk?" we assume before we reply that the question means, "What is the colour of milk under normal conditions?"

But there are questions, and religious questions are the most important of this kind, where we may lack a common universe of discourse, that is to say, the universe of ideas forming the back-ground of our questions and answers is not the same in all persons. There is consequently no fixed 'normal' or 'average'. In such cases, it would be doubly rash to assert that there can only be one truth or true opinion regarding a question. A question like "Does God exist?" cannot be answered, for example, by one simple affirmative or negative proposition. Because the reply would depend upon the meanings which 'God' and 'exist' bear in the question? Does 'God' mean a person or an impersonal being, a concrete reality or an abstract law, an ideal or an actuality? Again what is the meaning of 'exist'? Does it mean 'in space and time' or 'is any fact', etc. There are persons, who would demand the existence of God in space and time, like so many other objects of nature, and crave for a *darsana* or sensuous perception of God. There

are others who are satisfied to believe in God as an ideal which is struggling for perfection, but not yet fully perfected. It is impossible, therefore, to assert honestly that there can only be one true reply to an indefinite question like 'Does God exist?' There is, therefore, room for many replies to such important and vague questions, and the dictum, 'Truth is one,' can scarcely brush aside the possibility of different views.

Understanding truth in the third sense, namely, as identical with reality, the dictum would come to mean that Reality is one. Conceding to the monist, for argument's sake, that Reality is one, we are not necessarily compelled to the view that conception of that Reality must also be one. If a simple thing like a pice presents so many different aspects to different observers occupying different points of view, it is very unlikely that the one Reality, which by supposition, is the basis of so many divergent appearances, should present the same view to all. Room for divergent opinions is, therefore, ample.

From all that we have said above, it would follow that in whatever sense the word truth is taken, the dictum, 'Truth is one' cannot affect the possibility of different views

about the same truth or reality. If we take into consideration, the divergent physical and mental compositions of men, their different traditions, cultures, education, etc., it is only natural to expect that they will come to look at spiritual problems from different angles of vision. Differences would, therefore, exist very naturally among their views. If, again, man must tread the path of spiritual progress according to his own light, divergent paths would be the logical outcome.

It is a pity that a person's enthusiasm for his own view, which should be conserved and utilised fully for his own progress, deviates into the destructive path of forcing others to accept a view which is not theirs. If every man is an end in himself, he cannot be used as a means. Full freedom, therefore, is due to him in his spiritual and religious pursuits. Every person should have full freedom to chalk out and tread his spiritual path unhampered by coercion.

In celebrating the Birth-Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, we can do something more than a mere lip service, if we hark back to his simple teaching: As many views, so many paths. Herein lies our hope of unity among the fighting sects and communities of India.

## MY MASTER'S VOICE

*By Prof. Ernest P. Horowitz*

[Prof. Ernest P. Horowitz of Hunter College, New York, is an authority in world-literature and Aryan semasiology. Sometime back he had lectured on these subjects in the Bombay, Nagpur and Rangoon Universities. He is a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and an ardent admirer of Indian spiritual ideals. In the present article, written as a tribute to the memory of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Prof. Horowitz touches upon various spiritual and cultural ideals of great importance.]

**N**AGNAJITS, sky-clad like triumphant aurora, are valiant knights of the spirit, ever extinguishing the flames of flesh and roving fancy. Orthodoxy and ritual is a preparatory stage of spiritual unfoldment; Nagnajits ignore the one and reject the other, yet condone and even encourage either. Ceremonial observances and time-hallowed symbolism lead to the inner sanctuary which no imagery adorns. In a state of self-oblivion and self-abandonment, reality (Sat) rules supreme; for the time being vanity fair (Prapancha) is shattered and scattered. No ordained Brahmin ever consecrates a self-illuminated Nagnajit. By a bold sweep of vision, Totapuri, the naked one, dispensed with the intercession of intermediary powers, that glorious progeny of faith, from mother Kali downward to the home-befriending 'lares and penates.' Young Ramakrishna in whom he engendered direct Advaita cognition had long envisaged with the "eye of truth" (dharma-chakshus) the noumenon within phenomena. In his eager search for "essence in semblance" (Sat in Asat), the god-intoxicated youth roused slumbering Deity in indolent nature; he was given power to identify the Infinite with the cosmic egg or matrix of the universe—Brahman with Kali. The Divine Mother had tutored him in sacrificial

love and social service, while caste-pride draws arbitrary and artificial divisions between the untouchable and the twice-born (Harijan and Dwija). The master knew of no such cruel distinction. In his secluded nest he sensed the unity of all men; he could touch their hearts, and change their thoughts, by merely touching their body. Six years ago, the writer of these lines visited the Panchavati. Alas! the sacred spot was already desecrated to a noisy market-place. Pedlars haggled, pilgrims purchased, quarrelsome women shouted. Foul odors of fried fish tainted the fragrant garden-grove which once was a Deva-sadanam, sheltering the holy and lowly lad of Dakshineswar. East and West are interlocked for evil and for good; they share in the same vices and virtues. Social justice is the very breath of the gospels, but the church, supported by profiteers and industrial vultures, has turned capitalistic. If the Saviour entered the sanctuary, he would drive out again munition-makers and other birds of prey.

Before reaching his teens, Ramakrishna walked in the fields one day. The sky was clear and blue, when the boy saw a flight of cranes circle along the horizon. The contrast of colour dazzled and bewitched his imagination. The enraptured youth fell in a profound and ravishing

trance; he caught never-forgotten glimpses of the Ever-beautiful which is also the Ever-one. Cosmic consciousness was the enchanting gift, carried back from ecstasy to normalcy. Ramakrishna fondly implanted the ingrained ideal of universal religion in his most dynamic disciple who condescended to become my guide and Guru. I casually met Vivekananda in the last century; the apparent incident turned out to be a Karmic necessity. When I first saw the Swami in London, an electric shock or magnetic thrill penetrated my inmost being, muddled and immature as it was. An inner voice said: this is the one whom you have been seeking all the days of your life! Swamiji is generally remembered as a suasive orator; to me he acted as a silent Muni. My complex idiosyncrasy could not be changed, but the bewildered garden of my soul was somewhat weeded. Vivekananda moulded and directed the subtle Samskaras or mood-imprints, deep-rooted in the psychic subsoil, even as a careful gardener tenderly watches over some frail flower. Subconscious wrinkles were smoothed and straightened out; I borrowed tint after tint from his grandeur. Whatever faults Swamiji had, are multiplied in me a hundredfold. Nature is rebellious; conversion becomes a lifelong agony, a sting and stigma, a heart-burn and humiliation. Backsliding and resurgence alternate in a vicious ring, but Vivekananda revived and saved my sinking self. His explosive personality has proved a healthful tonic and medicine to nobler natures than mine. Rolland faithfully chronicled the lives of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda; "la vie de Ramakrishna" is the more eloquent and convincing

biography. Gandhiji's Harijan campaign, perhaps the crowning piece of his eventful career, is a warm response to Vivekananda's lovable universalism. Yet neither Rolland nor Gandhi ever heard my Master's compelling voice; they never drank the nectar from his tuneful lips. O, for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!

Versatility of vision, a free, unhindered outlook all around, puts provincial prejudice and narrow nationalism to shame. Vivekananda, vivifying his Master's mighty message, dovetailed Advaita's ringing trumpet-call with Western aspirations and cultural vibrations. Herd-instincts sway the tribal psychology of mankind; it is a risky and even dangerous game to unsettle traditional beliefs. Swamiji held strong views on politics which in the end are determined by economics, but as a rule kept aloof from heated controversy on public affairs, either domestic or international. He keenly analysed the subtle springs of family and race pride, and clearly showed the damage done to human relationships by preconceived theories or rash conclusions. Race and religion ever were the apple of deadly discord or foolish dissension. Caste pride gives a superiority-complex, and intensifies aggressive nationalism with its sinister schemes of territorial aggrandizement. It is quite true that industrial States, overpopulated and underfed, need colonial possessions; they must expand or else explode. But expansionism and race-discrimination are sore trouble-makers, ravenous wolves, walking about in sheep's clothes of fervent patriotism! Dictators put up a smoke-screen, and let mob-passions loose on minority-

groups in a regimented state. Followers of Neo-Vedanta have a sane regard for every caste, creed and colour in an increasingly congested world. Their only God is Love, redeemer of the finite which sooner or later is to realise its infinitude. In the pre-designed plan of redemption, human nature is contacted with the Supreme Reality which hovers over visible manifestations, as an artist's creative genius over his masterwork. Atma alone is real; the Supreme Self, the old man of the mountains, is cosmic, impersonal, non-attached and unconcerned. Atma-bodhi or self-realisation is the ripest fruit of self-search and Nature-study; religion and science are two red roses, grown on the same Bodhi-bush. Cognition's dawn and sundown make a perfect day. Buoyant faith (Deva-darshanam) sees all things clearly in the glad gleam of morning. Knowledge grows; wisdom lingers. Grey theory falls behind experiment. Scepticism is Yama-darshanam, a fading light with lengthening shadows, chilly and dull. Science searches for laws which govern Nature; religion perceives the permanent in the personal. Ultimately science and religion intertwine in a higher unity; "being" (Sat) is a dynamic Deity, the god of evolution. The world-old pages of the Atharva Veda re-echo Nature-magic which, in the age of reason, matured to natural science. Medicine-men developed to medical practitioners, alchemy was transmuted to chemistry, and star-lore to astronomy. Vivekananda never stooped to ignoble magic, but ever gripped eternal values, the sound realities of soul and sense.

Vedanta is vast as the boundless ocean, and immeasurable as the infi-

nite skies. Vivekananda dreaded organisation\*. Limited societies, religious sects, admirably suit the lower middle classes which never experience personal salvation, yet fondly imagine that they alone possess the faith. Their comfortable bourgeois-creed silently sanctions pleasure-seeking and money-making. But organisation is altogether unfit for the giant-limbs of heroic Advaita. If the preaching of Vedanta is done depending on the funds contributed by liberal donors and generous patrons, forfeited is inner independence, the heart-blood of Vedanta! True teachers are heaven-born, and tower high above the wrangling schools. Vivekananda was indifferent to Christian Science, but approved of Mrs. Eddy's statement that "our Master lost no time in organisation; if his disciples founded a Church, they erred". Suchlike words occur in the first edition of "Science and Health," but were carefully erased and deleted from all successive reprints. Vivekananda reluctantly lent his name to the new Vedanta Society which he regarded as a form of faith, reflecting rather than embodying life and truth.

\*Lest the statement should be misunderstood, we have to remark that what the Swami warned against is the tendency of the organisation to swallow the individual and his freedom. It is good to be born in a church but not to die in it—this was one of his favourite sayings. He recognised, however, that organisation is absolutely necessary to achieve anything in this world. Refer to his letter. Complete Works, Vol. IV, Pp. 266 (2nd Edition)—"Organisation has its faults, no doubt, but without that nothing can be done." It was in this conviction that he founded the organisation that bears his Master's name. To help an individual and not to crush or enslave him is the object of a truly spiritual organisation.—Editors.

When the two congeal into historic facts, life develops and disintegrates; truth flourishes and fades.

## II

Modern youth dislikes to look at world problems through tradition-coloured glasses, and prefers to face the essentials of culture and the hard facts of law-abiding Nature. It is profitable to learn from a beloved Acharya, how giants of the past would confront present-day crisis and catastrophes if they happened to live in the mechanised age of cinemas and radios, dirigibles and tractors. Heraclitus and Shankara, Euripides and Bhavabhuti, Dante and Shakespeare, Calderon and Camoens, Descartes and Kant, Voltaire and Goethe, all were masters of their daring craft, titans of thought and world-citizens of universal breadth. Literature is a blazing torch. Productive poetry and gems of wisdom, enshrined in that priceless casket, enkindle in growing souls a holy enthusiasm for the heroic life, and engender lofty conceptions and sublime sentiments. Inborn idealism is fed; the force of literary judgment is strengthened. Our loose thinking sadly lacks logic. Critical acumen, applied to literature, say, to the Great Epic, enhances rather than mars its superb poetic beauty. The old national ballads, strung together by the magic of minstrelsy, are still fresh and fragrant like a vernal bed of crocuses and daffodils, though the state of society, depicted in the Mahabharata, has long vanished. The heroic age ended with the defeat and destruction of the Kauravas.

Ephemeral literature with very few exceptions is worthless trash, morbid, sentimental, depressing. It was always so. Classics alone make whole-

some reading; they gladden, uplift and release our better nature. The world-classics offer real and lasting values; they catch the ideal and eternal in the chequered experiences of actual life. On the stage of the world, truth (Sat) struts about in an actor's flimsy finery. We are the mummers in the mundane masquerade, and ignorantly tide or belittle the soul's eternal light. It is so easy to forget truth and ourselves, not so Kalidasa; he "recognised" reality everywhere in the earthly tragi-comedy. His sweet pastoral romance, enriched by the supernatural, bears the sub-title "Recognition." The illustrious recognitionist revelled in the exuberance of beauty, and enjoyed to the fullest heroic, girlish and scenic loveliness. But the Divine Mother had taught him to fall in love with transient beauties from a truer and more tranquil heart's angle of vision. The poet became a devoted "servant" (Dasa) of mother Kali. Culture does not always keep pace with technique and machinery; we are in danger of losing the throb and thrill and higher spark of Kalidasa and his German affinity, Goethe. The two classics, towering summits of Indo-German genius, are the best antidote to counteract the poison exhaled by our commercialised literature, boring and base, and only too often foul and filthy.

## III

My destiny demanded a dictator and disposer. Vivekananda, sent by fate, quickened my dormant trend toward cosmopolitan culture. I was to be a teacher of world-literature and Aryan Semasiology.

My New York classes are consecrated to the princes of poetry. Little heed is given to biographical and

technical details, but all the more attention is paid to the message of the masters, and its bearing on modern thought and conduct. Again the biology of words is the bedrock and background of all culture. For 35 years, on and off, I have been busy on Aryan Semasiology; the dictionary will be ready in another five years. Maybe, some institute or Government, in sympathy with the idea, will undertake the publication.

Science disciplines the untutored judgment, but a liberal education humanises. The Victorian training of young gentlemen included the classical humanities which by 1940 or 1950, will have run their course, and grown stale, and be outmoded. The vacated place is to be taken by world-literature and the "romance of words". Dry-as-dust grammar, dead Greek and dull Latin already cease to be popular. The New Learning makes light of erudition, but cultivates soul-force (Shakti).

In 1929 Bombay University invited me to rationalise Aryan Linguistics by Western critical methods. The Universities of Nagpur, Aligarh and Rangoon asked me to repeat the semasiological course. In the following year I was appointed Government of Bombay Research Scholar. Various Colleges use as a text-book my lectures on Indo-Iranian Philology, published by the Cama Institute (Bombay, 1929). A second enlarged edition is in preparation. Generally, the definition of terms, in every branch of knowledge, is theoretical rather than linguistic. The New Philology strips cultural words to their very root and elements, and films their historic development so to speak. Science and art, travel and trade, logic and law, social and poli-

tical ethics, religion and metaphysics, all of them are given a semasiological setting and foundation.

Before 1000 B.C. semantic vocabularies were in use in Vedic schools of thought. These glossaries disentangle the intricacies of names which even then had become obsolete, hoary and knotted, as it were. The Sanskrit word for "gloss," Nighantu, is derived from Grantha, and signifies "unknotting," that is, unraveling Mantra-tantra, the thread and tissue of obscure and complex vocables. In the fifth century B.C., Yaska was the leading Nairuktika or Semasiologist. His penetrating analysis untied riddling word-knots, and solved linguistic enigmas, even as Ramakrishna, by the mere touch of his foot, loosened heart-attachments. The two titans of vision were both Nirgranthas, unfettered by the trammels of the glib tongue's rigmarole and the bondage of Kama-kanchana. Words, Sphota-endowed, ascend the vast organ-scale of emotions from crude Arctic origins and rude cave-instincts, up the cosmic tone-ladder to the self-effulgence of a Valmiki and Vivekananda, or a Gibbon and Browning. The two English super-patriots were familiar with the world-classics, professed creedless universalism, and would have welcomed a semantic guide-book in their antiquarian investigations. In a little-noticed footnote, the immortal analyst of Rome's decline and fall commends semasiology for a better understanding of the organic growth of public institutions.

Sanskrit Semasiology is still a desideratum to students of Hindu culture. Dharma and Nasatya may serve as a test-lesson. The verb Dhri (hold) yields the three nouns: Dhar-

ma (holding on to the moral law; obligation; duty; justice), Dharana (holding Chitta or the brain to one thought only or bending the mind to one object to the exclusion of all others) and Dharani (holding down disease; magical incantation to assuage evil spirits). Mahayana and Shaivametric charms; such Dharanis have passed wholesale into Tibetan Lamaism. European kindred of Dharma are "throne" (a hold or support) and "firm" (holding fast), the former of Greek, and the latter of Latin parentage.\*

When the Bhaktas, followers of Narayana, still dwelt in the uttermost north (Shweta-dwipa), they saw the Arctic twilight dance merrily round Meru's polar heights like

[\*An English repercussion is 'dare' (hold on boldly). The transition of 'dh' to 'd' recurs in Sanskrit 'dha' (set) and English 'do' (set to work), with the classical reflections the-sis (a task set) and fa-et (an act done). Russians, like the ancient Romans, pronounce Greek 'th' (Sanskrit 'dh') like 'f'; Theodore like Fedor.

All these are phonetic changes, but the evolution of sound is subordinate in interest to the life-side of language. What we want to know is the historic process how root-conceptions like 'hold' or 'set' have burst into fuller meaning and blossomed into richer significance (dare and do; firm and fact). Semasiology is the queen of philology, and forms part of Nature-study. Orderly Nature, the cosmic organism, consists of names and forms (Nama-rupa) with corresponding laws of development. Tulip-beds, thickly rooted and ramified in the dark cold earth, grow into tender, slender shoots with fairy buds. The floral profusion, rainbow-tinted, wind-tossed and sun-kissed, no longer clings to the clammy heavy sod; scented and dainty heads nod gracefully to the four quarters of the azure sky. Our etymological dictionaries are antiquated; they must be vitalised and rewritten by biologists.]

heavenly twins. The Rig Veda calls them "dancing heroes" (Naranritu; 6, 63, 5) and also Ashwins, i.e., the two horsemen or joint-riders. Punters explain "Nasatya," an epithet applied to the Ashwins, as Na-asatya (not untruthful), or else derive Nasatya from Nasate, variously translated as "joins, returns, recovers." But the epithet is of Sumerian origin, and denotes "guardian of the midnight sun." The early Anglo-Saxons were divided into inge-priests and saxmen or swordsmen; or to speak Sanskrit, into Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Ingleside means fireside; the ancient English were fire-devotees like the Parsis, that choice minority-group and civic ornament to the progressive city of Bombay. The ruling class of Sumer likewise comprised sun-wardens (Nasati) and swordsmen (Amuru); Hittites and Amorites. The former name survives in Sanskrit Atithi (guest); Amuru is the source-word of the martial Maruts, cuirassed attendants of warlike Indra. In the circumpolar nest of the Proto-Aryans, including the Sumerian ancestry, the mythological function of the Nasatya-twins (Sanskritised from Nasati) was to bear the dying winter-sun or waning Northern Light through the big pond (winter solstice) into the New year. Nahusha (sunset) was fabled to ferry Nakshatra which in Vedic Sanskrit still means "sun" across the underworld-waters to golden Aurora's Easter resurrection. Awe-struck, the ghostly ferryman looks back, and reviews the ghastly battle ground, soaked with the blood of sunset-red.

The field is quiet, the fevered war is past!

Within their purple tents the victors rest,

Save where a silver-cuirassed sentinel.

Leans on his spear, and gazes down the west.

Nahusha, an antediluvian giant, usurped the throne of India. His affinities in the Old Testament seem to be Noah and the Noachids. Hebrew Noah signifies "sundown, rest," and is apparently a Sumerian loan word.

On the last day of his rich life, Vivekananda's sunray-genius was attracted to knotted philological problems which long ago had challenged the sagacity of Yaska and Panini. My dying Master heard the eternal rush and rhythm of Sphota, but no

longer garbed in articulate wording. His spirit ever lives among us, in every Math and Mission, and pleads with the societies which use his venerable name to claim the salient peaks of world-poetry, and delve deep into the romance of words. Truth through beauty and culture! Sat and Asat are interdependent and inseparable like Brahma and Kali. May the Divine Mother bless our Vedanta schools and every Advaita endeavour!

Om Ramakrishnaya Namah Om!  
Pranjalir anato 'smi Vivekanandam!

## THEN AND NOW

By E. T. Sturdy.

[Mr. Sturdy is a student of Indian Philosophy, and has also spent some time in the Himalayas practising spiritual disciplines. It was he who invited Swami Vivekananda to England and arranged for his lectures. He is now very old, yet, he takes a keen interest in the Vedanta movement that has been revived by Swami Avyaktananda in London. Mr. Sturdy is the President of the Committee formed for celebrating Sri Ramakrishna's Birth-Centenary in England.

His brief reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda and his views regarding the prospects of Vedanta in the West at present provide very stimulating reading.]

**I** T was in 1895 that I met Swami Vivekananda: a very memorable date in my life. I had previously been with two of his Gurubhais (fellow-disciples) in India, viz., Swamis Sivananda and Satchidananda.\* I think, probably, I wrote Vivekananda before he left America, but that is now 40 years ago. Be that as it may, I saw before me a man robust and upright of body with a dignified presence, calm features and luminous eyes, when he stepped from the train.

I soon realised that he had a very wide range of understanding and

\* Swami Satchidananda was a disciple and not a fellow-disciple of Swami Vivekananda.—Editors.

sympathy with all grades of life, Western and Eastern, and that he was a uniting force and not a disruptive one. He could be outspoken and severe with the shortcomings of both East and West, and I heard him speak very pointedly and candidly to people, who, without direct experience themselves, repeated the stock prejudices about Indian schools of thought and Indian life. He also exhorted young Indians who visited him to hold fast and remain faithful to what was good in their own culture and not be carried away by the materialistic glamour of the West.

The Swami himself was not exempt from all the blandishments, subtle

and gross, which were poured out upon him. He was no ascetic in the ordinary sense of the term. He met Western life with a cheerful acquiescence in what was going, but it left him as it found him, always true to himself. People who could not fathom his largeness of heart and mind criticised him as self-indulgent, but it was not so: he had a perfect control of himself, both in body and mind.

At this point one must not omit to mention J.J. Goodwin. He was a young journalist who had gone out to America. He was sent to make a shorthand report of one of the Swami's addresses for some journal. From that time he was so attracted to the Swami that he never left him, made himself his constant attendant, took down his lectures in shorthand and devoted all his time to him beyond that in which he had to go and earn a bare living for himself. We owe him a great debt of gratitude, for without him we should have the barest, if any, record of what the Swami taught. When the news was brought to him of Goodwin's death in Madras he was in the Himalayas. He remained silent for a long time gazing out upon the distant peaks. Then he said, "The last words that I shall speak have been recorded," or words to that effect, and he thereby also inferred his early departure.

We started off in London with an address at the then Prince's Hall in Piccadilly: there were about 300 people present and a favourable notice appeared in several papers. Afterwards lectures were organised and a

room was taken at which the attendance used to be about 120. Besides these lectures, he accepted many invitations to private houses and met many prominent people.

There is no doubt that the activities of Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society had done much to prepare the ground and to stir thoughtful minds to listen to a genuine Eastern teacher, and at that time there seemed much more spirit of enquiry than ever since. Whatever the cause, upon Vivekananda's return to India for the second time, interest in the work he had started here flagged and those Swamis who followed him were unable to sustain it. It is difficult to light damp straw or to keep it burning when lighted. Yet it is difficult to judge. Many more books are brought out and read by a widespread public dealing with Eastern thought now, than in those earlier days. Some Eastern tenets like *punarjanma*, *karma*, *vasanas*, etc., have become familiar to people, whereas in the days of my youth such ideas or references were quite unheard of and would have evoked astonishment and ridicule. Forty years ago the psychic atmosphere was calmer, people's minds were then not so much occupied with wars and rumours of wars. With ever quickening intercommunication the influence of East and West upon one another is bound to increase, and although the fifty years that Schopenhauer foretold have been now far exceeded, perhaps 150 years may see Eastern thought familiarised and universal here.

## THE HOLY MOTHER

*By Mrs. S. Muthulakshmi Reddi, M.B. & C.M.*

[Mrs. Reddi is one of the pioneers of the Women's Movement in India. In this capacity and as the first lady to be the Deputy President of a legislative body in this country, she enjoys an All-India reputation. Her life is devoted to social service, especially to the education and upliftment of women. In the following instructive article she gives a somewhat detailed account of the life, personality and teachings of the Holy Mother who is an embodiment of the highest ideals of Indian womanhood and forms an integral part of Sri Ramakrishna's divine life. Her life is not as widely known as it ought to be, and we hope this article of Mrs. Reddi written with deep understanding and fervent devotion will go a great way in remedying this state of affairs.]

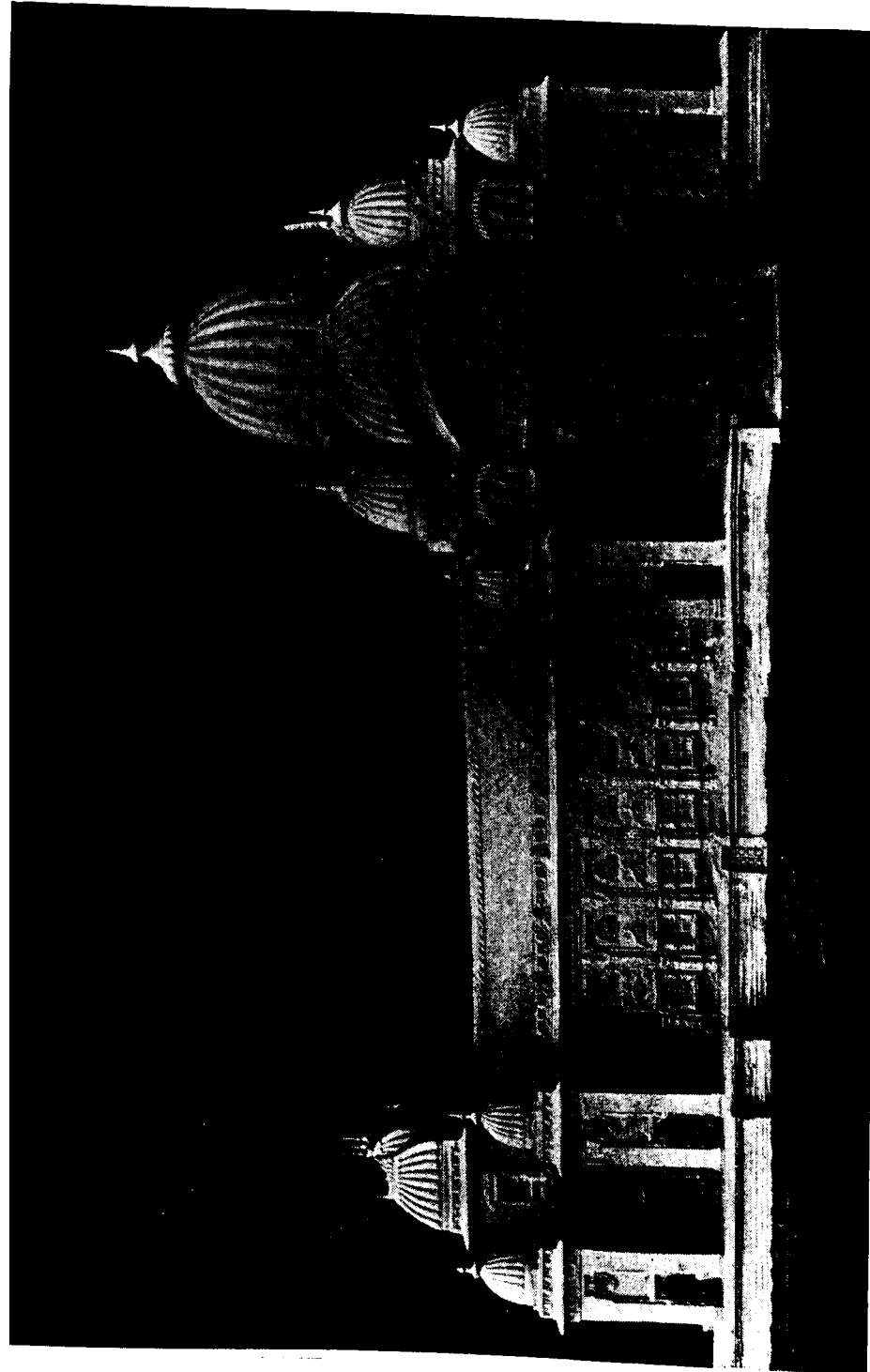
**T**O truly depict a great and saintly life is not within the power of an ordinary individual. To describe a superhuman personality one should have had either a close association with such a spiritualised person or one should have had oneself a glimpse at least of those divine powers. I do not lay any claim to have had either of these. Yet being asked by the authorities of Sri Ramakrishna Math of Madras just to put down in writing my ideas about the Holy Mother whom I consider to be an embodiment of the best in Aryan womanhood, I begin this sacred task with great diffidence, and I pray that this humble attempt of mine may not be a failure.

