

ANCIENT  
THOUGHTS  
FOR  
MODERN  
MAN

080  
VIP  
SLIPR

Swami Vipulananda

# **ANCIENT THOUGHTS FOR MODERN MAN**

# **ANCIENT THOUGHTS FOR MODERN MAN**

**A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS**

**SWAMI VIPULANANDA**



**SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH  
16, RAMAKRISHNA MATH ROAD  
MYLAPORE, MADRAS-600 004 INDIA**

Published by

(C) The President

Sri Ramakrishna Math

Mylapore, Madras-600 004

All Rights Reserved

I - IM - 4 - 1992

Printed by

AZHAGU ACHAGAM

10, South Mada Street, Mylapore

Madras-600 004. India

## PREFACE

Swami Vipulananda (1892-1947) is remembered today in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu as one who has contributed in a great way to Tamil literature and Tamil research. But that would be only a partial assessment of the personality of the Swami. For he was also an accomplished monk of the Ramakrishna Order, who had served the Organisation in various capacities. He was the Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* published by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, during the years 1940 and 1941; he was also the Editor of **Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam**, the Tamil monthly, as also **Vedanta Kesari**, the English monthly, both published from Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

The Swami, known in early life as Mayilvaganan, was born in 1892 at Karaithivu in North Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in a well-established Tamil family. Even in early years, he was attracted to literature and religion, particularly to the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He was fortunate in coming in contact with some of the prominent direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, specially Swami Brahmananda and Swami Shivananda. His intellectual eminence in Tamil and English literature did not obstruct his yearning for a totally dedicated spiritual life. And his contact with the great Swamis resulted in his joining the Ramakrishna Order in 1922, at the Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

The Swami had the unique distinction of being requested by the Annamalai University to work for its Tamil department, and later on to fill the chair for Tamil in the Univer-



sity of Ceylon. Besides holding these assignments with distinction, he contributed to the Tamil language by his original research work on the ancient Tamil musical instrument named 'Yal'. Swami Vipulananda had also contributed to the educational welfare of the people by starting schools and colleges in North Ceylon.

The present volume is a collection of some of his writings in the two organs of the Ramakrishna Order the **Prabuddha Bharata** and the **Vedanta Kesari**. They have been published here unedited in order to preserve their original flavour. Though the world has changed vastly since these articles were written they have relevance for us even today, as they are written against the backdrop of eternal values for which the Swami stood. It is this aspect we hope, that would recommend the book to the readers. And we are glad that we could bring this out in the Birth Centenary Year of Swami Vipulananda, though the hurry might have given access to some errors.

Ramakrishna Math  
Madras  
18-3-1992

PUBLISHER

## CONTENTS

Preface	v
1. The New Attitude Towards Religion	1
2. Permanent Values in A Changing World	13
3. Spiritual Revival	23
4. Problems of Harmony	36
5. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God	49
6. The Scientist and the Mystic	63
7. Perfection through Self - Conquest	76
8. The resuscitation of the Kshatriya Spirit	88
9. Social Justice and Religious Toleration	103
10. Civilization, New and Old	115
11. Religious Rival in Medieval India	130
12. Indian Culture through the Ages	148
13. The Book of Books of Tamil-Land	164
14. On the Threshold of a New Era	183
15. The Application of the Vedanta Ideal to Educational Problems	194
16. As A Nation Thinketh	209
17. The Rights of Man	221
18. The Common Spiritual Basis for International Order	236
19. The Ten Idylls of Early Tamil Literature	245
20. The Quest of the Beautiful	252
21. Humility and Tolerance Necessary for the Pursuit of Truth	266

# ANCIENT THOUGHTS FOR MODERN MAN

## 1. THE NEW ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION

At the present time, when men's minds are busy discussing a New World-Order, a New Education, a New Freedom and so on, we need offer no apology for taking up for discussion the new trends in what is commonly considered to be the oldest of human institutions. Religion came very early into man's life. Allowing ourselves to be guided by Semitic traditions, we may say that on the day when 'the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life', religion began. Man, a living soul, fashioned in the very image of God, did on that day stand face to face before his Maker, thereby establishing that relationship which forms the very core of the religious life. The lesser relationships that brought in the woman and the Tempter came later. Again placing ourselves under the guidance of modern science, we may say that on the day on which Homo Sapiens emerged out of his animal ancestry and standing erect gazed with wonder at the beauty of the starry firmament dimly sensing the Maker of heaven and earth, religion began. The science of anthropology has a great deal to say about primitive religion and the influence it exerted on making man a social animal, by sub-duing his violent

passions and providing him with diverse avenues for creative self-expression. When we turn to Hindu civilization we become aware of a very rich heritage. The sacred books which constitute the religious and cultural heritage of the Hindus have come down from a hoary past and are so perfect in their form and substance that one is forced to admit that men should have passed through several millenniums of intense religious thought and discipline to discover and formulate the grand truths contained in them. Without labouring the point further, we may take it for granted that from time immemorial religion existed and exerted a profound influence upon human society.

\* \* \*

World-saviours are, as it were, landmarks in the history of religion. Whenever humanity is at the cross-roads and in a state of confusion, a great prophet appears on the scene and provides the solution for the pressing problems of life. He becomes the centre around which a new integration takes place. Values which were forgotten are rediscovered and fresh values are added and new hope springs in the hearts of men. Very often a new culture develops. Men begin to mould their own life in the pattern of the great life that was lived in their midst. Under the potent influence of religion society often becomes completely overhauled. The change brought about is so great that men lose sight of the old culture of which the new one is only a growth and a fulfilment. They recognize the new as something unique and begin calling it by the name of the prophet who provided the dynamic impetus. But in all ages there have been wise men who could see a little deeper and observe the continuity of religious thought. They declare that Religion is one, although religions are many.

When the life of the spirit gets quickened by the coming of a new prophet, men find in the new movement the means for a fuller life. In time the new impetus gets worked up, fresh problems arise and it becomes necessary to interpret the philosophy of an existing cult, or wait for the advent of a new prophet. The course of human history records the birth, the persistence and the passing away of religious cults. Even if the cult does not altogether pass into oblivion, it loses its power to influence humanity. The religions of Egypt, of Babylonia, of Greece and of Rome have had their day and have become forgotten chapters of human history. Some of the later religions have lost their original power by crystallizing into rigid forms which do not sufficiently respond to the needs of a changing world. Some others like Hinduism have been continually strengthening themselves by giving birth to a succession of saints and seers who by their life and teachings added new vigour to the religion they practised.

\* \* \*

To fully comprehend the current trends in religion it would be necessary to subject contemporary life to a thorough analysis and clearly formulate its pressing problems. Moral chaos, economic disharmony and political mal-adjustment are noticeable everywhere. The man in the street feels that something is wrong somewhere. To ease his mind troubled with conflicting thoughts and emotions he sets about to do a little amateur philosophizing. Even as the expressing of sorrow eases to a certain extent the agony of a stricken heart, so does philosophizing ease a troubled mind. Thinking is a hard job, but to allow the mind to continue for any length of time in a state of hesita

tion and doubt is harder. Consequently when the average man is confronted by any problem he feels that it is better to offer some solution and be done with it. It is said that pessimism afflicts the man who enjoys political freedom and fatalism is the philosophy of life of the enslaved. When poverty and misery are the problems before them both are prone to take a dark view of life. Everywhere we find Jeremiahs who are not tired of telling us that the human race is heading to a fall. There is a sort of universal restlessness and also a widespread discontent. These are hard facts. The old moral restraints, the respect for authority, the mild contentment with which persons stuck on to the station in life in which they found themselves, the patient endurance exhibited by the poorer classes in facing the insolence of the rich and such other qualities which the passing generation looked upon as the products of a well ordered religious life have almost disappeared from the face of the planet. Seeing these happenings, one section of people opine that religion has failed to perform its function and another section denounce religion as an opiate of the masses and would have it altogether removed from the position it erstwhile held. This second section belongs to the school of advanced socialists. A third that swears by science—not modern science, but the discarded seventeenth century science—says that in its scheme of things there is no place for a Divine. Being that rules the destinies of mankind. Scepticism is eating into the vitals of the more educated classes. The masses driven to a state of despair speak disparagingly of high and holy things.

\*                      \*                      \*

The creative arts, the handmaidens of religion, have suffered deterioration. The modernist poetry, painting

and sculpture of contemporary Europe fails to evoke those lofty thoughts and sentiments that we associate with all good art. Men and women exhibit a tired, weary aspect. Charity which is the first and foremost of religious disciplines is on the wane. Truth is hidden in a welter of false propaganda. Justice is assailed by narrow national and sectional interests. Man has lost faith in himself and consequently has no faith in the working of the moral law. Statisticians tell us that insanity, neurasthenia and similar maladies are on the increase. All these exhibit a state of decline. Nevertheless there is a silver lining to the cloud. Several forces are at work for the unification of humanity and for the emergence of a new civilization. As far as religion is concerned, attempts are being made to erect a common platform in which the votaries of different creeds will meet not as rivals, but as co-workers having a common aim and a common purpose. Man is learning to be more tolerant towards his neighbour's religious faith. Organizations such as the World Fellowship of Faiths testify to the new spirit pervading religion. We wish them god-speed, for they are the harbingers of a new dawn.

The West is making efforts to understand the religions of the East. The more cultured minds are trying to get at the real thing. The less educated, with characteristic shallowness, appear to be satisfied with the sham product. Herein, perhaps, lies the explanation for the fascination which some Westerners exhibit for occultism, spiritualism and cheap Yoga, things which the East discarded long ago as veritable obstacles that hinder the progress of the spiritual aspirant. The path of religious discipline is long and arduous and at every stage the light of true knowledge

should illumine the path. Those that are impatient and seek short cuts may be led into blind alleys and end in confusion and disappointment. The man who practises the religion of his forefathers has a certain advantage in that he unconsciously learns many things which are extremely difficult for the neophyte to acquire. Learning to practise a new religion is something similar to the acquiring of a new language. The grammatical rules of the mother tongue are acquired almost unconsciously, whereas the rules governing a foreign language have to be consciously acquired by accurate study and application. Consequently outsiders who are interested in the study of Hinduism would do well to make a careful study of the philosophical thought of the Hindus. 'Religion without philosophy runs into superstition; philosophy without religion becomes dry atheism' (Swami Vivekananda). Here philosophy should be taken in the broad sense of insight, enlightenment regarding essentials. According to one's standard of education, one can make a serious study of relevant religious texts and acquire a clear conception of the essentials. The conversion of children and ignorant adults to an alien faith cannot be justified, for it is not possible for them to arrive at true convictions based upon reason. As religion is a way of life, it is best for the majority to stick to the path that is familiar to them.

\* \* \*

The mechanistic conception of the universe held by older scientists has broken down before the brilliant achievements of modern physics. Physical science has now become an ally of idealistic philosophy; and the alliance, we dare say, is advantageous to both the contracting parties. Phi-

losophy from being mere speculation has taken a firm stand on scientifically observed facts and conclusion arrived at by sound reasoning. Science on the other hand has risen above the reproach of being blind to the realm of reality that lies outside the limitations of sense perception. The time is, therefore, most opportune for broadening the ranges of both science and philosophy. The mental discipline demanded by the accurate science is also something akin to the discipline demanded by religion. Science seeks for unity amidst diversity. All matter has been reduced to ninety-two elements and these have been shown to be built up of varying numbers of units of energy. Matter, in fact, has been dematerialized by science. Mathematics, the science *par excellence* appears to hold the key to the final explanation of the material universe and mathematical concepts belong to the realm of ideas. The pure scientist travelling along his own chosen path knocks at the portals of religion and gains entrance. God has been conceived as the Supreme Mathematician.

\* \* \*

The Diety has also been conceived as the Supreme Poet and the Supreme Artist. He is also the Eternal Law. There are indeed many paths which the aspirant can tread to reach the Fountain-Head of all truth, beauty and goodness. The widespread recognition of this fact is one of the new trends in the religious attitude of the modern man. Viewed in this light all education, in the true sense of the word, is religious education. The barriers between the sacred and the secular in matters educational was only a passing phase as the history of education as well as the history of religion definitely shows. The ascendancy of

the positive sciences has also made the educated man to seek for a scientific religion, a religion that would satisfy the reasoning faculty of man. Humbler folk who seek the consolation that religion affords desire a simpler faith that would be easily intelligible, a faith centring round a Personal Deity to whom they can address their prayers. Religion, therefore, should be many-sided. 'If a religion cannot help man wherever he may be, wherever he stands it is not of much use; it will remain only a theory for the chosen few. Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is, in servitude or in freedom, in the depths of degradation or on the heights of purity; everywhere equally, it should be able to come to his aid' (Swami Vivekananda). The Hindu religion is known to cover a vast range. Its rituals, its mythology and its philosophy grew up to meet the varying demands of various people and consequently it has the potency to help man, wherever he may be.

\* \* \*

To the early Indian thinkers, philosophy was not a mere intellectual quest. The search for the Reality underlying the changing phenomena of nature and the vicissitudes of human life was to them something more than a life and death problem. They were not satisfied with merely explaining the sense-manifold, but boldly sought to pierce the veil and go to the very source of all truth, beauty and goodness. What the rest of the world classifies as the special experience of mystics and seers formed the raw material of the philosophical speculations of the thinkers of the Upanishadic period. They who ventured upon the pursuit of absolute truth recognised the necessity for perfecting

the instruments used in the investigation. The mind, the supreme tool of the student of philosophy had to be purged of all bias and prejudice and consequently the researcher had to keep himself aloof from the competitive life of society and undergo a rigorous discipline. The science of Yoga that prescribed the necessary discipline was perfected a very long time ago, at any rate as early as the time of the Mohenjo-Daro civilization. Language and logic had also to be perfected and this resulted in the elaboration of various schools of thought all of which were limbs of the idealistic philosophy of the Upanishads. Direct realization of the Supreme Truth was held to be the goal and all other disciplines were counted as the means. The contemplative after completing his spiritual education could return to society and take an active interest in its affairs. Plato's scheme of education also was something similar.

\* \* \*

In the existing order of things, it is not possible for the large majority of men to follow the method of Plato and of the early Indian thinkers. The new attitude seems to be for harmonizing the active life and the life of contemplation. While continuing to perform the ordinary duties of citizen, the modern man would like to pursue the path that leads to the Supreme Good. This is by no means impossible. The stories of the housewife and the butcher related in Vedantic lore illustrate the possibility of attaining the highest knowledge, while pursuing the ordinary avocations of life. Let us relate the said stories briefly. A young aspirant retired to a forest and spent several years performing rigorous Yogic practices. One day while he was musing under a tree, some dead leaves fell on his head.

He looked up and saw a crane and a crow fighting. He angrily glanced at them and such was the young Yogin's power that a flash of fire went forth from his eyes and reduced the birds to ashes. Satisfied with himself, he went to the neighbouring village and entering the first house asked for food. Someone from inside the house asked him to wait a little. Feeling rather offended, he was thinking with in himself that the person who dared to slight him like that knew not his powers. While this thought crossed his mind, came a voice from inside the house: 'Boy, don't think too much of yourself; here is neither crow nor crane. The Yogin was nonplussed. A short while after when the housewife came with the alms, he fell at her feet and asked 'Mother, how did you know what took place in the forest.' To which she replied: 'My son, I know nothing of your Yoga and such other practices; I am a poor illiterate woman; and from my young days, I endeavoured to do my duty to my parents and then to my husband; I was tending my sick husband when you came and asked for alms; I could read what passed in your mind, I could also see clearly what transpired in the forest; I seem to have acquired these powers merely by the performance of my duties; if you want to know more, go to the neighbouring town, where in the market-place you would meet a butcher, who may tell you something higher? Taking leave of her, the young Yogin went to the neighbouring town and as directed met the butcher. At first the Yogin was reluctant to approach him, seeing him cutting big hunks of meat. But reassured by the fact that the butcher like the housewife knew all about him, the Yogin followed the butcher to his house and there witnessed the devotion with which the butcher nursed his old parents and learnt that such service led to

the remarkable illumination which the butcher possessed. The performance of one's duty with a spirit of non-attachment is thus seen to be the path most suitable for the householder to attain illumination. This path has been fully expounded by Swami Vivekananda in his Karma-Yoga.

But the one great fact to be borne in mind is that it is not possible to serve both God and Mammon. The aspirant for spiritual illumination must be non-attached to self and power, to fame and social advancement, to lusts and objects of desires, to anger and hatred and even to philanthropy. Keeping himself free of all attachment, he may yet continue to discharge the duties towards his family, his country and humanity. Fortunate is the man who lives under a Government that does not interfere with a citizen's private beliefs and in a society that is not over competitive in its economic outlook. When society is constituted on Dharmic principles, it is easy for the individual citizen to walk along the path of righteousness. The New World-Order, if it is to help humanity to achieve the higher ends of life, should be constituted with that definite object in view. As India has not as yet won its own political freedom, the world outside does not pay sufficient attention to Hindu Dharma as applied to the solution of social and political problems. The range of Hindu thought is vast, for it touches all aspects of life. It has been cynically observed that the Hindu bathes religiously and eats religiously. If the whole truth were to be told, the forefathers of the present-day Hindus fought in the battle-field religiously, conquered religiously, administered kingdoms religiously, dispensed justice religiously, traded religiously, did manual work religiously, married religiously and brought up children religiously. Religion as a

matter of fact pervaded the whole life. India's highest contribution to the world would certainly be this unified conception of life, the integrating factor being religion.

\*                      \*                      \*

Why is there conflict between Science and Religion in the West? It is simply because the scientist provides one outlook and the priest another. Both are partial views of life. Truth embraces the partial realizations of the scientist and the priest and works out the grand symphony where all partial views get harmonized. Sun's light comprises the seven colours of the spectrum, they lose their individualities when blended into a harmonious whole and reach our eyes as a single white light. Why do we dislike Nazism and Fascism? Mostly because they are partial views of life, they are exclusive and do not permit every one to develop according to his own chosen way. Religious intolerance is also disliked for the same reason. The modern man demands that religion, if it were to persist and continue to exert its influence upon human society should become fuller and richer. It should have the highest educative value. While not contradicting the conclusions of positive science, it should rise above mere rationalism and lead man to a conception of the supra-rational. It should provide the mental discipline necessary for the solution of the complex problems of modern life helping the individual to take his proper place in human society. The peace and consolation that it grants should begin here and continue through all eternity. Such, in brief, is the modern educated man's conception of religion. If we look for one system of thought that provides all these requirements, we find it in the Vedanta Philosophy.

