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THE Bharata Dharma

A Magazine of Liberal Hinduism

—The Official Organ of the Arya Mata Sabha—

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चित्ते वदतगोमृते वृद्धाः शिष्या गुरुर्युवा । गुणेस्तु मौने व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु छिन्नसंशयाः॥

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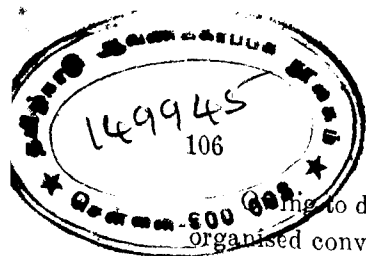
[No. 6 & 7

CONVERSION

K. V. S.

Elsewhere in this issue we are publishing the thoughtful address of
 Rev. A. J. Boyd, Principal of the Madras Xian College on "Christianity
 and Conversion" delivered at the Annual Conference of the Kodaikanal
 Missionary Union. The points raised in the address deserve the careful
 consideration of all persons interested in communal harmony. For some
 reason or other on account of historical causes conversion in India has
 from very early days taken one dominant aspect, viz., conversion from
 Hinduism to Islam or to Christianity. The conditions of the country were
 such as to encourage such conversion. Secular considerations played a
 prominent part though it could not be said that spiritual influence was
 absent. The way of conversion followed the traditional course of religious
 conversion in all countries. The people preferred the religion on the King
 or of those who stood for Kingship in the scheme of things.

The methods of conversion have been developed to perfection in some
 of the proselytising religions. Many of them are not prepared to discuss
 them with outsiders. A few however and among them specially the Pro-
 testant Christian community are willing to consider the problem of
 conversion as being within the range of public discussion. That is a great
 gain. The importance which the subject is hereafter assuming neces-
 sitates such discussion.



Coming to diverse causes Hinduism has not believed in or practised, organised conversion in the manner in which it is being done by other religions. Hinduism does not admit either the superiority or inferiority of one religion over another but looks upon all of them as ways of life having their own intrinsic merits. It holds that a person ought to be entitled to choose such religion as he decides to do for himself. It has proceeded on the axiom that it is the right of every man to determine his own way of life in the light of his understanding. This attitude may perhaps be partly ascribed to historical conditions and to the fact that Hinduism has had its growth arrested at a certain stage. Revivals in Hinduism have not been as powerful and widespread as in other religions. It is not as is thought by some, an admission by Hinduism of its incompetence or proof of its poverty of spiritual power and of its having nothing to give to those who want a new form of spiritual food. Hinduism also put a ban upon re-admission of people who have gone out to other religions on the theory that a Hindu has to be born and cannot be made. This theory still holds the field. The feeble attempts which are being made by small organisations in Hinduism to "reconvert" really shows the absence of any definite positive urge in Hinduism for conversion. These are the factors that have mainly contributed to large scale conversion from Hinduism to other religions in this country. They may also explain the generosity with which Hindu Kings made grants and endowments to Non-Hindu Institutions and encouraged them to continue in their work of converting Hindus to other faiths even to the point of danger to their throne. It is doubtful whether many parallels can be found in the history of the world to the tolerance that has been prevailing in Hinduism from time immemorial. It is part of the organic spiritual structure of Hinduism. The same cannot be said of other religions. The superiority complex of some of them is so great that they will not admit the equality of other religions with their own.

There are three important recent developments however which have vitally altered the situation with respect to conversion. First among them is the communal award under which Indian politics has become communal and statutory recognition given to the claim that only members of the same religious community can safeguard its secular rights. The first fruits of that award are the development of excessive sensitiveness of the communal consciousness and of the capacity to detect communal grievances and prejudices. The slightest disability whatever its real cause, is attributed to the machination of other communities and to their desire for aggrandisement. Whatever may be the truth or otherwise of this sus-

picion, all communities have strongly gained the impression that in a democratic state nothing pays like agitation. The thing to do is to hold out one's community or group as persecuted, or neglected, or unjustly treated. The sudden growth of "atrocities" stories and the exaggeration of petty incidents into serious offences are largely due to this motive. This may be indirectly a great tribute to the faith in the sense of justice animating a democracy and its anxiety to redress grievances. It is needless to probe into this further. The fact remains that the minority is apparently afraid of the majority and the majority of the minority. There is a growing feeling in the majority that it is being sacrificed to placate truculent minorities and that its welfare is bartered for gaining the support of vociferous groups.

The second factor is the claim made to political and secular power on the basis of the vote and therefore of the numerical strength of each community. Every conversion necessarily means one vote more for the community that gains a new recruit and one vote less for the losing community. Conversion has thus become an important secular event in the body politic. Possibly it is on this ground that some of the countries of the world have prohibited the activities of proselytising missions. The argument that it is the sacred spiritual duty of members of a faith to gain adherents to their faith by conversion from other faiths becomes weakened, when in practice it works out as a claim for political aggrandisement. At least it is capable of being viewed in that light and since motives are always difficult to divine while the result is seen, there is something to be said for the new fear of conversion that the majority community is beginning to entertain. When a person says "I will give up everything to save a soul from hell" and in the same breath also says "give my community more offices and political privileges and secular power because I have gained one more vote for my community," it is intelligible if other communities and especially that community which is prejudicially affected by such an attitude, discount the intensity of the religious zeal and look upon the move as a secular one. The altruistic aspect of conversion has receded into the background after the agitation for and subsequent to the communal award.