The Holy Mother—her maiden name was Sarada—was born in 1853 of poor Brahmin parents in an obscure village named Jayrambati, in the district of Bankura in Bengal, and bred in that simple rural atmosphere, was married at the early age of five to Sri Ramakrishna who was then in his 24th year. Sri Ramakrishna was then practising 'Sadhana' and was subjecting himself to severe austerities and stern spiritual discipline, and it was in order to divert his mind from its spiritual flights that his mother and brother planned the marriage.

But in this respect the marriage was a failure; for the partner with whom he was united in wedlock was well-matched with him in point of spiritual greatness. Except for once at the age of seven, Saradamani Devi never met her saintly husband after the marriage till she was in her fourteenth year. This meeting took place at Kamarpukur, the village home of Sri Ramakrishna whither he had gone for a short visit after an absence of seven years. In the meantime Sri Ramakrishna had passed through various spiritual disciplines and developed into a great saint, but this did not in any way make him neglect his duty to his wife. Besides, his Guru Totapuri had told him on knowing him to be married that he alone is truly established in Brahman whose dispassion, discrimination and wisdom are not in any way impaired even in the company of his wife. So out of his sense of duty to his wife and desiring to put himself to this test and fiery ordeal, he received Saradamani Devi cordially and undertook to teach his young and innocent wife all details of the practical life of the world as well as the profound secrets of spiritual discipline. He set himself wholeheartedly to this task and taught her



The Holy Mother



Sri Ramakrishna Temple (under construction), Belur Math, as seen from the Ganges  
(Dimensions L. 232 ft.; B. 110 ft.; H. 112 ft.)

not only her household duties, but "also the way of cultivating absolute faith and self-surrender to God and of behaving correctly with all persons under all circumstances and in all conditions and stations of life".

The Holy Mother herself talked to her disciples in later days of her early training by her husband. She used to say how Sri Ramakrishna was so careful about even trifling details that he instructed her: "When you get into a carriage or boat, get in first, but when you get down, get down last after seeing if anything is left behind". After five or six months' stay in Kamarpukur, Sri Ramakrishna returned to Dakshineswar by himself. Saradamani Devi also returned to her father but filled with that joy and contentment born of true love for her divine husband. She had lived with him, had served him and had tasted his love and affection for her. She had learnt her lessons from him—how to live a clean and pure and godly life, and how to make others happy. A Hindu wife, taught from her infancy to respect, love and revere her husband as God himself, is indeed a blessed and a happy woman, when she experiences a similar love and respect for herself from one whom she considers to be the highest and holiest for her here and hereafter. So it was with Saradamani Devi.

In later days, she often spoke of this, her great happiness to the women disciples of her husband, "Since then," she would say, "I always felt as if a pitcher filled with bliss had been installed in my heart. I cannot tell you how full I felt of that calm, steady and divine joy". This is pure divine love indeed.

Saradamani Devi passed a few more years away from her husband in her father's house, self-absorbed and content with the barest necessities. But though her body lived there, her mind dwelt ever with her husband at Dakshineswar. Even though she felt a strong desire to go and see him, she suppressed it carefully and patiently, consoling herself with the hope that he himself would call her to his side as is the usual Hindu custom. But different rumours about the mental condition of her husband began to reach her when she had completed her 18th year. She therefore became anxious to see him once, and if need be to stay with him and nurse him. Accompanied by her father she left for Calcutta, situated 70 or 80 miles from her village, and reached that place with her health pulled down by a bad fever which she contracted on the way.

When Sri Ramakrishna saw her thin and emaciated, he became concerned very much about her welfare. He made arrangements for her lodgings in his own room and nursed her and supervised her diet and medicine. In two or three days she recovered, whereupon her father finding that Sri Ramakrishna had welcomed her returned to his village quite satisfied.

Thus the Holy Mother was now again under the influence and instruction of her divine husband. Her coming at first caused grave doubts in Sri Ramakrishna's mind; for, as he saw only the Divine Mother in all women, how could he regard one of them as a wife? Saradamani, however, set his fears at rest by telling that she wanted only to serve and to learn. And this she did, as faithfully and devotedly as any disciple

possibly could, during her fifteen or sixteen years of stay in the Temple. She lived in a small closely screened room in the Concert House, at first with Sri Ramakrishna's mother, and after her demise, by herself alone. "Only through one little opening could I see the outside world," she remarks, describing her life, at the Concert House, "and I would watch there all day and night just to catch one glimpse of Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna), but when he passed he would draw his cloth across his face. Thus days went by without seeing him. In course of time Gopamma, Yogin-ma and other lady devotees came and I was less alone.

"Every morning I used to get up at three o'clock and go for my bath in the Ganges. After my bath I would return to my little room in the Concert House and not leave it again all day. The sun never came there, so I could not dry my hair properly. The Purdha curtain round the verandah was just about the height of a man's head. All of Thakur's disciples used to come with provisions and I had to cook for them; so round the edge of the little room there were cooking vessels, bags of rice, dal, etc., and I slept in the small space in the middle." Sometime later she fell ill, and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, probably feeling that this was due to bad accommodation, built a small house for her near the Temple, where she stayed with Sri Ramakrishna's niece and a maid-servant.

Describing her spiritual training under Sri Ramakrishna during this period she says, "I was always so shy that when I came to him I drew my veil down to my chin. He would ask me why I veiled myself and tell

me to lift it. But I could not draw it up beyond my nose. One night, however, I remember he talked the whole night on the Lord, and I became, as it were, mad. When dawn broke I found myself standing before him with my veil thrown entirely back from my face and lost in what he was saying. The daylight suddenly recalled me to myself. I drew my veil quickly and ran to the Concert House.

"Once I asked Thakur with what name I should make Japam. He looked up at me so searchingly that I was frightened and blushed. He replied: 'Take any name you like. Only believe that all power lies in the name you choose and it will surely save you.'

"At that time, at Dakshineswar, I used to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and sit for meditation. I would be totally lost in meditation. Once, in a moonlit night, I was performing my Japam near the steps of the Nahabat (Concert Room). Everything was quiet. I did not know even when Sri Ramakrishna passed that way to answer the call of nature. On other occasions, I would hear the sound of his shoes, but on this one I was totally absorbed in meditation. At that time I looked differently. I had ornaments and a cloth with a red border. The wind had made the cloth slip from my body. I was unconscious of it. Young Jogin came there to give the water-jug to Sri Ramakrishna and saw me in that condition. Ah! the ecstasy of those days! On a moonlit night I would look at the moon and pray with folded hands, 'May my heart be as pure as the rays of yonder moon.' If you are steady in meditation and prayer, you will clearly see Sri Rama-

krishna in your heart, and hear his voice. The moment an idea flashes in your mind, it will be fulfilled then and there. You will be bathed in peace. Ah! what a mind I had at that time. Brinde (the maid-servant) one day dropped a metal plate in front of me, with a bang. The sound penetrated into my heart. I was then meditating in the Nahabat and felt the sound like a clap of thunder, and she burst into tears. In the course of your spiritual realisation you will find that he who resides in my heart exists in your heart as well. He is in the heart of everyone—the oppressed, the persecuted, the untouchable and the outcast. This realisation makes one truly humble. What shall I say about my sister-in-law? One day some sweepers came to our house at Jayrambati and brought a straw-ring for supporting the water-jar on the ground. I asked the man with the ring to leave it outside. With great caution he left it there, but my sister-in-law created a fuss and said, 'The sweeper has touched other things. Throw them away!' and she began to abuse him saying, 'You are all outcasts and you have the nerve to touch our things.' The sweeper was almost dead with fright, but I reassured him and said, 'You need not be afraid of anything.' I also gave them some money to get some refreshments. Such is my sister-in-law's mental state."

Sri Ramakrishna treated his wife with that same love, gentleness and solicitude as he bestowed upon the best of his disciples. Of this the Mother spoke once as follows: "Ah, how Sri Ramakrishna treated me! Not even one day did he utter one word to wound my feelings! He never struck me even with a flower. One day, at

Dakshineswar, I entered his room with his meal. He thought it was Lakshmi (his niece) and said in a commanding tone, 'Shut the door when you leave the room.' 'Very well,' said I. He was startled to hear my voice, and said 'Who is it? You? I did not know that you came here! I thought it was Lakshmi. Please forgive me.' I said, 'What difference does it make?' He never addressed me as 'Tui'. He always looked after my welfare. He would tell me, 'One should be always active. When you are idle, all sorts of bad thoughts and ideas crop up in your mind.' One day he gave me some hemp and asked me to make a net from it so that he could keep the pots of sweets in it, for his young disciples. I made the net accordingly, and with the combed-out fibres that were left over, I stuffed a pillow."

So tutored by her divine husband, Saradamani Devi, now the Holy Mother, attained that peace, calm and joy which only a blessed few could realise. Here is an example for modern India. If every husband would take care of his wife as much as Sri Ramakrishna did, and bestow some time at least to enlighten her on the several duties of life, India will not suffer from the consequences of an educated manhood and ignorant and superstitious womanhood. There would not then be any need for our men to throw the blame on their poor, helpless and ignorant women for many of the ills in our society for which men themselves are wholly responsible. Instances are not wanting even in modern India where husbands, though married to illiterate child-wives, having realised their responsibilities as husbands and householders, have taken upon their own shoulders

the task of educating and training their wives to fulfil aright the several duties enjoined upon householders. One such example was the late Justice Ranade of Bombay who taught his child wife the three R's and made her the pioneer of women's education in Maharashtra and the founder of the famous Seva Sadan Society in Poona, but these are rare indeed. Sri Ramakrishna discharged his duty as householder by instructing and initiating his wife into all his spiritual practices and discipline, and by thus making her his spiritual companion and true helpmate in life. The Holy Mother has said, "He taught me everything, secular and spiritual. He taught me how to arrange the wick of a lamp, what kind of a person each of the family was and how he or she should be behaved with, how to move in a stranger's house and such other wordly things. He also taught me the singing of the praise of the Lord and the secrets of meditation, Samadhi and the knowledge of Brahman."

Here is a great lesson for all householders to learn and to follow, and a suitable answer to all our Western critics who say that Hinduism does not advocate self-restraint, continence, purity and celibacy. If the present-day Hindu has failed to assimilate his sacred scriptures, nay, if he is completely ignorant of their true teachings, his ancestral religion is not to be blamed. The fault is more in the present-day school education and the so-called orthodox practices and customs which have nothing to do with real religion. Sri Ramakrishna's constant advice to his disciples was not to become entangled in the worldly life but to remain pure and detached

from it so as to realise God and attain the highest bliss.

Householder as he was in a sense, he not only preached but underwent the fiery ordeal himself of setting an example to his immediate disciples and to the modern world of a pure celibate life, even in the company of his wife. Will India need Birth-control teaching if the example of this great life has been properly presented before our young men and young women in schools and outside?

Again Sri Ramakrishna is different in many ways from other saints and aspirants after Godhead, the latter always avoiding the sight of women. These, apparently unable to overcome the tempting of their own flesh, used abusive epithets upon the innocent fair sex, calling them by all sorts of names, as temptresses, devils in human form, enchantresses, etc., whereas the truth was that they themselves were at fault. Being weak-minded, they could not restrain their passions. Even the compassionate Buddha ran away from his wife and child, and hesitated to accept women as his disciples and to receive them into his fold. But Sri Ramakrishna is unique and supreme in this respect, and his divine nature, which is sexless, having asserted itself, he could even sleep with his wife in the same bed, his mind being ever fixed on God and lost to all body consciousness.

The Holy Mother's own words give us an idea of his attitude in regard to women. She was one day shampooing his legs. She asked him, "How do you think of me?" To which Ramakrishna replied, "The Mother who is in the Shrine, the mother who gave birth to this body and is now living in the Nalabat—even she is

now shampooing my feet. Really I tell you, I find in you an embodiment of the Divine Mother Herself." Sri Ramakrishna found in all women—even in the most corrupt—the presence of the Mother of the Universe.

Sri Ramakrishna had a profound reverence for womanhood. To him God was primarily the Mother and woman was Her shrine. He saw in each woman the sanctified image of Divine Mother. Even the street-walker had in his eyes something holy in her. The reflection of Divinity, he declared, can never be completely obscured. He used to say that this was the Divine Mother's age and woman must take a leading part in shaping the world's life. She would fulfil her high mission, he believed, not, however, by denying her womanhood, but by glorifying it.

All living beings possess the immortal soul—a spark of that divine—which in some will be dim and hidden, and in others bright and sparkling according to the particular mode of life and daily practices. If those whom the world condemn as sinners and criminals are brought under good teaching and influences, very often the divine element in them asserts itself and they become wholly good and useful. That was the great lesson taught by Sri Ramakrishna and by all the great prophets of the world. Any human individual, hardened criminal and sinner though he may be, if he becomes truly repentant and comes to have absolute faith in himself and in the wisdom and goodness of his Creator, and makes an honest attempt to become good, is sure to attain his desired end. Many such men and women who came under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother turned

a new leaf in their lives and by the mere touch of their holy person were metamorphosed into totally different individuals beyond all recognition. That is why God says, "Between me and my devotee there is no difference, My wisdom is his wisdom, My life is his life, My bliss is his bliss."

Sri Ramakrishna was great beyond all human descriptions, but without the loving and sympathetic co-operation of his wife, he could not have risen to that supreme height of spiritual greatness and wisdom. At one time Sri Ramakrishna and Saradamani Devi used to sleep in the same bed. Often, all through the night Sri Ramakrishna would be absorbed in Samadhi, his body as rigid as in death; and his young wife would be put to fright at the sight of this. Sri Ramakrishna therefore taught her the way of bringing down his mind to body consciousness by the repetition of certain mystic letters in the ear. Although this alleviated her fears to a great extent, still she could have little sleep at night. Realising her difficulty Sri Ramakrishna made arrangements for her sleep at the Nalabat. From what he said about those days it is clear that if Saradamani Devi also had not been completely free from all desires, he would not have so completely escaped from the taint of body-consciousness. Here the woman was stronger than the man. This is true of many a great man who made a mark in the world. The wife has always silently and behind the scenes influenced and shaped the husband's mind and career.

From this and other instances we realise how whole-heartedly the wife of Sri Ramakrishna got into his spirit and assimilated all his teachings and

more than fulfilled his expectations of her. Here is another instance of her nobility, in Sri Ramakrishna's own words: "When a Marwari devotee offered ten thousand rupees, I felt as if he had plunged a saw into my head. I cried to Mother, 'O, Mother, do you want to tempt me at last?' I wanted to know her (his wife's) mind in the matter, and when she came, I said to her, 'The devotee wants to give this money. But as I cannot accept it, he wants to give it in your name. Why do you not accept it? What do you say to it?' But she replied at once, 'How can that be? The money can never be accepted. For if I take it, it will be as if you took it. If I accept it, I shall have to spend it in your service; it will thus be practically accepted by you. People revere you for your renunciation; this money must never be accepted.' Hearing her I heaved a sigh of relief."

His extreme courtesy and consideration for her is amply illustrated by the following incident: One day she was bringing to him a basket of fruits and vegetables with all the eagerness and pride of a happy child. He looked at it gravely and said, "But why so extravagant?" "At least it was not for myself!" said the young wife, all her sunshine gone, in sudden disappointment, and she turned and went away, crying quietly. But this, Sri Ramakrishna could not bear to see. "Go, one of you," he said, turning to the boys beside him, "and bring her back. My very devotion to God will take wings, if I see her weep!"

During Sri Ramakrishna's incurable illness, the Holy Mother nursed him day and night, preparing his diet

and attending to his other comforts along with his devoted disciples.

He passed away in her 33rd year and in his 51st year. When she was going to put on her widow's garb after her husband's demise, Sri Ramakrishna revealed himself to her in the healthy appearance of his early days, and holding her hand, said, "Am I dead that you are removing the signs of wifehood?" After that she never bared her wrists. She always put on a cloth with a thin red border and wore bangles on her hands.

She lived for another 34 years after her husband's death, preaching his gospel to his and her disciples, and was a mother to all of them in the highest sense of that word. The remaining period of her life was remarkable and significant in every respect. She proved herself to be the best disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Thousands of men and women devotees came to see her from all parts of India and from the outside world, to pay their respects and to receive her blessings. She showed herself in word, deed and thought to be capable of the highest spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Her later life was a continuous process of spiritual ministration, she being called upon to play the part of a Guru and a teacher to many a devotee who sought her help to attain peace and bliss. She was highly intelligent and possessed an up-to-date knowledge of the world so as to give appropriate answers and advice to many a worldly-minded individual. She loved all and sympathised with the joys and sorrows of the world. A true description of this illustrious and divine personality is not possible without referring to her conversations and to incidents in her daily life pre-

served for us by devoted disciples. We shall pass in review through some of the pages of these instructive records in the rest of this study.

One lady devotee said: Mother, I have five daughters. I cannot find suitable bridegrooms for them, I am so anxious about it.

Mother: Why do you worry about their marriage? If you cannot find suitable husbands for them, please send them to the Sister Nivedita Girl's School. They will be trained there. They will be very happy in the school.

Another day in the morning Radhu, her niece, was ready to go to the Christian Missionary School of the neighbourhood. Golap-ma came and said to the Mother, "Radhu is now a grown-up girl. Why should she go to the school any more?" She asked Radhu not to go to the school. Radhu began to cry. The Mother said, "She is not quite grown-up. Let her go to the school. She can do immense good to others if she gets education and learns some useful arts from the school. She has been married in a backward village. Through education she will not only improve herself but will be able to help others." Radhu was allowed to go to the school.

When talking to women on household duties, the Mother said, "One must always do some work. It keeps both the body and the mind fit. In my early days at Jayrambati, I was always busy, day and night, with some work or other. I never visited my neighbours. People would blurt out at the very sight of me, 'Dear me, the daughter of Shyama has been married to a lunatic.' I did not see anybody in order to escape such criticism."

Her advice to her own niece who was in an angry mood one day is worth quoting here: She reprimanded her and said, "Women should not show so much anger. They must practise forbearance. Women are generally very sensitive. A mere word upsets them. Words also are so cheap nowadays. They should have patience."

The Holy Mother had practised forbearance and self-control to the highest degree, yet she could never tolerate or be a witness to injustice or cruelty to anybody in any form. One of her woman

devotees describes the following incident: "It was evening when I went to Bagh-bazar to see the Holy Mother. She was kind enough to ask me to spread her small carpet on the floor and fetch her beads. She soon became absorbed in her meditation. Across the lane there was an open space. A few labourers lived there with their family. One of the male members began to beat one woman terribly, probably his wife. Slaps and fisticuffs began to be showered upon her. Then he kicked her with such force that she was thrown to a distance, with a child in her arms. Then he started kicking her again. The Mother could not proceed with her meditation any more. Extremely modest though she was and though her voice could hardly be heard by people on the ground floor, she came to the porch of the second floor, stood by the iron railing and cried aloud in a tone of sharp reprimand, 'You rogue! Are you going to kill the girl outright? I am afraid she is already dead!' Hardly did the man look at her than he became quiet, like the snake before its charmer, and released the woman. The sympathy of the Mother made the woman burst into loud sobs. We heard that her only fault was that she did not cook in time. Afterwards the man became his old self again and wanted to be at peace with the woman. The Holy Mother saw this and came back to her room."

The Holy Mother's love and concern for her disciples knew no bounds. When Saradamani Devi's mother deplored in the hearing of Sri Ramakrishna that her daughter would have no children, Sri Ramakrishna seemed to have said that many good children would call her mother. "When one has earthly children, sometimes they are bad and disobedient," he said to the Holy Mother on one occasion, "but the children I have brought to you are good and pure and will never cause you trouble." This prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna was fulfilled to the very letter. All the young disciples of Sri Ramakrishna loved her and revered her as their own mother, and she in turn was so tender and full of that maternal love for them all. She would be so solicitous about their welfare, would cook for them with her own hands, serve them and feed them with sweets and pray

for them to Sri Ramakrishna. Once when some devotees went to her village to be initiated by her, on hearing from them that they were caught on the way in rain and darkness, she actually went into tears and reprimanded them for having risked so much.

Again the Holy Mother's advice to a young widow devotee is worth repeating for the benefit of our women readers. That devotee writes: "Once I was going to my father-in-law's house when the Holy Mother gave me the following advice, 'Don't be familiar with anybody. Don't take much part in the social functions of the family. Don't be inquisitive about others. Gradually increase the time of meditation and prayer, and read the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.'"

Regarding the instruction that the Holy Mother gave her on another occasion, she writes: "She said to me, 'Never trust a man, even not your own father or brother, what to speak of others. Let me again repeat, don't trust a man, even if God comes to you in the form of a man.' She forbade me to frequent the monastery and other places where the monks lived. She would say, 'You may have no bad intention in your mind. You visit them with pure thoughts, but if your presence brings any impure ideas into their minds, then you will also be partly responsible for it.' She forbade me to make pilgrimage without discrimination of time or company."

Again when one of her disciples lost his father, she advised him to look after his mother and make her quite comfortable before he thought of renouncing the world and seeking his own spiritual welfare. "Everyone should serve his mother. It is all the more incumbent upon you because you have all come to me with the purpose of dedicating your life to the service of others. Had your father not left any money for your mother, I would have asked you to earn money and look after her comfort. Through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, that obstacle has been removed. Simply see that the money left at her disposal is not wasted. Make some arrangement about it, and look after her as much as you can. Is it a small advantage for you? One cannot earn money in strictly honest ways. Money always taints the mind. For this reason I ask you to

settle the pecuniary affairs of your mother as soon as possible. Such is the fascination of money that if you involve yourself too much in it, you will feel attracted to it. You may think that you are above money and that you will never feel any attraction for it as you have once renounced it. You may further think that at any moment you may leave it behind. No, child, never harbour this thought in your mind. Through a tiny hole it will enter into your mind and then strangle you gradually. You will not even know it. Especially as you belong to Calcutta, you know the value of money. Settle your mother's affairs as soon as possible and run away from Calcutta. Further, if you can persuade your mother to go to a holy place, you can both lead a spiritual life, forgetting your worldly relationship. Just now your mother is stricken with grief. I think this is the best arrangement. Your mother is now quite advanced in years. Always talk to her about God. You will really fulfil the duty of a son if you can help her to gather the means for her ultimate journey. You have grown by sucking her milk. How much suffering did she undergo to raise you to manhood! Know that service to her is your highest duty. But it is a quite different matter if she stands in the way of your spiritual life. Why don't you bring her to me? I shall see what she is like. I may give her a few words of instruction if they will be of help to her. But beware! Don't involve yourself in worldliness on the plea of serving your mother. After all, it is nothing but the maintenance of a widow. It means a very trifling sum. Try to settle her affairs as quickly as possible, even at a loss. Sri Ramakrishna could never bear the touch of money. You are all out in the world, taking his name on your lips. Always remember his word. Money is at the root of all the disasters you see in the world. You are young. Money will attract your mind to other temptations. Beware!"

In reply to a question of one of her disciples, she said, "It is true that one may put off a pious intention on considering the propriety or impropriety of the time, but death does not make any distinction of time. As death is always uncertain, one should carry out virtuous wishes whenever

the opportunity presents itself without waiting for a particular time."

The following conversation of the Holy Mother with one of her woman devotees will convey to our readers the high ideals of a married Hindu couple and the duty to their children and family:

Mother: Look at the child who has renounced the world. He has left everything behind in the name of Sri Ramakrishna. The worldly men beget children without number, as if that is their duty in this world. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'One must practise self-control after the birth of one or two children.' Yesterday a young woman came to see me. She had a bunch of children, some hanging from her back and some clinging to her arms. She could hardly manage them. Can you imagine what she told me? She said, 'Mother, I do not at all enjoy this worldly life.' I said, 'How is that, my child? You have got so many young ones!' She replied, 'That is the end of it. I will not have any more.' I said, 'It would be nice if you could carry out your intention.'

The Mother began to laugh.

Devotee: Well, Mother, according to our Hindu conception the husband is our most adorable teacher. The scriptures say that through serving him one can go to heaven, and even be united with God. Now, if a wife, somewhat against the will of the husband, tries to practise self-control, through supplication and spiritual talk, is it sinful for her?

Mother: Certainly not! Whatever you do for the realisation of God cannot have any sinful effect. Self-control is absolutely necessary. All the hard disciplines enjoined upon Hindu widows are meant to help them practise self-control.

All the acts of Sri Ramakrishna were directed to God alone. He once performed the Shodashi Puja, making me the object of worship. I asked him what I should do with the bangles, the clothes and other articles of worship. After a little thought he said that I could give them away to my own mother. My father was then alive. Sri Ramakrishna said to me, 'Don't think, when you present your mother with these articles, that she is an ordinary human being. Think of her as the direct embodiment of the Divine Mother of the

Universe. I acted accordingly. That was the nature of his teachings.

Her extreme humility and simplicity will be seen from the following incident: "The wife of a devotee brought her baby with her during one of her visits to the Holy Mother. The baby dirtied the blankets. The Holy Mother began washing it herself. When the baby's mother snatched it from her, the Mother replied, 'Why should I not wash it? Is he not my relation?'"