## 2. PERMANENT VALUES IN A CHANGING WORLD

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring happy bells, across the snow ;  
The year is going, let him go ;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more ;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife ;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite ;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

—Alfred Lord Tennyson : *In Memoriam*



We send our greetings to all our brothers and sisters in both the hemispheres. The ineffable peace that is reigning in this Himalayan retreat reminds us all the more of the din and strife of the war theatres of the West. Our heart-felt love goes to the women and children, who are suffering for no fault of theirs. Darker and more dreary days are ahead of us, but let us not lose hope. As we are writing these lines, we see in front of us a lofty Himalayan peak gloriously shining with new-fallen snow. It reminds us of the faith that sheds lustre on a pure human heart. Faith is no empty make-believe. It arises from the sincere conviction that there is a Heavenly Father, who listens to our prayers, when we approach Him with humility and reverence. Our faith in God leads us to a belief in the innate goodness of humanity. Recently from his sick-bed Rabin-dranath Tagore, the world-poet, has, in the following words, reaffirmed his faith in the innate goodness of humanity. Says he, 'In the midst of this insane orgy of violence and' destruction, I shall continue to hold fast to my faith in the final recovery of man's lost heritage of moral worth. Man is great. We who stand by him have the privilege of sharing defeat and disaster, but never the ignominy of betraying the great trust of humanity. I know that even in this demented world, there are individuals scattered all over who believe with me.'

\* \* \*

Man's moral worth is, indeed, a precious heritage. 'The nobler modes of life,' 'sweeter manners,' 'purer laws, the love of truth and right,' 'the larger heart,' 'the kindlier hand,' and all other truly valuable things in life, which the great Victorian poet nobly pleads for, are of the very tex-

ture of man's moral worth. All these and many other noble qualities are denoted by the comprehensive Sanskrit term Dharma. The term has been rendered into English variously by various authors. 'The law,' 'the norm,' 'religion,' 'righteousness,' 'virtue', and all other terms which have been actually used to render Dharma into English fail to convey the full significance of the Sanskrit term. The Indian thinkers with their wonderful capacity for finding unity in diversity have coined a term which has a very wide application. Generally speaking, Dharma denotes the standard of excellence that a particular object should attain with reference to the quality that characterizes it. Moral values elevate man above the brute creation, the Dharma of man, therefore, is the measure of the standard of excellence attainable by him in the realm of moral values. Again human Dharma in its more specialized aspect can be subdivided into many distinct 'norms' depending upon distinctions of caste, creed, occupation, sex and so on. There is a Dharma for the Brahmin, another for the Kshatriya, still another for the Vaishya and a fourth for the Shudra. There is a Dharma for the Sannyasin and another for the householder. There is the Dharma of the woman and the Dharma of the child. There is one Dharma for action and another for rest, one for war and another for peace. There is Bauddha Dharma, Jaina Dharma and so on. The Dharma Shastras have elaborated all these and have framed codes of conduct for various groups and various occasions. Every person has to endeavour to attain excellence in his or her own line. As Swami Vivekananda has clearly shown in his Karma-Yoga, each is great in his or her own place. The Hindu religion is known as the Eternal Dharma, for rising above mere doctrines and dogmas it leads its vota-

ries through various steps to reach the highest and it also exhorts every one to endeavour to attain his or her fullest development.

\*

\*

\*

There is a rhythm in Nature. Birth succeeds death until, of course, the individual soul gets released and goes to a place or state, where there is neither birth nor death. Infancy is succeeded by youth, then manhood comes and is followed by old age. Death is no un welcome visitor, for it brings a period of rest, a short respite before the beginning of a new round of activities. Heart-beats, the ticking of the clock, the succession of day and night birth and death, the in-breath and the out-breath, and winter and spring all point to the same moral that action alternates with rest. The moon also with its waxing and waning, its disappearance and reappearance tells the same tale. Both action and rest have their own Dharma, the law that governs them. We make the fullest use of both, by ourselves conforming to their inherent Dharma. Night is meant for rest and the day for action. The sluggard who sleeps away the day and spends the night in revelry is transgressing the Dharma, the eternal law of Nature. He pays the penalty by physical ill health or sourness of temper, which is certainly worse than ill health. The burglar, who hides his face during day-time and begins his nefarious activities when honest people are slumbering in their beds, is not only transgressing the eternal Dharma, but also is breaking the law framed by the State for the safe-guarding of property and is sure to be

caught in the long run, although his cunning may help him to escape once or twice with impunity. Youth and old age have their own codes of conduct; certain transgressions, which are readily excused in youth, are extremely reprehensible if committed by old age. On the other hand, certain exemptions, which age may claim with good grace, will be unseemly if demanded by youth. The recognition of the difference of duties and the guiding of life in conformity with the principles of Dharma leads to a happy youth and an equally happy old age.

\*

\*

\*

Dharma sustains human society. It is for the upholding of the Dharma, that the Supreme Lord incarnates again and again. When He came as Sri Krishna, he delivered the Gita and has clearly explained the nature of Dharma, and has demonstrated its permanent value in an ever-changing world. Philosophical religions such as Buddhism have given a place to Dharma, higher than that ascribed to personal gods, whose whims and wiles the mythologies of all religions sufficiently expatiate. The working of the Dharma is inexorable. Human justice and man-made laws are only attempts at approximation. No artist hopes to succeed in painting the full glory of the sunset, although he sees it repeated by Nature times without number. Jurists and law givers may like critics and artists attempt to represent the Dharma, as best as they can. Their success is bound to be limited; for the Dharma eludes verbal representation even as the sunset eludes the painter's brush. This does not

mean that the Dharma is difficult of comprehension; it is written in the hearts of all beings in indelible characters. The humble individual, who has learnt to listen to the still small voice within, often comprehends the Dharma better than the professor of law who is caught in the unending tangle of legal phraseology. The letter often killeth the spirit.

\* \* \*

'There is nothing higher for a Kshatriya than a righteous war', says the Gita; and the Gita as well all know, was not composed in a Himalayan monastery; it was delivered in the great battle-field of Kurukshetra, where the contending parties fought for world-domination. It is the Dharma of the Kshatriya to fight, but the war in which he engages himself ought to be a righteous war. We know very well that in all wars each combatant calls the other fellow the aggressor and himself the upholder of righteousness. Where the truth lies is another question, but the very fact that the claim is made in the name of righteousness shows that man is not altogether lost. Even if righteousness is not there, the combatant vociferously claims it showing that he fears the Dharma which in this case expresses itself as world-opinion. Do we need further argument to show that if Dharma, righteousness, is truly present, the knight who goes forth to battle to redress human wrongs would become invincible. 'My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure', are the words which the poet puts into the mouth of a true knight. What is known

in the West as chivalry is known in India as Kshatriya-Dharma.

\* \* \*

Throughout the long course of human history wars have been fought. The Gods fought the Titans. Lucifer led a revolt against the Eternal King of Heaven. Sri Ramachandra, the Man-god, routed Ravana, the mighty scion of the race of Asuras. The war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas was an extremely fratricidal strife in which many Kshatriya families of Ancient India were wiped out. The Greeks of antiquity led an expedition against the Trojans. All the great epic poems of the world have war for their theme. *Arma virumque cano* 'Arms and the man I sing' are the opening words of Virgil's immortal epic. Homer invokes the Muse saying,

'Achilles' wrath to Greece the direful spring,

Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess sing.

We teach the epics to our children, we glorify the soldier, taking care, of course, to show the bright side of the picture. How can we hope to make the young less war-minded? So long as human nature is what it is, with its loves and hates, its ambitions and rivalries, conflicts are bound to be. But then there are the rules of the game. If these are strictly followed, the outcome is bound to be honourable to both the victor and the vanquished. A war fought according to well defined rules may not leave any bitterness behind. The bitterness of the vanquished is dangerous for the victor as is evidenced by contemporary events. We, the men and women living in the world to-day, are the unfortunate witnesses to a terrible conflict unprecedented in the annals of the human race, and it is more than probable

that there will be wars in the future for a very long time to come. For aught we know, the pacifist's vision of perpetual peace may be nothing but a pleasing mirage. If war is unavoidable, humanity to save itself from total extinction would do well to ask the war-lords to define the rules of the game. World-opinion ought to be mobilized in that direction. There are armament-makers and war-makers all over the world and the gambling for the command of the greater resources of the world is as prevalent among the ruling classes of the world, as the gambling for lesser stakes is among the poor. There is a psychological necessity for war. War fought according to well defined rules will be certainly more exciting for the combatants than an international football match or a pugilistic contest between two boxers competing for world-championship. While providing the necessary excitement for the men actually engaged in the contest, it will save them from the unsoldierly and cowardly business of killing women and children. The ancient Kshatriyas of this country, with their noble traditions of true valour would never have tolerated tank warfare and aerial bombing which rain death indiscriminately on helpless women and children.

\* \* \*

'Peace hath her victories no less glorious than war' is one of the favourite citations of the pacifist. The philosopher will pertinently remark that peace has its iniquities quite as marked as those of war. 'Why do they prate of the blessings of peace, we have made them a curse,' says the poet and concludes his denunciation with these words : 'Is it peace or war ? better, war ! loud war by land and by sea, war with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones.'

In those early days, when man had not lost his intimacy with the Deity, God plainly told the Hebrew prophets that if the people failed to keep the covenant. He would send plagues and wars and pestilences in their midst. This fact is recorded in the Old Testament. The covenant of God may be interpreted as the Dharma indelibly inscribed in the heart of humanity. Instead of appeasing a potential enemy, how much better it would have been if the leaders of the people had set about appeasing God by strictly following the path of righteousness. We are told that in this war nations are transgressing the international law and the rules of warfare. This leads us to the conviction that it would have been ever so much better for the world, if international treaties and 'gentlemen's agreements' were written in the hearts of nations instead of being committed to scraps of paper. This world, with its two thousand million human beings and numberless varieties of flora and fauna, all pulsating with life, cannot be a mere mechanical assemblage of blind forces. This common mother, who has given birth to, and continues to sustain millions of sentient beings, cannot be a mere insentient globe spinning about in space. When we consider the world as a living organism, we are forced to the conclusion that it must possess a heart, a heart throbbing with life. The Dharma of the world is evidently inscribed in the heart of the world. We certainly refer to it, when we speak of appealing to world-opinion. Nations that cultivate a world-outlook have a better chance of getting closer to the heart of the world than those that choose to maintain an attitude of isolation. Such isolation may be cultural, political or economic; whichever it might be, the nation that holds itself aloof from the life-currents of the world has no chance of survival ; it would become atrophied and wither away like a limb that refuses to work har-

moniously with the rest of the body. Indians in the more glorious periods of their history actively thought of the welfare of the world. Renascent nationalism would certainly strengthen itself by actively setting about to establish contact with other nations.

\*                      \*                      \*

All religions are based upon the Dharma. The practice of religion, therefore, helps the common man as well as the philosopher to understand the Dharma and also to re-establish the closer communion with the Deity which according to all historic religions the human race enjoyed at an earlier period of its history. Philosophical and theological studies may not be available to all but the lives of the prophets are available to one and all. Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna and other great Saviours with their all-embracing love are the true models for humanity. They are the embodiment of the Dharma and they are accessible to the artisan in his workshop, to the farmer behind his plough, to simple fishermen, to women, and to children. We can rise to our full moral stature by trying to imitate them. Alexanders, Caesars, and Napoleons can never touch the core of our being; Platos and Shakespeares, and Goethes are but imperfect models, although in their own lines they have risen to heights unattainable to us. The Dharma that is indelibly written in the hearts of all human beings finds its fullest expression in the great Saviours of the world. The only way for humanity to reach the goal of its endeavours is to walk in the path chalked out by them. They alone can ring out the darkness and moral chaos of the world and make us valiant men and free, with larger hearts and kindlier hands.

### 3. SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

Long before Oswald Spengler wrote *The Decline of the West* prophetic souls had foreseen the approaching catastrophe. In one of his addresses, delivered as early as January 1897, Swami Vivekananda sounded the note of warning in the following words: 'Europe is restless, does not know where to turn. The material tyranny is tremendous. The wealth and power of a country are in the hands of a few men who do not work, but manipulate the work of millions of human beings. By this power they can deluge the whole earth with blood. Religion and all things are under their feet; they rule and stand supreme. The Western world is governed by a handful of Skylocks. All those things you hear about—constitutional government, freedom, liberty, and parliaments—are jokes.... The whole of Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up, are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. Europe, the centre of manifestation of material energy, will crumble to dust within fifty years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life'. Forty-four years have passed away and there are barely six more for Europe to change her position, shift her ground and begin to build anew in order to avoid

total disaster. The present conflagration is perhaps the beginning of the end of the old order. A contemporary thinker recently declared that the present-day civilization, centring as it does on banks and factories and corporations and industries has absolutely no chance of survival. We are told that this civilization in which men are pursuing wealth and power, often at the expense of justice, deserves to perish and ought to perish and that the only hope of humanity lies in a true spiritual revival. The present industrial civilization is not confined to the West ; it has, to a certain extent, spread to the East also. The debacle when it comes will certainly be world-wide and consequently the Problem of reconstruction also is a world problem.

\*

\*

\*

The saving forces of civilization, we are told, lie in a true spiritual revival. It behoves us, therefore, to try and understand what exactly is meant by a true spiritual revival. To clarify the issues concerned, it may also be necessary to analyse the present world-situation and bring to light the hidden forces that tend to disintegrate civilization and also make the attempt to discover the nature of the higher forces that would usher in a fresh reintegration and regeneration of human civilization. The religious legends of India contain many accounts of the fights between the Devas and the Asuras, between the forces of good and the forces of evil and the ultimate triumph of the good. Children listen to these beautiful tales in their nurseries and grow up in the conviction that the forces of good always triumph; but when they attain manhood and womanhood and take their places in the life of the world, they become thoroughly

disillusioned, for they see evil and uncrupulous men succeeding beyond measure and they also see men disposed to a virtuous life suffering from chill penury and utter frustration. The moral of the legends escapes their comprehension. Often they cast aside the religious legends as mere fairy tales, concocted by priests with other motives. Or as in the Christian countries they keep religion and spirituality for off-days and guide their working days along the paths that bear the sign-boards marked with the words : 'Get on' and 'get ahead.' Pushing and struggling they force their way through the crowd and often attain a measure of success proportionate to their ability to strike their opponents down by fair means or foul.

\*

\*

\*

Money rules the world. Society, as at present constituted, functions on a competitive basis. Even the philosopher must live before he can philosophize. The academician may not find it quite convenient to live like Socrates on what chance may bring and frequent the market-places pursuing knowledge for its own sake. All philosophers cannot retire to mountain caves and forest abodes and spend their lives away from the turmoil of the world. Priests and professors who have families to support are reminded by cruel necessity to pitch their tents on the valleys although they may clandestinely allow their inner minds to soar to the mountain peaks of wisdom. Those priests and professors who want to get on and get ahead are forced to pander to the whims and fancies of their wealthy patrons. Bankers and merchant princes of all countries have built churches and have also endowed educational institutions.



Purest motives of philanthropy may have induced them to spend their money for the welfare of their fellow men. Being businessmen they are often farsighted enough to see that the institutions they nurture function in the way in which they would like them to function. Can they leave the finances to be bungled by mere priests and scholars? No. These patrons reserve to themselves the paramount right in all vital matters connected with the management of the trusts they have created. Priests and professors may be allowed a small margin of free-thinking. There are limits beyond which they cannot proceed. Bankers and merchant princes rule and stand supreme. 'Religion and all things are under their feet'.

Might is right in the existing order. Can any one deny this fact? Do we not see before us the brilliant triumphs achieved by ruthless aggression? Where are the small nations that erstwhile held their heads high with no stain on their fair names? Where are they that honestly toiled to earn their sustenance and carried on their lives peacefully and in contentment? Has not the aggressor's sword humiliated them and cast them into the gloomy slough of despondence? Are we not told that the world is unsafe for small nations and also for those that are militarily unprepared? Seeing these happenings, how can we say that the right will ultimately triumph and peace and contentment will reign over the whole earth? Is not life itself a mighty battle-field, where the strong win and the weak go to the wall? Can the exhortations of priests and professors prevent the strong from acting in the only manner in which they would act to achieve their own ends? Are the oppressed peoples of the world to rest contented with the pro-

mise of a reward in the ever-receding future, when universal peace and goodness will prevail upon the world? Will such a day ever come so long as the conditions that rule to-day continue to exist?

Pious and sincere men of all countries speak of social justice. But few seem to know how that desirable consummation is to be achieved. It is easy to see that there is something very wrong in the existing economic order. Otherwise, why should the toiling millions of the world suffer under perpetual famine conditions even when the granaries contain enough food to fill all mouths? The labourer is ready to put in his share of arduous toil willingly and ungrudgingly. Why then should his child cry for a crust of bread or a handful of rice and his poor wife fail to get sufficient clothing to cover her nakedness? Shylocks are abroad, you might say. They make use of the laws framed by themselves or by their nominees to legally drain the poor of the last drop of their life-blood. This world also contains tyrants and aggressors who prowl about like hungry beasts and make use of every opportunity to despoil the poor of the fruits of their labour. Priests may attempt to lull the poor into the belief that they that suffer misery here will be generously recompensed in a future world. It is extremely consoling to hear that poor Lazarus, stricken with foul leprosy and dire poverty here on earth will in the life-to-come be comfortably seated in the lap of Father Abraham and Dives who ill-treated him will be cast into eternal hell-fire. But unfortunately poor Lazarus finds that the pangs of hunger cannot be appeased by sweet consoling words. The priggish philosopher cast into the same mould as the Pharisee of old expounds the law of Karma

and with incomparable hardness of heart tells us that the poor suffer because of their misdeeds committed in a previous life and that the rich enjoy the merits which they acquired before they were born. The law of Karma of the philosopher appears to strike the balance sheet in the present life itself and does not even contain the element of consolation which the priest offers in a post-mortem existence. These in brief are the ideals of social justice now in practice in both the hemispheres. This in bare outline is the picture of the material tyranny referred to in Swami Vivekananda's thought-provoking address and of the economic system controlled by banks and corporations, which Sir S. Radhakrishnan so ably denounces.