The third factor is the growing desire of the Hindu community to do justice to its members and to give them more religious rights. The agitation for the abolition of untouchability and for throwing open all temples are two conspicuous instances of this. Along with this is the desire to bring into the Hindu fold those who want to come back after experience of other religions. It cannot be denied that as a result of the

convergence of a large number of influences to which the members of foreign Christian missions have themselves made valuable contributions, there is a great re-formatory movement in Hinduism. The main objects of this movement are to liberalise religious practices, to systematise sacraments and to bring the whole Hindu community together under some common scheme of religious ministrations. How far this movement will succeed it is difficult to tell. It may take many forms and the genius of Hinduism for variety may also express itself in this re-formatory movement. But the spirit is there working in each one of them, for giving to those who have been hitherto denied their rights, their full share in the ministrations of Hinduism.

These reflections are set down here in no critical or carping spirit but merely to emphasise that time has wrought changes even in the Hindu Society. Attitudes which might have been correct a century ago may not be correct at the present day. The prepondering motive in conversion has shifted from the desire to escape from a permanent Hell towards the development of a full personality in every sense of the term, "body, soul and spirit." The attitude of society towards conversion has been modified by this change. There are fundamentalists among the Hindu who go by the written text of scriptures and who insist upon proclaiming that all that is done by Liberal Hindus is irreligious and is a violation of their primary religious rights. If it was possible for them to do so they will put a ban upon all change in Hinduism and keep it in the ancient ruts and say that no practice is valid except that which is sanctioned by the "Sastras as traditionally interpreted and followed." But it is recognised that this cannot be. Similarly with respect to communities belonging to faiths other than Hinduism; their claim to convert as a religious right cannot be said to be an absolute right but will have to be investigated with respect to its reactions upon the social and the political life of the country, subject always to the right to the maximum safeguard that an individual is entitled to in the choice of his religion and in the determination of his religious affiliation. Such a right is more the right of the converts than of those who try to convert him.

It may not be too much to hope that the present secular tension between religious communities in the country will disappear and that the influence of religion will be in the direction of the betterment of inter-communal harmony. To this goal Hinduism can make a great contribution, perhaps a greater contribution than other religions. But for the fact that it is being goaded to do so, Hinduism is averse

to taking what may be called a strictly communal attitude. A Hindu looks upon all forms of worship as approaches to a better life in greater or lesser degree. He believes in the right of his neighbour to follow his own religious convictions and is prepared to learn from him. Hinduism believes in the free-exchange of ideas and ideals and practises among the different religions. After all it may be that each community tries to experiment and grow in the best method of approaching God through individuals and groups and there is no reason why lessons should not be learnt by one community from the success or failure of the other. At any rate a Hindu has no objection to learn from the religious experience of the followers of other religions and he has no objection to the followers of other religions learning from Hinduism.

To those who have been labouring in this country far away from home and friends in obedience to the parting injunctions of their great Master to proclaim his message throughout the world, it is perhaps permissible to suggest that though the tangible fruits of their labours are to be seen in the number of persons who acknowledge formal allegiance to Jesus Christ the harvest of their work is not exhausted by the number of new recruits to that fold and that it is possible that there may be a wider field in which has come an awakening and where people in the light of their awakened conscience seek to do the will of God without calling upon him under the same name. Though it is natural that they should ally and identify themselves with the Christian community in this country, they can also stand out for the great ideals of missionary effort in Christianity regardless of time and clime. They may rejoice in the fact that while the tangible fruits are great the unseen ones may be greater.

CHRISTIANITY AND CONVERSION.

(Extracted from the Presidential Address of Rev. A.J. Boyd
at the Kodaikanal Missionary Union Conference.)

I think we have to remind ourselves and I am sure we have to remind the non-Christian friends who may have chance to read reports of our findings that the Christian community is not our creation—but Christ's. How often have Hindu friends said to us that while they appreciate our various forms of humanitarian service to India, they do not understand, and indeed heartily deplore, our desire for a vigorous, expanding, self-propagating Christian community! When non-Christian friends talk to us in this way, I believe it is our duty to try to understand the point of view which they express, and to give all their relevant objections due weight, but, having done that, it is also our duty—to them, and to ourselves, and to Christ—to talk to them as plainly as they have talked to us.

If their fear is that a strong and expanding Christian community will, in the political sphere, become some day a menace to the interests of this or that other community, let us tell them that we, for our part, are by no means devoted to the idea of communal divisions in politics, and should in fact be happy if that system could ultimately be broken down. If their fear is that a strong and expanding Christian community will tend to weaken the national solidarity, let us try to convince them that, on the other hand, such a community might well become an important moral and economic asset to the nation.

If their fear is that the Christian community is un-Indian in its ways of thought and modes of worship, and not sufficiently conscious of the wealth of its ancient heritage, let us confess to them that we sometimes share their fear, and let us assure them that we want the Christian community in India to be rooted in the land, and proud of everything in India's heritage save that which is in opposition to the mind of Christ.

CONVERSION.

But when our non-Christian friends ask us why we must seek for converts at all, why we cannot be content with doing a little good here or there, as we are able, in the manner of Jesus Christ, then it is time we asked them where they find this Jesus Christ of whom they speak, who makes no demands on human loyalty, who asks for no open confes-

sion of faith, who simply does a little good here and there to make men's lives a little happier and a little more comfortable. Where is this Jesus found? Certainly not in the New Testament, and certainly not in the traditions of the Church. The Jesus whom we know, and under whose command we march, is no mere teacher or reformer. He claimed to be a King, God's chosen King. His coming marked the ends of the ages. He not only healed men and taught them and comforted them—he called them, and in calling them he created the community of which he is the Head. No missionary created it, no apostle. The Christian community came into being as soon as faithful men heard the word, and responded to it. It is not of our planning or our construction. It is Christ's. And in nurturing it and enlarging it, we are carrying out no human design, to be followed or cast aside at will. We are obeying the command of Christ, our Lord.