She looked upon her disciples as her own children and she never considered that any service to them was beneath her dignity. She, whom thousands revered and worshipped, was never proud and thought for even one minute that she was superior to the rest of the world. Her expressions and manners were always full of grace, tenderness, love and gentleness, and she could solve the knottiest problems of life as well as perform the lowliest of services to comfort and console others who sought her help. She had unlimited patience and in spite of her ill-health and other inconveniences, she would never send away devotees without listening to his or her troubles and without offering a word of comfort. She would particularly be kind and considerate to the poor amongst them.

Sister Nivedita, the English disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who knew the Holy Mother personally writes, "To me, it has always appeared that she is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood."

The Hindu ideal of marriage has been fulfilled in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother; for they were one in spirit but twain in body. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother were in the world and still not of it. They lived for others and never for themselves. They have set an example to the modern world by illustrating in their very lives the ideals of the most ancient of all religions, Hinduism, and thereby making it possible for others to follow those ideals. At a time when India's

sons and daughters were beginning to forget all about their past and ignore their own precious heritage, the soul of India took birth in Sri Ramakrishna and Saradamani Devi to demonstrate to the world the potentialities and virtues of the Hindu race. This description of the life and personality of the holiest and purest of women will not be in vain if the daughters of India begin to think and find time even in the midst of their busy lives to study their ancient scriptures in the light of the lives of

these two great incarnations of God-head. Then they will understand that the highest knowledge and wisdom are not to be had by mere book-learning but by looking within themselves. They will recognise themselves to be the storehouse of all human virtues, if only they realise that the human soul is but a part of the universal soul and make an honest attempt to reach Him, the All-wise, the All-good, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent—the ultimate goal of all human existence.

### SOME DISCIPLES OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

*By Swami Jagadiswarananda*

[Swami Jagadiswarananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order and is well-known as a contributor to several journals in this country. These short sketches of some of the disciples of the Master will not only reveal the greatness of these personalities but also the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna whose glory they reflect.]

**I**N THE following paragraphs we are giving brief sketches of some lay and monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who have not come much into the limelight of public recognition. They were nevertheless great personalities and were intimately connected with the Master's life. They were also largely responsible for spreading his message and for strengthening the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement which has to-day gained a world-wide significance. Little is known outside a limited circle of friends and admirers about their uncommon devotion and dedication to God, and little also is available in print about the part they have played in preaching the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda is omitted from this account as the public has read sufficiently about him, and know fairly well about his work

in starting and stabilising the Mission of the Master in India and abroad. The Holy Mother who may rightly be described as the foremost of the Master's disciples is also not included because there is a special article devoted to her elsewhere in this issue. A study of these personalities is also useful in understanding Sri Ramakrishna; for, one aspect or other of the many-sided genius of Sri Ramakrishna is embodied and illustrated in the lives of these devoted disciples through whom his glory and greatness were manifested after he had shaken off the mortal coil.

#### MATHURANATH

We shall begin this account of the great devotees of Sri Ramakrishna with a sketch of Mathuranath, the son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, who founded the Temple of Dakshineswar where the Master spent the greater part of his God-intoxicated life. Though by



Mathura Nath



'M' or Master Mahasaya  
(Prof. Mahendra Nath Gupta)

himself a shrewd man of the world in the full sense of the term, Mathuranath was perhaps the first to recognise the spiritual genius of Sri Ramakrishna who was then but an obscure priest in the Temple of which Mathuranath was practically the lord and master. This in itself speaks volumes of the extraordinary spiritual calibre lying behind the apparent worldliness of this young aristocrat. The pride of wealth and worldly position did not in the least interfere with his reverence and devotion for the Master whom men in general regarded at that time only as a low-paid employee of his with a somewhat deranged brain. During the period of storm and stress that characterised the early spiritual development of Sri Ramakrishna, Mathuranath, with an understanding so rare among the worldly-minded, stood fast by the Master, taking every care of his health and physical comfort of which he himself was supremely unmindful, and providing him with all facilities for carrying on spiritual practices under the guidance of various adepts. It is no exaggeration to say that the devotion and liberality of Mathur had much to do at least in providing the external conditions for the full flowering of the Master's spiritual genius. For this, the world at large, and the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna in particular, owe a deep debt of gratitude to this devoted worldling. Sri Ramakrishna himself recognised the value of his services, and as a token of this recognition described him as the most important of his 'rasaddars' or divinely appointed care-takers.

There is an exquisite tenderness about the intimacy and the mutual devotion between these two diver-

gent characters—the austere devotee whose watchword in life was the renunciation of Kama-Kanchana (lust and gold) on the one hand, and the wealthy aristocrat who never felt any repugnance for the good things of life on the other. Mathur, of course, was not a credulous simpleton to be imposed upon by any assumed garb of piety. He fully shared the rationalistic and sceptical spirit common to the English-educated men of the time, and it was not without several tests, cunningly planned, that he allowed his initial impression regarding the Master's saintliness to crystallise itself into unwavering faith and devotion. But once this faith was engendered by observing the immaculate purity of the Master's character and by the spiritual experiences he himself gained in his company, Mathur manifested in his attitude towards the Master a rare type of trust, devotion and unreasoning love, for which no self-sacrifice was too great, no considerations of honour and prestige too valuable, in the service and adoration of the object of its attention. Though parsimonious by nature, he would, at the Master's wish, spend hundreds and thousands of rupees in feeding and clothing the poor; at his request he would remit the rent of the famine-stricken tenants of an estate; to please him he would arrange for religious discourses and Sastrie debates and lavishly distribute gifts and prizes among devotees and scholars; to entertain and delight the Master he would make princely arrangements for pilgrimages to holy places like Benares, Brindavan and Navadwip, spending large sums of money. In fact he looked upon all his wealth as meant for the Master's service, and at one time wanted even

to transfer the ownership of his estates to him, and himself be only his steward and agent. The offer of course was rejected.

Besides this, the intimate association of the Master with Mathur's family and the liberties allowed him in his household show how unreserved was Mathur's trust in him. The Master was called 'Baba' or 'Father' by Mathur and his wife, and neither of them would consider any festival or religious ceremony in their house to have been celebrated properly if the Master could not attend it for some reason or other. The 'Father' had free access into the inner apartments of the house, and it was often a great delight for the ladies to be in his holy company and hear his godly talks. During the Master's Madhura-Bhava Sadhana, when he impersonated a woman, dressing like and cultivating the feelings of one of the fair sex, Mathur insisted on his living in his own inner apartments along with the ladies of his household. Nay, so close was Mathur's intimacy with the Master and so solicitous was he about taking care of him that when the Master was in his house, he would not be satisfied without arranging for the 'Father's' sleep in the same bed-room where he and his wife slept.

Addressing Hriday Mathur once said, "My wife, children, wealth, position—these and all other things are unreal; Ramakrishna alone is real." There is no adequate description of the character of this devoted householder, than this brief profession of faith coming from his own mouth.

It must also be remarked that as Mathur loved and trusted him, the Master too staunchly stood by him in all his spiritual and secular diffi-

culties, and confided all his thoughts and aspirations to him as a child. What was more he cured him of his scepticism and sensuous inclinations, and gave him a spiritual upliftment which he could not have gained by himself.

#### THE MASTER MAHASHAY

The only other householder disciple whom we shall consider in these sketches is Mahendra Nath Gupta or Master Mahashay, more familiarly known by his pen-name "M." Of all the lay disciples of the Master he did the most for disseminating the Master's message. "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" compiled by M. is the most popular of all publications on the Master and has carried his message far and wide even to distant villages not only of Bengal but of other provinces as well. The biblical simplicity of its style appeals alike to men and women of all classes and types and its description of the events and holy conversations of the Master's everyday life are so vivid that the reader often feels transported to the actual scenes. The Gospel has been rendered into almost all Indian vernaculars and many European languages: "Socratic dialogues are Plato all over—you are entirely hidden," said Swami Vivekananda writing to him about the Gospel. A comparative study will show that the Gospel may rightly be bracketed with the famous Dialogues of Buddha.

Like many other educated youths of his time Mahendra Nath owed his religious awakening to Keshub Chandra Sen. His spiritual thirst was finally quenched by the Master with whom he came in contact at the age of 28. Since then till his end, for a period of over half a century, the one

object for which he lived and laboured was to talk of him to others and to live up to his teaching. Even in his active career as a Head Master in High Schools or as a Professor in Colleges he lived an austere and intense life of spiritual discipline, never allowing his mind to be ruffled even by the most provoking circumstances and perplexing situations. Aptly does an English writer describe him: "A venerable patriarch has stepped from the pages of the Bible, and a figure from Mosaic times has turned to flesh. . . . In that grave, sober presence I realise instantly that there can be no light persiflage, no bandying of wit or humour, no utterance even of harsh cynicism and dark scepticism. . . . His character with its commingling of perfect faith in God and nobility of conduct is written in his appearance for all to see."

According to the mandate of the Master, Mahendra Nath lived in the world but he was never of it. He simplified his living so much that it bordered on ascetic sternness and plainness. To drive home to his own mind the idea of homelessness and to slacken the bondage of domestic ties, he would sleep in the open balcony of the Senate Hall of the Calcutta University among the waifs and strays of the city who passed their nights there. He spent his life mostly in a room of the High School of which he was the proprietor and rector; and there, surrounded by a circle of wrapt listeners, he would lose himself while discoursing on the words of the Master till late hours of the night. It was an inspiration to hear him talking of his Master, God, or religion, throwing wonderful sidelights on the mysteries of spiritual life with apt

examples from the lives of the prophets and apposite quotations from scriptures.

Mahendra Nath was a perennial source of inspiration to all who came in contact with him. Even in the early days of his discipleship under the Master, being the Head Master of a High School, he was responsible for influencing the minds of several young men and directing them to Sri Ramakrishna. Some of the Sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna came from among them. Even among the later generations of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, not a few owe their first inspiration to him. They ever met with encouragement from him in the pursuit of the monastic ideal. In fact so great was his reverence for the ideal of Sannyas that he often used to say: "A Sannyasin of the common type even is like a cultured graft-mango which, even if sour, is without any fibre. But a householder, however outstanding he may be, is like a country mango. It may be sweet but it is fibrous. There is a difference in the stuff." He also used to describe Sannyasins as 'whole time workers of God.' This distinction between the householder and the Sannyasin on which he always insisted, he used to apply in his own case too. Often his students and admirers who had become Sannyasins afterwards would go to him for inspiration. Though himself an illuminated sage, he would protest against their prostrating before him for the reason mentioned above, and would feel visibly moved if they did so in spite of his protestations. To shake hands with him as an equal is all that he liked them to do—so deep was his humility and so profound his regard for the ideal of

renunciation, the message of his master's life and teachings. Truly has it been said that in his presence no word was heard but the word of God, no word spoken but in description of His glory and no word read but what revealed the mystery of His being.

#### SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

We next pass on to the Sannyasin disciples who have been mainly responsible for spreading the message of the Master. Of these the first that requires consideration is Swami Brahmananda, universally recognised as next only to Swami Vivekananda in point of spiritual greatness. If the latter was responsible for carrying the message of the Master from one end of the globe to the other, it was under the fostering care of the latter that the work got stabilised and entered the stage of rapid expansion. He occupied the presidential seat of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission for more than two decades from its very establishment.

The spiritual eminence of the Swami can be well gauged from the fact that Swami Vivekananda described him reverently as a "Mountain of Spirituality." Considering the latter's dignified reserve, firmness and equipoise of mind, he would sometimes compare him with Bhishma of the Mahabharata. The brother-disciples' veneration for Swami Brahmananda almost amounted to adoration. To them he was the likeness of their Master. He was their beloved "Rajah" and was known by that appellation among the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. His transcendental spirituality had installed him in the spiritual sonship of Sri Ramakrishna who fondled and treated him as a child. As a boy of 19, Swami

Brahmananda met the Master, and he perhaps of all his fellow-disciples, lived most in his company. He loved the Master as dearly as a child loves its father, and so unconventional was his relationship with him that in his playful mood he would run to him from time to time and sit on his lap. Under the influence of the Master's holy company and by the practice of Tapasya, his boyish innocence developed into profound spirituality.

As a wandering monk he visited numerous Tirthas in Northern and Western India, practising spiritual absorption in congenial places. Often he used to pass the whole night in meditation. A considerable portion of his itinerant life was, however, spent in Brindavan which he liked very much. In many of these places, he went into ecstasy. In those days his appearance was remarkably sober and serene, and an ineffable radiance shone over his face. His eyes were wonderfully lustrous and indrawn, and his person seemed to radiate spirituality. He was always calm and collected, and was marked for his inwardness of life.

As the spiritual head of the Order he took special interest in moulding the lives of young monks and novitiates, whose number increasingly swelled. He looked with parental care after their physical welfare, and personally attended to their grievances and inconveniences. His presence was an inspiration to the inmates of the Math and was always sought by them. His association with the devotees was a perennial source of delight to them. Though the Head of the Order, he was very unassuming and as the President he never commanded but only suggested. He was full of wit and humour and was a



Swami Shivananda



Swami Brahmananda



Swami Saradananda



Swami Ramakrishnananda

source of joy to all who would come in contact with him.

The Swami's spirit of renunciation, his spiritual insight and his wisdom in dealing with men and matters are well brought out by the following incident. A rich businessman, having lost his only son, wanted to bequeath his whole business concern to the Math and retire from the world. He began frequenting the Math and insisting that Swami Brahmananda should accept the gift, but the Swami however deferred giving any definite reply. The gentleman finally persuaded one of the Sadhus of the Math to plead on his behalf to the Swami for the acceptance of the gift. The Swami however told that Sadhu in reply: "By coming in contact with you the gentleman wants to renounce his wealth. On the other hand by associating with him you want to become a businessman! *Wait and watch*, and you will see the gentleman will change his mind." The course of events justified the Swami's caution; for the gentleman actually changed his mind.

The Swami was of a retiring disposition and would always avoid public limelight. When, however, he met people, he would welcome them and hear their talks. He would enter into the spirit of a person, be he a doctor, a lawyer, a professor, a dramatist or a journalist, and listen to them as a learner, about their professions or the subjects with which their minds were full. He would hardly speak about matters spiritual unless he was impressed by the enquirer's sincerity.

In his spiritual instructions to people, he used to lay special emphasis on the efficacy of Japam, devotional

songs and the reading of holy books. He instructed his disciples to meditate four times a day—morning, evening, noon and midnight. In the course of a conversation or in the midst of fun he would disclose a spiritual truth, or hint the solution of problems in a manner that went home into the questioner's mind. He always recommended combination of work and meditation in the case of generality of men. "Give 12 annas i.e. three-fourths of your mind to God, and devote the remaining 4 annas i.e. one-fourth to worldly duties and activities,"—this used to be one of his favourite sayings. Practice of religion and realisation of Truth were the burden of all his teachings.

Swami Brahmananda initiated only a handful of aspirants who were possessed of steadiness and sincerity. Men of position, learning or wealth without spiritual hankering were summarily dismissed by him and he gladly gave instruction even to the illiterate, the poor and the penitent with true religious thirst. Once he blessed with initiation a menial in whom he recognised spiritual calibre. His psychic powers were so developed that he could divine like his Master, the spiritual inclinations and possibilities of a person at a glance. He was endowed with the supernal faculty of transmitting spirituality to a worthy candidate. He carried about him a religious atmosphere; so wherever he went he breathed spiritual fragrance and became a centre of attraction for all religious-minded people. This spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna was ever eager to help earnest men in the higher life and led many from the darkness of life to the light of God.

## SWAMI SHIVANANDA

Swami Shivananda succeeded Swami Brahmananda as the President of the Math and Mission and occupied that position for about twelve years till his death. Mahapurush Maharaj, as he was popularly known, was the name given to him by Swami Vivekananda in recognition of his perfect control over the senses.

He was married and was in employment at the time he met the Master, but so receptive was he to spiritual ideas that from his first meeting with the Master he decided to follow the ideals of renunciation and God-realisation. A considerable part of his long life of eighty years was devoted to austerity and contemplation. At Benares he spent many years, devoting his whole time to meditation, worship and study, eating very little food and never going out of the monastery. Even when he was engaged in work, no day passed without his getting up at 3 o'clock in the morning and spending several hours in meditation in the shrine room. So perfect a master was he of the palate that whatever the quantity and varieties of the delicacies served in his plate, he would never touch any of them except the simple preparations that he was usually accustomed to take. Those who had seen him in his younger days describe him as radiant in complexion and leonine in his gait. Majestic and grave, free from elation and depression, seeking no praise and offering no prayers, there was something in him characteristic of Buddhist ascetics. Whenever walking he was in the habit of fixing his gaze on the toe. Jokingly he remarked once that he might have been a Buddhist ascetic in the previous birth.

The spirit of renunciation in him was so stern that even blood-relations were nothing better than strangers to him. Once at the sight of his aged elder sister near by, he said addressing the assembled monks: "Five years ago when I met her I felt her to be an acquaintance of mine. Now I feel as though she is a stranger to me, the impression that she is my sister, the nearest blood relation, having been completely obliterated from the mind."

He had also remarkable spiritual experiences, of some of which at least he spoke to others. At the Master's touch he had experienced within the welling up of a divine joy, causing horripilation and tears for hours together. He had experienced the awakening and rising up of the Kundalini, accompanied by a sensation resembling that of ants creeping up. He perceived on several occasions that the whole universe was instinct with Chaitanya or consciousness. The test of the pudding lies in tasting it. Swami Shivananda's spiritual power is to be gauged by his capacity to mould people's life. He could put down the restlessness and turbulent spirit of an individual by a mere touch. He could by the exercise of his will help a person to overcome his resurgent passions that defied all his own attempts at control.

Not only in point of such powers, but also in the perfection and magnanimity of character did he show signs of his spiritual greatness. Though revered like a God by his innumerable disciples and admirers, he was child-like and free from every trace of egoism. This self-effacement in him he gave expression to, when he confided to an intimate disciple that Shivananda was dead long ago

and that it was the Master alone who spoke through him. He felt this aloofness from the body, this sense of being only an instrument in the hands of the Divine in so tangible a form that in his last illness, even when subjected to the tortures of asthmatic fits, he could say when questioned that the body was suffering but he was quite happy. That this was no mere profession is testified by those who had seen him in the morning after a sleepless and torturous night, enquiring after others' welfare and speaking words of joy, encouragement and benediction, with the cheerful and beaming face of a child. No word of despair, sorrow or complaint would escape his lips.

His love of devotees and men of genuine piety was limitless. A monk suffering from bad health was asked by him why he did not leave Belur and go to some other place for a change. He replied that disease and death stalk everywhere, and that wherever he be, he will die at one time or other. Mahapurushji remarked thereupon that that was his feeling too, and that he stayed at Belur, even though he was sure that he would live a healthier life in a bracing climate, because he felt that his departure to a more distant and inaccessible place will cause great disappointment to the large number of people who flocked to him for spiritual help. It is said that a devotee who had done great service to the Mission, falling into financial embarrassments felt shy of going to the Math for a long time. Mahapurushji, on knowing this, sent for him and asked him what amount would be required to relieve him of his immediate difficulties. Being told that Rs. 1,000 would do, he readily

gave away that amount from his small personal fund of Rs. 1,300, the offerings of some of his devoted disciples. The grateful gentleman wanted to give a receipt as a document, but the Swami thereupon remarked: "Is this the relation between you and us! The money is given unconditionally. If you are able to return it in future you may do so; otherwise not." This put the gentleman to tears. The Swami would even go to the length of requesting his wealthy devotees to relieve the financial embarrassments of earnest spiritual aspirants when worries of this kind prevented them from pursuing the spiritual ideal.

As the President of a big religious organisation he travelled all over India, carrying the message of Sri Ramakrishna to distant Provinces, and inspiring many devotees by his own life and character that reflected the glory of the great Master. His disciples are to be counted in thousands all over India and the outside world. Liberal and cosmopolitan in outlook, he made no distinction between Hindu and Muslim or Christian and Parsi; and no provincial and national barrier as between Madras and Bombay-man, Bengali and Hindustani, Indian and European ever vitiated his outlook.

The stern ascetic that he was, the Swami had in his early days a reputation to be a relentless disciplinarian and hard taskmaster. Indiscipline, inattention and lethargy would receive severe chastisement from him, and none but a few could stay with him in those days. But age and the responsibility of presidentship mellowed down his sternness of temper, and the fiery ascetic with his awful reserve and unapproachable aloofness, became the very picture of

sweetness, love and forgiveness before which even the guilty would feel no fear.

#### SWAMI SARADANANDA

From the two Presidents of the Math and Mission, we now come to one who was its Secretary during the presidentship of both of them. For Swami Saradananda was made Secretary by his illustrious spiritual brother, Swami Vivekananda, from the very inception of the work; and the solidarity and expansion of the Math and Mission are largely due to the devotion, dexterity and administrative skill displayed by him during his regime extending over quarter of a century. He was for sometime the successor of Swami Vivekananda in the preaching work started by the Swami in America and England. But his most solid contribution towards the spreading of the Master's message, besides his services as the Secretary, is his great biography of the Master in Bengali running into several volumes. Being one of the most cultured and intellectual among the Master's disciples, he was perhaps the one most fitted to do this work, and generations yet unborn will be grateful to him for preserving for them the divine life-incidents and spiritual experiences of the Master in a form that comes to a very high standard of literary and philosophical excellence.

The spiritual eminence of the Swami is well indicated by the fact that his first request to his Master was to lead him to the highest spiritual experience of recognising God as dwelling in all creatures. Towards the end of his life he confessed frankly that he was blessed with that vision by his Guru's grace. That was

why he took whole-hearted interest in all philanthropic activities of the Mission in the time of flood, famine, fire, epidemics and other natural catastrophes. The Swami was largely responsible for popularising all over India the ideal of service now so much needed for our national upliftment. Physical, intellectual and moral service of God in man was his constant exhortation to his disciples.

Another outstanding trait of his character was his respect for women verging on worship. It was his realisation of the woman as the manifestation of the Divine Mother that was at the root of his devoted service to her in multifarious ways. To this may also be linked up his devotion to the Holy Mother whose service was the first and foremost concern of his life. He built up the Bagh Bazar Math in order to house her comfortably, and he also fixed up his headquarters there as the 'Darwan' or gate-keeper of the Mother. He was ever like an affectionate son to the Holy Mother. A striking incident characteristic of this relation between them took place a few days before the Holy Mother's passing away. It so happened that some one brought for her a tasty preparation of fried pulses, and the Mother, who was for days living on bland and insipid diet during her prolonged illness, had a strong inclination to eat it. Her attendants, however, coming to know of it feared that it might upset her already impaired digestive system and reported the matter to Swami Saradananda. He thereupon went to the Mother and asked her to give him something to eat, whereupon the Mother gave him the pulse preparation immediately, although she was herself very eager to eat it. The death of the Holy

Mother whom he looked upon as the very duplicate form of his Master, came to him as a shock, and since then he retired more and more from public activities to the inner sanctuary of his soul.

Swami Saradananda was the very embodiment of forgiveness, impartiality and patience coupled with firmness—qualities abundantly needed for a successful executive head. He would always allow each individual to grow according to his own line of development, and would never rebuke a person or wound the feelings of an individual in pointing out his mistakes. There was also in him a complete readiness to own his own mistakes whenever he discovered them. He inspired confidence in all with whom he came in contact. His sympathetic heart and loving touch acted as a charm on people during their illness or when they were overcome with despair. His bulky body, august appearance, and grave look concealed within a tender heart and lent a divine dignity to his personality. Practicality and spirituality were beautifully harmonised in his life. In his later days Swami Saradananda was indifferent in health but wore a smiling face in illness. He was reluctant to accept services even from his attendant disciples and would not disclose an acute illness till he was laid up in bed. His patience and perseverance elicited praise even from Swami Vivekananda. In a strict Confucian sense he was a gentleman, and observed good manners and social etiquette as far as practicable in his monastic life. His talks, his dealings, and movements disclosed his unique self-restraint, and no provocation could disturb the balance of his mind. His friends found in him an ideal

example of a Sthitaprajna (one of steadied understanding), as described in the Gita; for he was an adept in the Yogic secret of right activity.

#### SWAMI PREMANANDA

We next come to another personage, less august, majestic and learned than the one we were considering till now, but still a centre of great spiritual attraction, who incessantly radiated the rays of purity, love and godliness on all that came near him. Swami Premananda, or Baburam Maharaj as he was familiarly known, was distinguished as the purest by his great Master from even among his young disciples of unsullied purity. "He is absolutely pure to the very marrow. No impure thought can even cross his mind," remarked the Master about him, and in recognition of this trait in him, he always liked to have him by his side as his attendant and allowed the young man the privilege of touching him in his ecstatic moods when he was specially sensitive to impure touch. He often called him by endearing names as "Kindred spirit" and "Golden Treasure."

The Swami too in his attitude towards the Master whom he looked upon as the Deity maintained several special characteristics. There was a feminineness about his devotional outlook, which often percolated even through his physical frame at the time of worship and in fervent devotional moods, imparting a special grace to his movements and to his naturally handsome body. His devotion belonged to the class of Raga Bhakti, as opposed to Vaidhi Bhakti, —the unconventional, intense and overflowing love of God resembling that of a passionate wife for her hus-

band. He always felt the presence of God, and used to see the form of his Master moving with him in his daily activities in the monastery. Unnoticed by any one he often used to sing and dance, as if for the entertainment of a Presence which he alone felt. Every act of his was dedicated to God, and so great was his delight in such worshipful service, that in the exaltation of it he would, in spite of his physical frailness, work day and night with little food and rest on the occasion of the Master's birth-day celebrations. In his love of God and devotion to His service, he did not care the least for scriptural study; for why should he study any book, when he found in his Master the very embodiment of their principles? Besides devotional manifestations and dedicated service, he had also his moments of deep contemplative absorption. One day in one such moment of absorption, a monk noticing that he had not gone for his night meal even long after the bell, and that he was sitting in a meditative posture without any outward consciousness, roused him up and asked whether he was sleeping. He replied by humming a song: "I have put sleep to sleep," etc.