Mr. Edward Carpenter's book on *Civilization : Its Cause and Cure* appeared to us in our early days to be a remarkable book. World-events of the past two decades bear ample testimony to the insight of the author. The thesis he put forward is almost self-evident in the light of existing facts. This civilization that has led to two sanguinary world-conflicts within the brief space of twenty-five years may indeed be compared to a cancerous growth that feeds on the vitals of humanity. A cancer may appear rosy outwards, but undoubtedly there is corruption within. This evil of Cain, this fratricidal strife, this eagerness for mutual destruction is not a healthy condition of the human race. Human values have been forgotten and money rules the world ; right has receded to the background and might reigns supreme. Religion, having its own vested interests, has forgotten its sacred mission and bows down to political power. The creative activities of the spirit of man are altogether dormant and ugliness has taken the place of the

beautiful. Students give their time to the natural sciences and economics and care more for that which is useful than for the unattached pursuit of truth. Our vice-chancellors tell us that meta-physics and ethics may soon cease to find a place in the curriculum of studies. Both in the sphere of thought and in the sphere of action the tendency appears to be towards disintegration, towards the breaking up of human society into national, racial, and ideological groups, militant and opposed to one another. Under the stress of internal factions and external aggression law and order are becoming extremely unstable. Thinking men recognise the existence of the malady. Acting on the dictum 'As long as there is life, there is hope', statesmen are making frantic efforts to effect temporary cures. But the malady appears to be too deep-set to yield to nostrums and pills.

\* \* \*

Whence will the spiritual revival come, what forms will it take, and wherein lies its potency to effect a complete cure of a malady the symptoms of which are so complicated and diversified, are the questions to which we shall now address ourselves. We began by quoting the opinion of a great spiritual genius of the age. Let us remember that Swami Vivekananda delivered his addresses on Jnana-Yoga in the city of London, in the heart of the British Empire. The preaching of the Vedanta in the heart of the British Empire appears to have a deep significance. Let us listen to what Swami Vivekananda has to say on this matter. 'Yes, it is worth one's while to plant an idea in the heart of this great London, surely the greatest governing machine that has ever been set in motion. I often watch its working, the power and perfection with which the minutest vein is reached, its wonderful system of circulation and dis-



tribution. It helps one to realize how great is the Empire, and how great its task. And with all the rest, it distributes thought. It would be worth a man's while to place some ideas in the heart of this great machine, so that they might circulate to the remotest part.' The early Christian apostles planted the ideas of their Master in the heart of the city of Rome, the metropolis of the world at that time. The ideas spread and gave rise to a new civilization. In the march of time the old order changed, but Rome continues to be the centre of Christendom. May not something similar happen again, and London become the distributing centre of Vedantic thought? The conquered Greece conquered Rome, it is said. Why should not conquered India make herself ready to effect a cultural conquest of the British Empire? Advaita Vedanta, upholding the divinity of man, provides a rational basis for democracy. With its principles of universal tolerance, it rises above sects and creeds. It looks upon man as man and has the power to harmonize racial differences. If India is to remain within the empire it will be on a basis of equality. Nazi and Fascist ideas of racial superiority will have to go and will go. We hope that a true commonwealth will emerge out of the present conflict and the strength of the commonwealth will to a great extent depend upon the strength of the individual citizen and his capacity to combine with his fellow citizens whole-heartedly and unreservedly in order to build a new civilization on a more stable basis.

\* \* \*

The first lesson which Vedanta teaches to both men and women is their potential greatness: 'The greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power,

and you cannot do this or that'. 'You are the Pure One; awake and arise. O mighty one, this sleep does not befit you. Think not that you are weak and miserable. Almighty, arise and awake, and manifest your own nature'. This is the clarion-call of Swami Vivekananda, the great apostle of the Vedanta. We shall quote a few more passages from the Jnana-Yoga. 'The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them'. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they were great.' 'Faith in ourselves will do everything'. 'Build up your character and manifest your Real Nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-Pure, and call It up in everyone that you see'. 'Infinite power and existence and blessedness are ours, and we have not to acquire them: they are our own, and we have only to manifest them'. 'Be free; hope for nothing from any one.'

\* \* \*

This idea arises from the knowledge of the divine in men. God is both transcendent and immanent. In His immanent aspect he is the Soul of all souls. Swami Vivekananda saw the divinity in the wicked and the miserable. He coined the beautiful significant term: 'Daridra-Narayana', a term which has passed into current usage among the thinkers and reformers of modern India. The true philosophy of service, Karma-Yoga, was formulated by the great Swami. In his wake, modern India has earnestly taken up the work of uplifting the untouchable and the downtrodden. At this stage, the reader may ask, why this philosophy,

which has been with India for centuries, was not put into practice until the present time and how comes it to be that nations who do not possess the theory have consciously or unconsciously practised the Vedanta. The seeming anomaly may be explained as follows. The religious practice of a nation is to a great extent bound up with its political life. The self-abasement of the self and his meek subservience are the outcome of a feudal conception of life and are fostered by feudalism. Democracy makes man not only to do his duties but also claim his rights. Liberal ideas can thrive only in a liberal atmosphere. The influence is, of course, mutual. The Vedantic ideals were conceived in an epoch of freedom. They were fostered during the ages in the free and uncramped atmosphere of the forest universities by fearless men who defied not only kings and gods but also cold and hunger. This priceless heritage has now been bequeathed by Swami Vivekananda to the rich and the poor, to the outcast and the aristocrat, to men and women, to the learned and the illiterate of all nations and of all climes. The heaven is steadily spreading everywhere.

\* \* \*

The writings of Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter bear evidence to the striking similarity between Vedantic ideals and democratic ideals. Whitman has been rightly designated as the first great prophet of modern democracy. His belief in human values makes him say, 'A great city is that which has the greatest men and women. If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world'. He sees the divine aspect of man and exclaims, 'I see something of God each hour of the twentyfour, and each moment then. In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass.' His belief in equality finds expression in the following lines :

I speak the password primeval, I give the sign of democracy,

By God ! I will accept nothing which all cannot have on the same terms

Whoever degrades another degrades me,

And whatsoever is said or done returns at last to me.

Poise and balance of mind and the capacity to face all situations with imperturbable calmness is one of the fruits of Vedantic discipline. Concerning this Swami Vivekananda says, 'Real activity, which is the goal of Vedanta, is combined with eternal calmness, the calmness which cannot be ruffled, the balance of mind which is never disturbed, whatever happens.' On the same theme Whitman has the following lines :

Me imperturbable, standing at ease in Nature,

Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of irrational things,

Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they

Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less important than I thought.

Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for contingencies,

To confront might, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.

Although Herr Hitler speaks of 'effete' democracies, we can with sufficient reason say that democracy is yet in its infancy.

Ballot-boxes by themselves mean very little. The widest possible franchise may not confer the benefits of democracy upon a people. Wide-spread educational facilities are not

of much value. So long as money shackles the heart of man and an individual is ready to betray his neighbour for the sake of filthy lucre, education and universal franchise cannot produce the democratic spirit. Where love of gain rules supreme and men and women are crushed under the iron heels of big business, democracy is only a sham and a snare. We quoted above a passage from Whitman in which the poet affirms the possibility of a few ragged huts being deemed to be the greatest city in the whole world. The reader may think of Sevagram, but many less-known villages of India do also satisfy the condition laid down by the American poet. The inhabitants of the few ragged huts may be poor and illiterate, but you will find them to be true men and women who have an abiding sense of human values. Every great city should have a cathedral. The village temple is the cathedral of our village city. The officiating priest may be clad only in a loin-cloth and sacred thread; he certainly lacks the pomp and ceremony of Monseigneur the Bishop. What of that? He is the inheritor of the Vedic culture that arose in the hoary past and which by its inherent worth has withstood the onslaughts of time. He is pure within and without. Sun-shine or rain, he goes through the religious discipline and maintains the sacred fire of spirituality. The villagers find in him an unfailing guide, friend and philosopher. Poverty or affluence has no power to shake his equanimity. The simple village folk often receive not only their spiritual culture but also their secular learning from him. The neighbourly charity which the villagers exhibit, their honesty and truthfulness and above all their mental attitude of appraising man as infinitely higher than money in the scale of values makes the village life truly democratic. Let us remember that it was a village in Bengal and a family that

inherited the Vedic culture that gave the world the blessed Ramakrishna.

\* \* \*

Will it be possible for the modern world to give up its scientific achievements and go back to the Arcadian simplicity of village life? We do not advocate any such revolutionary step, for we are convinced of the fact that the momentum of the past cannot be annihilated easily. What we do advocate is that there should be a change of direction, a change in human outlook. The machine will be there, but man will learn to value man as infinitely higher than any machine. Factories will be there but the workers will not be mere factory-hands, mere cogs in the wheel. The employer will look upon them as brothers and equals. Every child will be provided with equal opportunities of education and self-expression. The problem of surplus population and the consequent war and bloodshed for the acquisition of 'living space' may not arise in a truly spiritual civilization, for man and wife will live chastely as companions after raising up one or two children. Present methods of birth-control accompanied by uncontrolled lust is as much a potent cause of the decay of civilization as any other contributing factor. Man is a sort of an amphibious being. He lives both in the world of matter and in the world of spirit. So long as he is dead to the spirit, matter has the power to rule over him. But the moment he recognizes his spiritual heritage, the shackles fall asunder and the will in man asserts its freedom. Gold is the slave of man and man has no need to be the slave of gold. It is ignorance that leads man to the illusion of thinking that he has to pay obeisance to gold or perish. True wisdom makes one understand that a more real and ampler life can be gained only when one shakes off the shackles of gold.

#### 4. PROBLEMS OF HARMONY

To define is to settle the exact limits. The Infinite is boundless, endless. Defining the Infinite is, therefore, a contradiction in terms. God transcends space and time; He is also immanent in space and time. In Him contraries meet and stand synthesized into a grand harmony. He is greater than the greatest and at the same time smaller than the smallest. Storm and thunder, violent earthquakes and terrific cataclysms reveal one aspect of God ; the gentle zephyr that blows over a flowery meadow reveals another aspect. He is the one, yet He is the Many. He is the Seed Immutable, the cause of the unfolding of all the worlds; He is also the mighty world-destroying Time, which becomes manifested for the purpose of infolding the worlds. He is the Life of all life and He is also Death, the great destroyer. The scriptures declare that He is the Ancient One, the Teacher of all teachers; yet we know that the newest philosophy has its source in Him. Residing in the hearts of all beings, He is nearer than the nearest ; yet standing apart in His own glory, He is farther than the farthest. His voice is heard in the silence and solitude of the desert; He is also present in the turmoil and rush of life. Renunciation and life-struggle are but the reverse and obverse of the same coin. 'I am immortality and also death.; being and non-being am I, O Arjuna,' says the Lord. We address our brayers and call on Him to lead us from non-being to being, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.

He is both non-being and being, darkness and light, death and immortality. Why then should we prefer one to the other ? The reason for this probably lies in the fact that non-being, darkness and death are already with us and we yearn for the opposites so that we may realize the fullness which is God. Once we realize the fullness, we may 'hug the form of Death and dance in Destruction's dance.'

Who dares misery love,  
And hug the form of Death,  
Dance in Destruction's dance,  
To him the Mother comes.

— Swami Vivekananda

'Be thou free, O Arjuna, from the triad of the Gunas, free from the pairs of opposites, ever-balanced, free from (the thought of) getting and keeping, and established in the Self,' says the Lord. Freedom lies in rising above the pairs of opposites, and in attaining the balanced state of mind that is not affected by heat and cold, joy and grief, action and inaction, attachment and aversion. This appears to be the central teaching of all forms of Yoga. What are the characteristics of the free man ? 'Content with what comes to him without effort, unaffected by the pairs of opposites, free from envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound.' Freedom is the goal of life and the attainment of freedom demands a moral and intellectual discipline that would help the individual to harmonize differences. Nature seeks harmony. Water, we say, finds its own level. The river that rises in the lofty mountain peak flows through smiling valleys and rice-fields and ultimately reaches the sea. The mountain and the sea stand harmonized by the river. The breeze that blows

humming over the tree-tops harmonizes a high-pressure region in the atmosphere with a low-pressure region. Charity that flows from the rich to the poor is a blessing to both, the giver and the recipient. The rich and the poor, the aristocrat and the base-born, the learned and the illiterate, youth and old age, all have their place in the scheme of things. Each needs the other and finds its fullness in what appears to be diametrically opposed to itself. We hear a great deal nowadays about the equality of the sexes. If we think a little deeply we shall find that man and woman are not equal, nor are they unequal. Each is the complement of the other and that is why man finds his fulfilment in woman and woman finds hers in man. Night finds its fulfilment in day and day in night. Sunshine and gloom, winter and summer are complementary; each finds its fulfilment in the other.

\*

\*

\*

Mystics and philosophers have attempted to express the inexpressible by saying 'not this, not this.' Even the term 'infinite' is a negative term, it negates finiteness. 'Eternal' negates finite duration of time. Our mind is capable of conceiving a limited extent of space and a limited extent of time. It is like the frog in the old story, the frog whose whole range of locomotion was limited by the confines of an old well. The mystic is the more fortunate frog that had hopped to the sea-side and back, per-chance a few times. As a result of its peregrinations, it had caught some glimpses of the sea. If it had chosen to make the sea its permanent home, it may not have returned to tell its tale. The very fact that it returned to its friend in the well shows that it knows the limitations of the well and has also a vision of the limitless sea. The only way in which the mystic frog

can convey its new impression to its non-mystic friend may be by negating the limited. The limitless may be conceived as a negation of the limited. Can it not also be conceived as including the limited and yet surpassing it? Is it not possible to see that every drop of water in the old well has at some time or other formed part of the limitless sea? If the mystic frog were to grow a little more philosophical will it not include the part in the whole and communicate a fuller view to its friend by making an affirmation and a negation or by making two affirmations? Its answer might have been 'this and yet not this' or 'this and much more than this.' In the course of evolution the human mind has learnt to perceive things by setting up limits and perceiving differences. The term signifying mind in some languages is etymologically connected with the root denoting measure. To know is to measure. Human logic lays emphasis on the differences of contraries, and human history is the record of battles fought for the maintenance of tribal, racial and national frontiers. The hunter assigns to himself a tract of forest and does not suffer another man's trespassing into it. The walls of a rich man's pleasure-garden are also the walls of his prison. He not only shuts out the world but also shuts himself out of the world. This is 'mine' and this is 'not mine', are the first conceptions which arise in the undeveloped mind in its attempt to grasp the facts around it. Finite facts can be grasped easily by noticing their peculiarities, their differences. The foot-rule, the pound-weight and the stop-watch are excellent instruments for comparing two limited quantities. But can they be used to measure the infinite and the eternal? Likewise, can the logic of finite facts be used as a measure of the infinite glories of God? If contraries meet in Him, it is evident that the mode of apprehending Him is to be sought for elsewhere.

The circle has often been used as a symbol of perfection, for the vertical and the horizontal, the right end and the left end, the top and the bottom and all the points of the compass stand harmonized in it. In this planet of ours the North Pole and the South Pole are farthest apart, they are literally poles asunder. Yet they combine into the axis around which the earth spins. The fact that contraries are not mutually opposed, but can be combined together to make a whole infinitely richer than the two seemingly opposed elements has been perceived more by the artist than by the man of science. The scientist with his measuring rod attempts to comprehend the unity amidst diversity. He reduces quality to a mere function of quantity. With his delicate instruments he can minutely measure wave-lengths and frequencies of vibration. He examines the seven colours of the spectrum; to his eyes they represent differing wave-lengths, differing frequencies of vibration of the same light energy. Music to the mathematician has only a quantitative appeal. The varying notes of music are to him differing frequencies of vibration based upon differing wave-lengths. The harmony of two notes is to him a mere arithmetical ratio. Science progresses by closer and closer analysis. Light is conceived as an electromagnetic disturbance. In an advanced stage, the scientist discovers that light energy, electrical energy, magnetic energy, heat energy and mechanical energy are all different forms of the same energy. Even the distinction between matter and energy ceases to be, when matter is conceived as built up of electrons and protons, centres of energy or waves in the ether, whatever the scientist might choose to call them. The scientist having arrived at the last possible stage of analysis proclaims that he has explained the riddle of the universe. Now let us con-

sider for a moment the working of the artist's mind. He sees light and shade and notices their distinctive characteristics. To him shade is not a mere negation of light. The difference between them is not merely quantitative. He knows that each standing by itself means very little, but he recognizes the possibility of bringing them together to produce a whole of far greater value than the parts. He harmonizes light and shade and produces a picture that delights our eye. Each part has not lost its individuality, its inherent value. At the same time each part has contributed to the making of a whole of far greater value. The artist again knows the value of each tint, its qualitative difference from other tints. The patches of colours he places upon the canvas at various positions in varying degrees of intensity combine together to make a beautiful picture, a master-piece, an immortal work of art. The individual tint, while conserving all its inherent value, contributes its quota to the making of a whole of infinitely greater value. The musician knows the worth of each individual musical note. By combining them he produces a symphony of inestimable value. His rhythms interweave sounds with intervals of silence. The poet has the whole gamut of human emotions to work upon. He builds out of them immortal dramas, epics, and lyrics. In the productions of the artists we notice how greater values can be created by harmonizing lesser values. We also notice how the fleeting can be made into the permanent, how mortality can be raised to immortality. With the insight of the artist, shall we not pray to God, the Master-Artist to lead us from being and non-being to the Truth that harmonizes being with

non-being, from darkness and light, to the Beauty that harmonizes darkness and light, from death and immortality to the Perfection that harmonizes death and immortality ?