If, then, we are the servants of a divine community, what is to be the nature of our service? Wherein lies the community's true well-being? There can be little doubt what would be our primary answer to these questions. The essential well-being of the Christian community lies in its knowledge and acceptance of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ; in its consciousness of the continual help of God, the Holy Spirit; in its joyful sense of being one brotherhood in Christ; in its spontaneous impulse to widen the bounds of the brotherhood that others may enter its fellowship. And these blessings of the redeemed life are open to all, high or low, rich or poor, powerful or downtrodden; the ability to receive them and to enjoy them is not necessarily or ultimately conditioned by any outward circumstances. That is our primary answer to the question about the true well-being of the community—it is a spiritual well-being. And it follows that we, as the members and servants of the community, are above all committed to the task of making known the great things that God has done and is still doing, and of helping men to receive and respond.

SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL NEEDS.

We are first and foremost the trustees of a spiritual gospel. And yet, in any actual situation, it is never possible for long to consider and deal with spiritual needs in total isolation from material needs.

There is, as you know, some ground for believing that our Lord himself, in his dealings with men and women in Galilee and Judaea, would fain have turned aside on some occasions from those who came to seek his help in bodily sickness—not because he was careless of their need,

but because he must, above all, deal with the needs of men's Souls. And yet, again and again in the concrete situation, their need touched his heart, and he responded.

Similarly, in the first days of the Church, when the experience of the Spirit had come to them, the sense of fellowship inevitably (shall we say) expressed itself in the sphere of economics. Our gospel is a spiritual gospel, and must be spiritually received, and can be spiritually received by those whose outward circumstances are of the humblest. But it is chiefly, after all, in the material order that spiritual apprehensions and impulses find their expression, and conversely material circumstances do in fact in the majority of cases—whether or not they ought to—condition the inner life.

And so in actual fact, whatever we might say in theory, we who are concerned with men's souls find ourselves also concerned, rightly and inevitably, with the outward circumstances of their lives, with rice and poultry and sowcars and marriage-feasts. I certainly don't need to remind you that, at this point also, we are subject to serious, and sometimes most deplorably harmful, misunderstandings by our Hindu friends.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

Our predecessors, faced with the economic and social problems consequent on conversion, sometimes made mistakes—precisely the same mistakes that we should have made in the same circumstances—and we need to do some plain speaking here also, as occasion arises, in order to clear the air. We need to tell our non-Christian brethren who speak still of "rice-Christians" that, while human motives are invariably mixed and only God can fully discern them, the only conversions we have any desire for are those in which, however obscurely, however indirectly, a spiritual response to spiritual truth can be discerned. We need also to point out, however, that human beings are not naked spirits living in a world of pure ideas, and that, in the minds of simple villagers a very genuine religious intuition might well be inextricably involved with social, and perhaps even economic, considerations.

Finally, we need to remind our Hindu friends, that, if there are dangers in allowing religious conversion to be too closely associated with economic and social improvement, there might be even greater danger of misunderstanding if we professed a passion for human souls and at the same time displayed a callous indifference to their social disabilities and their economic struggles.

I imagine that these and similar considerations have been in the background of the minds of most of us during these days of conference, and have in their measure helped to determine our conclusions.

And what, broadly speaking, are our conclusions? That we cannot fail to be concerned with the social and economic conditions of the people among whom we work; that our main aim must be to enable them to help themselves, and to help others; that the sure source and guarantee of social and economic health is Christian character, nourished by the grace of God.

And so the wheel comes full circle, and we find that in the last resort, the end and the means are in a sense identical. All sorts of subsidiary means are no doubt required—agricultural demonstration centres, village welfare centres, stud bulls, marketing schemes may all play a part, and must play a part—but, behind everything else and beneath everything else, there must be Christian character nourished by the grace of God. Is not that a rediscovery in experience, a chastening, rediscovery and yet a heartening rediscovery, of the most fundamental of all religious truths? "Not by might nor by power but by my spirit, said the Lord of Hosts." Salvation is of God. It is Christ Himself who saves his people, and if we are to serve His purposes the one thing needful above all is that He himself by the Spirit should be living in our hearts.

SANATANA DHARMA vis-a-vis CURRENT HINDUISM.

By

THE LATE PROFESSOR N. K. SANYAL OF SRI GAUDIYA MUTT.