As his love of God was great, so also was his love and regard for His devotees. So irresistible was his personal magnetism and so charming his loving disposition that the Math was a source of attraction to people of all classes and ages. At all hours of the day they flocked to him, 'the mother of the Math,' and nothing was so delightful to him as speaking of God to them, and feeding and entertaining them. For, was not every visitor to the Math devoted to God to some extent at least; otherwise, of all

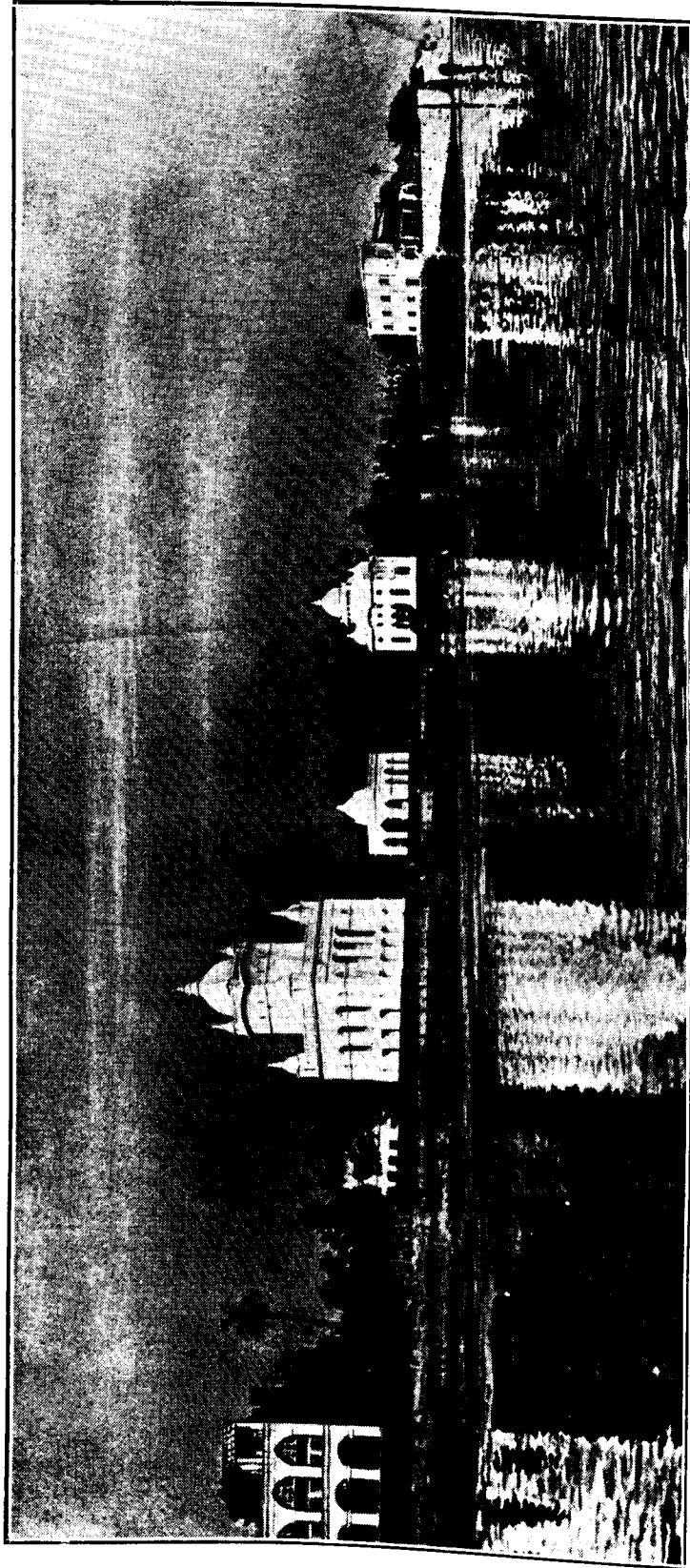
places in a big city like Calcutta, with its numerous attractions, why should they visit the Math which offered nothing to feast their senses? So he thought. And his joy and satisfaction used to be boundless when any inmate of the Math undertook, even at great personal inconvenience, say, after a late meal, to cook food for these untimely visitors, and feed and entertain them. Before this celestial love even some hardened sinners, the classes generally shunned and ostracised by society—drunkards, rowdies and rogues—got transformed and turned a new leaf in their lives. It is needless to add that many were the pure-hearted young men whom the loving contact of this seraphic soul attracted to the life of renunciation and piety.

Though the centre of attraction for numbers of people, the Swami never accepted any one as his personal disciple. But he would point out to them the way of divine love and make them feel within the nearness of God and the guru. In all that he did there was absolutely no personal consideration at all. He never accepted any presents from his admirers, and did not keep with him even superfluous clothing other than what was just required for his simple needs. So true was he to the ideal of renunciation that after his passing away, his tin box was found to contain only one or two pieces of cloths and a complimentary copy of a Math publication.

The Swami played an important part in spreading the message of the Master. He made several propaganda tours all over Bengal, especially the eastern Districts of the Province, and wherever he went, he was a great source of attraction and inspiration. But his greatest contribu-



Swami Premananda



The Belur Math  
(The Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, near Calcutta)

tion to the Master's work was his training of the young men who had adopted the life of renunciation. In this he has left a tradition still remembered by many. Swami Saradananda, as we pointed out before, was a believer in individual development. Swami Premananda, however, preferred the method of actively interfering with men and mercilessly chiselling away their eccentricities and angularities of character. He compared his method to that of the potter who uses all his force in cleaning and kneading the clay thoroughly before applying it quietly to the wheel to take the special shape required. For, the refinement of the clay of human character, the pre-requisite of all higher spiritual development was the sole object of the apparently harsh treatment meted out to the young men under him by this otherwise loving and kind personage. For as soon as a young man, attracted by the Swami's love and piety, joined the Order and entered his school of discipline, he would discover another facet of the Swami's character, the uncompromising taskmaster and disciplinarian in him. The slightest neglect of duty or inattention brought from him severe chastisement. Did any one cut too deep when removing the potato skin or did he arrange the fruits and flowers for worship inartistically, he would surely receive severe rebuke. One who used more than a single match stick to light a lamp at a time will be reminded that the income of the Math came from poor people and one should be more careful in spending it economically. If a young man cut his finger carelessly while chopping fodder for cattle, he would be severely reprimanded for his carelessness, and little sympathy would be shown him

for his suffering. Those who fell sick were given very little attention and comforts, so that they may remember that as Sannyasins only the shadow of a tree was their legitimate due. From morning 4 A.M. to 10 o'clock at night when they retired for sleep, the Swami would fully engage the young men in some work or other, tirelessly supervising every bit of their activities and sharply rebuking them for their mistakes. When asked for the reason why he made the young men work so hard, he would say that in the beginning of their spiritual life they would be able to forget their family and its attachments and cultivate the monastic outlook and its new ties and affections, only if they got accustomed to engage their minds wholly in works of the nature of service to Sri Ramakrishna. There was, however, a silver lining in all his harshness and severity; for these were punctuated by acts of self-forgetting love and disinterested affection, and all knew full well that he was never actuated by selfishness or revengeful motives. The sole object of his training was to inculcate in these young men his own cherished ideal of life, namely, the practice of resignation unto the Lord, which he used to express in the significant words: "Not I, Not I, but Thou." And it is worth remarking that on the shoulders of many of the young men trained by the Swami has fallen today the mantle of the early pioneers of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

#### SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

Another disciple of the Master who worked indefatigably for spreading his message was Swami Ramakrishnananda. A keen mathe-

matician and an erudite scholar in English and Sanskrit, he held a position of intellectual eminence among the Master's disciples. But the devotee in him, however, predominated the scholar, and it was in recognition of his whole-hearted devotion for, and absorption in, the service of the Master that Swami Vivekananda conceded to him the name of 'Ramakrishnananda' which he himself would have liked to take. His relationship with Sri Ramakrishna has been compared to that of Hanuman towards Sri Ramachandra. An anecdote is current about the monkey-devotee that after vainly searching for Sita everywhere in the harem of Ravana's palace, he was about to give up the quest, feeling that it would be improper and undesirable for him, a Brahmachari, to witness any more the scenes that greeted his eyes in the privacy of the inner apartments. Just then the devotee, however, recalled: "What is this Brahmacharya for? Is it not for pleasing the Lord and realising Him? Even that pleasure of the Lord I am gaining by doing his work. How foolish was then my previous thought!" Such was the devotional attitude of Swami Ramakrishnananda too; for, in his case *both the means and the end of spiritual life was the service of the Master.*

And this service he did with a steadfastness and devotion that may seem romantic in the modern age. In the Master's life-time, especially in his last illness, he was the most untiring of his attendants. After the Master's passing away he continued the service of the Master through the worship of his likeness in which he felt his living presence. Because of this clear perception of the Deity in

the picture or image, there was no conventionality about his worship which partook more of the nature of spontaneous service to a living being. He would feed and clothe the likeness of the Master; he would put it to sleep as one might do to a beloved person in flesh; he would fan it for hours at noon. And once in Madras, it is said, while he was living in a dilapidated building, it rained suddenly at night, whereupon he stood the whole night with an umbrella protecting his Master's likeness that was installed in a leaking corner, lest he should disturb his sleep if he removed him to another place. In the earlier days of the monastery, when the other Sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna used to be absorbed always in meditation and devotional practices or went to distant parts of India as wandering monks, the Swami was the only person who stuck on tenaciously to the place where his Master's relics were kept, continuing the service to him as he used to do in his life-time; for to him, as for the monkey-hero Hanuman, no spiritual discipline was of greater value than the service of the Deity. And in that service was his delight and through it he gained perfection—the highest form of Vairagya (dispassion), Bhakti (divine love), and gnana (spiritual knowledge).

"The standard he set for himself in the life he had taken up was a very high one," remarks an American writer about the Swami. "With his breadth and loftiness of vision he was as humble and simple as a child. He was always an imposing figure but his features were plain save when they were lighted by his smile which transfigured them and lent them a rare spiritual beauty." He was to the

core an orthodox Hindu, yet was he very liberal and catholic in his religious outlook and noted for his devotion to Christ and deep understanding of the Bible. His powers of endurance were remarkable, it being reputed that for a particular autumnal worship he would sit continuously for twenty-four hours before the altar without moving an inch even once from the place.

To this Mahatma with his portly form, his spirit of consecrated service and his orthodox ways of living, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement owes a debt the magnitude of which can never be overestimated. The continuity of the central Math, the nucleus of the movement, was kept up by his unwavering devotion to the Master's service which made him forego the luxuries of a Sannyasin's life like itineracy and retreat into solitude. Often under very difficult conditions of life, he stuck on to the relics of the Master for a period of nearly twelve years, without stirring an inch from the city of Calcutta. And when he at last left Calcutta, it was due to the compulsion of his much esteemed fellow-disciple, Swami Vivekananda, who wanted him to start a centre of work in Madras and be an apostle of the Master to South India. For over a decade he lived and laboured in Madras passing through difficulties of an overwhelming nature that would have disheartened a less stalwart spirit. Though he did not live to see the fruits of his labours, he planted the seeds of devotion in the minds of a few sincere men, which have since then sprouted into big institutions—monastic, educational and industrial—and into publications, magazines and a crop of young men who have dedicated

their lives to the Master's cause. His intellectual contribution too was by no means small, consisting as it does in a number of books in English of great religious and philosophical value, and an excellent book on Sri Ramanuja in Bengali.

#### CONCLUSION

In the foregoing sketches we have picked out only a few of the great disciples of the Master who worked actively for many years in spreading the Master's message and whose influence is tangibly imprinted on the Math and the Mission. There are several others, Sannyasins and householders, men and women, whose lives of matchless purity, devotion and self-sacrifice have been a source of inspiration to innumerable souls in India and other parts of the world. Among the Sannyasins we may mention in passing Swamis Yogananda and Turiyananda who were both noted for their learning, austerity, control of mind and spiritual realisation, and of whom the latter worked for a short period in America; the learned Swami Abhedananda, otherwise known as Kali Tapaswi for his austere life, whose valuable work in the cause of Vedanta in America has received wide recognition both in the East and the West, but of whom we do not write much here because he is still alive in our midst; and Swami Adbhutananda who lived away from the Math and its works in wrapt contemplation without sleep at night, but was none the less much respected as 'the greatest miracle of Sri Ramakrishna' for having risen from an illiterate servant boy to the status of a Paramahansa. Innumerable are the pious householders of whom we can mention but a few here. Ramachandra

Datta, the atheist who became a great devotee by the Master's contact, wrote his first biography and moulded the lives of many in later times; Girish Chandra Ghosh, the man of faith, who gave his 'power of attorney' to Sri Ramakrishna and thereby rose from a talented sinner and debauchee to an inspired saint, and whose immortal dramas in Bengali have done much to spread the Master's ideas; the pious householder Balaram Bose who stood fast by the Math in its early days of struggle after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away; Suresh Mittra, the Bohemian who turned into a saint under Sri Ramakrishna's influence and became a tower of strength on the side of the Math; and last but not the least Nag Mahashay whose fiery Vairagya (dispassion), faith, devotion, humility, spirit of service and spiritual realisation elevated him to the highest status of sainthood—these are some of the names that will ever be remembered along with the divine life of Sri Ramakrishna. Mention has also to be made of at least a few of the remarkable group of women devotees that gathered round the Master—of Gopaler Ma (Gopal's Mother) whose simple story according to Romain Rolland is worthy of a place among the Franciscan legends and whose romantic realisation of God as Baby Krishna cannot but thrill even an irreligious heart; of Jogin Ma who spent years in prayer and meditation in Brindavan and

whose deeply contemplative eyes spoke of a highly spiritual soul within; of Golap Ma who was imbued with the spirit of service and who never hesitated to call a spade a spade; and of Gouri Ma who renounced her home early in life to devote herself to prayer, meditation and scriptural study and whose vast learning and remarkable organising capacities have been responsible for the starting of an important Girls' educational institution in Calcutta known as Saradeswari Girls' School. Most of these pious and saintly ladies were the Holy Mother's companions and have done much in moulding the lives of many men and women.

Almost all these great souls have passed away, but their silent lives have left an indelible impression on the spiritual life of the Order and are the inexhaustible sources of inspiration to the monks and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Their mortal frames are no more to be seen, but their examples, words and associations are written in letters of gold in the annals of the movement, infusing hope and strength into the lives of countless men and women.

On this auspicious occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's Birth-Centenary, let us reverently contemplate on the personalities of these great spiritual children of his, through whose example and precept mankind has received the Revelation embodied in the life and words of the great Incarnation of the Modern Age.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA AS HIS DISCIPLES SAW HIM

[Disciples are perhaps the best persons to speak with authority on the character and personality of a great Master, although the unsympathetic critic will not attach much value to their estimates because of their supposed tendency towards exaggeration and deification. Yet it remains true that the greatness of a Master of the spiritual realm cannot be adequately depicted by any but those who have actually felt the power of his personality. Hence there is nothing that helps a study of Sri Ramakrishna as statements like the following culled out from the writings and utterances of his immediate disciples.]

### I

WHEN it was that Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna incarnated himself in India, to demonstrate what the true religion of the Aryan race is; to show where amidst all its various divisions and off-shoots, scattered over the land in the course of its immemorial history, lies the true unity of the Hindu religion, which by its overwhelming number of sects discordant to superficial view, quarrelling constantly with one another and abounding in customs divergent in every way, has constituted itself a misleading enigma for our countrymen and the butt of contempt for foreigners; and, above all, to hold up before men, for their lasting welfare, as a living embodiment of the Sanatana Dharma, his own wonderful life into which he infused the universal spirit and character of this Dharma, so long cast into oblivion by the process of time.

"Always remember that Sri Ramakrishna came for the good of the world—not for name or fame. Spread only what he came to teach. Never mind his name—it will spread of itself."

"Once more He has come to help His children, once more the opportunity to rise is given to fallen India. India can only rise by sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna."

"It took me six years to understand that Ramakrishna was not a holy man, but *Holiness* itself. He was the living embodiment of the Vedas, the Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures. He lived in one single life what not only the Hindu but whole human race lived spiritually for ages."

—Swami Vivekananda

### II

"Such love, knowledge, dispassion and catholicity—I have not seen elsewhere. The Lord has created the Master Himself with His own hands. The power of the Lord has been embodied in him. I think, Jesus Christ, Chaitanya, and yourself (*i.e.* the Master) are one and the same personality."

—Mahendra Nath Gupta

### III

"The Master loved each of us so dearly that everybody thought that he loved him most. With the passing of days I understand the greatness and glory of my Master. He was God in flesh and blood, and in him live all deities."

—Swami Adbhutananda

### IV

"Ah, how, joyfully we lived with the Master at Dakshineswar!—And how free was I not with him! One day I was rubbing oil on his body in the semi-circular western porch. For some reason I got angry with him.

I threw away the bottle of oil and strode off with the intention of never returning to him. I went out of the Temple and came near Jadu Mallik's garden-house. And then I could not proceed further. I sat down. Meanwhile he had sent R. to call me back. When I came, he said, 'Did you see? Could you go? . . .'

"Once an evil thought rose in me, and as I approached the Master from a distance, he divined it and said: 'My boy, I see that an evil thought is disturbing your mind! So saying, he placed his hand on my head in blessing and uttered some words inaudibly; within five minutes it had gone.'"

"Another day, when I returned from Calcutta, he said: Why can I not look at you? Have you done anything wrong? No, I replied,—I had forgotten that I had told a lie. 'Did you tell any lie?' he asked me. Then I remembered that I had—"

"A true and living representation of Viveka (discrimination) and Vairagya (renunciation) we saw in Sri Ramakrishna, the Master. We read of Viveka and Vairagya in Scriptures but we saw them personified in Him. Neither in sleeping nor in waking state could Sri Ramakrishna touch a coin. What he has taught us by His own life is that there is no other path to attain God but through Tyaga (renunciation). Look at the life of Sri Ramakrishna and be a man in the best sense of the term."

To the question whether Sri Ramakrishna was still living, the Swami said in reply, "Have you gone mad? If he does not live, why should we then lead such a life, giving up our home and all? He is. Only pour out your whole heart in prayer to Him, and He will stand revealed in

His glory to you and will remove all doubts and confusions that are troubling your mind." In answer to the further question whether he used to see Sri Ramakrishna after his passing away, he said: "Yes, but only when He is pleased to reveal himself to us; then alone can we see Him. Every one can see Him through His grace. But alas! who longs to see Him? How few have that yearning!"

—Swami Brahmananda

#### V

"What other Upanishad would you teach them when there is the living Upanishad? The life of the Master is the living, flaming Upanishad. None could understand the meaning of the Radha-Krishna cult if Sri Chaitanya had not been born and demonstrated it in his life. Even so the Master is the living demonstration of the truths of the Upanishads. . . He never read the Upanishads or any other book. Yet how is it that he could explain those subtle and complex truths in so simple and straight a manner? If you want to read the Vedas, you have to commit its grammar to memory and read various commentaries, in which every commentator has sought to explain the texts in his own way. Innumerable scholars have been arguing over the texts without coming to any conclusion. Our Master, however, has in very simple language explained all those truths and his words are extant. When you have such a living fountain before you, why dig well for water."

—Swami Premananda

#### VI

"I have not yet been able to understand whether Ramakrishna was a man, a saint, a god, or God Himself,

but I know him to be the embodiment of wisdom, love and renunciation. He was totally free from egoism. As I get more and more intimately acquainted with the spiritual realm with the passing of days, and perceive the infinite breadth and depth of the Master's character and personality, I am being firmly convinced that to compare him with God—i.e., God as we generally understand Him—will be to belittle his infinite spiritual greatness. I have seen him bestowing the love of God freely on all—men and women, the educated and the ignorant, the good and the bad. Wonderful also was his intense anxiety to relieve men of their sorrows and confer on them eternal peace through God-vision. I may declare with as much emphasis as I can command that the modern age has not seen a greater man engaged in working for the spiritual welfare of mankind, than the Master."

—Swami Sivananda

#### VII

"After living in the intimate company of the Master and having meditated long on his unparalleled life and character, I have been astonished to find that he was a unique combination of humanity and Divinity. Without seeing him we could never understand that such a marvellous synthesis of varied ideals and ideas is possible in one and the same personality. My conviction is that he was a God-man; his personality is an example of divine perfections and powers manifesting through the medium of a human body and mind. He belongs to that small group of God-men who are known as World-Teachers."

"The life of the Master was the solution of the national problems of

India. He has fulfilled what his predecessors left unfinished. The Master has finally solved the religious conflicts of India and of the world. His unheard-of Sadhanas have awakened the Sanatani Shakti of India for the spiritual welfare of the world."

—Swami Saradananda

#### VIII

"Those who went to the Paramahansa Deva were all virtuous and good-natured. His love for his young devotees who became his monk-disciples afterwards may be quite natural. But his love for me was unconditioned and is a mark of his graciousness. God as the Saviour of the sinners was beheld by me in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. Some of those who had seen and known Sri Ramakrishna may be fickle-minded but in comparison with my unsteady and restless nature they were all saints! I never liked to walk on straight paths of life. But in spite of all this I was the object of his deepest affection and grace. Oh! his love for me had no limits! He used to bring from Dakshineswar Temple to my Calcutta residence fruits and sweets offered to the Deity and feed me with his own hands. Once in Dakshineswar he fed me with Payasam offered to Mother Kali, with his own hands. When he did so I forgot that I was an adult and felt myself a child. I experienced then that it was the Divine Mother who fed me. He is now no more, but when I think of his love my heart is touched to its deepest core. I cannot dream of another mortal frame through which so much divine love can flow to fallen humanity. I never visited his death-bed, for that was unbearable to me. Wonderful was his way of teaching."

He never forbade me to do anything. From my boyhood I did just the opposite thing of what I was asked to do by my elders and superiors. Paramahansa Deva's method has proved infallible in my case. Whenever I am prompted to speak falsehood, or any evil thought arises in my mind, I see in the mind's eye my Master's face, and I naturally refrain from committing any wrong. Sri Ramakrishna is the sole tenant of my heart. That, however, is in no way due to my worth but to his grace and love. He has taken away all my sins and has made me understand what religion is."

—*Girish Chandra Ghosh*

#### IX

"It was only on Sunday that there was a crowd at the Temple; on other days Guru Maharaj was left alone with his few chosen ones. And why did he keep them? In order that in one night he might make them perfect. When he was alone with his special disciples, they would sing and talk and play together. If a visitor came, he would tell him: 'Go and have a bath, eat something and rest awhile.' Then about two o'clock he would begin to talk and he would go on teaching for five or six hours continuously. He would not know when to stop.

"Sometimes Guru Maharaj would wake at four in the morning and he would call all the disciples who were sleeping in his room, saying, 'What are you all doing? Snoring? Get up, sit on your mat and meditate.' Sometimes he would wake up at midnight, call them and make them spend the whole night singing and praising the name of the Lord.

"Ramakrishna was able to supply to every man just what he needed. Sometimes a man would come from a

distant place with his heart panting for God, but seeing the room full of people, he would shrink back and hide himself in a dim corner. Without a word Ramakrishna would walk to him and touch him and in a moment he was illumined.

"By that touch, Ramakrishna really swallowed ninety-nine per cent of the man's Karma. Taking other's Karma was the reason he had his last long illness. He used to tell us: 'The people whose Karma I have taken think that they are attaining salvation through their own strength. They do not understand that it is because I have taken their Karma on me.' We do not know how much we owe to him; but some day we shall realise what he has done for us and then we shall know how to be grateful to him.

"He never condemned any man. He was ready to excuse everything. He used to tell us that the difference between man and God was this: If a man fails to serve God ninety-nine times, but the hundredth time serves Him with even a little love, God forgets the ninety-nine times he has failed and would say: 'Oh! My devotee has served me so well to-day.' But if a man serves another man well ninety-nine times and the hundredth time fails in his service, then man will forget the ninety-nine good services and say: 'That rascal failed to serve me one day.' So Sri Ramakrishna, if there is the least spark of goodness in any one, sees only that and overlooks all the rest.

"In Ramakrishna there was absolutely no ego left. He knew everything. Everything he did was for others. He was not necessitated to come to this world, but he came to help mankind; and every movement of his body, every movement of his

mind was directed towards the amelioration of his fellow-men.

"The only real enemy Sri Ramakrishna ever had was a man who was very jealous of the devotion of Mathur Babu for him. Ramakrishna was the embodiment of truthfulness. He always said: 'No man can hope to realise the Truth who is not absolutely truthful.' He practised the most perfect simplicity in his habits. His spirit of renunciation was without

reservation and compromise. One day he saw an especially fine mango and he had a mind to take it, but he could not raise his hand to pluck it. Another day he tried to pick a fruit, but with the same result. He was unable to lift his arm; the muscles refused to obey him. 'You see,' he explained 'A Sannyasin should never store anything, so the Divine Mother will not let me lay by this fruit even for a few hours.'

—*Swami Ramakrishnananda*

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA AS OTHERS SAW HIM

[The following sections consist of excerpts, compilation, and abridgements of the reminiscences left by some notables who had seen and known Sri Ramakrishna personally in his life-time. None of them were his disciples, but nevertheless all of them had drawn inspiration from him. Raja Rajendralal Mitra, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Devendranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and other then worthies of Bengal came in contact with him but unfortunately for us most of them have left no record of their impressions.]

#### I

**A** SWINI KUMAR DATTA, the patriot-devotee of Barisal, whose Bhakti-Yoga is one of the most popular religious books in Bengali writes as follows:—

It was perhaps during the Puja Holidays of 1881 that I met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time. Keshub Sen was to come that day. I arrived at Dakshineswar by boat. When I saw him he sat leaning against a bolster facing the garden. Rajendralal Mitra sat at his right very near his pillow. A little further off sat some others. He was very anxious for Keshub who came with his party at twilight. Keshub bowed before him touching the ground with his forehead and the Master also returned the salutation in the same manner. Shortly after, he went into an exalted state of ecstasy in which he remained for some time. Keshub's heart overflowed with emotion as he looked at

Sri Ramakrishna. Seeing this state of the Master, I thought, "Can this be pretence?" I had never seen anything like it before and I am not a credulous man. Coming back from this divine mood he held a conversation with Keshub.

After an hour or so the Kirtan commenced. What I saw then, I shall probably never forget in this life or the life to come. All began to dance, Keshub included, with the Master in the centre and the others in a circle around him. In the course of the dance the Master suddenly stood motionless. He was in Samadhi! It continued for a long time. Hearing and seeing all these I understood that he was a real Paramahansa.

Another day, perhaps in 1883, I went to see him with a few young men of Serampore. Seeing them he asked me something about them. I went another day. When I bowed down to him that day and took my

seat, he asked me to bring a bottle of lemonade. I think I brought him a bottle. So far as I remember, he was alone that day. I asked him a few questions about Keshub, Sivanath and others. Then he told me a little of his religious practices at Panchavati. He also spoke about Totapuri. After telling me something about the realisation of God, he got up and stretched himself on the cot. As it was very hot, I fanned him in response to his request. While I was doing so, I exchanged a few words with him. I cannot express in words the immense pleasure I derived from his company that day.

When I paid my last visit to him on 23rd May, 1885, the Head Master of our School (the well known scholar-saint, Jagadish Mukherjee) was with me. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna saw him, he asked me about him and praised him eloquently. He also told me that my father had come and stayed with him there for three days. A little later he got up and repeating Om several times started singing a song that began, "Dive deep, dive deep, my mind in the ocean of divine beauty." He had scarcely sung the first few lines when he himself dived deep and fell into Samadhi. When Samadhi was over, he began to pace up and down the room and with both hands pulled up the cloth he was wearing till it reached the waist. One end of it was trailing on the floor and the other was hanging loose. A moment later he threw away the cloth with the words, "Ugh, what a nuisance! off with it." He sat down, still nude, on one end of his cot and began a conversation with me. He showed us the pictures in his room and asked if a picture of Lord Buddha could be had and requested me to

bring one for himself. But alas! I never had the opportunity, because I never met him after that. I met the Master only four or five times. Ah! how happily I spent those few days with him. In that short time we became so intimate that I felt as if we had been class-mates. How much liberty I took while speaking with him! But no sooner had I left his presence than it flashed on me, "Great God! With whom was I speaking?" My whole life has been sweetened by what I received in those few days. The memory of that Elysian smile is still with me, shedding unending bliss.