\*       \*       \*

It is true that we have to rise from non-being to being to appreciate and evaluate the harmony of non-being and being. Likewise we have to rise from darkness to light to understand the harmony of darkness and light and we should also rise from death to immortality to live in that state of perfection that harmonizes death and immortality. The principle of harmony supplies us with a new organon, a new tool of thought to understand the workings of the infinite mind of God and the order prevailing in His universe. Art appears to open up new vistas of thought, new portals of understanding. The apparent dualism of Creator and creature may not be resolved into the barren monism of denying the one or the other. Non-dualism harmonizes the Creator and creature into a whole of infinitely greater value. Brahman, the Absolute has no parts. The Creator is Brahman, the creature is also Brahman. The Spirit is Brahman, matter is also Brahman. The sentient, the conscious is Brahman ; the insentient, the unconscious is also Brahman. The static, the unchanging is Brahman; the dynamic, the ever-changing is also Brahman. Being is Brahman, becoming is also Brahman. In the light of the Shruti, meditation such as this forms the path of the aspirant and also the goal that he has to reach. In highly symbolical language, the Vedic seers have revealed to us the results of their meditations. Their teachings are difficult of comprehension, except to scholars who are prepared to spend a lifetime studying the commentaries. The average

student yearns for something simpler, something easier of comprehension and applicable to life and its ordinary problems. This need has been fulfilled by the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the great prophet of harmony. Every little act of his and all his teachings illustrate the principle of harmony. He harmonized the life of a true Sannyasin with the life of a true householder, a most wonderful achievement in itself. The ordinary aspirant on the path enters into these two stages successively. Having completed the duties of the householder, he embraces sannyasa. Here is a person who successfully practised the two ideals simultaneously. Ever dwelling in the silent bliss of Samadhi he combined with it the active ministry of communicating to eager listeners the fruits of his profound meditations. Himself a scion of the highest caste, he took upon himself to clean the lavatory of a low-born man. He, the best of teachers, always spoke of himself as a learner and conducted himself accordingly. The sacred and secular were not kept by him in two watertight compartments. The sacred became the secular when he fed the image of the Divine Mother with his own hands and placed on the head of the holy image flowers with which he had previously touched various parts of his own body. The secular became the sacred, when he offered worship at the feet of his own wife. He had the simplicity of a child but learned pandits and profound scholars sought his advice. He exhibited his contempt for possessions when he refused a large sum of money offered to him by a merchant, but at the same time we find him insisting upon getting his proper share of the food-offerings made to the Deity. The rich as well as the poor saw in him a true comrade who could sympathize with them and understand their true difficulties. The sages, mentioned in the old religious legends, were as a rule misogynists, but

here is a man whom women regarded as one of themselves. We stand in amazement and ask ourselves the question : Is this person man or God ? Men had different opinions regarding him. Various religionists saw in him their own ideals ; scholars versed in Vedanta philosophy saw in him the Brahma-Jnani in whom God and man stand harmonized. He himself declared to his beloved disciple that Rama and Krishna have become Ramakrishna, also adding not in your Vedantic sense.'

\*

\*

\*

Turning to his teachings we find a wonderful catholicity and universality of outlook. Spiritual truths and practices which were considered as different and incompatible stand harmonized by the realizations of this supreme artist of the religious life. The worship of the One, the Absolute, is shown to be quite compatible with the worship of the Many, the various divine manifestations. The impersonal and the personal, the Nirguna and the Saguna, the Nirakara and the Sakara are shown as complementaries. The worship of God as pure Spirit is shown to be quite compatible with the worship of man by kind and loving service. The emotional life of Bhakti, the path of devotion, is harmonized with the intellectual life of Jnana, the path of knowledge. He speaks of God as Father and also as Mother. Dvaita, dualism, Vishishtadvaita, qualified non-dualism, and Advaita, non-dualism, are held by him not as distinct warring creeds but as parts of one undivided whole. Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism coalesce into one religion by his religious experience which also lends new light to Islam and Christianity. He and his disciples after him insist on preserving the individuality of each creed. Let a Christian be a better

Christian and a Muslim a better Muslim, seems to be the burden of their teachings. The necessity of maintaining careful accounts and marketing intelligently is considered to be as much a religious duty as retiring into solitude and practising a life of contemplation. The gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, thus lays down the principles for the realization of whole and complete life. It is no wonder that the active West and the contemplative East are equally attracted by this life and these teachings.

\*

\*

\*

Let us now turn our attention to the application of the principle of harmony to other pursuits in life. 'The education of the whole man' is one of the important topics that at present engages the attention of prominent educationists in the West. Some of their writings exhibit a poverty of conception. Attention is centred on the mind and body of man; the soul figures as a sort of a moral director, as the active agent behind that aspect of mind known as conation. The Oversoul that pervades all individual souls has no place at all. In spite of these deficiencies the thoughts propounded and the forms of discipline recommended are original and if accepted cannot but have very far-reaching effects. The educator of the present day pays attention only to the mind and that too to the cognitive aspect of it; the affective and conative aspects are treated as subsidiary. The training of the body is left to the physical instructor, who is often the drill-sergeant, the soul is cared for by the parson or priest and is often left uncared for. *Mens sana in corpore sano* 'a sound mind in a sound body' is often exhibited in the walls of gymnasiums and school-halls, but no one ever questions why splendid specimens of manhood



which often figure with success in playing-fields are usually found associated with extremely moderate brain powers. The existing system of education both in the West and in the East, where teachers are proud to follow second-hand ideals imported from the West, is at its best a mere patch-work. At its worst, it is a regular anarchy in which soul, mind and body instead of working harmoniously rebel against one another. To conceive the training of man as an organic whole and to bring in order where there is chaos are in themselves very difficult tasks, which require very sound thought and application. We made our humble contribution to this pressing national and international problem in a previous issue of this journal (March, 1940), under the caption 'The Application of the Vedantic Ideal to Educational Problems.' We discussed there the ancient Greek ideals of education which aimed at the harmonious development of mind and body and the Ancient Hindu ideal of Yoga which gave the foremost place to the development of the spiritual side of man. We also dwelt a little on the possibility of harmonizing the Greek and the Hindu ideals. The subject i., of course, very vast and we could not do justice to it within the limited space that was available. The technique recommended by the promoters of the new ideal in education demands also a new class of teachers. The post-war world may give more thought to this matter and formulate the principles for the education of the whole man. Among the products of the present system we often see fractional men who snarl at each other like street-dogs and restlessly run about like monkeys. The new education should develop sober men who would harmoniously co-operate for the progress of the world as a whole and who would remind us of the following noble words of the greatest of English poets : 'What a piece of

work is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form in moving, how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a god !

Self-assertion with its emphasis upon rights and privileges and self-denial with equal emphasis on duties and obligations are two of the cardinal principles of life. The excess of either will lead to ruin. To establish a harmony between faith, duty, obedience and obligation on the one side and reason, liberty, privilege and personal conviction on the other requires constant alertness guided by a cultivated and well-balanced mind. The egoistic and altruistic impulses are both too precious to be suppressed or killed. The problem is to harmonize them. The men who have developed their intellect at the cost of their moral nature develop Asuric tendencies and become a real menace to society and to the world. Those that have developed the emotional side but lack the guidance of a robust intellect and strong will fall an easy prey to the aggressor in the political, economic and other spheres of life. Again, when differing cultures and thought-currents assail a nation, as is the case in contemporary India, the necessity arises for working them out into a harmonious whole. Many valuable suggestions for the working out of such a synthesis are to be found in the valuable papers contributed to the January (1941) Number of this journal by Prof. Akshaya Kumar Banerjee and Mr. Eliot C. Clark. Prof. Banerjee has clearly shown how spiritual idealism can promote social justice and bring about peace, harmony and unity in human society. Mr. Clark's thesis lays down the lines of approach along which the East and the West can progress towards the common goal of humanity. Man as a social being can realize the fullness of life only in a well-ordered harmoniously working society.

\* \* \*

As an individual also, man maintains his physical, mental, moral and spiritual health by his capacity to harmonize conflicting forces. Disease, intellectual perversity, moral turpitude and spiritual inanity are the results of conflicts; they can be cured only by solving the conflicts and reestablishing conditions of harmony. Love between two persons is essentially a state of harmony in which each enriches the personality of the other. Hatred and discord on the other hand impoverish the personality of the persons concerned. The highest bliss is attained when the individual soul attains to a state of complete harmony with the universal soul. The science that lays down the paths to the realization of such a consummation is known as Yoga. Swami Vivekananda's books on Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and Jnana-Yoga deal exhaustively with the subject. Yoga is the science of harmony *par excellence*. The study and practice of Yoga will help the aspirant towards a harmonious development of body, mind and spirit and will help him to live a fuller and richer life in harmony with his surroundings.

## 5. CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The world was never made ;  
It will change, but it will not fade.  
So let the wind range ;  
For even and morn

Ever will be  
Thro' eternity.

Nothing was born ;  
Nothing will die ;  
All things will change.

The poet sounds a note of optimism. In the very next poem, however, he gives us a pessimistic view of the fate of our 'old earth.' For he says,

Nine times goes the passing bell ;  
Ye merry souls farewell.

The old earth  
Had a birth,  
As all men know,  
Long ago.

And the old earth must die,  
So let the warm winds range,  
And the blue wave beat the shore ;

For even and morn  
Ye will never see  
Thro' eternity.  
All things were born.  
Ye will come never more  
For all things must die.

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

As the poet provides us with two diametrically opposed views, he may not be helpful to us in our search for Beginnings and Endings. Let us turn to the scientists and hear what they have to say on this matter. For the last three centuries, that is, ever since the time Galileo pointed his telescope to the sky and began to make a closer examination of the heavenly bodies, astronomers have done a considerable amount of work in exploring the sky and giving us precise information concerning the distances of stars and planets, their size, chemical composition, velocity of movement and so on. During the last few decades physicists by their brilliant researches into the structure of the atom have opened up a new universe in which relative magnitudes and relative distances bear close resemblance to relative stellar magnitudes and distances. Thus the macrocosm and the microcosm have in a way been explored and charted. We have precise information, where the ancients had to navigate uncharted seas. Man stands in the middle, for it has been found that his size is a mean between the size of an average star and the size of an atom. The ratio of the size of a star to the size of a man is the same as the ratio of the size of a man to the size of an atom. Much work has also been done on the ultimate composition of matter. The study of the source of the sun's energy has led scientists to the startling fact that in the interior of the sun matter gets annihilated and in ceasing to be matter becomes radiant heat and light. It has been calculated that every minute the sun loses about 250 million tons of matter, which as heat and light and other cosmic rays radiates into space and according to existing scientific views is irrecoverably lost as matter. The same thing happens to the stars, for we all know that the sun is also a star and not a very important one either. The second law of thermodynamics definitely shows that

we are inhabitants of a running-down universe which will ultimately cease to be. The end may be millions of years off. As practical men, we may not be much concerned with what is going to take place in such a distant future but philosophers who seek for ultimate truths have to accept the verdict of science, at any rate provisionally, and see how far the cosmological views propounded by physical science will influence their ideas of man's destiny.

\* \* \*

The speculations of ancient Hindus as recorded in their Puranas hold that time moves in cycles. The arrow of time makes a long flight and comes back to the place from where it started. Creation and preservation are succeeded by destruction, and during the Maha-Pralaya the universe rests in the womb of the Creator and at the dawn of a new creation, a new cycle commences. This introduces the idea of an extracosmic Creator, an idea not much in favour with modern science. Let us hear what a leading scientist, Prof. A. S. Eddington has to say regarding the conception of a never-ending cycle of rebirth of matter and worlds. 'At present we can see no way in which an attack on the second law of thermodynamics could possibly succeed, and I confess that personally I have no great desire that it should succeed in averting the final running-down of the universe. I am no Phoenix worshipper. This is a topic on which science is silent, and all that one can say is prejudice. But since prejudice in favour of a never-ending cycle of rebirth of matter and worlds is often vocal, I may perhaps give voice to the opposite prejudice. I would feel more content that the universe should accomplish some great scheme of evolution and, having achieved whatever may be achieved,

lapse back into chaotic changelessness, than that its purpose should be banalised by continual repetition. I am an Evolutionist, not a Multiplicationist. It seems rather stupid to keep doing the same thing over and over again."

\* \* \*

The great scientist admits a 'purpose' and a 'great scheme of evolution' directed towards the fulfilment of that purpose. These admissions are of value to the philosopher whose quest is for the discovery of permanent values in a changing universe. There is no reason why the philosopher should not accept the verdict of science *in toto*. On the other hand, the scientist need not have any quarrel with the philosopher, if the latter attempts to fill up gaps in the findings of the former. The scientist takes up a ready-made universe and traces cause preceding cause and arrives at the birth of matter, the birth of the great nebulae, the birth of the stars and the planets, the formation of the seas and the mountains on the face of our planet, the coming of life, the evolution of various species of plants and animals and the evolution of man, the crowning glory of creation. All these the scientist does without positing a Creator. He computes in millions of years the time taken by all these processes and directing his eyes forward brings to our view the distant future in which the moon, the satellite of our planet, will approach the earth and finally collide with it; he stirs up our imagination by pointing to us a dying sun, which from being white-hot becomes red-hot and finally ceases to be, very much like the coal in a burnt-up furnace. Long before this event, he tells us that the last human being

\*Prof. A.S. Eddington : *The Nature of the Physical World* (Gifford Lectures 1927). Chapter IV last para.

on earth would have died leaving behind no heir to all our noble heritage of culture and civilization. As science stands at present, the accepted view is that the night that would set in will know no dawn. Thus according to the scientist, out of the void we came and into the void we return. We fail to see the 'purpose' behind this 'great scheme of evolution.' In speaking of a running-down universe, the scientist compares the universe to a wound-up clock which will keep on functioning for millions and millions of years to come. But as to who wound it up, or how it came to be wound up, the scientist is significantly silent. We have no reason to find fault with the modern scientist. He himself admits that we emerged from our animal ancestry fairly recently and that the time we have so far given to the study of these problems is very very little. Future scientists may have many more valuable findings to communicate to the human race, but that does not in any way decrease the value of the work already done.

\* \* \*

The fact that matter gets annihilated into cosmic radiation and thereby gets dematerialized is of interest to the Vedantist who negates matter. Life such as we know it evolved out of matter, at any rate it is associated with matter. Inorganic matter surrendering itself to the embrace of the vegetable gets incorporated in the body of the vegetable and becomes organic matter. Of the ninety-two elements carbon with its possibility of linkage enters greatly into the formation of organic compounds. Animals cannot directly make use of inorganic matter; vegetable matter by surrendering itself to the animal helps the latter to build its body tissues. Mind, consciousness and spirit are thought of by us so closely associated with, functioning through and

expressing themselves by means of bodies, that it is almost impossible for us to conceive them in isolation. The immortality which religion promises is ordinarily conceived as a survival of the human personality clothed in a body of some kind, probably composed of finer matter, shining and resplendent. God, although He is spoken of as the Pure Spirit by all theologies, enters the human imagination as a person, 'having definite feelings, endowed with knowledge, thinking successive thoughts as we do and finally arriving at a decision to be carried into effect.' The inveterate habit of the mind to form images exhibits itself, in language and thought as the desire to give some kind of vesture to abstract notions and speak and think in metaphors, similes and personifications. As soon as we hear the word 'courage', our mind brings into its field of vision the picture of a lion or a strong man, the word 'purity' may usher in a white flower or a saintly personage. The poets confirm our natural propensities and enlarge their scope by giving corporeality to all kinds of abstract notions. As a convenient device for communicating thought, images certainly have a place, but do they not vitiate higher thinking and prevent the spirit from breaking the shackles of matter? Higher mathematics has developed by rising above the necessity of using figures and models which are indispensable in the lower branches of the subject. The differential equations and such other symbols which it uses belong to a higher order of entities. Modern relativity physics has made its brilliant discoveries by eschewing models and making use of the symbols of higher mathematics. Why should not religious and philosophical thinking do something similar? The heaven of the dualist is peopled with a host of images. The city of God is conceived in dualistic scriptures as built up of pure gold as transparent as glass and of all manner of

precious stones such as jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, beryl, topaz, jacinth and amethyst. The Supreme Being is thought of as a person seated on a throne surrounded by devotees all clad in fine raiments. Flowers unfolding and exquisitely perfumed and the harmonies of sweet music lend enchantment to the charming city,

Where the bright Seraphim in burning row  
 Their loud up-lifted Angel trumpets blow  
 And the Cherubic host in thousand choirs  
 Touch their immortal Harps of golden wires.

\* \* \*

The thinking man's ideas of cosmogony have undergone a revolutionary change in the course of the three centuries that have elapsed, since the time Milton, the great English poet, wrote his immortal epic. Astronomy has searched the skies and has provided us with a new set of cogent ideas. As poetic imagery Milton's conception of heaven and earth may be considered as valid for all time. But do they approach anywhere near the modern conception of space, time and matter revealed by mathematicians and physicists and the brilliant conception of Reality which transcends space, time and matter and also forms the background of space, time and matter, a conception formulated by Vedantic philosophers who lived in India two thousand years ago? Einstein's theory of relativity with its ideas of a finite, yet boundless universe, of time conceived as mixed up with space forming a space-time continuum, of the warping of space, of matter conceived as a curvature of space, of the interdependence of the units of length, time and mass and of the necessity of our revising the ideas propounded by

classical Newtonian mechanics, has withstood the rigorous tests of scientific thinking and has brought about a revolutionary change in the scientists' conception of the external world. Minkowski's exposition of a four-dimensional world has made scientists to revise their old ideas of time. The philosopher may perhaps find in it the possibility of identifying 'becoming' with 'being'. Max Planck's quantum theory by measuring the value of the constant,  $h$ , the single quantum of action, has introduced an element of chance into the way in which a particle of matter may act under fixed conditions. This has led to the formulating of the Principle of Indeterminacy and to the recognition of the fact that the laws of Nature divide themselves into three classes : (1) identical laws, (2) statistical laws and (3) transcendental laws. The scientist has worked his way up to the portals of the mystic and admits the possibility of the latter's possessing certain aspects of the knowledge of Reality, at present denied to scientists. Physical science has come to realize its own limitations and looks up to the philosopher and the mystic for a solution of the deeper problems of life and Reality. At the same time, shall we not say that it behoves the philosopher, as the seeker of fundamental truths, not to belittle the claims of science but to accept its conclusions within the limitations it has set to itself. It is gratifying to note that the conclusions of modern science are in harmony with the findings of Vedanta philosophy.

\* \* \*

We have already noted that science upholds the ultimate annihilation of matter. It has also propounded theories which hint at the illusory nature of seemingly solid and palpable matter. The immortality of the Spirit remains

unshaken ; it does not fall within the circumscribed realms of science. Concerning the approach which the mystic makes to the realms of Reality we hope to say something in our next article on 'The Scientist and the Mystic.' Let us proceed to examine the claims made on behalf of physical immortality. Religious legends tell us about the sage Markandeya and others who have been blessed with physical immortality. We admit that there may be more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy dreams of. As far as we know, Vedanta philosophy wherever it speaks of the blessed abode of the Devas, the shining ones, adds that they have a long but limited life and have to be born again as men to enter into Mukti or Nirvana which is a state in which space, time and matter cease to be. In differentiating between the attainment of heaven (Svarga) and the attainment of emancipation (Mukti), Vedanta philosophy upholds the conception of spiritual immortality and casts aside all ideas of physical immortality. If the physical bodies of Sage Markandeya and others were to persist through the Maha-Pralaya of the Puranas or the annihilation of matter of the scientists, they must be composed of something other than matter, at any rate matter as conceived by modern science. If spiritualizing matter means a process in which the inherent attributes of matter get replaced by the attributes of the spirit, then also matter loses its identity. The Siddhas, a class of alchemists of medieval India, claimed to have discovered the elixir that would prolong human life indefinitely. Alchemists of other countries have also made similar claims. We have no evidence to prove the validity of their claims. Some of them might have lived longer than the normal span of life allotted to humanity, but all of them appear to have completed their sojourn on earth and finally departed treading the same path as their forefathers. Again the question

arises, is it desirable to prolong life indefinitely, particularly if physical and mental deterioration sets in even to a small degree? What is the harm in passing through the portals of death with the possibility of being reincarnated in a fresh young body to continue whatever work one may have to do and gather fresh experience? In the case of persons whose religious philosophy holds that a human being has only a single chance of living in this 'best of all possible worlds' there is some justification in desiring a length of life beyond the normal span, as Mr. Bernard Shaw does in his *Back to Methuselah*. Even such persons may not think of a physical immortality.