Current Hinduism is claimed to accomodate all shades of religious opinion, in a matter that is not self-contradictory, without deviating from the teachings of the Shastras. But as a matter of fact it is not an effective common faith but the constitutional antagonism of Moham-medanism and Christianity to current Hinduism in all its forms that is the real cause of any degree of the negative type of general unity that may sometimes be perceptible in the professions and activities of the modern Hindus as Hindus. Philosophically the principle of liberalism seeking to unify, assort or rather destroy the beliefs of the various sects of the Hindus in their distinctive practices is supplied by that of the Vedanta-Sutras as sought to be expounded most unsuccessfully but with unscrupulous cleverness by the impersonal monistic school. It says in effect that there is no permanence in the particular forms and practices of religious activity prevalent in the world, which have their value in ultimately destroying themselves and thereby preparing the way for a state of a uniform, undefinable and inconceivable state which is the true and ultimate position. The differences that divide the practices and belief of one religion from another are held to correspond to historical differences in the passing interests of individuals and groups and need not be considered as obstacles or helps for attaining the common end of an undefinable existence by the method of tactful present indiscriminate neglect of all definite activity. The systems of worship of the different sects of the Hindus have accordingly been recommended for affiliation to Hinduism on the only condition that their followers agree to regard such worship to be ontologically useless although unavoidable for the time being as the penalty of the immaturity of our spiritual convictions. Such Hinduism cannot refuse to accept either Christianity or Islam within its fold provided the latter are prepared to be equally indifferent to all forms of religious beliefs and practices.

The difficulty in the attempt to bring about a common positive understanding among the religions and sects is set forth in the teachings of the Vaishnava Acharyas who are uncompromising opponents of the Kevaladvaita thought which ignores the very existence of any such difficulty. There can be no compromise between the right method, the

wrong method and no method. The Kevaladvaita philosophy regards all definite religious conduct as equally useless. By regarding all prevalent religious activities as radically untrue and useless, Kevaladvaita thought can hardly avoid the confession that it is not prepared to attach any importance to the facts of our present existence. Such Utopian liberalism is sheer organised thoughtlessness. It is for very good reasons that the Vaishnava Acharyas have categorically opposed the dissemination of such barren, suicidal views. It is for the Kevaladvaitins to come down to the plane of our everyday life and amend his theory in the light of the criticisms so amply provided by the Vaishnava commentators, if he is to find the method of helping us in our actual needs. The proposal of the Vaishnava Acharyas is to provide not hypothetical but actual and immediate help for our real needs. The Kevaladvaita philosophy leaves us on principle exactly where we are. This makes it not only purely academical but also extremely dangerous, as an accepted creed.

The synthesis which the Vaishnava thought offers is not sufficiently known to modern scholars of religionists. The Vaishnava thought does not at all agree with the conclusions of Kevaladvaita thought even in its analysis of our worldly experience. The Vaishnava Acharyas hold that the activities of the present conditioned state are also capable of being used for serving the eternal or spiritual interests of individuals and groups by necessary adjustments for such purpose and that such regulated conduct is categorically different, both in its method as well as purpose, from conduct prompted by utter unconcern for present conditions represented by the Kevaladvaita thought. The responsibilities of individuals as well as of groups are both immediate as well as prospective. Kevaladvaita thought completely ignores the former and cannot at all envisage the latter. The Vaishnava Acharyas teach us that the real nature of present responsibilities may also clearly be explained to every person and group of persons in a manner that should automatically suggest their satisfactory solution. It is then practicable for the latter to agree fully to undergo the necessary course of training for functioning in the proper manner. In such training the eternal interests are given absolute preference. Properly perceived they should include, explain and secondarily provide for all the needs of the temporary unadjusted position during the period of training. The eternal interests themselves are clearly formulated by the systems of the Vaishnava theology in the body of its positive teachings.

The Vaishnava position is most fully presented by the Teachings of Mahaprabhu Sri Krishna Chaitanya. The soul of man according to Mahaprabhu is the manifestation of the own Potency of the one Absolute Person Sri Krishna. She is by essence the same as the Absolute Potency in Her Positive i.e., Spiritual Aspect. She is not direct or full manifestation, but marginal and infinitesimal. She is marginal in the sense that there is a still outer manifestation of the Absolute Power which is distinct from the spiritual manifestation of the same. The soul of man is located in the borderland between the direct spiritual and the outer non-spiritual or mundane manifestations of the Absolute Power. Her stuff is a particle of the Absolute Spiritual Energy. This stuff is maintained in her normal position by consenting to be consciously adjusted to the Absolute will. She is in an alternative abnormal condition by seeking to function on her own initiative without seeking to be adjusted to the will of his Absolute Master Sri Krishna represented by the working of the Absolute Power in her Spritual Aspect. But as Sri Krishna is the only Master of all manifestations of His Potencies, the perverse soul of man is granted (?) her prayer for functioning independently of the will of Sri Krishna by the operation of His Deluding Power. The soul of man thus functions on the mundane plane by being endowed with a secondary enveloping personality and by misidentifying herself with the same by the operation of the Deluding Potency. In so far as the worldly sojourn of the soul of man if willed by Sri Krishna on the perverse soul's deliberate seeking of such deluded existence, such sojourn itself, is however, so ordained by the causeless mercy of Sri Krishna that it is capable of becoming also a help to the conditioned soul for enabling her to revert to her normal state and inducing her without in any way interfering with her freedom of choice to be repentant and to feel the misery and helplessness of the state of exile as it really is during her worldly sojourn. The difficulties of this mundane existence are in this sense really blessings and help to direct the soul to the search of the truth about herself. But, notwithstanding this negative help, the conditioned soul also requires to be informed positively of her spiritual nature by the direct intervention of the spiritual Potency of Sri Krishna in the Role of Divine World-Teachers of religion. These Teachers are the Mediums through Whose Help the connection between the conditioned soul and her Master Sri Krishna is capable of being re-established and maintained intact.

The method used by the Divine Preceptor is that of persuasion. He invites the repentant soul to give Him a Hearing, but on His Own Terms.