## II

Pratap Chandra Majoomdar, an influential leader of the Brahmo Samaj, wrote as follows in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* of 1897:

My mind is still floating in the luminous atmosphere which that wonderful man diffuses around him whenever and wherever he goes. My mind is not yet disenchanted of the mysterious and indefinable pathos which he pours into it whenever he meets me. What was there in common between him and me? I, a Europeanised, self-centred, semi-sceptical so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, friendless Hindu devotee? I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Muller and a whole host of European scholars and divines. Why should I be spell-bound to hear him. And it is not I only but dozens like me who do the same. Some of our clever intellectual fools have found nothing in him; some of the contemptuous Christian Missionaries would call him an impostor or a self-deluded enthusiast. The face of this Hindu saint retains a fullness, a child-like tenderness, a profound visible humble-

ness and an unspeakable sweetness of expression and a smile that I have seen on no other face that I can remember. He protests against being lionised and openly shows his strong dislike to be visited and praised by the curious. The society of the worldly-minded and carnally-inclined he carefully shuns. His religion is his only recommendation. Ramakrishna is the worshipper of no particular Hindu God. He is not a Shaiva, he is not a Shakta, he is not a Vaishnava, he is not a Vedantist. Yet he is all these. He worships Shiva, he worships Kali, he worships Rama, he worships Krishna and is a confirmed advocate of the Vedanta doctrines. He accepts all the doctrines, all the embodiments, usages and devotional practices of every religious cult. Each in turn is infallible to him. His religion does not mean too much dogma, controversial proficiency or the outward worship. His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcendental worship. He merges into rapturous ecstasy, and loses outward consciousness often during the day and oftenest in conversation.

In the intensity of burning love of God which is in his simple heart, the devotees' form and features suddenly grow stiff and motionless, unconsciousness overtakes him, his eyes lose their sight and tears trickle down his fixed, pale but smiling face. There is a transcendental meaning and sense in that unconsciousness. Who will fathom the depth of that insensibility which the love of God produces in him? But that he sees something hears and enjoys something, when he is dead to all the outer world, there is no doubt. If not, why should he in the midst of that unconsciousness burst into floods of tears and break

out into prayers, songs and utterances, the force and pathos of which pierce through the hardest heart and bring tears to eyes that never before wept under the influence of religion?

He has successfully escaped the evil of carnality which he dreaded. The purity of his thoughts and relations towards women is most unique and instructive. The other sin which he spent his life to be free from is the love of money. The sight of money fills him with strange dread. His avoidance of women and wealth is the whole secret of his matchless moral character. His reverence for Christ and Mahomet is deep and genuine and shows the catholic religious culture of this great Hindu saint. He never writes anything, seldom argues. He never attempts to instruct, he is continually pouring out his soul in rhapsody of spiritual experiences. He unconsciously throws a flood of marvellous light upon the obscurest passages of the Shastras.

A living evidence of the depth and greatness of Hindu religion is this good and holy man. He has wholly controlled his flesh. He is full of soul, full of the reality of religion, full of joy, full of blessed purity. He has no other thought, no other occupation, no other relation, no other friend in his humble life than his God. That God is more than sufficient for him. His spotless holiness, his deep unspeakable blessedness, his unstudied endless wisdom, his child-like peacefulness and affection towards all men, his consuming, all-absorbing love for God is his only reward. So long as he is spared to us, gladly shall we sit at his feet to learn from him the sublime precepts of purity, unworldliness,

spirituality and inebriation in the love of God.

### III

Pandit Shivanath Shastri, a leader of Brahmo Samaj, wrote in the *Modern Review* for October 1910, to this effect :

My personal acquaintance with Ramakrishna Paramahansa happened in the year 1875. A friend, after his visits, would relate to me the strange sayings and doings of a Hindu mendicant. Some of these sayings seemed so remarkable to me that one day I accompanied my friend to see him. He was not known to fame then, which came to him afterwards, when the late Keshub Chandra Sen began to visit him and to publish the accounts of his visits in his papers.

I do not remember the things he said during our first interview but I vividly recollect that he received me very warmly. He said to me again and again in his well-known, open-hearted, simple and child-like manner, "Will you come to me now and then?" After repeated visits he began to unbosom his experiences to me.

He had attained to a state of perfection the like of which was seldom seen. The idea that struck him most and had an abiding influence on his mind was to avoid as poison Kamini-Kanchan or woman and wealth as the most effective way of ensuring spiritual detachment. His efforts to rise above the attractions of women and gold were very peculiar. I was personally present on occasions when pieces of coin were placed in his hand by an enquiring visitor, as an experiment, and the saint fell into his usual fits (?) and did not come back to consciousness until the pieces of coin were removed from the hand.

In fact the impressions left in my mind by intercourse with him was that I had seldom come across any other man in whom the hunger and thirst for spiritual life was so great and who had gone through so many privations and sufferings for the practice of religion. Secondly I was convinced that he was no longer a Sadhak or a devotee under exercise but was a Siddha Purusha or one who had attained direct vision of spiritual truth. He passed away leaving behind him a memory that is now spiritually feeding hundreds of earnest souls. My acquaintance with him, though short, was fruitful by strengthening many a spiritual thought in me. I owe him a debt of gratitude for the sincere affection he bore towards me. He was certainly one of the most remarkable personalities I have come across in life.

Let me now proceed to relate some incidents expressive of the saints' personal affection for me. On one occasion he had been sending repeated messages to me, asking me to come and see him but I was being detained by Brahmo Samaj work till at last he turned up at my house one day. On another occasion he had been invited to be present at a Brahmo Festival held in a garden-house at Dum-Dum. I arrived a little late. Upon my arrival I found him standing and singing in the midst of a crowd of people. As soon as he saw me, he clasped me to his bosom, declaring, "Oh my bosom is now soothed." After that, his proceedings went on with unusual fervour and enthusiasm. On a third occasion he seemed to be equally surprised to find me coming after a long time. So great was his delight that he fainted away from excess of emotion. When able to

speak again he broached to me the proposal of accompanying him to the Zoological Garden. The manner in which he expressed his joy at the thought of seeing the lion was charming in its simplicity. At last it was so arranged and a carriage was brought. But while in the carriage, seated though he was, he began to make a sort of dancing movements, as a mark of his great pleasure. At this point there came on his trance, and then I witnessed a scene that I shall never forget. His whole countenance was aglow with a strange spiritual light. He became thoroughly unconscious, leaning on my arm for some minutes. During the last few years of the saint's life my visits became less frequent than they were before. At last when the news of his fast declining health was brought to me one day, I left all work and went to Dakshineswar. He took me to task for neglecting him. I pleaded guilty to the charge. That was my last interview with him.

### IV

Mr. Nagendranath Gupta, famous journalist and late editor of the *Tribune*, the well-known daily of Lahore, wrote in the *Modern Review* and the *Prabuddha Bharata*, his reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna, the substance of which is as follows:—

Men assign without hesitation the highest place to the teachers of humanity, the men who show the path that lead Godward. Among these is the assured place of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He began his life by both justifying and upsetting Carlyle's theory that the greatest men were born before no books were written. If, however, he had a distaste for books, he was avid about everything pertaining to religion. But in all he

read very little, and could not be called an educated man. And yet in his crude form of speech he expressed thoughts which amazed and delighted his hearers, including several highly cultured persons in Bengal. Many of his sayings have become familiar as household words.

In fact, he practised with full faith and conviction every form of worship that came to his knowledge or of which he heard, and he accepted every religion as a path to salvation. Ramakrishna used to pass frequently into a state of Samadhi, and while in this state he was unconscious of his surroundings but his countenance was lit up with ineffable rapture and beatitude. He invariably spoke of himself with utmost humility and usually avoided using the first person singular.

Following the distinguished lead of Keshub Sen, other men of note began visiting the Paramahansa. The papers controlled by Keshub published some of his sayings and drew attention to the saintliness of his character. P. C. Majoomdar of the Brahmo Samaj, a man of high intellectual attainments, wrote several articles remarkable for the eloquence and expressive of warm admiration. Sivanath Shastri and Vijaya K. Goswami were frequent visitors to the Paramahansa.

His aversion to woman and wealth was so great that the mere touch of gold or silver twisted and paralysed his fingers. He turned in disgust from worldly wealth but he was never tired of acquiring the wealth of the spiritual world, and never rested till his treasure-house was full to overflowing. Humble as was the life of Ramakrishna, he never made any distinction between

one man and another, between a wealthy and titled person and a poor, obscure individual. He designated every man, Raja or Maharaja, eminent writer or famous man, by name, and was always outspoken in his expressions of opinion. Bankim Chandra, the famous writer, was reproved for his ill-timed and indecorous levity while conversing with Ramakrishna. So were Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore and Kristo Das Pal for their assumption of superiority. Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, a learned scientist and the leading physician of Calcutta, was strongly attracted by Ramakrishna whom he treated in his last illness. He used to spend hours listening to the marvellous conversation of his patient and was fascinated by the inexhaustive flow of the Truth from the lips of Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna, uninstructed even in the speech of gentle folk, spoke often, even as the Buddha or the Christ spoke, out of the radiance of his own wisdom. Earlier teachers taught love and compassion for all men and even for all creatures having life. Ramakrishna Paramahansa added love and respect for all religions. He characterised the desire to perform even minor miracles as evidence of a low mind. Why should any miracles be attributed to him? I saw the main miracle of his self-luminance and listened to the outflow of the welling spring of wisdom that never ran dry. His gospel is not a new creed and he does not seek to set up a new religion. It is a note of peace in the conflict of the many contending religions of the world. It is the living faith of Universalism. He is the confluence of various streams of all the religions

of the world, each one retaining its identity and distinctiveness.

In 1881 I had the good fortune to be included in the party of Keshub on board a steam yacht to meet Ramakrishna. All the talking was practically done by Ramakrishna. It is now more than forty-five years ago that this happened and yet everything that the Paramahansa said is indelibly impressed on my memory. I have never heard any other man speak as he did. It was an unbroken flow of profound spiritual truths and experiences welling up from the perennial spring of his own devotion and wisdom. The similes and metaphors, and the apt illustrations were as striking as they were original. Then he began to speak of Nirakar Brahman. He repeated the word Nirakar two or three times and then quietly passed into Samadhi as the diver slips into the fathomless deep. We intently watched him in Samadhi; his whole body relaxed and then became slightly rigid. There was no twitching of the muscles or nerves, no movement of any limb; both his hands lay in his lap with the fingers lightly interlocked. The sitting posture of the body was easy but absolutely motionless. The face was slightly tilted up and in repose. The eyes were nearly but not wholly closed. They were fixed and conveyed no message of outer objects to the brain. The lips were parted in a beatific and indescribable smile. There was something in that wonderful smile which no photograph was ever able to reproduce. After some time he opened his eyes and looked around him as if he were in a strange place.

He was practically an unlettered man like some prophets of old. It

may be said with absolute truth that he was one of the elect who appear at long intervals in the world for some great purpose. It has been my privilege to hear him speak and I felt then, as I feel now, that it is only rarely that men have the great good fortune of listening to such a man."

# V

Rev. Girish Chandra Sen, a colleague of Keshub Chandra Sen and a leading Brahma missionary, writes in his Bengali book "Sayings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his Life in Brief," published by the Brahma Samaj in 1886, (now out of print) as follows:—

Ramakrishna lived in a secluded spot in a room of a one-storeyed house on the banks of the Ganges at the farthest end of the group of temples which go by the name of Dakshineswar Devalaya. He seldom visited any place except his own home where even he went on rare occasions only. Having returned to Dakshineswar from a pilgrimage in the company of one Mathura Babu, he became totally absorbed in meditation and was lost in spiritual rapture. He was absorbed in the spirit and was scarcely visited by people; nor was he much known to the public. The people of the adjacent villages took him for a mad man.

In March 1875 one day at about 8 or 9 A.M. Ramakrishna came to the garden of Jayagopal Sen at Belghoria where Acharya Keshub Chandra with his missionary friends was staying for the purpose of Sadhan and Bhajan. When Ramakrishna arrived there in a hackney carriage, Keshub with his companions was just making preparations for his daily ablution in the tank within the garden. Ramakrishna was plainly dressed in

a single piece of red bordered Dhoti only. He had no shirt or Chuddar. The end of the Dhoti was flung across his shoulders. His body was much emaciated and he looked rather weak. The missionary friends of Keshub at first took him for an ordinary man. Ramakrishna addressed the party thus: "I have heard that you have seen God. I am anxious to know what He is like."

Thus started the discourse on religious topics. Then Ramakrishna sang a hymn from Ramprasad and immediately fell into a trance. Those present there did not think much of it. At that time they thought it was afflictation. His faithful attendant Hriday however, started uttering loudly the sacred symbolic word 'OM' and invited the others to do the same. This brought Ramakrishna round to partial consciousness and he began to laugh, and then followed a stream of inspiring words from him. This astounded the missionary friends who thus realised that he was a man of God and not an ordinary human being. The party, engrossed in his sweet company for the time being forgot altogether about their ablutions and prayers and devotions which they performed later on.

A devotee can at once know another devotee. Keshub was charmed and was attracted towards Paramahansa and the latter in his turn was closely drawn to Keshub. Thenceforward a close intimacy grew up between these two souls. Keshub with his party began to visit Ramakrishna often, and Ramakrishna with Hriday used to come to Keshub's place. On Ramakrishna's arrival a big crowd would usually gather round him, and in it could be noticed the relatives, friends and neighbours of Keshub.

At their meetings several hours were occupied in talks on different topics of religious interest culminating in the enjoyment of an intense spiritual fellowship. At the end of the celebrations of the Brahmo Samaj Keshub used to go every year with his co-workers and other Brahmos to Ramakrishna by steamer or boat; or Keshub used to send a conveyance for Ramakrishna to take him to the Tapovan at Belgharia. To talk with Ramakrishna on spiritual matters and to make merriment with him became part and parcel of the programme of the annual Utsab (celebration).

It was the life of Paramahansa that intensified the culture of devotion to God as Mother, in the Brahmo Samaj. To call upon God by the sweet name of Mother as a simple child does, to pray to her and crave her indulgence like a child—this habit our minister (Keshub Chandra) received in a special way from the influence of Paramahansa.

Notwithstanding the element of Bhakti to be found in Brahmo religion, it was predominantly a religion of faith, rationalism and dry disputations. The shadow of the life of Ramakrishna rendered it moist, fresh and sweet. It must be admitted that the meeting (between Keshub and Ramakrishna) was quite providential. At this time such a contact was for the Brahmo Samaj Sadhaks a necessity. There was no doubt that his (Ramakrishna's) exalted life in which Yoga and Bhakti predominated was used by Providence for helping the development of the Navavidhan Brahmo Samaj. Keshub was wont to sit by Ramakrishna's side just like a humble disciple and a younger brother, and listen to his utterances with humility, reverence and loving

tenderness. Keshub never entered into any controversy with him. He assimilated to the fullest extent all that was good in Paramahansa's life, and made those his own. On many occasions, before leaving for Paramahansa's place he sat for saying his prayer at his family sanctuary. When we, Brahmos, used to visit Dakshineswar, Paramahansa Dev would not allow us to leave his place without partaking of some refreshments. Paramahansa Dev also used to take something whenever he paid a visit to Keshub's place. During Keshub's last illness Ramakrishna came to see him once and both of them talked on profoundly spiritual topics for some time. By his writings in the organs of the Brahmo Samaj and in books, Keshub was the first to give publicity to the ideals and personality of the Paramahansa. His sayings were published by Keshub in a booklet.

Paramahansa Dev had a wonderful power of studying human nature. Even from a glance at a man or by exchanging a few words with him he could ascertain of what stuff he was made. He never joined in the Divine Service of our Brahmo Samaj. How could he? For he would fall into a trance even before the Service commenced. Ramakrishna was really as simple and artless as a child.

When the dead body of Ramakrishna was brought for cremation to the burning Ghat, about 150 persons came up from Calcutta and took part in the funeral ceremony. His disciples and admirers carried the profusely decorated bier on their shoulders, followed by a Sankirtan party and a procession of many leading Brahmos. The emblems of the Hindu religion, *i.e.*, the Trident, the Spud of the Buddhists, the Crescent

of the Moslems and the Cross of the Christians were carried in front of the procession. Trailokyanath San-  
yal (Ramakrishna was fond of his sweet songs when alive), seated by the side of his lifeless body, sang several songs, suited to the occasion. The eyes of Ramakrishna were still partly open, and his face was slightly smiling which showed that he breathed his last while in communion with God. At sunset the corpse was consumed by the burning flames of the pyre on which sandal-wood mixed with ghee was put. His devoted disciples set fire to the body as so many sons of their spiritual father. We were very pleased to witness the respect and devotion shown to this God-filled man by so many educated young men. Many missionaries of the Navavidhan Brahmo Samaj observed

mourning for three or four days and ate Havisyanna (boiled rice and vegetables) only.

Ramakrishna's modesty was wonderful. He would salute a visitor before the latter could do it. He did not like that his sayings appeared in print or were published in newspapers. Nor did he like that a photo of his be taken. It was only when absorbed in meditation that he could successfully be photographed. Such a man is a vivid example of Divine grace. Such a life inspires hope to a drowning soul in the dark ocean of life and guides many into the port like a light-house. We have read about great men like Chaitanya and others in books but we were fortunate enough to come into direct contact with Ramakrishna and to read his saintly life.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA AS LEADING MEN OF THE AGE SEE HIM

[In the last section we gave extracts about Sri Ramakrishna from the writings of those who knew him personally but were not his disciples. Here are some extracts showing how leading thinkers of the age view Sri Ramakrishna. Except Keshab Chander Sen, none of the other thinkers included here saw him personally. The extracts have been selected from the writings of famous men of both the East and the West in order to show how the ideas of the Master are spreading everywhere. To represent the view of the conservative section of Hindus, we have also included here a recent utterance of Swami Jayendra Puriji, an ascetic of the orthodox way of life and thought.]

I  
IN a recent and unique example, in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa we see a colossal spiritual capacity first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yoga method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of in-born spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge. Such an example cannot be generalised. Its object also was special and temporal, to exemplify in the great and decisive experience of a Master-soul the truth, now most necessary to humanity, towards which a world long divided into jarring sects and schools is with difficulty labouring, that all sects are forms and fragments of a

single integral truth and all disciplines labour in their different ways towards one supreme experience. To know, be and possess the Divine is the one thing needful and it includes or leads up to all the rest. . . all the rest that the Divine Will chooses for us, all necessary form and manifestation, will be added.

—Sri Aurobindo (in his "The Synthesis of Yoga" in the Arya No. 5.)

## II

The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion. Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of godliness. His sayings are not those of a mere learned man but they are pages from the Book of Life.

They are revelations of his own experiences. They therefore leave on the reader an impression which he cannot resist. In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which give solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light. His love knew no limits, geographical or otherwise.

—Mahatma Gandhi

## III

When we recollect the great covenants of Eastern Wisdom, a luminous example from our contemporary life stands before us. Giants of Enlightenment are outstanding—the Blessed Ramakrishna and the fiery Vivekananda. What an unforgettable example of Blessed Hierarchy! There is no literate country where these great

names together with those of Abhedananda, Premananda, Brahmananda, Saradananda and other glorious names of the Ramakrishna Order are not cherished. The Blessed Bhagawan Ramakrishna is bringing from the Himalayan heights the symbol of OM. His yellow robe is furling in the wind, His feet touch the white snows, but gloriously. He proceeds to manifest to Humanity the greatest bliss. Stormy clouds indicate the upheavals and distress of Humanity but great and shiny is the halo round the Blessed Bhagawan's head and He carries His great Mission as a light-bringing beacon.

—Nicholas Roerich

## IV

It is needless to add with how much love and respect I associate my humble name with the great name of the Superman. Above all he was a rare combination of individuality and universality, personality and impersonality. His word and example have been echoed in the hearts of Western men and women.

More than once I had recited from memory, though imperfectly, the lesson of thought learned at some former time (but from whom? one of my very ancient selves. . .). Now I re-read it, every word clear and complete, in the book of life held out to me by the illiterate genius who knew all its pages by heart—Ramakrishna.

It is always the same Book. It is always the same man—the Son of Man, the Eternal, Our Son, Our God reborn. With each return he reveals himself a little more fully, and more enriched by the universe.

Allowing for differences of country and of time Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ,

I am bringing to Europe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna.

The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the social and political activity of the time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods. It was a part of the very source of Energy, the Divine Shakti, of whom Vidyapati, the old poet of Mithila, and Ramprasad of Bengal sing.

—Romain Rolland (in his "Life of Ramakrishna," etc.)

## V

The story of Sri Ramakrishna is really a story of inner life. The life of this Man of Realisation, this Messenger from the mystic Realm of the Spirit, has, I believe, an abiding value. For in his life, as in the lives of prophets and saints, hath shone the Light Eternal. A spiritual genius, Ramakrishna was a union of the mystic, prophet and saint. He has inherited immortality. He belongs to the Temple of the Future. Not yet have we known him well. Not yet has the world realised his true greatness.

I love to think of Ramakrishna as the Child-Man of the 19th century. He was a simple child of the Divine Mother. He was simple, artless, spontaneous, humble, child-like.

Therefore he lives. Therefore his influence grows. Our big man, distinguished to-day, is extinguished to-morrow.

Ramakrishna, born in a little village, now belongs to Humanity. We look to-day in wonderment and marvel at his spiritual stature, as we would at a mountain height. Wonderful, his life; wonderful, his words! The sayings of Ramakrishna! How rich in thought and reflection! How pregnant in wisdom! How vital in their appeal and inspiration! How fragrant with true mysticism! The sayings of the Saint have a beauty born of meditation. In his message of one Religion in all religions, of the one Spirit in all prophets, and the one Divine Life in all Humanity may Hindus and Muslims come together, to serve India.

—T. V. Vaswani (in his "Sri Ramakrishna")

## VI

As Sri Ramakrishna's heart and mind were for all countries, his name too is the common property of mankind. All nations of the world—at least those which transcending the racial and national barriers believe in the Divinity of man—can be united.

—Sylvain Levi

## VII

The fervent love of God, nay, the sense of complete absorption in Godhead, has nowhere found a stronger and more eloquent expression than in the utterances of Ramakrishna. They show the exalted nature of his faith. How deep he has seen into the mysteries of knowledge and love of God we see from his sayings.

—F. Max Muller (in his "Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna")

## VIII

Ramakrishna is the fulfilment of Hinduism. He embodied the soul of Hinduism. Verily the history of the world is but the biography of such great men. The lives of such great men also affect, more deeply than those of sovereigns, the lives of their contemporaries. All the essentials and fundamentals of Hinduism were fully exemplified and embodied in Sri Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna did not confine the light he attained, the wisdom he won, to himself but he sought to impart the benefits of the same to others as well. The volume of his unique teachings bring out the social aspect of his transcendental greatness. We see in them a supreme anxiety to make his individual attainment a matter of common possession to all mankind, and an infinite patience to human frailties.

In the society of men there are some who represent its spiritual dynamos and boilers, its storage and reservoir of moral power that vitalises and moves society, breathes into it life and strength and, like the electrical power-house of a city, brings light to every heart. Sri Ramakrishna too was such a spiritual power-station of his nation to serve the needs of its true well-being. We may notice in Ramakrishna, another characteristic of spiritual fulfilment, viz., an abounding charity and sympathy for human suffering. The form of tribute which will be most acceptable to him is our most earnest endeavour to be his worthy disciples, to reproduce him in our several lives and to keep up the stream of culture that emanated from him so that instead of being arrested

or dried up it may continue to fertilise the spiritual soil of the country.

—Dr. Radhakumud Mukherjee,  
(in his "*Hindu Principles of Self-Culture*")

## IX

We met one sincere Hindu devotee, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and were charmed by the depth, penetration and simplicity of his spirit. The never-ceasing metaphors and analogies in which he indulged are most of them as apt as they are beautiful. The characteristics of his mind are the very opposite to those of Pandit Dayanand Saraswati, the former being so gentle, tender and contemplative, as the latter is sturdy, masculine and polemical. Hinduism must have in it a deep sense of beauty, truth and good to inspire such men as these.

—Keshub Chander Sen (in the "*Indian Mirror*" of 1875)

## X

Sri Ramakrishna was the supreme representative of modern spiritual India. There is none, I believe, among the careful students of various branches of spiritual thought and culture of India who will not take part in the moral duty of celebrating his centenary.

—Dr. Walter Schubring, Professor  
of Indology, Hamburg University, Germany

## XI

Few men have made deeper impress upon the mind of Bengal (why not of India?) in recent years than Gadadhar Chatterji, known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and his chief disciple Narendranath Dutt, better known under the title of Swami Vivekananda. At a time when the craze for the ideas and ways of the West

was at its height, these men stood for the ancient ideal of the East, for renunciation in an age of megalomania, for simplicity at a time when discoveries in mechanical science were making life elaborately complex.

He (Ramakrishna) was no scholar, yet he possessed the power of attracting to himself men of light and leading of the day—Keshub Chander Sen, Pundit Iswar Vidyasagar, Bankim Chatterji and Protap Chandra Mazumdar amongst others. . . By temperament he was a mystic rather than a philosopher. The narrative of his life and teaching recalls inevitably the emotional figure of Chaitanya. . . His knowledge of God was intuitive and he never felt the need of systematic study. . . Apparent contradictions were nothing to him. God is the Absolute, the One, the All, the Brahman of the philosopher. But that does not prevent Him from manifesting himself in different aspects in his relations with the phenomenal world—as Krishna in His aspect of Divine love, as Kali in His aspect of creator of the universe and saviour of mankind.

Ramakrishna did not dissent from the monistic explanation of the universe. It was only that he was driven by temperament to attach far greater importance to the Personal Aspect of God. The Absolute of Sankara could be realised; but only in perfect Samadhi. . . But when a man returned from Samadhi he became a differentiated ego once more, and was thrown back upon the world of relativity so that he perceived the world-system (Maya) as real. Why? Because with the return of his egoity he was convinced that he as an individual was real; and, "so long as his ego is real to him (real relatively)

the world is real too, and the Absolute is unreal (unreal relatively)." He laid constant stress upon this. . . And since Samadhi was not achieved by the average man, he must meditate upon and commune with the Personal God, for "so long as you are a person you cannot conceive of, think or perceive God otherwise as a Person."

Many of the young men who flocked to the temple at Dakshineswar in the eighties of the last century are preaching the gospel of the Master. Those who, following his example, have adopted the path of renunciation have established a monastic order. . . . Some of these men I have met at Belur Math. And having met them I know that it is for no colourless abstraction that they have renounced the world. Whether known as *Saguna* Brahman (God Personal) or as *Nirguna* Brahman (God Impersonal), it is to them the sole reality, the ultimate goal towards which sooner or later all mankind must direct its steps.

—Lord Ronaldshay (in his "*Heart of Aryavarta*")

## XII

Ramakrishna's was a magically plastic, sensitive, receptive, impressionable disposition. He had a special capacity for entering into and becoming other persons—living, dynamic, symbolical. His soul took on instantly each of the beings whom he saw or imagined, and he had a genius for expressing the soul of others. He was a born artist, a great lover of beauty and of his fellow-men, and he was himself most lovable, with an attractive smile and charming voice. . . From that time ecstasies became more frequent. And an occasion came when, as he said, he was torn with unutter-

able anguish at the thought that he might never be granted the blessing of the Divine vision, and then lo! the whole scene changed and he saw an ocean of Spirit, boundless and dazzling. . . Round him rolled an ocean of ineffable joy; and in the depths of his being he was conscious of the presence of the Divine Mother. . . Beyond it he reached the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. . . the soul was lost in self, dualism was blotted out. Finite and infinite space were as one. Beyond word, beyond thought, he had attained Brahma. . .