\*

\*

\*

The Legend of the Wandering Jew advocates the case for death. Undue attachment to the flesh and the fear of the unknown make the normal human being shrink from the approach of what he or she considers to be an unwelcome visitor. But if philosophy teaches anything it is the insight into Nature's plan, which enables the knower to rise above this unwholesome fear, the fear of death. The Wandering Jew desired death but a curse pronounced on him prevented him from getting it. Shelley, the English poet, has immortalized this legend which was current in Medieval Europe. Some worthy men of those credulous times have even testified to having come face to face with the Wanderer. Ahasuerus (also spelt Ahasverus) was a Jew by birth and a shoemaker by trade. He lived in the time of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Tradition says that when Jesus was wearied with the burden of His pon-

derous cross and wanted to rest before the door of Ahasuerus, the unfeeling wretch drove Him away with brutality. Jesus uttered no complaint. But an angel of death appeared before Ahasuerus, and exclaimed indignantly, 'Barbarian! thou hast denied rest to the Son of Man; be it denied thee also, until He comes to judge the world.' Because of the curse Ahasuerus tramped and wandered over the wide world and years afterwards returned to his native town and found it in ruins and full of desolation. He wanted the consolation of death but the curse precluded him from the rest of the peaceful grave. Whenever he attained the age of one hundred years, he fell into a swoon and suddenly recovered finding himself to be thirty years old, just the age which he was at the time the curse was pronounced on him. The mental struggle which the poor Jew had to undergo is best described in his own words: 'Dreadful beyond conception is the judgement that hangs over me. Jerusalem fell—I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the Romans—but, alas, alas! the restless curse held me by the hair;—and I could not die! Rome the giantess fell—I placed myself before the falling statue—she fell and did not crush me. Nations sprang up and disappeared before me; but I remained and did not die. From cloud-encircled cliffs did I precipitate myself into the ocean; but the foaming billows cast me upon the shore, and the burning arrows of existence pierced my cold heart again. I leaped into Etna's flaming abyss, and roared with the giants for ten long months, polluting with my groans the Mount's sulphurous mouth—ah! ten long months. The volcano fermented, and in a fiery stream of lava cast me up. I lay torn by the torture of snakes of hell amid the glowing cinders, and yet continued to exist. A forest was on fire; I darted

on wings of fury and despair into the crackling wood. Fire dropped upon me from the trees, but the flames only singed my limbs ; alas ! it could not consume them. I now mixed with the butchers of mankind, and plunged into the tempest of raging battle. I roared defiance to the infuriated Gaul, defiance to the victorious German ; but arrows and spears rebounded in shivers from my body. The Saracen's flaming sword broke upon my skull ; balls in vain hissed upon me ; the lightnings of battle glared harmless around my loins ; in vain did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed ! The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me, and hurled high in the air I fell on heaps of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant's steel club rebounded from my body, the executioner's hand could not strangle me, the tiger's tooth could not pierce me, nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me. I cohabited with poisonous snakes, and pinched the red crest of the dragon. The serpent stung, but could not destroy me. The dragon tormented, but dared not devour me. I now provoked the fury of tyrants ; I said to Nero, "Thou art a bloodhound !" I said to Christiern, "Thou art a bloodhound !" I said to Muley Ismail, "Thou art a bloodhound !" The tyrants invented cruel torments, but did not kill me. Ha ! not to be able to die—not to be able to die—not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life—to be doomed to be imprisoned for ever in the clay-formed dungeon—to be for ever clogged with this worthless body, its load of diseases and infirmities—to be condemned to be hold for millenniums that yawning monster Sameness, and Time, that hungry hyena, ever bearing children, and ever devouring again her offspring !—Ha ! not to be permitted to die ! Awful Avenger in Heaven, hast Thou in Thine armoury of wrath a punishment more

dreadful ? Then let it thunder upon me, command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel, that I ther may lie extended ; may pant, and writhe, and die !"\*

Even men who live more than the normal span of life are afflicted by the bereavement consequent upon the passing away of near and dear ones. Methuselahs will have to bear the pain of parting from generations and generations of friends. It is, of course, a different thing if by some decree Providence decides to lengthen the span of life of the whole human race. Until such a time comes one would surely prefer to tread the path of one's forefathers and be gathered unto their bosoms when Death the leveller takes hold of him. Living in the realms of heaven with resplendent bodies may give a span of life probably three hundred and sixty-five times as long as the present life, for the scriptures say that the human year is but a day to the gods on high, but even such a life holds forth no permanency. What then is the eternal life, the true citizenship in the Kingdom of God ? Long familiarity with our planet has bred in our hearts a certain amount of contempt for it. We have forgotten that our earth is also one among the many heavenly bodies. If we could transport ourselves to the Morning Star we may see our earth as a brilliant star in the blue vault of heaven. There is no reason why eternal bliss and the Kingdom of God should not begin for us even while we are sojourning on this planet, the home of all our joys and sorrows. Our scriptures bear testimony to the Jivan-Muktas, the realised souls who although they were in the body were not of it. They had established full communion with the

---

\* A. S. Rappoport, Ph.D.: *Medieval Legends of Christ*, Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., London 1934.



All. A limited body, howsoever fine and resplendent it might be, could not contain the soul that had pervaded All having become one with the All. When Shukadeva was addressed by name, mountains and rivers, the wide ocean and the raging winds responded to the call, for Shukadeva had become the All. The sacred scriptures give us glimpses of the life eternal, which appears to be not a mere lengthening out of the span of life but a change in the quality of life. If time is only a relative entity, as it is claimed to be by modern science, a moment can become a millennium and a thousand years shrink to a single moment. The human being already experiences three distinct conceptions of time in his waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. Is not the blessed state of the released souls something that transcends time? Einstein tells us that the velocity of light which is a finite quantity is bound up with time and if a conscious being were to move with the speed of light time would stand still for that being. Matter that gets annihilated and time that ceases to be cannot assure a persisting material vesture for an immortal spirit. He who lives, moves and has his being in God has gone above mortality, and immortality seems to be the verdict of the sacred scriptures.

## 6. THE SCIENTIST AND THE MYSTIC

Since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers the West is credited with the possession of the scientific outlook and the 'unchanging' East has in all ages been held up as the custodian of the spiritual treasures gathered by mystics and seers. These popular judgements are, of course, based upon broad generalizations. Plato and Plotinus Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, and Ruysbroeck of ancient times as well as Emerson, Blake and others of modern times have shed their brilliance appearing in the western firmament and have guided many a soul in the pathway of the spirit. Turning eastwards we find that Kanada, the founder of the Vaisheshika school of philosophy, Varaha-Mihira, the Mathematician, the alchemists of Medieval India and others have pursued the study of external nature and the tradition set up by them has been maintained by learned savants such as Dr. P.C. Ray, Sir J.C. Bose, and Sir C. V. Raman. Pure science is the common property of all mankind; it knows no geographical barriers and will continue to have its votaries among all the nations of the world. Pure mysticism like wise would blossom in all climes and in all ages in the hearts of those fortunate souls which the Supreme Spirit has chosen for its own. In spite of the university which we ascribe to both science and mysticism, we recognize an element of truth in the popular judgement that classified the outlook of the West as material and that of the East as spiritual. The judgement is not that of a scholar who traces the history of science or

mysticism and brings to light the names of the illustrious men and women who by their devoted labours have advanced the realms of knowledge in these two great departments of human endeavour. With that unerring instinct that helps an individual to detect his neighbour's attitude towards life, the common people of both the hemispheres have passed judgement upon themselves and upon their neighbours on the other side of the globe, each party claiming priority of place to that which it considers peculiarly as its own. What are the premises from which the common man has drawn his conclusion? The common man is not expected to be conversant either with science or mysticism. For a matter of that, the demagogue who denounces religion as the cause of national decay and his equally vociferous opponent who condemns the science laboratory calling it the devil's own workshop only exhibit their ignorance of the achievements of scientists and mystics, who are among the greatest, the noblest and the best flowers of the human race. We admit the common man's ignorance, and we also accept the possibility of his judgement being vitiated by his incapacity to differentiate between the true scientist and the pseudo-scientist and the true mystic and the pseudo-mystic, but we credit the common man with that instinct which finds out the general attitude towards life which large numbers of his neighbours happen to possess. He meets his neighbours in the shrine as well as in the beer-shop, in the market-place as well as in the factory, in the seclusion of his home as well as in the public square where the demagogue attempts to guide the country's politics. The daily press and the small talk of his neighbours convey to him valuable information. If our common man belongs to one of the materially successful nations, he becomes imbued with a certain amount of racial pride and ascribes all kinds

of virtues to his own people tracing them all to the nation's special attitude towards life.

\* \* \*

Men who suffer under political domination, unless their souls are dead, have also their own racial pride that emphasizes the cultural achievements of their own past. The course of world history during the past two or three centuries marks out the nations of Eur-America as the possessors of material wealth and the power that it conveys. The tide may turn to-morrow and put power into the hands of the ancient nations of the East and the infant nations of Africa. But to-day as things are, the power-intoxicated nations of the West claim that science has led them to the peak of prosperity. The higher values of life appear to be forgotten. The discovery of America, the rise of industrialism, and the rapid expansion of trade have been the cause of material prosperity as well as of spiritual decline. The disillusionment is bound to come sooner or later. In the meantime, the common man's judgement that the scientific West is material and the mystical East is spiritual holds good. The true scientist is often as 'other-worldly' as the true mystic when he concentrates his whole attention on the search itself. After the nugget of gold has been discovered, both the scientist and the mystic return to the plane of everyday life and with commendable practicality order the common concerns of life. Both are valuable to human society, for man sharing the characteristics of the angel and the brute needs sustenance for his soul as well as for his body.

\* \* \*

Words often exaggerate or minimize the true import of the objects which they signify. The natural sciences have appropriated to themselves the name science. Etymologically the word signifies knowledge. When the ancients spoke of grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy as the seven terrestrial sciences, and civil law, Christian law, practical theology, devotional theology, dogmatic theology, mystic theology, and polemical theology as the seven celestial sciences, they used the word in its original meaning as covering all knowledge. Monks were the founders of the first universities in the East as well as in the West. When secular power took possession of the centres of learning, less attention was paid to the celestial sciences, and the branches of knowledge which were grouped under terrestrial sciences came to be sub-divided under the heads of the humanities and the sciences. The original meaning of the word, however, stuck on to it and thus by a mere philological illusion and the natural indolence of humanity men came to believe that the natural sciences covered the ground of all that was to be known and what lay outside their scope was mere speculation not worthy to be classed as true knowledge. The brilliant achievements of the scientists and the extreme conservatism of the theologian confirmed people in the belief that the scientist was the only man of knowledge and the doctor of religion was at best a nincompoop and at worst a sheer fraud.

\*                      \*                      \*

The political domination of the West and the consequent cultural domination made the young generation that is growing up in India to accept the current coin of the West at its face value. It is quite in the fitness of things to pursue

the study of the natural sciences and apply them to the development of the resources of the country. But it is entirely wrong and unworthy of the traditions of this great country to confine liberal studies to the narrow circle of the natural sciences and to speak as if there was nothing in heaven and earth beyond the limits covered by them. The world turns to the East and particularly to India for the inner light that will dispel the darkness of materialism and help man to see life in its true perspective. Will the descendants of ancient Rishis pay no heed to the appeal of the world? The securing of political emancipation and the solution of our country's economic problems may loom large before our eyes. These are undoubtedly urgent problems. But is this country's soul so dead as to make it turn a deaf ear to the call of a world that has lost its way in the blind alleys of materialism. By parting ways from secular science Christianity appears to have lost its hold on the intelligentsia of the West. The time seems to be most propitious for Eastern thought to step in and effect a harmony between the 'terrestrial' and the 'celestial' sciences and thereby give fresh vigour to both.

\*                      \*                      \*

Let it be remembered that the mystic thought of India has never been mere speculation or mere emotional rapture wholly devoid of intellectual content. Its method was all along something similar to that of modern science. Hypotheses were submitted to rigorous tests. The mind itself constituted the laboratory. A thorough-going discipline of body and mind were considered essential for the practice of Yoga. The details regarding the discipline and the practices have been handed down through a succession of

Gurus and disciples begining from the hoary past. The tradition is still alive. Even as physical energy and material wealth should be accumulated before one thinks of distributing them, so also the treasures of the spirit should be patiently gathered before a person can qualify himself as a teacher of the eternal wisdom. The feverish frenzy that characterizes the modern man is not the way to achieve the higher things of the spirit; it is not even conducive to higher secular learning. The would-be Yogi as well as the would-be scholar should discipline the surging passions of the mind and make it as calm as a deep mountain-lake, the unruffled surface of which mirrors the blue sky, stars and mountain peaks. It is not easy to establish communion with the eternal source of all knowledge and all power; but it can be done and has to be done by the aspirant who desires to realize the supreme values of life. Take the lives of the great prophets. Muhammad the prophet of Islam spent a long time in the mountains far away from human habitations; Jesus retired into the solitude of the desert; Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree with the firm determination to realize the truth or die in the attempt. Even the busy man who lives in a crowded city can have a secluded room set apart for prayer and holy meditation. Think of the amount of time and effort which a person gives to the mastering of a subject like law or one of the several branches of physical science. Should he not give more time and spend more effort in mastering the laws of the spiritual realm and the supreme science of soul-making?

\* \* \*

Secular learning forms the steps of the ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. The prophet of Islam exhor-

ted his followers to cultivate learning and the ancient sages of Hinduism were the teachers of both forms of knowledge, the sacred and the secular. Auguste Comte, the founder of the positivistic school of philosophy, spoke of three stages of thinking or philosophizing, calling them the theological, metaphysical and the positive. Let us not be misled by his terminology. By theological Comte meant primitive religions and such other faiths which call upon their adherents to accept dogmas and doctrines without submitting them to the light of reason. Vedanta, the science of reality, occupying the highest place in the hierarchy of sciences accepts reason and in doing so accepts all the sciences. Its transcending the limitations of science should be interpreted not as rejection but as renunciation after acceptance and fulfilment. The illustration of the ladder may help us once again. The man who has reached the topmost rung of the ladder cannot be said to have rejected or discarded the lower rungs that helped him to ascend the ladder. His action towards the lower rungs may be more correctly described as acceptance, fulfilment and renunciation. Men that seek the higher have to detach themselves from the lower; there is no other way. One cannot serve both God and Mammon. Comte admirably describes the lower rungs of the ladder of knowledge. The simplest science and therefore the one that should be mastered first is the science of number—Arithmetic and Algebra. These constitute the first philosophy, the lowest and therefore the most fundamental rung in the ladder of knowledge. The second is Geometry which presupposes a knowledge of the laws of number. Rational Mechanics is the next higher rung and it presupposes a knowledge of the first two. Astronomy is the next higher rung. Physics is the step above it. Above

it stands Chemistry, for it presupposes a knowledge of Physics. Biology is the next higher rung. Social Physics or Sociology is the highest rung as conceived by Comte. The Upanishadic thinkers and Plato accept all these and proceed a step higher by proclaiming the supreme value of self-knowledge, Atma-Jnana. 'Know thyself' is the dictum that exhorts the aspirant to seek the highest. 'What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?'

\* \* \*

There is a kind of completeness, a consummation in each one of the lower levels. The mathematician would reduce to numbers, forms and formulae all objects, relations and phenomena that he can possibly tackle with the help of his powerful tool. Certain values such as the concept of beauty and phenomena such as the reproduction of living organisms elude his grasp. The physicist too attempts a complete explanation of the riddle of the universe, but stands utterly confused when he finds that the gentle eyes of a comely maid has enough power to upset the gravity of a learned professor. He fails to understand in the light of his chosen science the tremendous power lodged in a pair of eyes. The biologist steps in next and realizes that the activity exhibited by living organisms, transcend the mathematician's abstractions and the various forms of energy formulated by physicists. He discovers the laws of organic life. Like Sir J.C. Bose he may extend the principle of response to stimuli to crystals and metals also. Still the riddle remains unsolved. That species of animal known in his terminology as *homo sapiens* eludes his grasp. Human

behaviour can be studied only in the social group and consequently the sociologist steps into the arena and ably aided by his brother the anthropologist studies the evolution of the social group. The behaviour exhibited by certain individuals known as prophets and seers and the remarkable power exhibited by them in moulding the destinies of individuals and nations are subjects which he cannot honestly tackle. One such prophet appears in the desert regions of Arabia. 'One spark, on a world of what seemed black, unnoticeable sand. But to the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada. Allah-ho-Akbar! There is nothing great but God.' (Swami Rama). Another appears among the prieststridden ignorant men of Judaea. His people disown and crucify Him. But that is not the end of the episode. The power that arose from Him changes the race of whole continents. The ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome tumble down like a house of cards before this tremendous power. Can the sociologist explain a Muhammad and a Christ? Calling their followers imbeciles or fools or calling the prophets impostors or maniacs does not explain anything. It only exhibits the poverty of thought and bad breeding of the so-called scientist.

\* \* \*

The science of psychology and a branch of it known as psycho-analysis are very much in vogue at the present time. The two brilliant men Jung and Freud, with whose names psycho-analysis is associated, studied pathological cases and have formulated certain principles underlying the behaviour of demented persons. It is illogical and unscientific to apply the principles they enunciated for sub-

human and abnormal tendencies to the elucidation of super-human and supernormal behaviour exhibited by the prophets. The jeweller who knows the worth of precious stones does not class them with pebble, in spite of the fact that the physicists may see only the same kind of atoms and molecules in both. There is such a thing as value and it cannot be overlooked with impunity. The poet's song, the maiden's eyes, the painter's masterpiece and the words of the prophets are objects possessing value. Their effects are seen, although they themselves elude all efforts of objective analysis. The scientist attempts to grasp the meaning behind the universe by dissection and analysis. The beauty of a perfect rose with the drop of morning dew shining on it like a precious stone ceases to be, the moment the dissecting knife of the scientist touches its soft petals. We can only tell the scientist, 'Step aside and take off thy shoes, friend ; knowest thou not that thou standest on holy ground?' The poet himself does not know all the power that is lodged in his burning words. The psycho-analyst may call the poet a mad man. What about the power of those undying words that go down to generations yet unborn and effect a transformation in the lives of thousands of human beings ? Would not one like to be that mad poet that gave utterance to those burning words than be the cool-headed scientist that botanized over his mother's grave ? Tastes and ideals differ, of course.