The Divine Teacher promises to convince all, who listen to Him with loyal and undivided attention, of the duty and wisdom as well as naturalness of adopting the course of purificatory training enjoined by the Shastras for being repatriated to the Eternal Home. By recognising the right of the Divine Preceptor to unconditional hearing of the Message of the Absolute from His lips and on acting upto the same on conviction, the conditioned soul is enabled to serve the Autocracy of the Absolute Person as the necessary preliminary condition for being helped to have the effective inclination of freely and most ardently seeking His Service to the exclusion of every other activity by the dictates of her awakened proper spiritual nature.

The soul who is thus re-established in her normal servitorial position on the plane of the Spiritual Energy of the Absolute is not any longer hampered, even during the remaining portion of her external worldly sojourn, in the performance of the service of her Master by the operation of the Deluding Potency. On the contrary, the Deluding Potency is then discovered to provide conditions which are necessary for enabling the repentant soul to undergo the course of purificatory training under the direction of the Divine Master. No so-called duty of this mundane world need be neglected by such awakened soul. On the other hand, every activity of the awakened soul is promotive of universal concord by disclosing to the sojourners of the mundane plane the method of being consciously adjusted to the operation of the Will of Sri Krishna over-ruling the permitted opposition of His Own Deluding Potency. All persons are thereby enabled to know how they are to use their present conditions for the eternal benefit of their souls. The method is thus categorically different from the indiscriminate encouragement that is given to every form of so-called religious activity by the Kevaladvaita thought which merely condemns, without providing a substitute for the unwholesomeness of the misguided life of the deluded sojourners of this world.

The Vaishnava thought is tolerant. It seeks to persuade and not to dogmatise. It is positive and constructive. The Kevaladvaita thought relies on the self-destructive function of mundane logic. What appears to thoughtless critics as the destructive aspect of Vaishnava thought should appear on careful scrutiny to be only the first appearance of the positive, abiding reality in the midst of a world of delusions, which produces the fear of the possibility of destruction, but really of the cessation of delusion, in the conditioned souls utterly forgetful of their own proper deathless nature. It is no use seeking to hide this fundamental difference

between the two positions by a jungle of casuistical arguments as has been done most dishonestly by a host of apologists of the Kevaladvaita thought. Empiric intellectualism, which is the mother of Kevaladvaita doctrine, by its deliberate and misguided refusal to submit to the Will of the Absolute Intelligence brings about its own useless stultification for any purpose except that of multiplying and perpetuating the discords of deluded existence.

The Shastric designation of Hinduism is Sanatana Dharma which means the eternal function (of the human soul). Is this function properly represented and explained, in strict conformity with the Shastric teachings and the true demands of our own rational nature, by the exponents of the Kevaladvaita thought? The Hinduism that is sought to be taken under its patronage by the impersonal Vedantists is not Sanatana Dharma or the positive eternal function of the liberated soul, but the unreformed temporary activities of her deluded state. It advocates unpracticable negligence of the difficulties of our temporary, deluded existence as the positive function of the redeemed soul or Sanatana Dharma. In order to justify such a purpose it accepts in to the self-destructive help of the empiric intellectual method which tantamounts to refusal to be guided by the Divine Master representing the Will of Sri Krishna. The regulated activities of individual and social life advocated by Vaishnavism are the means of attainment of the positive eternal function of the liberated soul by the method of practising the same by properly utilising the conditions of this temporary existence for the purpose, under the Guidance of Sri Krishna Himself made possible by the Descent of His Agent, the Divine Preceptor, to this mundane plane.

“ POIGAYAR. ”

By

C. NARASIMHACHARIAR, B.A. B.L., *Advocate.*

“ Poigayar ” or Poigai Alwar is one of the earliest, if not the earliest of the Vaishnavite saints of the Tamil Nad in Southern India. “ Poigai ” literally means a tank and as he is said to have been born in a tank at Conjeevaram he became known as “ Poigayar ”. The term “ Alwar ” is a titular suffix to denote one immersed in devotion. Tradition would have it that he was an “ ayonija ” or not born of the womb but sprang out of a lotus flower in a tank. We have no history, chronicle or other authentic information as to his time, origin or life apart from tradition, most of which it is difficult to believe in these days of scientific advancement. There is not a trace in his work to indicate even faintly that he was an “ ayonija. ” On the other hand his statement in one of his verses

“ அன்று கருவரங்கத்துள் கிடந்துகை தொழுதேன் கண்டேன்
திருவரங்கமேயான் திசை ”

that while in the womb he worshipped and found the God at Srirangam is not reconcilable with the tradition about him. There is also no material to ascertain the age he lived in. Tradition again would have it that he was born in Dwapara-yuga about 5000 years ago. Some modern tamil scholars fix him to the third sangam age about 2000 years ago and say he was one of the sangam poets who composed several other works in tamil besides the “ First Tiruvandadi ”, a work of one hundred devotional verses in tamil which has been incorporated as part of the “ Tamil Vedas ” and chanted in every Vishnu temple as part of its ritualistic worship. Among the several devotional works written in various languages in Southern India the tamil works of these “ alwars ” or saints alone have been immortalised as equal to if not superior to the vedas in sanskrit. There can be no doubt that almost all these “ alwars ” or saints lived long before the impersonal advaitic mysticism caught hold of the thinking mind of India leading to idealism and illusionism. Nowhere in the works of these “ alwars ” is there any indication that after salvation attained by knowledge man is annihilated altogether, body and soul, as both of them are illusory. These alwars are it is said the precursors of the severely personalistic Alavandar and Sri Ramanuja who believe in a personal God full of good qualities and who is reached through “ Bhakti ” or devotion.