Shattering as must have been the impact of the spirit upon Ramakrishna and emaciated as was his body, it is said of him that he was like a spiritual dynamo conveying a kind of electric shock, that contact with him gave a sudden access of power, causing each to attain his ideal at a bound. And what is further remarkable about Ramakrishna is the deep impression he made upon leading Indians of his time. He could scarcely read. He knew no English. But he could read men and men could read him. . . And the leading Hindus of to-day, including men of affairs like the Delegates to the Round-Table Conference, have the deepest reverence for him. Frail and delicately sensitive as he was, he has exerted a profound influence upon modern India. And his influence has been an uplifting power raising men on to a higher level.

—Sir Francis Younghusband (in his "Living Universe")

### XIII

Not that Buddhism ignored charity. On the contrary it recommended it in the most exalted terms. And it joined example to precept. But it

lacked warmth and glow. . . Let us add—and it comes perhaps to the same thing—that it did not believe in the efficacy of human action. It had no faith in such action. And faith alone can grow to power and move mountains. A complete mysticism would have reached this point. It is perhaps to be met with in India, but much later (?). That enthusiastic charity, that mysticism comparable to the mysticism of Christianity, we find in a Ramakrishna or a Vivekananda, to take only the most recent examples. But Christianity, and this is just the point, had come into the world in the interval. . . Since it has impregnated the whole of Western civilisation, one breathes it, like a perfume, in everything which this civilisation brings in its wake. Industrialism itself, as we shall try to prove, springs indirectly from it. And it was industrialism, it was our Western civilisation which liberated the mysticism of a Ramakrishna or a Vivekananda (?).

—Henri Bergson (in his "Two Sources of Morality and Religion")

### XIV

In Ramakrishna we find the manifestation of the same divinity which according to the ancient tradition of India comes in fulfilment of the demands of different ages. Sri Ramakrishna in his life practically proved that every faith is a path to God and we should find Siva in every 'Jiva'. Even today, his followers by their wonderful humanitarian activities—selfless services to all irrespective of caste, creed and colour—are but following in the footsteps of the great saint, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who is worshipped by many in the East and the West.

—Swami Jayendra Puriji

## THE ADVENT OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By Sri Aurobindo

[In continuation of the foregoing section, giving extracts of the views of leading thinkers of the age on Sri Ramakrishna, we are reproducing the following article by Sri Aurobindo, originally published in the "Karmayogin" of 1909, and later reprinted in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of March 15, 1932. A true spiritual genius alone can understand and appreciate a personage of Sri Ramakrishna type. In the following reflections, written with that true understanding and insight, Sri Aurobindo, the renowned sage and thinker of Pondicherry, draws our attention to the national and spiritual significance of the Master's advent. On the 100th birth-day anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, which falls on the 24th of February, these reflections on the advent of the Master will be read with interest.]

THE 'Utsab' of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is an event that annually stirs Calcutta to its depths. Year after year the number increases, of those who believe that the birth of the sage of Dakshineswar has been the critical event of the present age in India. Some believe this, for one reason; others for another. The devotee sees in him the last of the Avatars. The historian sees the key-stone of the idea that constitutes Hinduism. The partisan feels that he satisfies all parties and conflicts with none. The philosopher finds him the living embodiment of the highest Vedanta. And even amongst the workers, there are some who derive from the spectacle of his birth the faith that inspires and sanctions all their struggles.

For, a nationalist may be described as one who believes that the light has already shone upon us. He is not waiting for someone to arrive, for God to remember His India or for the leader of the age and the heroes to be born. In the eyes of the nationalist, all this has been done for us already, and it remains for us to work out the trust laid upon us. We have every opportunity that a people ever had. We have nothing more to ask for, nothing more to

wait for. Ours is only to love, work and suffer, and struggle unto the last with all our might, secure in the conviction that the great Power which bore us all will bear others also.

Some such faith is an absolute necessity, to those who pledge themselves to a cause for life and for death. Our own action is limited and guided by our own vision, our own opinion, our own knowledge. Others, with a different or defective experience, act variously; some in ways of which we do not approve, some in ways that are proved mistaken, and others by methods that are mutually destructive. A certain hope and joy is essential to all work. It would take a Titan like Bhishma himself, to throw his whole heart into a losing cause, a cause that he knew belonged neither to God nor to future. Mere mortals are not so made. The nation-maker, therefore, works to his utmost; but he must be free to realise that while every little depends on him, his work achieves significance only from that immense current of destiny that is working through him and his efforts, and that whatever outward form it might take, it would, so long as it was whole-hearted and sincere, be carried in the self-same way, on that self-same stream.

In other words, behind the best work lies a super-consciousness—knowledge that the work itself is not the great thing but the spirit that speaks in it. It is the purpose of help and redemption, the pitying love, the steadfast hope, that determines the value of the act. The deed itself, the work performed, is merely apparent, and does not count in comparison with the thought-force sent out and the spiritual energy generated. God is working through many people to-day in different ways; and though mistakes may entail suffering—and hatred is a mistake—yet even these defects cannot retard the onward march of what has been begun.

Are we then to condemn no one? Are all to be held equally useful, equally valuable, since, whether they will or not, God works through all equally? Is the renegade to be pardoned, and the traitor treated as saint? Very much the contrary. We are not to ask that a man stands with us, we are always to demand that he stands with God. Here there must be no slackness. The politician and extremist, the religious and the Swadeshi worker, the social reformer and the ultra-orthodox can all co-operate, as long as they can heartily respect each other's characters. Integrity is the only possible foundation for common faith and work. Once let the character be found questionable, however, and the worker is better passed on one side. If the heart of a man be divided in its allegiance, that man is not the mouthpiece of God. Honest conviction and sincerity of purpose are all that is necessary but conversely, we cannot be too stern and clear in our condemnation of dishonesty, treachery or insincerity.

Nationality will be the synthesis of all righteous forms of effort, but it has neither hope nor heaven to offer to the man who makes and teaches a lie. On the one side infinite charity, on the other unrelenting condemnation. Idling is bad enough in the day of our need and opportunity. But deceit and falsehood of intention are not to be condoned.

A lie that we often hear is the lazy man's promise that God will some day send us an Avatar to rouse and aid us. These are the fallacies of sluggards, who would fain turn over in their comfortable beds and dream that they are safe. Face to face with the great life of Dakshineswar, it is difficult to put up with such fatuous self-assurance. Said the pots, discussing their future destiny and alarmed at the prospect of possible breakage, "Tush! the potter is a good fellow! It will be well!" Of this quality is the faith of the man who is looking for a future divine revelation before he stirs. The revelation will come. The world throbs with such hourly. But it will pass the slumberer by. "Rascal!" said Tota Puri to—, "fire is burning before your door and you have come to the sands of the Narvada for heat?" The world cannot bear a second birth like that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa in five hundred years. The mass of thought that he has left, has to be transformed fast into experience; the spiritual energy given forth has to be converted into achievement. Until this is done, what right have we to ask for more?

Religion always, in India, precedes national awakenings. Sankaracharya was the beginning of a wave that swept round the country culminating in Chaitanya in Bengal, the Sikh

Gurus in the Punjab, Sivaji in Maharashtra and Ramanuja and Madhwacharya in the South. Through each of these a people sprang into self-realisation, into national energy and consciousness of their own unity. Sri Ramakrishna represents a synthesis in one person between all the leaders. It follows that the movements of his age will unify and organise the more provincial fragmentary movements of the past.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa is the epitome of the whole. His was the great super-conscious life which alone can witness to the infinitude of the current that bears us all oceanwards. He is the proof of the Power behind us, and the future before us. So great

a birth initiates great happenings. Many are to be tried as by fire, and not a few will be found to be pure gold; but whatever happens, whether victory or defeat, speedy fulfilment or prolonged struggle, the fact that he has been born and lived here in our midst, in the sight and memory of men now living is proof that

God hath sounded for the trumpet

That shall never call retreat!  
He is sifting out the hearts of men

Before His Judgment seat;  
Oh, be swift my Soul, to answer Him!

Be jubilant, my feet,  
While God is marching on!

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT AT HOME—I

(ITS IDEAS AND IDEALS)

By N. Kasturi, M.A., B.L.

[The writer is a lecturer in history in the Maharaja's College, Mysore. He is also a close friend of the Movement and a worker in its cause. In the following article he gives a very effective presentation of the idea for which the Movement stands.]

THE last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the discovery of India by herself as well as by the world. The consequence was that Young India was confronted by a bunch of problems that demanded solution, before India could justify herself and her heritage at the bar of history and take her place in the world as the home of universal religion, the haven of fearless inquiry into the ultimate and the hermitage of high morality.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" queried the new-born Indian individualist. "Can we conceive of religion at any time standing the rigorous test of exact science?" doubted

the young man, fresh from the laboratories of Indian colleges. "Can we build across the centuries a span connecting Kalidasa and Calcutta?" asked the impatient patriot. "Has the teachings of the ancient Indian forest-dweller any meaning to the generations whirling in the maelstrom of world politics and economics? Can Vedanta be used as the lever of national regeneration? Is religion only the opium of the masses? Does God exist? Can you and I see Him or It?"—thus came the questions, one after the other. "Is there a fundamental cleavage between the individual's path to God and his duty to society?" asked the aspirant who

was half recluse and half active! "Truth is one; the sages call it by different names," said the Vedic Seer. "Can this vision be made the harbinger of peace between the warring peoples of the world?" asked the lover of world peace and co-operation.

These were the self-same questions that surged in the breasts of the brilliant galaxy of inquirers and spiritual heroes who wended their way along the Ganges towards Dakshineswar. There, supremely kind to them all, sat Sri Ramakrishna, awaiting with answers that removed the thorn of doubt for ever and, in addition, transformed their hearts by a Divine Alchemy. Among those who sought and secured this conviction, it was Swami Vivekananda who saw, even then in general outline the significance of the Master's life. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna the Swamiji felt it more and more clearly. While he listened to the painful cries of poverty and ignorance rising from the mud hovels of India and the lusty cheers of luxury from the marble mansions of America, he felt that Sri Ramakrishna had vouchsafed a vision that could, in more senses than one, put bread into the mouths of the hungry and heal the lacerations of distress. That vision, he felt, could create not only a New India and a New World, but the essential guarantee of both, a New Man.

It was thus that Swamiji came to resolve upon an embodiment of the uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna and build up a system of hearts that will treasure up the precious perfume of his personality. The Ramakrishna Mission was the result. The objects of the Mission were declared, so far as they could be crystallised in cold

and stereotyped words, to be "the imparting of the teachings of Vedanta as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna, the promotion of the study of Vedanta as well as the arts, sciences and industrial and secular knowledge for the task of helping the masses, and the establishment and maintenance of educational and charitable institutions and homes of service."

Now for the translation of these words into deeds, so far as that imponderable can be expressed in black and white. Let us look into the General Report of the Ramakrishna Mission issued in September, 1934. Let us turn rapidly over the pages of matter-of-fact abstracts, summaries and figures and try to catch something of the vital forces behind every line. Apart from the gigantic relief operations conducted under Sannyasin guidance during the Bihar Earthquake and other but relatively minor calamities, there are some fragments that catch the eye as we hurry along. Indoor Hospitals some of them treating 410 patients; Dispensaries affording free medical relief to thousands; Night Schools in the labourers' colonies; anti-malarial and Kala-azar injections; a workshop of Automobile Engineering; a Sanskrit Pathasala; magic lanterns and sets of slides for demonstration in villages; practical training in meditation; two shoe factories for the untouchables of a place; relief given in cases of small-pox; 6914 home visits done by the Sishu Mangal, Child Welfare Centre, at Calcutta; an asylum with thirty seats for the aged and the disabled; a free tuberculosis centre at Paharganj; season schools for the Khasia Hill aboriginal tribes; lectures in Spanish by the Swamiji in



The Sishumangal Pratisthan  
(Child Welfare Centre.)



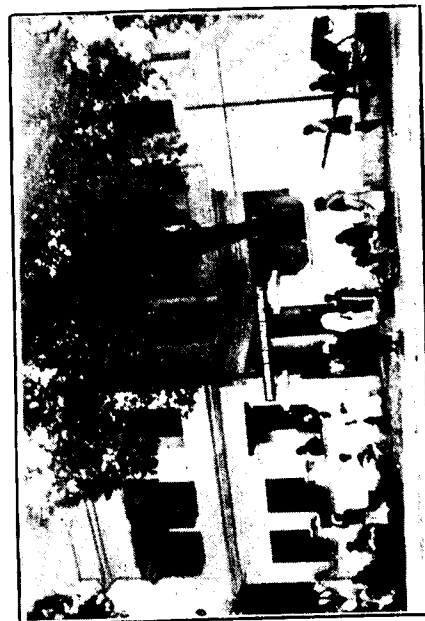
The Lecture Room



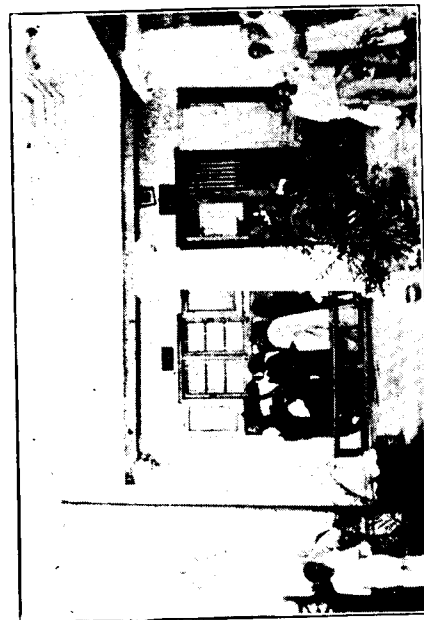
The Resident Staff



A Group of Toddlers



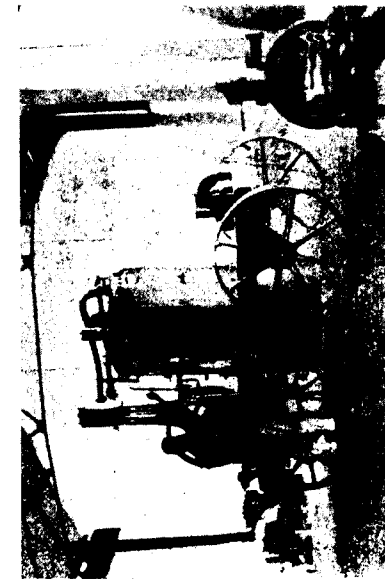
Ramakrishna Math Charitable Dispensary, Madras



Patients waiting at the Dispensary counter



Mechanical Engineering Section, Students' Home, Madras



Steam Engine



Weaving Section



Rattan Work



Carpentry

Brazil; lessons in toy-making and leather-embossing; a Seva Samiti Scout Troop started; a children's library; a lecture every week at W. P. R. O. Station; a school with 162 Harijan boys and 200 caste Hindu boys ....and so on, right through the ninety-six pages! What a variety of programmes, plans and activities, fed by the same strengthening grace, inspired by the same ideals! And yet, who can measure the influence exercised on thousands of people, through contact and conversation, through example more than precept, by the Sannyasins who reside in the various centres? Who can gauge the spread of tolerance and understanding, the emphasis on the inmost factors of individual and social renovation, the awakening of the moral enthusiasm needed to translate theory into practice? Suffice it to say, that the Mission is a mighty army of heroes, lay and monastic, marching forward to the call of their commander, "I bequeath to you, Young Men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Vow then to devote your whole lives to these millions going downward and still downward, everyday. You have read, मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव "Let the mother be as God to you, let the father be as God to you! I say, मूर्खदेवो भव, दग्धदेवो भव, 'The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant and the afflicted, let these be your God.' Know that service to these alone is the highest religion."

Wherefrom did the Swamiji imbibe this positive and practical Vedanta? Listen to Swami Saradanandaji, his great companion-in-arms. "One day, when Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room at Dakshineswar, surrounded by Narendranath (Swami Viveka-

nanda) and other disciples, the discussion drifted to the ideal of mercy and its implications. "Show mercy to all creatures"—with these words on his lips, the Master passed into a deep trance. On coming back into semi-consciousness, he took up the thread of discussion. Kindness to creatures! Fie upon thee, Man! An insignificant being, thyself, how canst thou show kindness to God's creatures? Who art thou to show mercy? Rather, *serve* all Jivas, all beings, as Shiva, God Himself." Narendranath, of all others, understood the deep significance of the words of the Master and found in them a wonderful illumination." Sri Ramakrishna always drove home through example and advice, the message of Seva-dharma. "The spiritual aspirant," he said, "should strive to see and serve the Narayana in every human being, especially the stricken, the downtrodden, the diseased, the ostracised and the ignorant." Thus Sri Ramakrishna laid the foundations for the Daridra Narayana Seva that we find enshrined in a multitude of endeavours throughout the country, the latest being the Harijan Uplift Movement.

And, after all, in spite of pedantic analysis that seeks to explain the origin of the Ramakrishna Mission through modern parallels in other countries, it is not difficult to see that the roots go deeper still. The Buddhist Sangha was a great historical and cultural inspiration for the New Monasticism. That the heart of the Buddha and the intellect of Sankara form the highest peaks of human possibility was the conviction of the Swamiji. The Buddha said, "As the mother protects her only son at the sacrifice of her life, let the

monk cultivate an infinitely kind mind towards all beings. Standing, walking, sitting or lying down, so far as he is awake, let him abide in this mental mood. They call this state the state of Divine Life in this world." And, monks building their faith on benevolence, tended the sick, wiped away the orphan's tear, succoured the victims of flood and pestilence, everywhere in Asia from Ceylon to Korea, on the banks of the Ganges as well as of the Yangtse-kiang. The Buddha too was but re-interpreting for *his* age, the teachings of the Upanishads re-lived and commented upon by Sri Ramakrishna for this age. The Upanishadic seer described the Lord as

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।  
त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वंचसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः  
"Thou art woman, thou art man, thou art youth, thou art maiden, thou, as an old man, totterest along on thy staff, thou art born everywhere."

Who can deny that in the realisation of this Truth, for oneself, lies the consummation of the career of Man? The Ramakrishna Mission (so far as a lay servant treading in its outer corridors, eager to share and benefit, can understand it) is dedicated to serve man in the realisation of his Destiny. Every seeker is given sanctuary and persuaded to battle with himself and proceed a few further steps towards the goal. Invariably, the battle is itself the victory.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT AT HOME—II

By N. Subramanya Aiyar, B.A., L.T.

[In the following article by Mr. N. Subramanya Aiyar, the Head Master of Sri Ramakrishna Residential High School and a close friend and worker of the Mission, the reader will get in a brief compass some idea of the nature and extent of the work done by the Math and the Mission.]

### INTRODUCTION

**T**HE twin institutions known as the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission have a history dating from the time when the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna gathered round the sick-bed of their great Master to nurse him in his last illness. Their ideals and objects embodied in the motto "Siva and Seva" may be briefly elucidated as follows:—

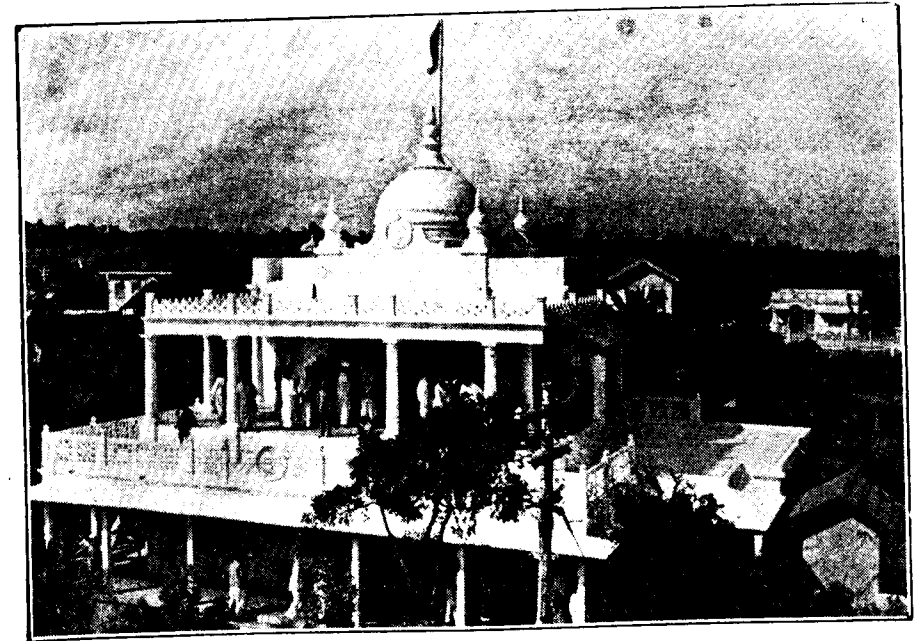
(a) To bring into existence a band of Sannyasins devoted to leading a life of renunciation and practical spirituality, from among whom teachers and workers could be sent out to spread Vedantic and religious ideas as illustrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

(b) In conjunction with the lay disciples and sympathisers to carry on missionary, philanthropic and educational work, looking upon all men, women and children irrespective of caste, creed or colour as veritable manifestations of the Divine.

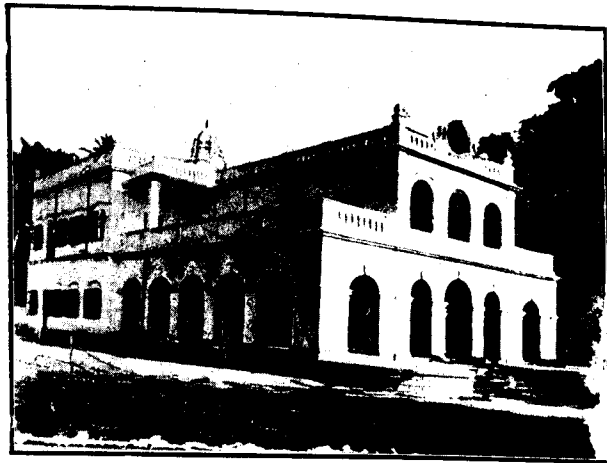
From very small beginnings the Math and the Mission have now become institutions of all-India importance, and their activities, as will be seen from the articles appearing elsewhere in this issue, now extend to several countries outside India. One can form an idea of their present position from the fact that the General Report of the Math and the Mission for 1933 gives descriptions of 77 main Indian institutions, several



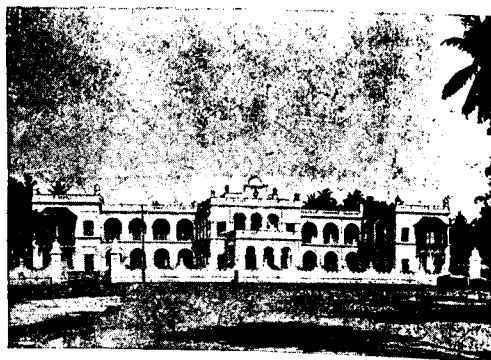
Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati



Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bombay



Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras



Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Madras



Prayer Hall, Students' Home, Madras

of them having many branches and departments of activity, and 17 foreign centres of work. An estimate of the work can also be made by considering the accounts for 1933 which give the total receipts of the several Mission centres in India (as apart from the Math centres) as amounting to Rs. 6,33,425-15-4 and the Permanent Funds of the same to Rs. 13,56,829-8-0.

It is not possible to give here a comprehensive account of all these centres of work. We shall confine ourselves to brief descriptions of a few centres that are specially important and typical of the activities of the Math and the Mission. The descriptions are given under four main heads: (1) Maths or purely monastic institutions, (2) Educational institutions, (3) Philanthropic institutions, (4) Temporary Relief Works.

#### MATHS

The Math at Belur and its branch Maths serve both as retreats and as training ground for Sannyasins and Brahmacharins of the Order. The members are constantly moved from one centre to another according to the exigencies of the work, under the control and direction of the Governing body at Belur, Calcutta. The funds of the Maths consist of subscriptions and donations from friends and devotees, ear-marked for worship and maintenance of the Sadhus. In some Maths this fund is strengthened by the proceeds of the publication department.

*Belur Math* : The first and the foremost of the Maths is the one at Belur, situated on the western bank of the Ganges five miles north of Calcutta in full view of Dakshineswar, and this is the heart of the whole Order. Here rest the relics of Sri

Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and the atmosphere is filled with a thousand sacred memories relating to the lives of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples, many of whom had lived for years in this head monastery. The Math has become a place of pilgrimage to thousands of Sri Ramakrishna's devotees hailing from different parts of India. On the Master's birthday the Math attracts more than a lakh of people, and over twenty thousand people of all sections of society take their mid-day meal there on that day. On the occasion of the Durga Pooja also several thousands of people congregate at the Math for worship. Besides imparting spiritual training to the monks, the Math maintains a library and a seminary for the instruction of the inmates in Sanskrit literature and philosophy. As the headquarters of the Math and the Mission, it controls and supervises all the branch centres and their activities. All the relief operations of the mission are carried on under its auspices. Locally it runs a Charitable Dispensary and an Industrial School with a free hostel attached to it.

*Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati*: Started by Swami Vivekananda himself in 1899, it is dedicated to the practice and preaching of Advaita free from any compromise. The Ashrama is situated 6800 feet above the sea level, and nestles amidst the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, far away from other human habitations. Besides serving as an ideal place for contemplation and study, it has grown to be the most important publication centre of the Order. The Ashram conducts the well-known English Monthly, "Prabuddha Bharata", and has published several important books in English, some of them being the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda in seven volumes, Lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda separately, M. Romain Rolland's two volumes on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with Sankara's commentary on it translated into English. The Ashram maintains a free dispensary in the hills.

*Madras Math* : This Math with its multifarious works, spiritual, missionary, literary and philanthropic is one of the important centres of the Order. Started on a very modest scale in 1897 by the late

Swami Ramakrishnananda, the activities of this Math have been either directly or indirectly responsible for the starting of several centres not only in South India but also in Ceylon, Burma and F.M.S. Besides undertaking preaching work in Madras and other parts of the Presidency, the Math conducts two magazines, the "Vedanta Kesari" in English and the "Ramakrishna Vijayam" in Tamil and publishes several books in English and in the South Indian languages. Among the important publications may be mentioned the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and the Upanishad Series in English, and a detailed life of Sri Ramakrishna and translation of Swami Vivekananda's works in Tamil and in Telugu. A Charitable Dispensary with a very large attendance, and work in some slums of the city form the other important public activities of the Math. It need not be added that worship and training of monks occupy a prominent place among the various items of the Math activities.

*Other Maths and Study Centres:* We can but make brief references here to a few other important Maths run on the same general lines but still having their own individuality and special field of work. In western India there is the Ashram at Bombay whose influence is felt all over the Presidency and has been indirectly responsible for the starting of centres at Rajkot and Karachi. Besides several other centres, Calcutta has the Bagh Bazar Math in the northern part of the city, which is sacred to the memories of the Holy Mother and Swami Saradananda both of whom lived and entered into Mahasamadhi in this place. It conducts the Bengali Monthly "Udbodhan" and is the most important centre for publishing Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in Bengali.