\* \* \*

The mind of the artist and the mystic sees things whole and thereby succeed in grasping the essence and the soul of things. Having grasped the essence of the whole it proceeds to examine the relationship of the parts to that whole

and wonders how beautifully Nature or Nature's God has fashioned a thing of beauty, a thing of joy. The mystical mind has that power known as creative insight. Perception to the mystic is the same thing as creation, reproduction. In life this process becomes *being* as distinguished from *knowing*. The myriad-minded Shakespeare was Othello and also Desdemona. He was Julius Caesar who defied death and also Mark Antony who mourned the loss of a noble friend. When the Prince of Denmark speaks out words of hesitation, we hear the voice of Shakespeare and when Lady Macbeth gives the decisive word urging her husband to action, we catch another phase of that master-mind. Shakespeare created immortal characters because he first became those characters. Something similar seems to be the procedure, if procedure we may call it, of the working of the mystic mind. The great mystic does not merely see truth, he identifies himself with truth, he becomes the truth which he contemplated upon. He does not merely perceive beauty and holiness, but becomes one with them. If we are fortunate to come face to face with a mystic and are sufficiently receptive, we too get some glimpses of the beautiful and the true and effect a transformation in our own lives. The social reformer does good deeds according to his own lights. The mystic becomes goodness itself. His holy contact fires men to perform good deeds. The heavenly compassion of a Buddha still lives in the Buddhist monk whose mission is the relieving of human distress. Water can flow only from a high level to a low level. When we see a disciple's work, do we not see some glimpse of the Master's hand ? If we cannot see something at least, we must consider ourselves altogether blind to the higher realities of life.

\* \* \*

If all human beings stand at the level in which the mere biologist sees them, our fair earth would be nothing better than a bear-garden. The biologist with his pernicious doctrines of 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest' has already converted the erstwhile smiling fields of Europe into something worse than bear-gardens—we are tempted to say 'hell'. There is nothing wrong in studying the partial truths taught by science, but the mischief comes in when these partial truths are held up as the whole truth and the only truth. When the biologist attempts to explain to us the mystery of the birth of a new life by pointing to the parents of the babe, we refer him to the mathematician who might tell him that if two objects coming together can give rise to one or more other objects which possess the same potentiality of reproduction, then the force that acted through the medium of the two original objects must be classed as one possessing infinite potentiality. The reproductive germcell, the biologist himself tells us, is transmitted from parent to child in succession. Tracing backwards we come to the beginning of life. The question as to how life first originated remains unanswered by the biologist. The mystic does not evade the question, he approaches the fountain of all life and finds that love begets life. He gets into communion with the source of all love and brings down to us that potentiality which goes to regenerate a fallen people.

\* \* \*

'Dive deep, brother, the pearl of great price will also be yours,' is the exhortation which the mystic gives to seekers of true wisdom. The power which the mystic holds for transforming men carries conviction to his words: Love, truth, and beauty are not things to be merely heard or

thought over. They have to be integrated into life itself. Life alone can touch life. We do not call a man educated, if his learning is limited to the reading of books. We expect him to have got into touch with a living teacher or teachers. If this is true for secular learning, is it not truer for spiritual wisdom? As we have already shown, it is not a question of merely knowing, but being and becoming. If one half of the thinking world is busy discussing external nature and finding out the relationship between physical objects and their movements, is it not proper that the other half would carry on the important task of making investigations into internal nature and discovering the hidden forces that make the moral immortal, infuse the eternal essence of beauty into evanescent objects and assist thought itself to transcend its own limitations? If one half of the thinking world is using its scientific knowledge to forge engines of destruction and to manufacture poison gases for mutual slaughter, should not the other half utilize its mystical knowledge to tap the sources of more abundant life in the form of religion, altruism, poetry and the fine arts and help to regenerate a fallen world? We need not pause for an answer; for the answer is most obvious.

## 7. PERFECTION THROUGH SELF-CONQUEST

While perusing an ancient Tamil treatise on rhetoric we came across a definition of the term 'conquest'. The author, Tolkappianar, reputed to be the first among the twelve disciples of the sage Agastya, says that conquest is the attaining of excellence naturally and non-violently in the particular vocation to which one is called by virtue of his birth and other circumstances. Proceeding to consider one by one the various social groups, the author says that conquest for the Brahmin consists in attaining excellence in the acquisition and dissemination of learning, in the performance of Vedic sacrifices and in receiving and making gifts. Conquest for kings consists in the promotion of learning, in the performing of Vedic sacrifices such as the Rajasuya and the Aswamedha, in making gifts, protecting the people and punishing wrongdoers. The last-mentioned act may be directed towards unrighteous kings of other countries, in which case it was the duty of the conqueror to afford protection to the people of the conquered territories. Conquest for the sages (Arivars) consists in the disciplining of body and mind, by acquiring a steady posture, by controlling thoughts and the senses, by the practice of concentration and contemplation upon the ideal. Conquest for the men engaged in the performance of austerities consists in overcoming the sensations of heat and cold, hunger and the cravings of the senses. Conquest for the soldier and all other combatants such as those who contest for the first place in oratory, music, dancing, composing

verses *extempore*, various games of skill, cock-fighting, ram-fighting, gambling, etc. consists in attaining excellence in the chosen vocation.

Elsewhere the author speaks of 'aggression' defining it as the annexation of another's territory by aggressive warfare. The commentator cites the case of Hiranyakasipu, the Titan king who achieved world-domination, as an example of 'no-conquest.' For, says he, undue effort was employed and the act was not approved by righteous men ; therefore, it could not be classed as 'conquest.'

\* \* \*

There seems to be a great deal of wisdom in the words of the ancient author, particularly where he makes 'conquest' a grand moral ideal applicable to all. The verdict of righteous men being the deciding voice in determining whether the results of a conflict was a 'conquest' or a mere 'aggression', war itself stands raised to a high moral level. The ancients, of course, had no idea of totalitarian war such as the conflict we are witnessing now. The invading monarch sent criers who gave the warning signal and proclaimed their sovereign's message in terms such as these, found in an ancient poem : 'May cows, and holy Brahmins who are as innocent as the gentle kine, the sick and the infirm, women and also those men who are not blessed with male children to perform their funeral rites, speedily take shelter; for our troops are marching against this city.' To modern ears this might appear to be a bit of ancient folly. But when we give some thought to the matter, we find the good sense behind the proclamation. By affording protection to a section of non-combatants, the invading monarch secured



the same kind of protection to the same section of non-yombatants in his own territories. Both parties instinctively knew that the moral ideal was all-powerful and that it acted unerringly. Self-interest itself demanded the strict observance of the moral law. Ancient moral philosophy and the beautiful legends worked out by the sages to illustrate the way in which the gods inflicted punishment on all who transgressed the law clearly show that the ancients fully grasped the sovereignty of law and the impossibility of breaking it with impunity. Our great living poet, the noble scion of the race of Rishis and the inheritor of the wisdom of our past, emphasized the same truth in a recent pronouncement, wherein he stated, 'By iniquity a man may thrive, may see many a good in life, may conquer his enemies, but iniquity, at last, is sure to overwhelm and destroy him.'

\* \* \*

The ancients who defined wealth as the fullness experienced by the mind when all desires were completely satisfied and who likewise defined poverty as mental distress caused by unsatisfied desires, took a subjective view of victory and defeat. Both victory and defeat were experienced by the mind before they were externally realized. The firm unflinching mind that meets all obstacles cheerfully and overcomes them is the conquering mind. The mind that shrinks from the path of duty and is cowed down by trials and tribulations carries within itself the seeds of defeat and disaster. Viewed in this light we find that the discipline which the true soldier has to undergo is not different from the discipline prescribed for the true monk. The fields of battle may be different but the moral stamina necessary for successfully facing the enemy is identically the same

After the fall of France Marshall Petain unambiguously stated that languid morals were at the root of the defeat sustained by his people. The Romans enervated by luxury and pride of power were no match to the barbarians who came fresh from the lap of mother nature unspoilt by ease and luxury. Life itself is a battle-field and perpetual alertness is demanded of him who would win the victories of peace and achieve success in life. A people get emasculated when they are denied the opportunity of taking their rightful place in the defence of their own hearths and homes. A false sense of security which makes a disarmed people look to someone else for protecting all that is near and dear to them eventually leads them to a mental attitude that shrinks from all effort. Re-education that may culminate in getting over the emasculation may properly begin by disciplining the people to face obstacles cheerfully and be prepared to lose life in order to gain it in a fuller measure. The heart of the true knight and the true warrior is indeed the efflorescence of a cultivated body and mind. There is no reason why every young man should not strive to acquire it. The old warrior Ulysses feels that age and the vicissitudes of fortune are powerless to stifle the will to conquer. We quote Tennyson's inimitable lines in which the old hero says,

Tho' much is taken, much abides ;  
and tho'  
We are not now that strength which  
in old days  
Moved earth and heaven ; that  
which we are, we are ;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but  
strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not  
to yield.

\* \* \*

The Hindu scriptures assign a particular heaven to the heroes who fall in the battle-field. The idea may be extended and the scriptural text may be taken to mean that he alone conquers heaven who unflinchingly fights the good battle here on earth. The Lord clearly says in the Gita that the saving knowledge is not for the weak.

‘Dying thou gainest heaven ; conquering thou enjoyest the earth. Therefore, O son of Kunti, arise, resolved to fight’. This message is addressed not only to the son of Kunti, but also to all sons and daughters of Mother India. Not only the men in the fighting forces but all who are in the battle-field of life should make pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest and death the same and engage themselves in the good fight. The path to freedom is beset with many obstacles, the conquering mind cheerfully faces them. In the verses next to those which we quoted above the Lord asks the aspirant to cultivate one-pointed determination, for that helps the focussing of all forces into a single spear-head. Conquest is achieved by the mind that can grasp essentials and without waste of effort march straight to the goal. We dare say that the mind which can successfully order the smaller concerns of life will, if the opportunity presents itself, solve larger problems equally successfully. The mayor who has the clarity of vision and the necessary foresight and imagination to control the affairs of a city possesses almost the same type of mind as the premier of a great empire. Napoleon planned his campaigns in his by-

hood and when the opportunity presented itself, marched across the Alps and rehearsed them on a grand scale.

\* \* \*

Bhakti-Yoga recommends that every aspirant should cultivate some personal relation with his heart's Deity. Why should one confine oneself to the Brindaban aspect and like the Gopis of yore look upon the Lord as the beloved ? Why should we not cultivate the Kurukshetra aspect and, as Swami Vivekananda pertinently says, look upon Parthasarathi as our own charioteer in the battle-field of life ? He will certainly drive our chariot onwards along the path of conquest. All obstacles will vanish into thin air. ‘Your country wants heroes, be heroes’ Let this be our watchword. Let us try and understand the true import of the teachings of the ancient Rishis. They were strong-boned men who unflinchingly gave their life in fighting for the right. They had a positive conception of virtue ; the hero who faced the difficulties of life and overcame them was considered by the ancients as the truly virtuous man. They sang his praise and treasured his memory. Sri Ramachandra, the great warrior and true knight, is regarded by the Hindus as the manifestation of the Supreme Being. The monk who embraces voluntary poverty demands our respect not because of his poverty which in itself is an ignoble thing, but because of his heroism in rising above the petty desires of the flesh. Gautama Buddha is revered by Hindus not for the fact of his being the founder of a new religion, but because he is the ‘conqueror’ of Mara and his hordes.

There is a nobility which mere birth cannot confer. The silent strong man who stands firm as yonder peak un-

moved by the buffetings of the sweeping winds of disaster and misfortune has indeed perfected his character. The acquiring of such steadiness has not been the work of a passing moment, nor is it the result of much book-learning. The very disasters and misfortunes went to the shaping of that character. Calm and alert, steadfast in the performance of the humblest of duties, that man has built his character bit by bit. Even the passing stranger that meets him on the wayside points to him and says, 'There goes a man,' thus investing him with a title nobler than that of the proudest peer of the realm. At the present time when India is passing through a period of preparation for fuller self-expression, even the men and women who are old in years have the right to feel young in spirit. The time for futile despair and meaningless grumbling has receded into the background. We see before us the breaking of a new dawn. The call of the great patriot-prophet of Modern India falls on our ears like the bugle-call that summons the warrior to the field of action, 'Come, be men ! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march ! Do you love man ? Do you love your country ? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things ; look not back, no, not even if you see the dearest and nearest cry. Look not back, but forward ! India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men—men, mind, and not brutes. The English Government has been the instrument brought over here by the Lord, to break your crystallized civilization, and Madras supplied the first men who helped in giving the English a footing. How many men, unselfish, thorough-going men, is Madras ready now to supply, to struggle unto life and death

'O bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor—and bread to their hungry mouths—enlightenment to the people at large—and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers ?... Calm and silent and steady work, and no newspaper humbug, no name-making, you must always remember.'

\*

\*

\*

In all his pronouncements on education Swami Vivekananda pleaded for a man-making, character-building education. Happy indeed is the man who is born in a good family inheriting high and noble ideals and happier is he who comes in living contact with a teacher who can draw out the best in him. But all men regardless of their birth and education, have in them that inner perfection which they can manifest if they begin to mould their character with sincerity and earnestness. The ethical teachings of all religions exhort man to conquer self. These teachings have often been misunderstood. The extreme stoical virtues of fortitude, endurance and self-abnegation were considered to be the essential attributes of self-conquest. Starving of the flesh and the withdrawing of oneself from the normal pleasures of the world may often lead to an unbalanced state of mind diametrically opposed to that self-control which is necessary for self-conquest. 'A man should uplift himself by his own self, so let him not weaken this self. For this self is the friend of oneself, and this self is the enemy of oneself. The self (the active part of our nature) is the friend of the self, for him who has conquered himself by this self. But to the unconquered self, this self is inimical, (and behaves) like (an external) foe' (Gita VI. 5, 6). What

is advocated is neither the starving nor the destroying of body and mind but bringing them under the sovereignty of the soul, the true self of man. The senses which are the gateways of knowledge should be made keener and quicker. The physical frame should be made lithe and strong.

Of greater importance is the freeing of the mind from passion and prejudice and the opening of it to receive healthy thoughts. Tolerance and equanimity are not gained overnight by mere intellectual affirmation. They have to be assiduously cultivated. The moral virtues of friendliness (Maitri) towards those that are happy, compassion (Karuna) towards those who suffer from misery, gladness (Mudita) on seeing virtuous people and indifference (Upeksha) towards evil-doers, are the four attitudes recommended by treatises on Yoga to persons who are keen on developing the mind on right lines. All the above pre-supposes man to be an active member of a well-ordered society. The ruler of a kingdom as well as a simple day-labourer has the fullest opportunity for practising the above.

\* \* \*

Yoga has been defined as the very dexterity of work. The true craftsman has to conquer sloth and indolence. Even the humblest duties well-performed contribute to the raising of the moral stature of man. He who is keen on mastering his tools cannot afford to neglect the smallest detail. Training of the hands and eyes is also a form of Yoga. In the discipline necessary for the attainment of self-mastery and perfection the means are as important as the end. The occupation which a person takes up as the means of his livelihood should be a righteous one ; it should

contribute to the general welfare. It is also desirable that it should be creative and thereby afford a means of self-expression to the worker. Pottery and shoemaking can be quite as creative as sculpture and the composing of original music. Courseness, untidiness, clumsiness and such other things which offend good taste are the obstacles which should be conquered by the artisan who wants to raise his work to the status of an art.

The ancients who cultivated the fine art of character-making and made a careful study of the science of self-conquest spoke of the threefold restraint of the body, the threefold restraint of the mind and the fourfold restraint of speech. Lust, violence and the predatory instinct, they say, are the evils that soil the body ; greed, anger and delusion are the sins that stain the mind ; falsehood, slander, harsh words and idle gossip are the faults of the tongue. All these evils should be eradicated by the person who aspires for perfection through self-conquest. In all these cases the remedy recommended is the careful cultivation of the opposite virtues. With unceasing alertness man should emancipate himself from evil propensities and exercise the ten restraints. This can be and has to be done by man in his everyday life. Moderation in food and drink, cleanliness, inner purity, tidiness, gentle behaviour and propriety may be cultivated by the person who is desirous of conquering the cravings of the flesh. Polite speech, courteous manners, true humility, love of justice and fair-play, truthfulness, absence of jealousy and the cultivation of learning may eradicate the faults of speech. Meekness, forbearance, sympathy, uni-

versal love, contentment, and the striving for the attainment of true wisdom may remove the evils of the mind. In religious allegories evil propensities and the forces of good are personified and are described as engaged in mortal strife. John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* describes many conflicts of a similar kind. The *Jataka Stories* tell us that the Bodhisattva had to practise the virtues in five hundred births before he attained Buddhahood. The course of discipline is indeed long and strenuous, but every battle won contributes its quota to the final conquest.

\* \* \*

'Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense-enjoyments, false perception, non-attaining of concentration and falling away from the state when obtained' are enumerated as the obstructing distractions. Bodily and mental health go a great way to help a person to get over grief, worry and distress and the thousand ills to which humanity is heir. But he is the hero who can conquer even these limitations. He who knows even a little bit of Vedanta can take his stand upon his true self and smile at all ills. There is nothing so purifying as knowledge. True knowledge energizes. Right discrimination is the motive power for right endeavour. The scriptures may not disclose the gem of truth to the casual reader who tries to scratch on the surface. He has to dig deep. Commentaries may serve the scholar and help him to make learned disquisitions. But these do not satisfy the soul. By deep thinking, sincerity and steady application the earnest student may succeed in grasping a few truths. These would enrich him for life. The illiterate man who has carefully listened to a wise teacher and by steady effort has succeeded in realizing a few truths possesses more wisdom than the

scholar who may carry on his head tons of learning without having undergone an ounce of practice. The acquisition of wisdom is the only way for conquering ignorance. Life in society with its pains and pleasures, ambitions and disappointments, loves and hatreds is the crucible in which the dross of ignorance is burnt off and the gold of true wisdom is made to reveal its lustre. If this world were merely a pleasure garden manly virtues would perish by sheer inaction.