In spite of the innumerable deities referred to in the vedic lore, the religion of the Hindus is and has always been monotheistic. The difference between the vaishnavites and the saivites consists mainly in the nomenclature of the one and only one supreme God of the scriptures. The one calls Him "Vishnu" while the other says he is "Siva" though the qualities ascribed to each of them are the same and the philosophy of these two sects is also the same. Poigayar says,

“முதலாவார் மூவர் அம்மூவருள்ளும்
முதலாவான் மூரி நீர் வண்ணன்”

Three stand foremost and of them Vishnu stands first (Brahma Vishnu and Siva). He offers his work at the feet of Vishnu in the following beautiful verse.

“வையந்தகனியா, வார்கடலை நெய்யாக
வெய்ய கதிரோன் விளக்காக—செய்ய
சுடராழியான் அடிக்கே சூட்டினேன் சொன்மலை
இடராழி நீங்குகவே யென்று”

I offer the garland of my verses at the feet of One who bears the brilliant disc with a lamp whose light is the sun, whose receptacle is the earth and the ocean the ghee wherewith the lamp burns. His contemporary "Bhoodatalvar" excels him by saying that the lamp he lits has "love" for its receptacle, devotion as the ghee and the mind that melts in joy as the wick for the lamp.

The most remarkable features of these saints, especially of saint Poigayar are (i) the catholicity of his religion as all embracing and (ii) the utter absence of the acrimonious distinction made between Vishnu and Siva in later times. He says :

“அவரவர் தாம் தாம் அறிந்தவாறு ஏத்தி
இவர் இவர் எம்பெருமான் என்றென்று—சுவர்மிசைச்
சாத்தியும் வைத்தும் தொழுவர் உலகளந்த
மூர்த்தி உருவே முதல்”

The one and only God who measured the world is worshipped in different forms by different men according to their respective knowledge by hanging or leaning pictures or images of Him on the wall and each says his God is the supreme one (not knowing that all are the same). A similar idea is found in the teachings of the Bhagavat Gita that who so wishes with true devotion and faith to worship any form of the Gods

whatever it may be, I myself render his faith firm and successful in attaining salvation.”

About Vishnu and Siva, he says :—

“அரன் நாரணன் நாமம் ஆன்விடை புள் உளர்தி
உரைநால் மறை உறையுங்கோயில் வரைநீர்
சுருமம் அழிப்பு அளிப்பு கையதுவேல் நேமி
உருவம் எரிகார் மேனியோ டொன்று”.

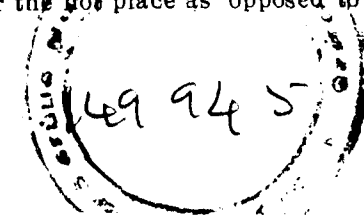
He is only one whose name is Hara and Narana whose vehicle is the bull and the bird whose teachings are the Agamas and the Vedas whose temples are the hill (Kailas mountains) and the sea, whose functions are destruction and sustenance, who holds the spear and the disc and whose body is like the fire and the clouds.” It will thus be seen that though he is a Vaishnavite with Vishnu as the absolute God, he regards Siva as part and parcel of the absolute.

Another feature which has to be emphasised in these days of Brahmin and Non-Brahmin conflict is his conviction that superiority does not lie in the accident of birth as a Brahmin and the recitation of the Gayatri prayers morning and evening unless it be the result of true and hearty devotion to God is worthless.”

“புந்தியால் சிந்தியாது ஓதி உரு எண்ணும்
அந்தியால் ஆம்பயன் அங்கு என்”

“What is the use of the recitation of Vedic prayers morning and evening unless it flows from the heart.” Birth is only an opportunity and not a right according to this saint.

He refers to only four Vaishnavite temples at Srirangam, Tirupati, Conjeevaram and Tirukoilur and of these he devotes several stanzas to Tirupati unlike stray references to the other three temples indicative of the fact that during his age the temple at Tirupati Hills was more important than Srirangam. It is rather curious that though he is said to have been born at Conjeevaram there is no reference to any of the numerous temples in that city except “வெண்கா” which is identified by some of the modern scholars with the temple of Sri Devaraja at little Conjeevaram while others hold it refers to the small temple of “Yadoktakari” about a mile away. I have indicated that the term “வெண்கா” is composed of “வெக்கை+கா” meaning a hot place. According to the Puranas “Bramha” is said to have performed a great “Yaga” or sacrifice and God Devaraja came out of the sacrificial fire and blessed him. The place where the sacrificial fires were lit must naturally be hot and hence it was known as “வெண்கா” or the hot place as opposed to “தண்கா” or the cool



place which is next to it and is the birth place of one of our greatest acharyar, Sri Negamanta Desika.

I have elsewhere indicated that these saints of the Tamil Nad have stressed the two all-important principles which must guide every religion viz., (i) service to God is the only means of salvation and (ii) service to God is and can be done only by serving man. These two principles are the natural and necessary corollary of the philosophy of the "sarira sariri Bhava" or the relationship of body and soul in every human organism. The body serves and can serve the soul only by its various organs serving one another in order to maintain or keep the soul in the body. The relationship between God or the world-soul and the individual soul, the infinite and the finite, is compared with the soul and the body in every known living organism. With the limitation that the finite cannot fathom the infinite, these saints of the Tamil Nad have attempted to hint at it from a known quantity like the human organism which is nearest and dearest to one and all of us. Taking man as a link in the chain of the cosmic mechanism the mechanism of the cosmos is attempted to be realised from the mechanism of the link and in such realisation disinterested service becomes all-important and is the only means of happiness here and bliss hereafter.