The Benares Advaita Ashrama where monks retire for a contemplative life, the Math at Dacca with its multifarious preaching and philanthropic activities, and the more recently started Ashrams at Nagpur and Delhi help to disseminate the ideas of the movement in different Provinces of this country. Although strictly speaking it has to be grouped along with foreign activities, we may also mention here the valuable work done by the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram and the educational institutions of

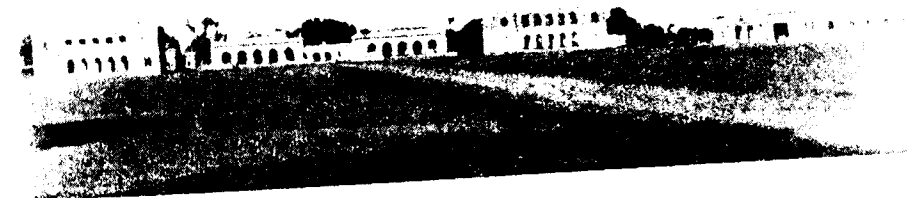
the Mission in Colombo and other parts of the island, and to the preaching activities of the Ashram in Singapore.

Another type of Ashramas, besides doing the usual preaching and philanthropic work, has grown in importance as study centres for monks. Among such institutions may be mentioned the Gadadhar Ashram in South Calcutta devoted to Sanskrit learning and Vedic culture, the monastery at Bhuvaneshwar (Puri), a peace resort noted for the conveniences it affords for meditation and scriptural study, and the Ashram at Mysore which through the kind patronage of His Highness the Maharaja has organised a study circle affording facilities to the monks for the study of eastern and western philosophy, psychology, sociology and comparative religion.

#### EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The main object of the educational activities of the Mission is to supplement college and school education with proper home-training and to create a few model institutions in different fields of educational work. Character building, moral and religious instruction, physical culture, vocational training and insistence on dignity of labour form the essential feature of the education imparted in all these institutions. These educational institutions are of various types—Homes for grown up students, Residential Schools for boys and girls and Rural Education Centres. The common ideal of all these is 'Man-making,' the educational creed placed before the Mission by Swami Vivekananda.

*Madras Students' Home:*—The Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home which has gained a great reputation in this Presidency is perhaps the most important educational venture undertaken by the Mission. From very small beginnings it has grown into a self-contained educational colony catering to the physical, intellectual and spiritual needs of about 170 human personalities in the making, ranging from boys in their early teens to young men



Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Deoghat



Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Calcutta

Ramakrishna Mission Siksha Mandir, Sarisha, Diamond Harbour,  
24 Perganas, Bengal



Girls playing Volley-ball



Girls at Dumb-bell drill

about to enter life. It has boarding arrangements for college students, a Residential High School for boys and a Residential Industrial School providing instruction in Automobile Engineering for students who want to take to technical lines. It adheres to the old Gurukula ideal in so far as it combines secular education with spiritual training, insists on the students' living in close contact with the teachers and gives free boarding and lodging to all its inmates except a few coming from rich families. Among other important features of the training imparted here it may be mentioned that the students learn various handicrafts and do all the household duties except cooking. The magnitude of the work turned out here can be estimated from the fact that the whole institution is run at an annual expenditure of Rs. 40,000. The Home with its palatial buildings, its impressive neatness and orderliness and its general atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual upliftment is a source of attraction to all educationists who visit the city of Madras.

*Calcutta Students' Home* :—This rapidly growing institution, though smaller in magnitude and scope of work than the one described before, is noted for the intensity of its system of training and the remarkable success with which it inculcates the ideals of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement into its inmates. Situated on an extensive ground of 20 acres some six miles away from Calcutta at Gauripur, Dum Dum, the Home is a college Students' Hostel recognised by the Calcutta University, providing lodging, boarding and home training to deserving students without any payment or at concession rates. The students live in close contact with the resident Sannyasins under whose direct supervision the institution is run. In its scheme of character building and spiritual training the institution relies more on loving personal contact and sympathetic treatment than on formal instruction. A section for training students in agriculture and cottage industries is fast growing. The Home may well feel proud of the fact that it has contributed many able workers to the cause of Sri Ramakrishna, two of them being at present teachers of Vedanta in America and England.

*Deoghar Vidyapith* :—This is a Residential High School for young boys, numbering more than 100 at present, conducted on the lines of the Gurukula system. While the assimilation of academic knowledge is not precluded, it lays the main stress on the development of character and religious spirit through a combined process of self-restraint and self-development. Surrounded by picturesque natural scenery and away from the bustle of town, it is situated in a place which is both a health resort and a centre of pilgrimage. The boys are taught and looked after by a staff consisting mainly of monks and a few self-sacrificing young men. It is mainly an institution for paying boys, and a good standard is maintained in diet, games, discipline and other matters essential to a high class Residential School.

In these days when efforts are being made to start a Public School in India, these institutions at Madras, Calcutta and Deoghar may very well serve as models of what true Indian Public Schools ought to be.

*Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta* :—

This is a free Girls' Educational institution with a total strength of 500 girls. Attached to it is a hostel with 50 inmates. While the School imparts modern education up to the High School standard, it lays special emphasis on the study of Sanskrit, religion, household duties and fine arts like needle work and music. The education it imparts is primarily meant to suit the needs of Hindu homes.

The last two institutions described above are unconnected with the Government Educational Department, although there is an arrangement to send up their students for public examinations through other educational institutions. They are therefore free to follow their own courses of study, and hence the education imparted in these may truly be described as national.

*Sarisha Centre* : This institution on the Diamond Harbour Road situated to the south of Calcutta devotes itself to the task of village reconstruction through an all-round education of the right type. It runs 5 day schools for boys and girls, and one Students' Home. Special efforts are made to impart physical education both to boys and girls, and under the supervision

of an expert teacher, those youths under training maintain a high standard of skill in drill and sports. The extent of the work that is done can be estimated from the fact that it has to incur an expenditure of Rs. 10,000 per year in its work in rural areas.

*Ramakrishna Ashram, Trichur* :—The educational work of this rural centre is directed chiefly to the upliftment of the depressed classes or Harijans. It runs a day school with about 300 pupils of which more than half are Harijans, and a Gurukula or Students' Home having about 30 inmates, three-fourths of whom are Harijans. While religious instruction and secular education up to the Secondary School standard are imparted and students are taught three languages, Sanskrit, Hindi and Malayalam, special care is taken to develop the aptitude for manual work found in boys of the depressed classes. The aim of the management is to make the institution for these poor people what the Tuskegee Institute is doing for the Negroes of America. The influence of the Ashram is felt in other branches of rural life also.

*The Ashram at Shella* :—There are some other Ashrams which carry on educational work in the name of Ramakrishna and on the same principles as the Mission institutions, but which have not yet been formally affiliated. Prominent among them is the Ashram at Shella in Assam which has been started by a member of the Order and is doing excellent work among the Khasia hill tribes who are being rapidly converted to other religions. The Ashram conducts one High School, two Secondary Schools, three Students' Homes and a Dispensary. It has its headquarters in Shillong and has recently started publication of religious literature in Khasi language.

These are only a few typical educational institutions of the Mission. Quite a large number of them, too numerous to mention here, are scattered over different provinces of India and Ceylon. According to 1926 Convention Report there were altogether nearly 4,960 boys and girls in the Mission Schools and 200 inmates in the Mission Homes. In the course of a decade these numbers have vastly increased.

#### GENERAL PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES

Philanthropic work done in a spirit of disinterested service leads to spiritual advancement through self-purification; by serving man as veritable manifestation of God one can grow spiritually and at the same time contribute to the general well-being of humanity. Thus the philanthropic activities of the Ramakrishna Mission are undertaken as a part of spiritual discipline, providing as they do a means of self-purification through disinterested and loving service of the needy and poor. In the following paragraphs we shall give brief descriptions of a few typical institutions sprung from this ideal of service as worship and spiritual discipline.

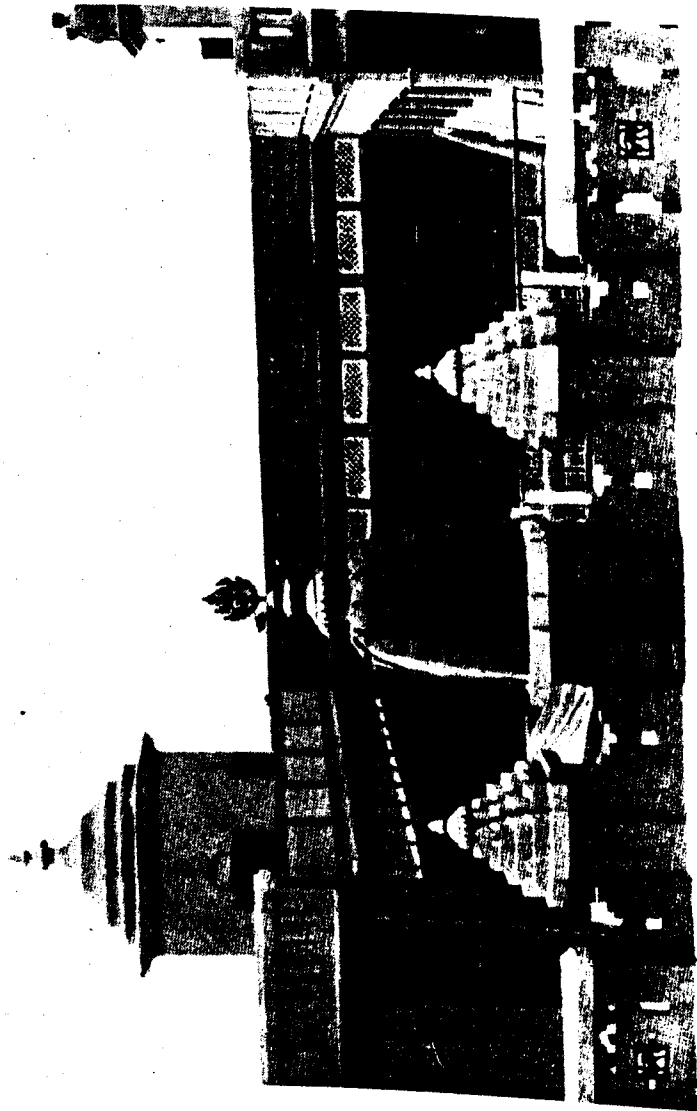
*Benares Sevashram* :—The largest of such institutions is the Sevashram at Benares. Started in 1900, it has now several extensions in different parts of the city, run at an annual expenditure of more than Rs. 50,000. These comprise an in-patient department with 145 beds; a refuge for men invalids with 25 beds; a refuge for women invalids with eight beds; a Girls' Home with eight inmates managed by a lady superintendent; a Home for about 20 paralytic patients; a Dharmasala for strangers; an out-door dispensary; and a section for special and occasional relief work. The workers in the hospital are all monks, the female sections being managed by lady workers.

*Other Similar Institutions* :—There are similar equally big institutions at Brindavan, Hardwar, and Rangoon. The work of the last one especially is very extensive, its expenditure being more than Rs. 40,000 per year. Smaller institutions are too numerous to mention.

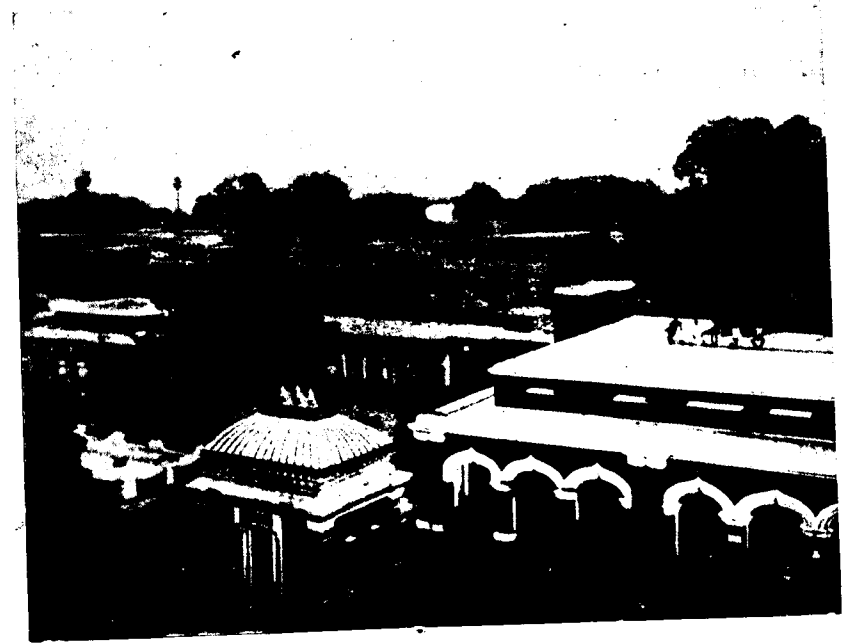
To show the extent of work it is enough to state that according to the Convention Report of 1926 the total number of in-patients treated in all the institutions was 3,385, and that of out-patients 4,14,378. The extent of service rendered has considerably increased during the intervening decade. Both in-patients and out-patients are treated free of all charges and no dis-



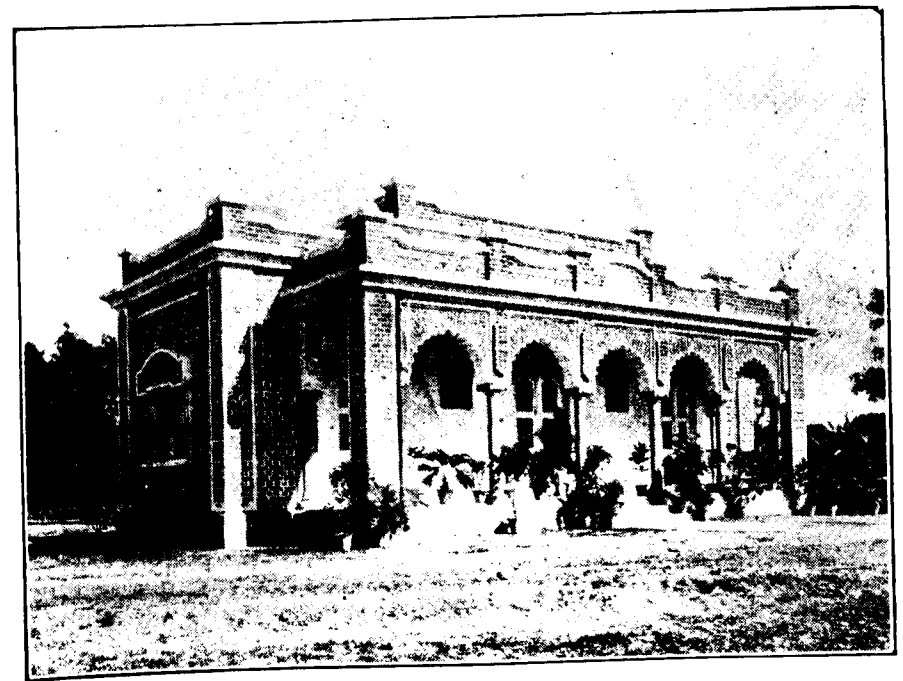
The Prayer Hall, Nivedita Girls' School



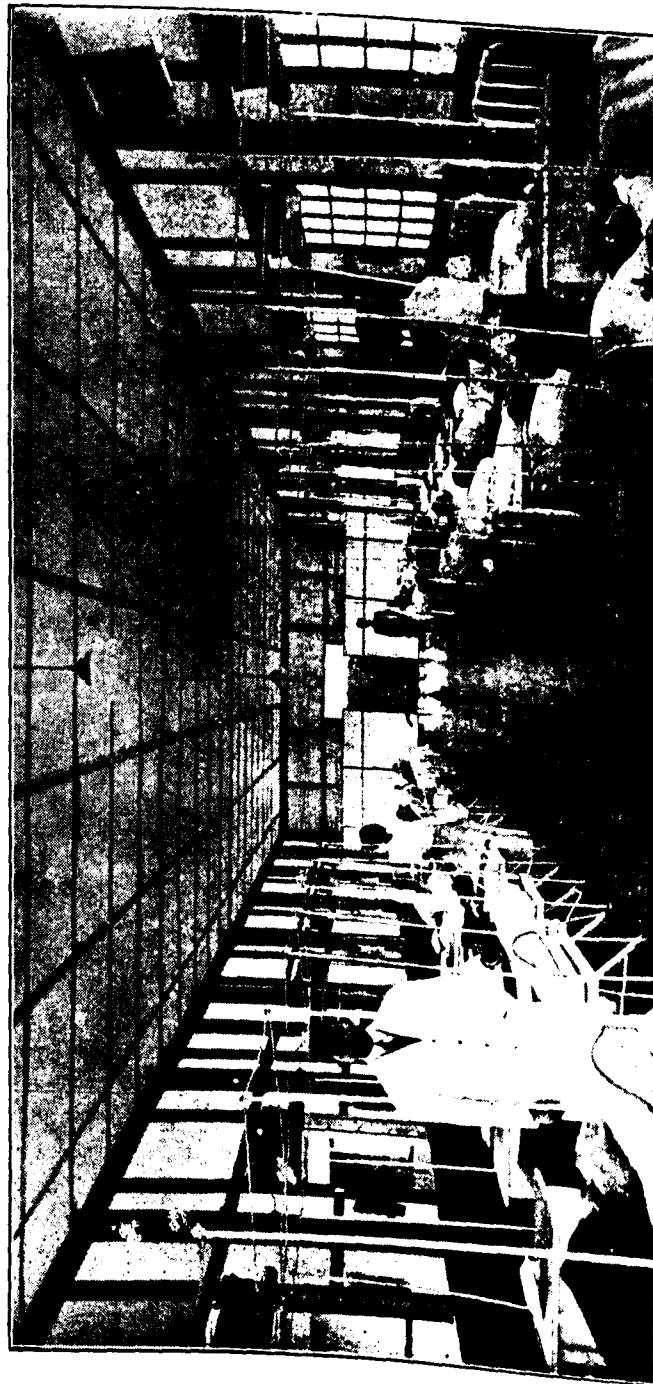
Matrimandir, Nivedita Girls' School



Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram, Benares



Surgical ward of the Sevashram, Benares



A road, Ramakrishna Mission, Serampore, Rangpur

tinction of caste, colour or creed is shown in the service rendered in these institutions.

*Sisumangal Pratishthan* :—Special mention has to be made of this Child Welfare Centre at Calcutta started in 1932. Competent medical authorities have pronounced it to be perfect in miniature both from the point of view of equipment and quality of service. Its work consists in giving regular hygienic instruction and efficient pre-natal care to expectant mothers through Sunday Clinics, providing skilled aid during confinement either in the houses of the patients or in the hospital of the Pratishthan, taking systematic care of new-born babies up to the school-going age through home visits and bi-weekly clinics and training women of good families in midwifery, obstetrical nursing and infant care. In many respects it is a pioneer institution in India and a model for others to copy. The Calcutta Corporation has shown its appreciation of its work by giving it an annual grant of Rs. 8,000 which is supplemented by an annual contribution of an American friend to the extent of Rs. 6,000 and other contributions locally received.

#### TEMPORARY RELIEF WORKS

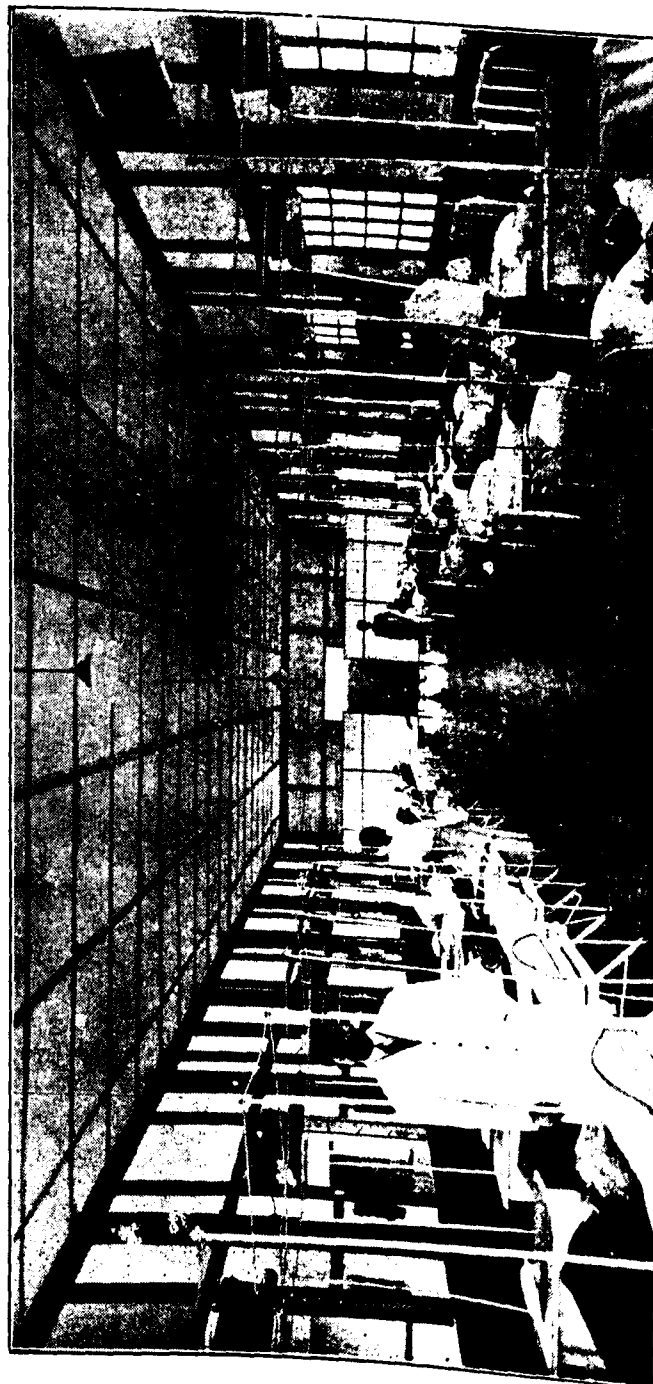
The humanitarian activities of the Mission are not confined to these and other institutions of a permanent nature. The field is vast and the service takes many forms—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and nursing poor patients in their own houses; picking up old and diseased persons from roadside and arranging for their accommodation and treatment; undertaking the cremation of the dead; providing for the comforts of pilgrims during big concourses at fairs and festivals; the organising of relief during epidemics, flood, famine, fire, plague and earthquake, etc. All these and other aspects of service receive the earnest attention of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission. They have been seen during the past thirty years and more in every part of India in times of need, carrying relief to hundreds of thousands of dis-

tressed people irrespective of caste, colour or creed, distributing food, grains and clothing, helping in the erection of huts and sometimes rebuilding whole villages, without any ulterior motive of proselytisation in all these activities. Recently work of this nature on a large scale was carried on in the province of Bihar. Care is taken in every case to see that while help is rendered to enable those who are struck down to stand on their own feet, it is given in such a manner as not to impair their sense of self-respect.

According to the report of the convention of 1926 the number of persons served from 1899-1924 in temporary relief operations is 1,92,119. Besides this, for the same period there are records of relief operations undertaken on 24 occasions in different parts of India of which detailed figures are not available.

#### CONCLUSION

The activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission are to be valued more for the spirit behind them than for the work turned out, however extensive it might be. The modern age is noted for its shift of emphasis from individualism to collectivism, from egoism to altruism, from personal salvation to social re-construction. Religion as coming to us through Medieval times undoubtedly places the emphasis on the ideal of personal salvation, and the essential religious problem of to-day therefore is how to reconcile the conservation of individual spiritual values with that of social values. The work of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission as a practical application of the doctrine of "Siva and Seva" to modern life, is the solution offered to this spiritual problem



A ward, Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, India.

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The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York

the number of people who have discovered truth for themselves by reading the works of Sri Ramakrishna's eldest spiritual son. They look upon the Guru of gurus as Perfect Man. Perfect Man, or incarnation of God, he has showered glory on India and all humanity. Each came to honour, not to humble. Each man or woman sees the truth that "Man is divine" and should live to manifest that divinity.

The books of Vivekananda have not gone out of print all these forty years. Newer editions and other translations are being printed. Compare this fact with the works of other Indians who have written on religion the past hundred years, and you will see that the teachings of the Sannyasin belong to the ages. Probably forty centuries will be devoted to honouring his words.

Who have acknowledged their influence to Swamiji? To date I am aware of the names of scientists, artists, philosophers, mothers, fathers, daughters and sons of various nationalities who have learned to do homage to Sri Ramakrishna by reading Vivekananda. Since they were Hindus and Indians, the tribute has been paid to India. The next hundred years will see its volume grow hundredfold. Fortunate are we who have witnessed the dawn before the rest of the world!

It is a matter of speculation if within a hundred years of his ascension the Buddha was preached to alien races in far off lands. We know

Jesus was proclaimed to non-Hebrew races within fifty years of his ascension. Ramakrishna was made known to the world by 1894—within ten years of his death. Those who will come ten hundred years from now will be able to measure the magnitude of his life. He belongs to the world. This Viswa Manav, World-man, lived and died within a radius of a few hundred kilometers of his birthplace. Now his shadow has crossed the entire earth. "Vedham etam Purusham mahantam"—yes, we know Him, this mightiest of Persons. He is Universal as the Sun. We who have been fortunate enough to know a little of his glory will be traitors to posterity, if we fail to set down what we have seen and heard. Indians and non-Indians are renouncing what men hold dear in order to join the Ramakrishna Mission. American, English, Scandinavian, Dutch, Chekoslovak and others are some of our monks. This has not happened since the Buddhistic period of Indian history.

On what does this structure rest? On a life whose four pillars are Kamarpukur, Jairambati, Dakshineswar and Belur. Men will come there for hundreds of years from Europe, Africa, America, and Asia to do obeisance to divinity. Now they come in their hundreds; later they shall come in thousands. The Ramakrishna Missions to-day at home or abroad are but faint indications of the vivid and vast drama of to-morrow.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT ABROAD—II

*By Swami Devatmananda*

[Swami Devatmananda is the leader of the Vedanta Centre of Portland. Before his departure to America he had done much valuable work in several of the educational institutions of the Mission in India. In America he has experience of several other Vedanta Centres besides his own, and his writing, therefore, giving some details of the work in America and an outline of what is taking place in other foreign countries will be found very interesting and instructive.

Besides the works of a permanent nature started in the countries mentioned here, Swamis have done temporary preaching in other parts of the world like France, Italy, South Africa, Canada, Malay States, etc. It has also to be mentioned that there is a permanent centre in Singapore, and an Ashrama and several educational institutions in Ceylon.]

**S**INCE the days when the adventurous Buddhist monks went to distant parts of the world to spread the Gospel of the Exalted One, Indian religious leaders and missionaries have not been known to have gone to foreign countries to preach the spiritual truths discovered by our sages and saints. This discontinuity in Indian missionary tradition was broken when Swami Vivekananda presented the message of Hinduism before the Parliament of Religions held in connection with the historic Chicago Fair of 1893. Since the Swami's successful preaching in America and Europe, the Vedanta movement inaugurated by him has been kept alive, especially in the U.S.A., by the successive line of Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order who have visited the American shores. In recent times the movement has been spreading to other Western countries as well. The following is a brief account of the Vedanta movement in its present state of development in (1) U.S.A., (2) South America, and (3) Europe.