\* \* \*

The old Spartan who whipped the young fellow who exhibited softness or effeminacy and the Victorian schoolmaster who freely used the rod on the back of his delinquent pupil succeeded in fashioning sturdy soldiers and meticulous civil servants. The educator of to-day may not go so far as that, but he may be considered to have failed in his duty if he makes life too soft for his wards. Even as nourishing food and physical exercise are necessary for building up a healthy body, hard work, strenuous effort, trials and disappointments are necessary to build up a high character. Character-building is creative work. Lives of great men may help one to some extent to tread the path to perfection. Blind limitation of mere forms is in itself a very poor thing. How we could utilize the influence of great lives in forming our character may be seen from the following passage culled from Plutarch. Says he, in the *Life of Pericles*; 'The goods of fortune we would possess and would enjoy; those of virtue we long to practise and exercise; we are content to receive the former from others, the latter we wish others to experience from us. Moral good is a practical stimulus; it is no sooner seen, than it inspires an impulse to practise; and influences the mind and character not by a mere imitation we look at, but by the statement of the fact creates a moral purpose that we form.'

## 8. THE RESUSCITATION OF THE KSHATRIYA SPIRIT

It is related in the Mahabharata that Nahusha, an ancestor of the Pandavas, performed one hundred Ashwamedha sacrifices and attained the position of Indra in the Svargaloka. His pride of power brought on him a curse and he fell, much like Milton's Lucifer, taking the body of a huge python. Centuries rolled on. It so happened that the Pandavas in their wanderings came across this python, their ancestor, and were caught in his coils. The contact awakened Nahusha who put a few questions to the wise Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, the king who stood firm in the battle-field, as his name signifies, and who was also the paragon of righteousness (Dharma) and truthfulness (Satya). 'Who is a Brahmin and what is the knowledge that is worth possessing?' asked Nahusha. Dharmaraja replied to the following effect. Birth and position in society do not make a Brahmin. In whomsoever truth, charity, forgiveness, compassion, love and austerity are found, he is a Brahmin, even though he is born of Shudra parents. In whomsoever the opposites of these qualities are found, he is a Shudra, even though he be of Brahmin parentage. That knowledge which is worth possessing is the knowledge of Brahman, the Supreme Reality. After answering certain questions put to him by Dharmaraja, the ancestor is said to have departed to heaven proclaiming aloud: 'Truth, self-control, austerity, charity, non-injury

to all beings, devotion to one's own duties in life—these alone are the means of salvation; neither family nor caste can bring one the highest good in life, O, king !

\* \* \*

The story from the ancient epic has given us an answer to the question; 'Who is a Brahmin?' Let us proceed to consider the allied question: 'Who is a Kshatriya?' The sacred books speak to us so much about the highest ideal and we become so infatuated with words that we do not pause to evaluate our own limited capacity and the necessity to choose a relatively lower ideal which we as individuals can hope to live by. On the other hand, we delude ourselves with the fond belief that an ideal which can be easily comprehended by the intellect can be as easily attained in life. The ethical teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita may be summed up in the statement: 'He who does the duty ordained by his own nature incurs no evil.' The very incident that led to the sacred revelation in the battle-field of Kurukshetra emphasizes the fact that a prince who is yet a prince should not lay aside the sword changing it for the beggar's bowl. The Gita urges the performance of one's own duty (Svadharma) as determined by one's own nature (Svabhava). The concluding chapter of the Gita studies this question in the light of social psychology as expounded in the Sankhya philosophy. The Sankhya is pre-eminently the science of Gunas—the psychological tendencies which determine individual character. The balanced state of serene tranquillity of the mind which illumined by knowledge has risen above action and inaction is known as Sattva. The activity exhibited by the will-aspect of the mind which though illumined by knowledge has not wholly risen above passions and desires is known as Rajas. The

inaction of the mind which is steeped in ignorance and has not risen above passions and desires is known as Tamas. Let us quote a few Shlokas from the eighteenth chapter of the Gita. 'Knowledge, action, and agent are declared in the Sankhya philosophy to be of three kinds only, from the distinction of the Gunas ; hear them also duly' (19). 'That by which the one indestructible substance is seen in all beings inseparate (undifferentiated) in the separated, know that knowledge to be Sattvika' (20). 'But that knowledge which sees in all beings various entities of different kinds as different from one another, know thou that knowledge as Rajasika' (21). 'Whilst that which is confined to one single effect as if it were the whole, without reason, without foundation in truth and trivial, that is declared to be Tamasika' (22). 'An ordained action done without love or hatred by one not desirous of the fruit and free from attachment, is declared to be Sattvika' (23). 'But the action which is performed desiring fruits, or with self-conceit and with much effort, is declared to be Rajasika' (24). 'That action is declared to be Tamasika which is undertaken through delusion, without heed to the consequence, loss (of power and wealth) injury (to others) and (one's own) ability' (25). 'An agent who is free from attachment, non-egotistic, endued with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected in success or failure, is called Sattvika' (26). 'He who is passionate, desirous of the fruits of action, greedy, malignant, impure, easily elated or dejected, such an agent is called Rajasika' (27). 'Unsteady, vulgar, arrogant, dishonest, malicious, indolent, desponding, and procrastinating, such an agent is called Tamasika' (28). 'Of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, as also of Shudras, O scorcher of foes, the duties are distributed according to the Gunas born of their own

nature' (41). 'The control of the mind and the senses, austerity, purity, forbearance, and also uprightness, knowledge, realization, belief in a hereafter—these are the duties of the Brahmins, born of (their own) nature' (42). 'Prowess, boldness, fortitude, dexterity and also not flying from battle, generosity, and sovereignty are the duties of Kshatriyas, born of (their own) nature' (43). 'Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaishyas, born of (their own) nature; and action consisting of service is the duty of the Shudras, born of (their own) nature' (44). The power which these three natures exhibit may be conveniently spoken of as soul-force, will-force, and physical force. The three Gunas may be distributed among the four Varnas in some such way ; pure Sattva for the Brahmins, Sattvika-Rajas for the Kshatriya, Rajasika-Tamas for the Vaishya, and Tamas for the Shudra.

\* \* \*

The sage who attains the knowledge of the Supreme Reality may be said to be Gunatita, one who has transcended the three Gunas. The particular caste to which a person belongs does not always determine his Svadharma as we have seen from the reply which Dharmaraja gave to Nahusha. The Svabhava determines the Svadharma. The sages belong to a class by themselves. Soul-force can be developed by those who are Brahmins by nature, will-force by those who are Kshatriyas by nature, and mere physical force by others. As every average citizen possesses all the three Gunas in varying degrees, it is open to all such to develop all the three forms of power as far as their capacities permit. Education rightly understood is the training of the whole man so as

to enable him to manifest the power within. Brahmins, as teachers of all arts and sciences, are known to have engaged themselves in training young Kshatriya princes in the art of warfare. As the higher includes the lower, we find Brahmins participating in the Mahabharata war. We also find kings such as Janaka becoming the teachers of Brahma-Jnana to Brahmins. That phase of the science of Yoga known as RajaYoga appears to provide *par excellence* the necessary training for one who is destined to enter into kingly duties and become a leader of men.

\*                      \*                      \*

As we have already stated above the sacred books often place before us the highest ideal ; they also speak disparagingly of lower ideals in order to help us to visualize the highest in bolder relief.

Nevertheless when we look upon human society as a whole we recognize the diversity of human tendencies and capacities and the necessity for different paths to suit different individuals. The crystallized system of castes that has come down to us through the ages may continue to guide Hindu society, if the leaders would admit the fact that all castes can produce exceptional individuals who rise above the conventional limitations set to the particular castes in which they were born. The Svabhava of an individual is a better criterion for determining his Svadharma. Mental attitudes and capacities may differentiate individuals more than accidents of birth and shades of colour in the complexion. The person who has no will of his own and lacking in intellectual capacity and initiative, always looks

up to someone else for guidance even in the smaller concerns of life is indeed a Shudra, whatever be the label attached to him by virtue of his parentage. As there is absolutely no need and no sanction of the Shastras to recognize a permanent fifth caste or the innumerable sub-castes which Hindu society has developed in its period of decadence, it is open to any Hindu to claim the religious rites and privileges ascribed to the fourth caste and to perform the duties pertaining to it. The story of the butcher-sage (Dharma-Vyadha) related in the Mahabharata testifies to the fact that perfection can be attained by a person while continuing to perform his Svadharma. The person who possesses initiative and intelligence and not being free from the love of gain engages himself in trade, submitting his will to the guild or union to which he belongs and at the same time contributing to its deliberations is indeed a Vaishya, whatever be the label attached to him by virtue of his parentage. The overwhelming majority of the people belong to these two classes. Persons who have disciplined their body and mind by long and arduous training, and have risen above the desire for individual gain by having identified their interests with those of the nation and country to which they belong and also cheerfully face death to uphold the honour of the nation and the country are indeed Kshatriyas, whatever be the label attached to them by virtue of their parentage. In the Shudra the affective (feeling) aspect of the mind rules the other two, in the Vaishya the cognitive (intellect) aspect of the mind rules the other two, and in the Kshatriya the conative (will) aspect of the mind rules the other two. The Kshatriya is thus the man who has developed a sovereign will, the man of action *par excellence*. He has subdued his lower passions and desires, yet



he is actuated by love of country and a passion for fame and glory. He in whom this last infirmity of noble minds gets erased, he whose mind and senses are fully controlled, and he who practises the ideal of Ahimsa and finds his wealth in non-possession and austerities and his highest treasure in the love of wisdom is indeed a Brahmin, whatever be the label attached to him by virtue of his parentage.

\* \* \*

Now we come to an important practical question. Which of these four ideals of life should be placed before the young men and women who seek entrance into our colleges and universities for higher education and training? The very fact that they are qualified to seek higher learning rules out the lowest ideal. Now the question is, which of the other three should be placed before them? Youth possesses idealism and love of country and it is also in the nature of youth to give a high value to honour and glory. Again, it should be admitted that youth is not mature enough to understand the higher morality of non-resistance preached by great prophets and founders of religions. All these make it evident that the Kshatriya ideal is the one most suitable for youth. Those who cannot reach it will naturally sink down to the Vaishya ideal. On the other hand they that have gone through the discipline of body and mind necessary for the Kshatriya and to whom complete self-control, non-resistance, love to all beings, and an outlook that transcends the limitations of nation and country become practicable will as naturally rise up to the highest ideal of Brahmins. In any country the persons who can take up the Kshatriya ideal are necessarily few but at the same time we should admit that those who can rise up to

the Brahminic ideal are fewer. Hence it follows that the comparatively lower Kshatriya ideal is bound to have a wider appeal than the highest ideal which demands complete self-control and almost complete self-effacement of the individual. Again, the path to the attainment of Sattva lies through Rajas. From inaction one has to proceed to action and then to the serenity that transcends both action and inaction. 'Inactivity should be avoided by all means. Activity always means resistance. Resist all evils, mental and physical; and when you have succeeded in resisting, then will calmness come. It is very easy to say, "Hate nobody, resist not evil," but we know what that kind generally means in practice. When the eyes of society are turned towards us we make a show of non-resistance, but in our hearts it is canker all the time. We feel the utter want of the calm of non-resistance; we feel that it would be better for us to resist.... These ideas of serenity and renunciation have been preached for thousands of years; everybody has heard of them from childhood, and yet we see very few in the world who have really reached that state. I do not know if I have seen twenty persons in my life who are really calm and non-resisting and I have travelled over half the world. Every man should take up his own ideal and endeavour to accomplish it; that is a surer way of progress than taking up other men's ideals, which he can never hope to accomplish' (Swami Vivekananda : *Karma-Yoga*).

\* \* \*

Energy, love of independence, spirit of self-reliance, immovable fortitude, dexterity in action, unity of purpose,

thirst for improvement, alertness, generosity, manly prowess, fearlessness in facing the struggle, and such other noble virtues combined with a trained mind that can face all problems and give prompt decisions go to the making of the Kshatriya ideal. *Plutarch's Lives* depicting the God-like qualities of Greek and Roman heroes has the reputation of being the one book that has exerted the greatest influence on many men of action of subsequent ages in Europe. The great biographer touches the very springs of human action which are the same for the East and the West and consequently the *Lives* has its appeal to the youth of all countries. Moral virtues are realized in action and the lives of heroes have the potentiality of inspiring men to noble deeds. Dexterity in action is not attained by mere repetition. The will to do should be guided by a clear intellect that does not miss a single relevant detail. The training necessary for leadership—for on a closer analysis, the Kshatriya ideal comes to that—should necessarily be many-sided. At the same time economy of effort is necessary and no time should be wasted on trivial accomplishments, however ornamental they might appear to be. The ancient treatises on Artha-Shastra lay down the broad outlines of the courses of studies and training necessary for the complete education of the prince, the leader of men. They should certainly be supplemented by the ripe wisdom of other nations in the East and in the West.

\* \* \*

Lycurgus, the law-giver of Ancient Sparta, elaborated a course of discipline that produced excellent fighting material. The Lacedaemonians (Spartans) perpetually lived in

military camps, the men by themselves and the women separately by themselves and the training began at a very early age. Children who were found physically unfit were thrown away. Fearless and valiant as they were the Spartans made good soldiers. They could never become an imperial race for by their very training the Spartans were unfit to govern freemen. The British have developed traditions of leadership and organization in their great public schools and these served them well in building up a great empire. But traditions often become obstructing forces and dead weights of the past when they refuse to yield to the demands of a changing world. No nation can afford to stand still hoping to solve its problems in the light of its own past. The policy that was successful in the past may not be successful in the future. Coming nearer home, for us in India our glorious past has many lessons to teach but it is good for us to remember that we have to learn most of our lessons from the contemporary world. Our centres of learning should not be content with their curricula of studies, which were formulated seven or eight decades ago with the purpose of producing efficient clerks. The scope should become much more liberalized. British universities are on the whole far behind continental and American universities and we who draw our inspiration from the former lag very much behind in those branches of studies which would help in forming the minds of our future leaders. The present tendency to give increased attention to the physical sciences and technology is the response to a definite demand in that direction. The demand for trained leaders who could thoroughly grasp contemporary world movements and devise practical ways and means for helping the people of this great country to take their rightful place in the comity of nations is also an urgent one.

The love of freedom which is now surging in the hearts of the Indian masses should be made more dynamic. The free man is the disciplined man. He cannot afford to be slack either in his person or in his clothes or in his habitation. These have to be tied up. He should learn to rise above circumstances and also to combine with his fellow citizens to struggle unto death if necessary, against petty tyrannies that attempt to curb his manhood. In times of strife he should 'stand firm' and obeying the words of the leader help in warding off the common danger. The personal message of Mr. Churchill to the British people outlining their 'order and duty' in the event of an invasion shows to what extent discipline ordinarily associated with military training is also necessary for civilians and non-combatants. Minus the skill in arms the ordinary citizen should have the same training as the soldier. Cowardly flight at the approach of danger is the mark of the slave. The free man stands firm and yields not. Goondas and other unruly elements fall back and lose all power of action when they come face to face with a disciplined man of true moral worth. Have we not seen men mastering wild animals by a mere look or a word of command? The power of a strong will can conquer wild and unruly men even as it can conquer wild animals. It is open to all to develop this Kshatriya power. Let us not confuse this with the 'Soul-force' associated with saints and seers who stand far above the common level of humanity. Terms such as 'Ahimsa' and 'Soul-force' have become common currency in connection with the political movement in this country. Let us bear in mind that these are ideals to be realized by men of the highest order, men who have freed themselves from all passions and prejudices and all ideas

of gain and loss by years of severe austerities and arduous discipline. The discipline for the development of a strong will and the true Kshatriya spirit should precede the higher discipline necessary for the realization of the Brahminic ideal of Ahimsa and Soul-force. The man who has not shed all fears has no right to follow the path of Ahimsa which demands of him a courage greater than that of the Kshatriya.

\* \* \*

The Samurai are the Kshatriyas of Japan. They are followers of Zen Buddhism, the main teaching of which is the defiance of death. Zen is a religion of will-power and will-power is what is needed by warriors. Zen philosophy does not engage itself in ratiocinations but seeks to arrive at truth by direct intuition. Our Upanishadic philosophy which originally had its highest exponents among members of the ruling class aimed also at apprehending truth by direct intuition. It fell on its evil days when various schools of philosophers caught hold of it and began writing elaborate commentaries. When the Upanishads and the Gita say, 'He who takes the Self to be the slayer, he who takes It to be the slain, neither of these knows,' they are not talking metaphysics. They place before the disciple a way of life, which he has to follow. The scene lies in the battlefield. The command of the Divine Teacher is scarcely veiled. The disciple is asked to have faith in the Indweller and engage in action. When the will abdicating its sovereignty yields place to weak commiseration and vain forebodings the individual loses faith and becomes a coward. Over-culture of the intellect often leads to effeminacy. In times of crisis when the mind is clouded the saving force is the word of command from the leader. Arjuna's appeal to the Divine

Teacher is, 'Say decidedly what is good for me.' The virile spirit that sets aside conventions and forms and goes direct into the heart of the question secures men's allegiance much more effectively than the weak and vacillating spirit that has no settled convictions of its own.

\* \* \*

Self-control is achieved by discipline. When body and mind are thoroughly disciplined the human will comes to its own. A clumsy body that does not promptly respond to the command from within becomes a drag upon the mind. The ancient Yoga system lays down the performing of Asanas to acquire bodily control. The methods adopted by the drill-sergeant are also necessary. Bodily discipline, although valuable in itself is not everything. The mind should be disciplined to get rid of fears and phobias. The philosophy of life that would establish the sovereignty of the will should be such as would free the mind from the trammels of the flesh. Stoicism in the West and asceticism in the East arose to cultivate the self-denial necessary to make men face danger cheerfully. This is just the discipline necessary for the Kshatriya and the true soldier. In course of time Stoicism and asceticism were carried to excess as ends in themselves and thereby lost their true significance. The virtues we enumerated above as forming the Kshatriya ideal have all to be cultivated in everyday life. Constant meditation on the ideal means that the standard set up by the ideal should serve as a sort of spiritual measuring-rod for all actions performed. The man who is bent upon self-improvement has certainly time for healthy recreation but he hasn't a single moment to be wasted in vain pursuits.

In medieval Europe the institution of chivalry served as the means for the development of the Kshatriya spirit. Purity in thought, word, and deed, unflinching courage honour, readiness to succour the helpless, and such other virtues marked the true knight. We have placed purity first, for that is the source from which all virtues spring. Sir Galahad, the true knight says—

My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure.

We know that he observed strict celibacy, for further on he says—

I never felt the kiss of love,  
Nor maiden's hand in mine.