REVIEW.

SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA,

of Bhagavan Sri Krishna (26 Chapters & 745 Slokas).

Translated into English by R. Vasudeva Rao, Assisted and published by T. M. Janardanam for Suddha Dharma Mandalam Association. The Suddha Dharma Office, Mylapore, Madras. S. India. Price Re. 0-14-0.

This is the 4th publication of this Institution. It is intended to be definitely a propagandist publication to popularise its version of one of the most sacred and prominent of the Hindu scriptures among a larger public. The Suddha Dharma Mandalam's edition of the Bhagavad Gita contains a larger number of verses than the orthodox edition. The arrangement is also different and aims at grouping the verses under a different scheme in accordance with the subjects dealt with in the verses. Much may be said for and against such an arrangement. It will depend upon the approach to the Bhagavad Gita. We offer no comment upon this vexed question and would only say that so far as we have gone into this book, it can be read with interest as a revelation of the possibilities of studying the Gita.

THE HINDU VISION

By

P. P. SARADHI, B.A., B.L., *Retired Sub-Judge.*

(Continued from page 104.)

There is yet another reason. Do they not recognise—and does not oriental research show that Christianity and Muhammadanism are indebted to thousands of Indians who had travelled to Arabia carrying their learned men and skilled artisans from India who popularised their Hindu religion? So much so the roots and terminologies of hundreds of words are the same as those in Sanskrit and Dravidian in India. One may take it the systems of philosophy spun out in Arabia, Persia, or China or in the West owe their foundations to one or the other systems of Hindu philosophy—even their Gods are jumbled Indian names, observe what Dr. Post Wheeler (an American) in the recent convocation address at Waltair said—

1. "The wisest of old Indian's children in the dawn of history gave to their race in the Upanishads what forms an eternal well spring of inspiration for the many."

2. "Persian customs in Northern India, in the course of centuries took on characteristics of the Native Hindu culture and the Parsis in India are today more Indian than Persian"

3. "Islam today was of various complexion due to other people who embraced it."

So let there be no display of any separatist tendency. Nor budge even an inch in our undivided loyalty to our country and accept the leading of the Nation by the Hindus.

Some Indians have been instigated by some undesirables to create a ferment, and the Hindu missed the vision, is equally agitated. Their tolerance is a virtue but intolerance of mischief is not a vice. Mischief would retard evolution. The term "Hindutwa" conjures up a vision which I called "The Hindu Vision" One Herbert Read has published an anthology under the name "The English Vision." But this vision visualises only the scenery of the land here and there, the school life in Eton and Cambridge, the common sense and pride of the youth, the jury system, Electricity and liberty, the national temper ("stupidest in speech, wisest in action" (Carlyle), English Eloquence, the call of Jerusalem ("sister of England"—William Blake). Hindutwa is Vision more

times magnificent thrilling, soul elevating. Kalaidoscopic, beatific is bound to work miracles in the life of the people, Let us visualise through music and dancing, through art and architecture, through Vedic hymns and kritis, sung before the sacred rivers, the Yamuna and the Ganges, before Prayag and Haridvar, Benares and Kailas, all that has vivified our spirit, created in us profound reverence to the giant-saints and sages, the great Acharyas who with unblemished and unbroken tapas obtained salvation and who are believed still bent upon redeeming the world from brutality, immorality and passion. More than all, the Rishis eternal in icy glaciers, in burning ghat, in remote forest fastnesses, on a solitary heights etc. are ready to show the way to lead and inspire to strive to victory "Hindu-twa" envisages in unbroken streams of energising vitalising story of the Truth, mighty men and woman who lived with our ancestors and left unparalleled legacy of truths and systems to realise the truths.

The Hindu mind is unflagging. The root cause of ills is the mind alone. So controlling the mind is one secret for success. Mind is greater than speech. Will is greater than mind. Intelligence greater than the will, contemplation greater than intelligence. (Chandogya) So we evolve our course which shall result in action and sacrifice. Can there be any more dynamic centre than this?

Hindutwa will rear its head again and make Hinduism greater than ever it was before.

THE THEOSOPHIC FACTOR IN MODERN LIFE

(Contributed).

A FEW FACTS.

Discontent and questioning are the distinctive features of the present time. People are rapidly developing an eye for perception of contrasts. Revolutionary slogans make a strong appeal. The mass of public opinion though still averse to change is beginning to move restlessly whenever it is stirred on some great issue. We appear to be heading towards violent change. Influences are pouring in through many avenues till now blocked to us and on more human beings than were ever receptive to it. Great masses of people find themselves lifted from their customary ruts of thought and action and are looking with curiosity and fear what will come next. The danger is increasing with the increasing difficulty of the struggle for physical existence and of the indefinite multiplication of wants due to progress of scientific and mechanical discoveries and to the rapid and revolutionary development of the means of transport and communication of ideas. Our dependence on others is increasing with the increasing complexity of our social structure. The whole map of India is filled with a big interrogation whose size is considerably enlarged by the political issue before the Country.

When one watches over it all the impression that is borne on the mind is that shorn of the extravagance and bitterness that are inevitable in the first manifestation of new impulses, these impulses are operating within manageable limits and are based on ideals which are emancipatory and therefore spiritual. The cry is for equality, for equality of opportunity, for social and political equality, for larger religious freedom and for the recognition of the right to live and to function with fullness.