### IN U. S. A.

As the place of Swami Vivekananda's brilliant triumph and active preaching, the United States of

America has been more responsive than any other country to Vedantic ideas. Since Swami Vivekananda's time, in all nineteen Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order have worked in the U.S.A. Of them eight have returned home after several years of preaching and two have passed away in America in the service of their adopted motherland. Special mention has to be made here of Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who was mainly responsible for stabilising the movement and laying the foundation of its further development after Swami Vivekananda's return from the West. For a period of 26 years, from 1896 to 1922, the year of his final retirement to India, the Swami worked tirelessly for the cause of Vedanta in the West. Besides spreading Indian spiritual ideals among people in the West, the Swami's labours have found expression in a series of valuable books on Vedanta, which are noted for their scholarship and lucidity of exposition.

At present there are nine Swamis managing ten permanent centres of work in various important cities of the United States. A brief description of these centres and the Swamis



Swami Paramananda



Swami Abhedananda

in charge of them will give the reader some idea of the nature and extent of the work in the U.S.A.

*Vedanta Society, New York.* *Leader—Swami Bodhananda:* Established by Swami Vivekananda himself in 1894, the Society was the field of the labours of Swamis Abhedananda and Nirmalananda, before its present leader assumed charge of it in 1907. Housed in a spacious building purchased during the leadership of Swami Bodhananda, the Society has a beautifully decorated auditorium, a chapel for silent meditation and a good library of Eastern and Western philosophical literature. A morning Service on Sundays, a study class on the Bhagavad Gita on Tuesdays, practical lessons in meditation to students followed by the study of Yoga Aphorisms on Thursdays, and occasional social functions form the important activities of the Society. Many churches, and cultural and educational institutions invite the Swami for lectures on the universal philosophy of Vedanta.

*Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York.* *Founder and Leader—Swami Nikhilananda:* This Centre was founded in 1933 by the Swami, who is a gifted speaker and has distinguished himself as a writer and as a translator of Vedantic texts while in India. He conducts a public Service on Sundays, and on week days he holds two classes on standard Vedantic texts, attended by an average of fifty students. He has also opened a class on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in order to give the more deeply interested among his students a fuller and more intimate knowledge of the religious traditions and practices of India than is possible in formal lectures and classes. He also lectures very often on invitation at University Clubs and literary and cultural associations.

*The Vedanta Society, San Francisco.* *Leader—Swami Ashokananda:* Founded by the saintly Swami Turiyananda, a co-disciple of Swami Vivekananda, in 1900, the Society had the leadership of a succession of brilliant Swamis. Special mention has to be made of Swami Trigunatita, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who consolidated the Society and established the first Hindu Temple in the West, in which

Swami Prakashananda, his successor, who worked in America for a period of 20 years. Both the Swamis passed away in America.

While in India, Swami Ashokananda, the present leader of the Society, had rendered distinguished service to the cause of Sri Ramakrishna in the literary field. Since he took charge of the work in 1932, there had been such a steady increase of attendance at all his discourses that the spacious auditorium of the Temple could not hold the crowd. Consequently, a large hall has been rented at the Century Club for the Sunday morning Services, when the hall is always full to capacity. A public lecture on Vedanta philosophy on Wednesdays, a study class on Fridays, and extension work in Oakland consisting of Sunday Services in the evening and study classes on Mondays—form the other activities of the Swami. During the warm season he holds also a Retreat at the Shanti Ashrama, when groups of students enjoy a marvellous period of solitude, study and meditation, away from their active life.

*Vedanta Centre, Boston and Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta.* *Founder and Leader—Swami Paramananda:* Swami Paramananda has been working actively in America for the past 30 years. He is the author of several works, both prose and poetical, which are noted for their simplicity of style and elevating influence and have been a source of inspiration to many spiritual aspirants.

Of the two centres situated on the two coasts of American Continent, the one at Boston on the Atlantic is housed in a magnificent four-storied house with a large and attractive auditorium and a chapel used for silent meditation and worship by resident members and students. Two Services on Sundays, a class on Hindu philosophical works on Tuesdays and a Hindu dinner served to the students and guests on Thursdays comprise the weekly programme of the Centre. At Cohasset, 20 miles from Boston, the Centre owns a beautiful Ashrama or "Retreat" where students can live in peaceful seclusion for several days with the special permission of the authorities. For the past 20 years the Centre has been conducting the well-known Vedanta monthly magazine entitled, "The



Swamies in U. S. A.

The Ananda Ashrama of La Crescenta, California on the Pacific Coast, founded in 1923 is a pioneer attempt in America to build up the spiritual life of its members in the peaceful seclusion of the woods. It is situated in an area of over 150 acres of land on magnificent wooded hills. The students live here as resident members leading a life of simplicity, contemplation and communion. Besides Sunday Services and weekly classes, the Ashrama has an art department, a large apiary and arrangements for incense making and weaving.

*The Vedanta Society, Providence. Founder and Leader—Swami Akhilananda :* Founded in 1928, the Society has been permanently established in a short period of three years. This is not a little due to the ability, scholarship, and loving and genial disposition of Swami Akhilananda who has won many friends for the cause from the best classes of society. The magnificent three-storied building of the Society, donated by two American members, has a chapel, an auditorium, a library, an office, a special worship room, and living quarters and study for the Swami. Besides the usual Sunday Services, and classes on Hindu Scriptures on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the Swami has a busy programme of lectures in churches, synagogues and culture clubs, radio speeches, and social gatherings at the Society.

*The Vedanta Society, Chicago. Founder and Leader—Swami Gnaneshwarananda :* The Society owes its origin and its present flourishing condition to the versatility and uncommon abilities of its founder and leader. Though established only in 1930, the Society has a large group of steady and sincere students. The popularity of the work is indicated by the fact that the Swami has to address often packed halls. Sunday Services at Masonic Temple, two weekly classes on Hindu Scriptures accompanied with meditation and special courses in Hindu Psychology, meditation and philosophy either personally or through correspondence—are the important activities conducted by the Swami. The Society also holds parties, picnics, dinners, etc., occasionally, and gives performances in Hindu music in which the Swami is an expert.

*The Vedanta Society, Portland. Leader—Swami Devatmananda :* Founded in 1925 by Swami Prabhavananda, its present

leader took charge of it in 1932. In 1934 the Society moved to its permanent headquarters, the Vedic Temple—a two-storied building situated in a respectable residential district. Besides Sunday Services, week-day classes, special devotional Services, and social gatherings, the Society also conducts a Women's League—a cultural and educational group consisting of women members and friends of the Society, which meets once in a month. Lectures, classes and forums in different parts of the city are also organised.

*The Vedanta Society, Hollywood. Founder and Leader—Swami Prabhavananda :* The Society, established in 1930, is permanently housed in the Vivekananda Home—the beautiful residence of a devoted disciple of Swami Vivekananda donated for the purpose of spreading the message of Vedanta. In a city where the truth seekers are often lost in the medley of pseudo-religion and cheap Yoga demonstration, the Society under the leadership of Swami Prabhavananda, who is both a spiritual leader and a true friend, is a welcome addition. His Sunday Services are often held in packed halls. On Thursdays he conducts a study class on standard works dealing with Hindu philosophy and Yoga. He has also started a new line of work, keenly appreciated by many American parents, consisting in classes every other Sunday for children, where non-sectarian principles of practical spiritual living are expounded through simple stories and inspiring biographies. To fulfil the great demand for the teaching, the Swami gives special series of lectures in different parts of the city, and holds meetings and study classes in branch centres outside it.

*Vedanta Society, Washington. Leader—Swami Vividishananda :* At the Society building situated in a prominent section of the capital city of the United States, Swami Vividishananda gives one public lecture on Sundays and holds two scriptural classes preceded by silent meditation. The Swami had done much literary work while in India. His lectures are often broadcast over the radio.

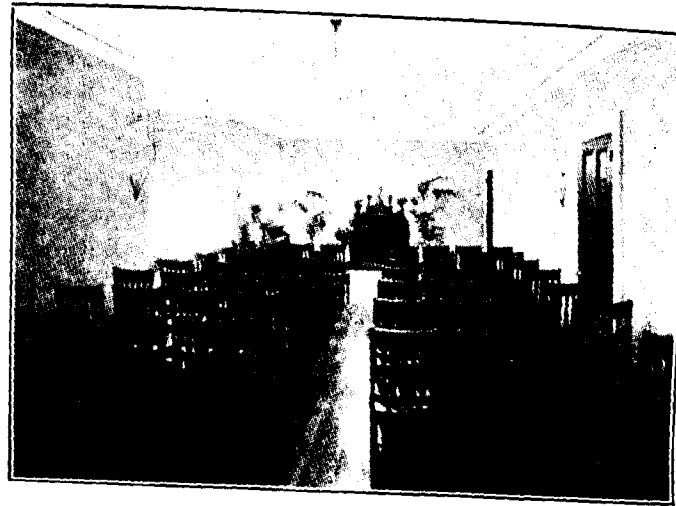
All the centres in the United States observe in a fitting manner the birthday anniversaries of the great teachers of the world, and some of them



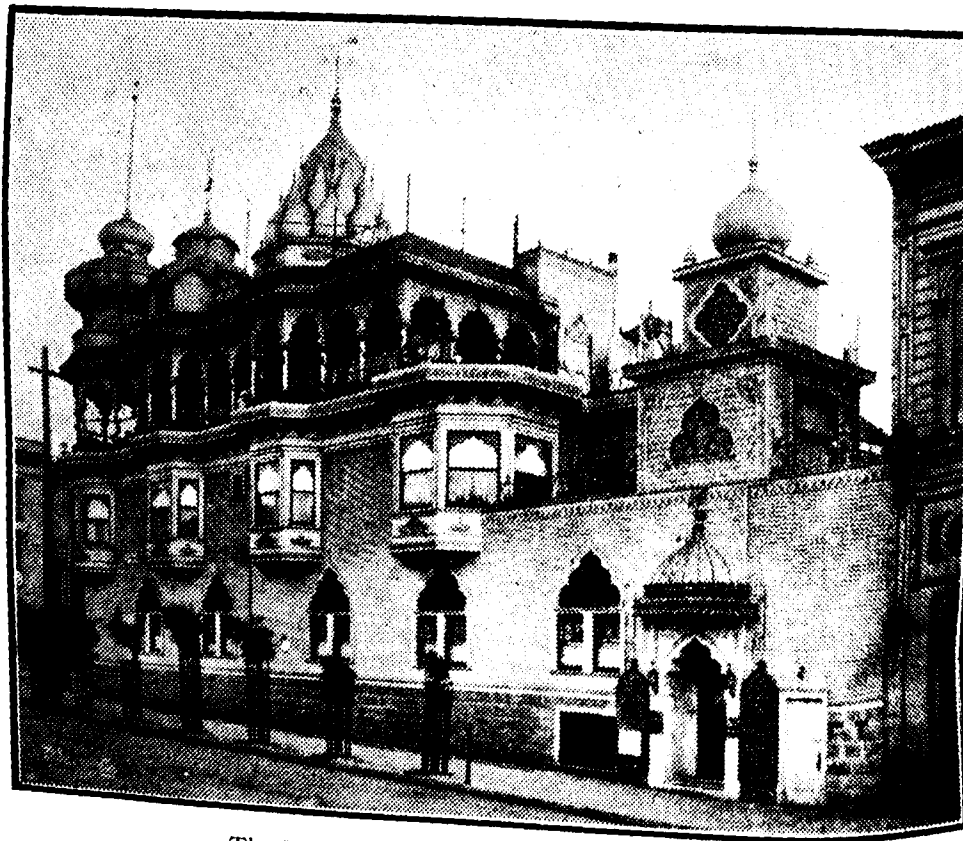
A view of the Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California



The Vivekananda Home, Hollywood



Chapel and Auditorium, Providence



The Hindu Temple, San Francisco, California

observe also Hindu festivals like Durga Pooja and others. They maintain a large collection of Vedanta literature for sale.

#### IN SOUTH AMERICA

An interesting development of the Vedanta work of the Ramakrishna Mission in foreign lands is the starting in 1933 of a Ramakrishna Ashrama in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina republic of South America. Swami Vijayananda who is responsible for this work has met with unprecedented success in this land where the message of Hinduism is for the first time being heard. Every week the Swami holds five scriptural classes in the morning, attended regularly by 35 students, and 3 evening classes attended by about 60. The Swami has been delivering a very large number of public lectures to which his eloquence and forceful personality is attracting from 500 to 1,000 hearers. The Swami does all his preaching in Spanish. The Ashrama is going to undertake the translation of Swami Vivekananda's works in Spanish, and the publication of the addresses and class-talks of Swami Vijayananda. It has to be remarked that the Swami has gained this remarkable success in spite of the fact that the field of his labour lies in a Catholic country where he has to face the bitter opposition of powerful religious organisations.

#### IN EUROPE

The Vedanta work was first started in England by Swami Vivekananda, but it did not continue for a long time after his return. But since the arrival of Swami Avyaktananda in London in 1934, new efforts are being made to revive the work there. From March 1935 the Swami was having

three regular weekly engagements—a drawing-room talk in Streatham, a meditation class in the International Fellowship Club and a lecture in the heart of London. He also met several prominent Englishmen interested in Indian thought and lectured before many cultural associations on invitation. As a result of the interest created by the Swami's work, a Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta Society has been organised in London last year. Regular classes and lectures are held under the auspices of the Society, and new people are getting interested in the movement. The Society has made arrangements for celebrating the Birth-Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna in a fitting manner.

The Vedanta movement which was till recently influencing mainly the English speaking countries, is now making itself felt in the European continent also. The publication of Romain Rolland's books on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in various European languages has for sometime prepared the ground for work. The next stage began when a group of earnest aspirants of Wiesbaden, Germany requested the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission to send a spiritual teacher, and Swami Yatiswarananda, the then President of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, was deputed in response to this request in November 1933. The Swami has since then been visiting important cities and cultural centres of Central Europe, forming groups of devotees and earnest students in the places thus visited. In Wiesbaden, Germany, there are three groups with whom the Swami spent the greater part of the first year of his stay, holding as many as 10 classes or more

a week. A good nucleus has been formed here. The Swami visited Switzerland in 1935 and is now trying to make it the base of his work in Central Europe. In Switzerland three groups have been formed, one at St. Moritz, another at Campfer and a third in Geneva. With each of these groups the Swami stays for a few months in the year holding classes. At Geneva talks were given to the members of the society of Friends and Bahai International Bureau, and the beginnings of a permanent group have been formed. In Zurich also the Swami has found a group of earnest students. Besides staying a few months with the groups already formed in these places, the Swami will shortly visit Paris and other cities where the admirers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda want to start a permanent centre of work during the year of the Master's Centenary.

In addition to forming the nucleus of work in these places, the Swami also visited Cracow in Poland where his lectures were translated into Polish language.

Besides the work with groups, the Swami has established points of contact with many scholars and devotees in Germany, Switzerland and Poland. He has gained several highly gifted and spiritually minded devotees and friends for the movement, who have identified themselves with the cause and some of whom are giving all their time and energy for its growth.

Another work of permanent value is the scheme for the translation of Swami Vivekananda's four Yogas and Inspired Talks into German and French. Miss MacLeod, a close American friend of Swami Vivekananda and of the movement bearing

the name of his Master, has generously given the funds for the German translation, and also made a decent contribution towards bringing out the books in French which has already been undertaken by Mon. Jean Herbert. In addition to this a German journal named *Weibe Rabe* has undertaken to open its columns regularly for articles on Vedantic subjects. This will be of immense value in popularising Vedantic ideas.

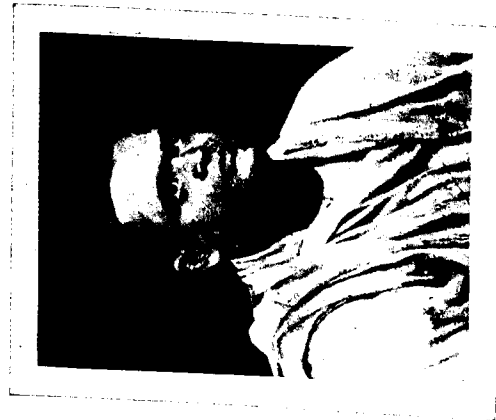
"Up till now I am doing only the pioneering work," writes the Swami. "The number of those who are coming within the sphere of its influence and are being helped by it is steadily growing and will greatly increase after the books are published. So, as the trend of events clearly indicates, the Vedanta movement inaugurated by Ramakrishna-Vivekananda has come to stay in Europe. And it is going to be firmly established here before long for propagating the message of cultural synthesis and religious harmony, and promoting thereby a spiritual understanding and unity between the East and the West."

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion we wish to remark that the Vedanta movement is not something foisted on the West by Indian teachers. It is only the response of India to the clearly expressed need of many people in the West for Indian spiritual ideals. The Swamis are only guests and carry no funds with them from India; in America their expenses are borne wholly, and in Europe mainly, by their students. The work is still in its infancy, but even its present development has been possible because the people there want it. We cannot



Swami Yatiswarananda



Swami Vijayananda



Swami Ayyakantananda

better conclude this short account than by quoting partly from a letter of Dr. Horace J. Bridges, leader of *The Chicago Ethical Society*, addressed to one of the Swamis: "There are some of us who have felt in all seriousness that some sort of synthesis between Eastern and Western ideals is indispensable for the well-being of the world. We may perhaps be pardoned for thinking that the East may have something to learn from us in such matters as politics and government, the seeking of personal liberty under law, in science, and the organisation of material side

of life. But we must be very lacking in imagination and a true sense of values if we do not realise how much we have to learn from old philosophies which saw through the fallacy of materialism long before we in the West had done so, and which learned the great secret of insight through serenity and repose. If you can do anything to bring this blessing into the hectic life of America, we shall all be your debtors." We need not add that the same sentiment has been expressed by other well-wishers of the movement in other Western countries also.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN LIFE

*By Miss Helen F. Rubel*

[Miss Rubel, otherwise known as Bhakti, belongs to the Vedanta Society of Providence, U.S.A. She has done great personal sacrifice to help the Ramakrishna movement both in India and America. Coming as it does from the pen of one who has been closely associated with the Ramakrishna movement and has derived spiritual benefits by this association, the reader will find in this article an authentic statement of what the movement is doing for Americans who come within its influence.]

**T**HE message of Sri Ramakrishna was brought to the West by Swami Vivekananda just at the right time to counteract the insurmountable difficulties that were arising in its mental and emotional life. Towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, due to the great strides made by science, the old dispute between science and Christianity became intensified. The spread of education and easy communication caused this disagreement to have a more far-reaching effect in all phases of man's life.

Science was discovering facts about the age of the world and of the stars in geology and astronomy. It was coming upon some of the laws of mat-

ter in nature. In biology, especially, important was the defining of the law of heredity which brought on the struggle between Darwinism and Lamarckianism as to how man developed. Even philosophy was tending towards purely materialistic explanations and trying to use scientific methods. Philosophy is in any case intellectual rather than experimental, so that the conclusions are not very satisfactory.

People in their difficulties, and when trying to understand and explain life, turned to the Church as divinely inspired, but found there the Christian theory of creation, the doctrine of original sin, and an anthropomorphic, extra-cosmic God. There

was no place for the findings of science nor for the philosophically-minded and thoughtful man. When a person fails in business and therefore loses the power to provide sustenance for himself and his family, when there is mortal sickness, when a beloved one dies, man first turns to the Church. But the custodians of religion could not prove to his satisfaction nor say with authority based on experience that spirit exists nor that there is surely immortality. Christ told men to leave all and to follow Him to know His Father. He taught and showed a life of high moral conduct. But people with their minds bent on material desires heard not the greatest good and decided that the conduct he advocated was impracticable since it did not help them to gain their ends. To be truthful, they thought, might be virtuous, but it would not help them make money nor provide against the hard living conditions. The same with lying, and so on. Beset with increased material cares and desires, and disappointed at finding no help from the existing religion, man became atheistic or agnostic. He turned his entire attention to gaining whatever material pleasures he could in this short life of which he felt sure. He argued that, if all is material and there is no life hereafter, then man may do as he wants so long as he does not clash with the law.

But people are not happy nor satisfied with such conclusions. They feel innately within themselves a craving for higher things. Urged on by this and by their many troubles, they seek everywhere for help. Both good psychologists and pseudo-psychologists are resorted to, all manner of

lectures are attended one after another—all without satisfaction.

Finally the seekers come upon the Swamis. Those who are seeking merely sensation, aids to beauty or cures for old age, soon drop off. Those who remain are drawn by the all-comprehensive rationality of the theory of Vedanta with a path for every temperament; or, more usually, simply by the personality of the Swami, bespeaking deep knowledge and experience. Science, they find, rather than being opposed to religion, is an integral part of it. There is a scientific method for those who prefer it. Lectures and interviews give psychological help and explanations to those nervously distracted with their myriad household cares. They are shown that their very work can be lightened and turned Godward. There is a devotional path to satisfy the seeking heart. All sincere seekers find help.

At the homes of the Society students feel a peace and restfulness which relaxes and refreshes them. There in the classes they hear of the value of meditation and are given the opportunity to try. At times of festivals, those who can, come together to prepare and to serve food, and learn from the Swami the highest method of work. Every centre has a library for members who wish to read but are not able to buy the books.

The different religions, Judaism, Catholicism and the various sects of Protestantism are now trying to bring harmony between them. For this purpose the religious leaders meet together to discuss and to hear lectures. They are beginning to invite the Swamis to join them and to tell of

the harmonisation of religions as shown by Sri Ramakrishna. years it is hard to realise the far-reaching effect of this on the lives of the people. For the most part only those who remain with the Swamis for a length of time gain any desire for realisation, as it must come after living in America a number of through renunciation.

As yet the idea of the possibility, and therefore of the desirability, of realisation is not well-known. Even after living in America a number of

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna falls on the 24th of February 1936, and the annual celebration in connection with it will take place at the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, on Sunday, the 1st of March. The birthday this year being the Centenary of the Master, it will be celebrated in different places at different times from February 1936 to February 1937. We shall in future be giving more information about the centennial celebration in Madras and elsewhere; but meanwhile we draw the attention of the readers to the appeal in connection with it, published on the next page.

## AN APPEAL

In concluding this commemoration issue of the "Vedanta Kesari" we appeal to all our readers to extend their help in carrying out the plan drawn up by the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission to do something of permanent value in memory of the holy occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's Birth-Centenary. There are three items in this programme that deserve special mention. These are : (1) the creation of a *Central Fund* for aiding the humanitarian activities of the Mission such as Relief Work during flood, famine and pestilence, etc., and mass education ; (2) the publication of the *Centenary Memorial Volume* dealing with the evolution of Indian thought and culture from the Vedic times ; and (3) the construction of a *Temple* for Sri Ramakrishna at Belur.

To carry out this plan a very large sum of money is required, and this has to be collected between February 1936-37, the year of the Centenary celebration. For the construction of the Temple, the major part of the necessary amount has been contributed by some devotees of Sri Ramakrishna in foreign lands. For the other items, however, money will have to be raised in this country itself. The splendid services of the Mission in the past in times of flood, famine and pestilence entitle its appeal in aid of a Central Fund for financing these operations, to a warm and liberal response from the public. The cultural value and comprehensiveness of the proposed Memorial Volume will be evident from the advertisement of it published elsewhere in this issue.

In the name of Sri Ramakrishna, the Saviour of India's cultural and spiritual ideals, we appeal to the generous public to come forward with liberal contributions, and thus participate in relieving the sufferings of the poor and the distressed, and in popularising India's cultural and spiritual ideals at home and abroad.

For the information of those who wish to contribute, we wish to state here that there is a system of membership which is open to all irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. The minimum fee is Rs. 5 (Rs. 3 for students) in India, Burma and Ceylon, and £ 1 or \$ 5.00 in foreign countries. Members will receive free of charge the Centenary Bulletins as they are issued from time to time. They will also be entitled to have at concession prices (1) the Centenary Memorial Volume (2) the Centenary Album and (3) the Memorial Medallion.

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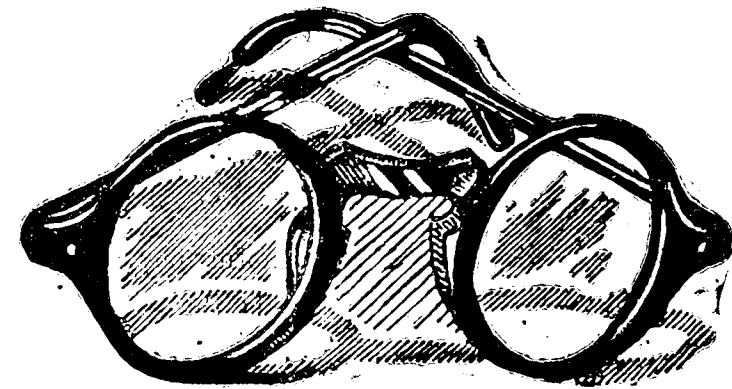
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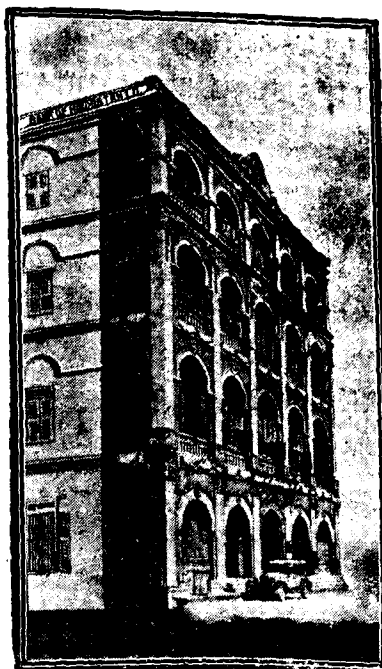
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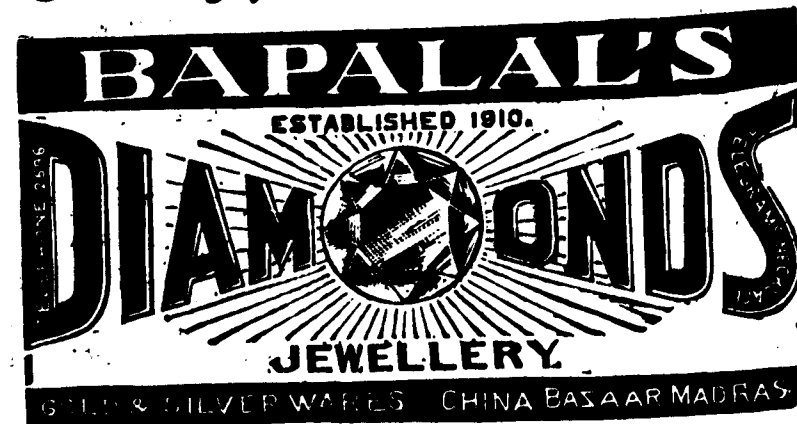
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