The Theosophical Society.—What does it stand for? Behind all life and form as their heart and soul is a great consciousness. That consciousness manifests itself as the evolutionary process a process which though at times it appears cruel and careless of individuals is exceedingly careful of types. The physical world in which we play our roles for a few decades is only one of several others unseen by us, in which we shall be able to function in after lives and which have a great bearing and influence on our physical lives. Religions, races and civilisations are

merely training grounds for the development through life after life of particular qualities necessary for the perfection of the human personality. Each life is but a day's class in the school of eternal life and each one of us as one enters this life comes with a long past of many lives and brings with us his tendencies and environments to begin his task once again under conditions built by him in past lives. We are also within certain limitations the moulders of our destiny.

Individual evolution is merely a continuous release of the divinity within us. Our growth is both a discovery of Him and a growing into His likeness. The only life worth living is to understand His will and to co-operate with Him in His eternal and continuing sacrifice. In many ways He trains his children for His work. All are equal before Him. For each He has a path. It is for each to tread it joining hands with others who are treading theirs.

In itself Theosophy is not perhaps so much a revelation as a rearrangement of the fundamental ideas found in many revelations. But it states them in a manner that fascinates the mind and inspires the heart. It liberates the mind from obsession by the trivialities of life and reveals to it the panoramic vision of the voyage of the soul which gives perspective to events and influences.

With its help we shall be able to understand and appreciate more fully the new influences, and it may be to discharge of our duties with greater strength. We shall also learn more fully its limitations and dangers. We shall see that underlying them is the expression of human brotherhood and of the absolute community of purpose which are merely the first deductions from the doctrine of the Atman, of Moksha and of Samsara. The entire humanity is in the same boat. Directly flowing from these conceptions is the claim for social equality, for the recognition of intrinsic worth of the human personality and the demand for larger opportunities of self expression. Each citizen is an end in himself and a means for the national being. The mechanical developments of modern age ought to mean and liberation of life from grinding physical toil leaving more and energy for culture and service.

Above all Theosophy is a great antidote to the tragic differences among the religions. It harmonises and synthesises all religions and brings to bear tolerance, understanding and scientific mind in their observance. It seeks to discover new channels by which the primary influences of these religions can be brought down and utilised in modern life and conditions.

When one contemplates the magnitude and complexity of the forces whose operation on our country is just beginning, when one studies the vicissitudes passed through by countries on which those forces have played and are playing, one is filled with concern about our future, a concern that is not diminished by comparison of social and economic conditions between our country and others. The horizon gets dark with the menace of grave dangers. Shall we have to travel the way of China and of Russia. Shall we have to repeat the mistakes and excesses of the West during the painful and difficult times of transition that await us in the years to come. Or shall we be able to make those adjustments that will enable us to transmute these forces for the national good with comparative freedom and faith. The future alone will tell.

One thing however is certain. There was never a time in the history of this country when there was greater need for comprehensive views and far-seeing vision, for mutual forbearance, for wise statesmanship and for co-operation. The pressure of social and economic problems and the increasing democratisation of the legislative machinery make it obvious that we cannot even if we so desire go back or stand still. The spread of education, the discipline of experience and the magnitude of the issues at stake are organising the masses for collective action. Obstruction therefore even if successful for a time can only make the inevitable change more violent and revolutionary when it does come. It can therefore be only a question of direction and guidance. There is therefore an obligation on everyone of us to study the situation, and to formulate the principles of right guidance. The forces at work render inevitable a widening of the sphere of state activity. Earlier or later the legislature in this country as elsewhere is bound to interpret the social will in terms of law.

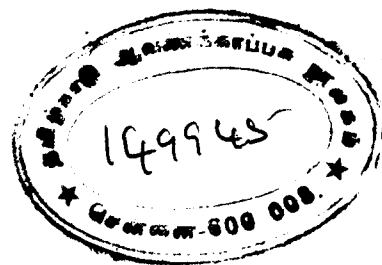
In a situation like this we are irresistably thrown back as other nations are being thrown back on those basic principles of human life and progress which are the imperishable heritage of this country and of which the body of thought known as Theosophy is only a modern and convenient re-statement. In few other systems can we find such an earnest endeavour to discover those basic principles and in such a form as to be specially applicable to modern conditions. In few other systems are they stated with such faith and optimism. By few other institutions they have been proclaimed with such courage and enthusiasm.

It looks as if that during the times to come more during the past—we shall continue to be as we have been in a body the spiritual and

cultural children of our ancestors. But there is bound to be a diffusion and intermingling if not also an enrichment of our heritage in a manner that we cannot envisage fully at present.

With emphasis now on the personal and now on the impersonal aspects of the higher powers that govern our destiny, now on the individual and now on the collective aspects of human life, the life of this country has flowed through the ages under the special blessing and direction and with the actual participation of an exceptionally large number of great and divine men. There has always been a marked emphasis that the life in the physical world is only part of larger life through the three worlds and must be interpreted and adjusted in relation to that life, and that the path to perfection through the worlds is governed by an order by an intelligence higher than man's and that that intelligence is ever waiting for everyone of us to take his part in marching towards the goal of self-realisation, which is joyous and uninterrupted service.

The world both in the East and in the West is in great need today of this perspective. There is great need for the exposition and understanding of this interaction, of the nature of this goal and the operation of this pervasive faith.



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