In 'Lancelot and Elaine' Tennyson also paints for us the false knight who was not true to his vows.

The lady was, of course, the constant source of inspiration for the knight who was ready to give his life to save her from 'shame and thrall'. Here in India also brave Rajput matrons and maidens gave the inspiration to Rajput chivalry. When we consider the question in its various aspects, we find striking resemblances in the institutions of the East and the West.

\* \* \*

What we are pleading for is not the resuscitation of the form of medieval chivalry but the spirit behind it. If we worship the mere form we are apt to become unbalanced like the hero of Cervantes. Aristocracy of birth belongs to medieval ages. But there is another aristocracy that is

esteemed universally and at all times, that is the aristocracy of character. The development of this will bring about the resuscitation of the true Kshatriya spirit. We shall conclude by quoting a passage from the great dramatist, Henrik Ibsen. 'Mere democracy cannot solve the social question. An element of aristocracy must be introduced into our life. Of course I do not mean the aristocracy of birth or of the purse, or even the aristocracy of intellect. I mean the aristocracy of character, of will, of mind. That only can free us. From two groups will this aristocracy I hope for come to our people—from our women and our workmen. The revolution in the social conditions now preparing in Europe, is chiefly concerned with the future of the workers and the women. In this I place all my hopes and expectations; for this I will work all my life and with all my strength.'

## 9. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

Prophets have appeared in all climes and in all ages. Everyone of them held that he came to fulfil and not to destroy. They accepted the heritage that came down to them from the past and added their own quota to it. They also claimed a universality for their message. It was not to be confined to a single country or a single racial unit but was to be the possession of all mankind. Prophets were the exponents of spiritual truths. They were the mediators between heaven and earth. They justified the ways of God to man. In the early epochs of human civilization when mankind had not learned to differentiate between the various ways in which the human mind could approach the eternal problems of existence, the prophet, the poet and the philosopher were classed together. The mental and moral sciences were not differentiated from the objective sciences either. The wise man, the sage, was considered to be the repository of all wisdom. He was also the seer, who had the inner vision to discern things that lay outside the ken of the ordinary man. The highest truths were uttered in the rhythmic language of poetry. Poetry did not confine itself to the singing of earthly love and earthly beauty but rose high and sang of heavenly love and heavenly beauty. Heroes became demigods, and a passing episode which manifested the glory of a nation in war or peace was fashioned by the poets to something of permanent value to inspire

the people ever after to noble deeds and high aspirations. Nations came to possess their Sagas, their Vedas, their sacred scriptures, in short their great national books which contained records of their highest achievements in thought and action.

\* \* \*

Ancient Hebrew, Greek and Sanskrit, Chinese and Arabic, as well as Egyptian and Assyrian and such other languages which have now become obsolete have been acclaimed as sacred languages by their votaries for they contained some of the noblest utterances of humanity. The Great Spirit continues to reveal Itself through living tongues, and many noble thoughts have been uttered and are being uttered through the languages which humanity is using to-day, but 'distance lends enchantment to the view' and humanity reveres the past and fails to see the beauty that ties close at hand. All great poetry is pregnant with thought, no matter in what age or in what country the poet lived. The plays of George Bernard Shaw and Henrik Ibsen reveal to us the hidden springs of human action quite as effectively as the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides, Sophocles and Shakespeare, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. Modern science is indeed more inspiring than the speculations of ancient natural philosophers. We happen to possess a more intimate knowledge of our planet and of the heavenly bodies than was possessed by the astronomers and geographers of ancient times. Traversing backwards in time the moderns have unravelled the records of the past and have a fairly accurate knowledge of the rise and growth of nations and also of the forces that brought about their decay and

dissolution. In spite of all these great advances in the knowledge of the external world and notwithstanding the fact that the lessons of the past lie unravelled before them, the nations of the modern world have not solved their social problems in any way better than the ancients. Class hatreds, racial jealousies, the exploitation of the weak by the strong, religious animosities, and such other anti-social tendencies are as rampant to-day as they were centuries ago. Why have men failed to be drawn closer together? What is it that drives nations to commit acts of aggression against other nations? In short, why is civilization drifting backwards to savagery by bombing itself out of existence? At this critical period of the history of the human race, it might be profitable to give some thought to this matter.

\* \* \*

What is the secret of that corporate life which would possess the potentiality to grow wider and wider until it embraces the whole of the human race? We have chairs in many universities to carry on investigations into problems bearing on human relationships. We have an army of specialists in the sciences relating to human life and human endeavour. There are the behaviorists, the gestalt psychologists, the psycho-analysts, the positivists, the humanists, the Darwinians, the Lamarckians and so forth. Our capacity for specialization has gone on endlessly in other directions also. Men of our age consider it worth while to give a whole life-time to the study of subjects such as the pigmentation on the wings of butterflies, the polychrome pottery of ancient Crete and so on. Our laws have developed to such an extent that in all countries, battalions of lawyers

are ceaselessly engaged in fighting out cases and making fat incomes for themselves. Like the squirrel in the revolving cage the modern man has traversed far in the realms of knowledge, without getting anywhere near the source of all knowledge. He even doubts the very existence of the source. Analysing endlessly he has seen the parts and has failed to see the whole. He has closely studied the phenomena of nature but the meaning behind the phenomena has escaped his attention. He often puts up a fight for the forms and empty conventions of religion but the spirit underlying the form has eluded his grasp. Poor deluded mortal! His greeds and ambitions are centred on the possessions and enjoyments of this world. He laughs at the saint or mystic who speaks of another, paying back the compliment by calling the man of religion, a vain chaser of shadows. Yet, the man of the world, whose valued possessions and enjoyments can only be secured in a harmonious corporate life here in this world, has not found it possible to solve that all-important problem.

\*     \*     \*

The modern man exhibits intellectual imbecility when he breaks into a bellicose mood and sings that blustering music-hall song ending with the refrain: 'We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do.' He seldom realizes the fact that jingoism leads to mutual destruction. The daily paper announces the slaughter of one million Germans and a quarter of a million Russians. The man who reads his paper at the breakfast table gives no further thought to the matter. He may pass judgement on the million and a quarter of dead men by saying, 'It serves them right.' The

present conflict in the West has clearly shown that it is not only nations that are at strife but also groups within the same nation. The Quislings were fully prepared to hand over their countries to the enemy. We have also seen friends becoming enemies and enemies becoming friends. Surely we are a confused people living in an extremely chaotic world. Some of our elderly statesmen say that we have to re-establish a Christian civilization to make the human rave settle down to peace and prosperity. Thereby, of course, they concede the fact that just at present the teachings of Christ have ceased to exert any tangible influence among the warring nations of the West. These statesmen probably think that Christianity will re-establish the old conditions and make the world safe for themselves and their children. 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' is the nursery version of the personality of the founder of Christianity. The men who guided the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era knew what a powerful influence that personality wielded in overturning the established order, by raising the lowly and the oppressed and pushing down the privileged from their pedestals. Let us see briefly how that divine power worked for social justice and equality among men.

\*     \*

The early Christians lived a communistic life. They formed one family. The brotherhood of those who professed the faith was not a distant ideal but an immediate reality. The glorious example of the Master was before them. The new faith admitted the learned and the illiterate, the freeman and the slave, publicans and sinners as well as saints and anchorites, all on a footing of equality. They shared their worldly goods by handing over their possessions to the community and drawing from it their bare maintenance. Such an economic order brought about a social organization

which recognized the equality of all the members. Every individual counted. Within the members who professed the faith there were no class distinctions; neither was there any racial prejudice. The Church sought no temporal power. Caesar's claims and Gods' claims were kept strictly separate. With the accumulation of wealth and the monopolizing of all learning, the Church found itself in conflict with the men who held temporal power. In some cases it compromised, elsewhere it set up a defiance. Schisms resulted and Christendom became divided. The Inquisition, the burning of the heretics at the stake, the persecution of the Roman Catholics by the Protestants and such other anti-social acts followed. Holy wars and Crusades were prompted by the hidden motive of uniting Christendom by turning it against the followers of another faith. Love gave place to hate. From being a universal religion, Christianity became transformed into a narrow dogmatism which subdivided itself into hundreds of warring creeds.

\*     \*     \*

Religious intolerance in the past led to the setting up of religious oligarchies. The Pope of Christendom had the power to make and unmake kings. The breaking a way of whole countries from the Church may be traced to the exercising of this power. In the present day, the only country in which supreme temporal power is combined with supreme spiritual power is Tibet, where the Dalai Lama is the sovereign ruler of the country and also the spiritual father of all his subjects. The supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church holds suzerainty over the narrow confines of the Vatican State. The millions of men who are his spiritual children owe allegiance to the governments of their own countries. All modern democratic countries give freedom of conscience

to all citizens. In doing so they guarantee communal harmony and social peace. No social unit can isolate itself from its neighbours. This necessitates that the citizens of free democratic countries should learn to respect the religious faiths of their neighbours. The individual citizen has the right to practise his religion in his own way provided he does not wound the susceptibilities of his fellow citizens. Men who grow up in democratic traditions come to realize that justice which is implanted in all human hearts is a better basis for social life than narrow religious doctrines and dogmas. Citizens of a democratic State have closer ties than men who are engaged in a co-operative commercial enterprise. The latter can break off their connection at will, whereas the former cannot. Hence arises the necessity for mutual understanding. All class-war is undemocratic. There should be true fellow feeling among all the citizens. Minorities should be treated as part of the people. They should also behave as such and should not ask for, nor be given privileges which mark them off from their fellow citizens. The solidarity of the State can be maintained by dispensing justice and not by conferring favours. In all democratic States education and other nation-building activities are the concern of all the citizens. Civic and national consciousness can only be developed by all citizens meeting upon a common platform, rising above racial, linguistic and religious differences. Religious toleration is a necessary concomitant of the development of democracy.

\*     \*     \*

The rich, who as a rule send their children to expensive schools, often grudge paying the taxes meant for the education of the poor man's children. They fail to see the inter-dependence of the various social units until a war



comes and the truth is brought home to them that the poor man's son has to march on to the battle-field for protecting the interests of the nation as a whole. The measures taken for ensuring public health are directly beneficial to all classes of citizens ; the incidence of taxation is, of course, heavier on the rich who own more houses and other taxable property. Charity, either organized or individual, is another means by which social justice is done to the less fortunate by those who possess more of the world's goods. Religion is a great equalizer. By enjoining charity and neighbourly love it makes the rich give away with good grace and the poor accept the gift with thankfulness. Where the religious spirit pervades violent revolutions in the social order do not take place. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself,' gives the solution to all our social and religious problems. To practise the virtue of neighbourliness it is not necessary to reconstitute society on a class-less, caste-less basis; nor is there much advantage in introducing legislation to break down all existing barriers. What is wanted is a little widening of the heart. The good Samaritan, in the parable related in the Bible, had compassion on the wayfarer. He dressed his wounds, carried him to an inn and provided for his wants. Such fellow feeling rising above caste and creed constitutes good neighbourliness.

\* \* \*

The following prayer for all creeds appeared in the *Message of the East* about fourteen years ago.

'Almighty God—We who are of different races and faiths desire to realize together Thy Fatherhood and our

kinship with each other. In our differences we find that many of our hopes, our fears, our aspirations are one. Thou art our Father and we are Thy children.

'We are heartily sorry for the mists of fear, envy, hatred, suspicion and greed which have blinded our eyes and thrust us asunder. May the light that comes from Thee scatter these mists, cleanse our hearts, and give health to our spirits. Teach us to put away all bitterness and to walk together in the ways of human friendship.

'Open our eyes to see that as nature abounds in variation, so differences in human beings make for richness in the common life. May we give honour where honour is due, regardless of race, colour or circumstance. Deepen our respect for unlikeness and our eagerness to understand one another. Through the deeper unities of the spirit in sympathy, insight and co-operation, may we transcend our differences. May we gladly share with each other our best gift and together seek for a human world fashioned in good under Thy guidance. Amen.'

This prayer was signed by three ministers of religions, belonging to the Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Methodist Episcopal persuasions. It is worth noting that differences in human beings make for richness in the common life and that we transcend our differences through the deeper unities of the spirit in sympathy, insight and co-operation.

\* \* \*

The immanence of God in all creation is accepted by most of the great religions. The Vedantist holds that the Atman is the Indweller in the bodies of all; the Christian speaks of the Church as the body of Christ who dwells in

the inmost hearts of all the members; the Sufis among the Muslims interpret the unity of God by saying that He alone has being and the whole of creation is His manifestation. The higher thoughts of all great religions converge to the same point. Knowing the higher truths, the intellectually emancipated man frees himself from all prejudices. Children and the pure in heart easily conceive of God as the common Father of all mankind and thereby rise above all narrowness. Men who possess neither intellectual emancipation nor purity of heart create discord by perceiving differences. We should learn to love and revere all great prophets and all disinterested workers who are builders of unity. The realization of the unity of mankind may come to us through philosophical knowledge, selfless service and friendliness and compassion that transcends the barriers of caste and creed. The fine arts and the sciences should become the hand-maidens of religion. Comte believed that it will be possible to harmonize the idealism of the Greeks, the religious enthusiasm of the Middle Ages and the luxuriant naturalism of the Renaissance. The time is ripe for a wider synthesis. When the Caesars ruled in Rome, the West had scarcely any idea of the contemporary civilizations that flourished in the East. The East was also ignorant of the West. Such isolation was possible in the past. Now owing to the development of rapid means of communication, all parts of the world have been brought closer together. The East must understand Western culture and the West likewise should learn to evaluate the cultural treasures of the East. The mutual understanding can only be secured by sympathy, insight and co-operation. The prophets of all nations exhort us to rise above the entanglements of matter and realize our spiritual unity in God.

Life is a whole. The poet and the mystic who view it as a whole, grasp the meaning of life. They proceed from lesser truths to greater truths by a method of synthesis. The man of intellect attempts to study the world around him by analysing it into parts; he loses sight of the whole and thereby misses to comprehend the meaning of the whole. Is the universe a cosmos in which the parts have their significance only in relation to the whole or is it a chaos of conflicting forces that possess no definite aim or purpose? The perception of the fact that God pervades the universe and that the whole of creation is moving towards one ultimate goal, invests individual life with a new meaning and a new significance. By an unconscious herd instinct, even the ignorant man develops a loyalty to the group to which he belongs. That very loyalty impels him to be inimical to other groups. The tribal god is a jealous god, for the infant societies which conceived the tribal god did not possess the vision of humanity as a whole. The prophets came and preached the brotherhood of man and the glorious destiny that is awaiting the race as a whole. The little tribal vanities which men developed in an earlier stage did not permit them to view the whole. The Aryan and the Dasyu, the Jew and the Gentile, the Muslim and the Kafir, the Christian and the Heathen are the vestiges of old tribal vanities. These vanities based upon blind prejudice hide the face of truth and make men forget the universal teachings of the prophets. Hinduism preaches the divinity of man, perhaps much more emphatically than any other religion does. But, what do we see in practice? We see the votaries of this noble religion stultifying themselves before the public opinion

of the world by branding one group of the adherents of their faith as untouchables. Can the tyranny of priestcraft go further? Renascent Hinduism should take immediate steps to remove the curse of untouchability and do social justice to all adherents. It should also be tolerant to all religions and respect all religions not merely in theory but in practice.

## 10. CIVILIZATIONS, NEW AND OLD

Recently some prominent intellectuals of Bengal issued a manifesto calling for India's sympathy with Soviet Russia in this critical juncture of her history. The arguments adduced in the manifesto are mainly based upon the information supplied by the book on *Soviet Communism—a New Civilization* by Sydney and Beatrice Webb. The signatories have shown how within a little over two decades and in the face of stupendous odds, the common people of Russia have brought into being a new order that has banished poverty and unemployment, providing equal opportunity for all to acquire knowledge and apply it for the promotion of human welfare. Quoting the Webbs the manifesto says : 'The Soviet Union has set itself diligently, not merely to treat the "lesser breeds without the law" with equality, but recognizing that their backwardness was due to centuries of poverty, repression and enslavement has made it a leading feature of its policy to spend out of its common funds considerably more per head on its backward races, than on the superior ones, in education and social improvement, in industrial investments and agricultural reforms.' Thus on the testimony of two leading social investigators we learn that the economic and social life of Soviet Russia has been planned for the welfare of all and particularly of that section, the claims of which has hitherto been neglected. In the days of the Tsarist regime, the Church and the State appear to have joined hands in keeping the people

in a condition of poverty, ignorance and enslavement, and it is quite comprehensible why there is a reaction against the old order and all that it stood for. The revolt against old theological conceptions need not necessarily be a casting aside of the higher values of life. For we are told that the love of knowledge of the Soviet people has considerably increased and that Shakespeare and Einstein are revered more in Russia than in the lands of their birth. Further we are told that Soviet book-production at the end of the first Five-Year Plan was greater than that of England, Germany, and Japan taken together. In the realm of international morality recent events have shown that the Soviet Union has strictly respected the plighted word and has proved herself to be a nation whose word can be trusted. The new civilization has so far justified its claim for our consideration.

\* \* \*

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York, extending their blessings to the alliance recently concluded between the British and the Russian people, have unequivocally declared that the people of Britain should give unstinted support to Soviet Russia and help her to come out victorious from the titanic struggle in which she is engaged. Says the Primate, 'We must wish every success to the valiant Russian armies and people in their struggle and be ready to give them every possible assistance. It may seem strange to combine an alliance with Bolshevik Russia and the claim that we are contending for a Christian civilization, but such misgivings are really misplaced, for the first essential of the struggle is to overthrow the evil embodied in the rulers of Germany. A Nazi

victory would destroy any tolerable form of Government and the Soviets are contending for the principles of national freedom and independence.' His Grace the Archbishop of York says, 'We ought to have no misgivings as we unite with her (Russia) to resist the common enemy. And we may well hope that her union with us may lead to a withering and at least to a repudiation of her official godlessness.' Eminent leaders of a Christian civilization have weighed the merits of the ideologies of Communism and Fascism and have pronounced their verdict. Fascism stands for tyranny and the enslavement of nations, whereas Soviet Communism is contending for upholding the principle of national freedom and independence. Consequently it behoves Christendom to join hands with Communism to put down Fascism. Even before high church dignitaries and prominent intellectuals pronounced their learned opinion on this matter the man in the street has sided Soviet Russia against Nazi Germany. In a street brawl when a bully meets with his equal the onlookers are happy. Men desire to see justice prevail. They range themselves against all forms of tyranny. This fundamental human instinct which civilization fosters and develops explains the universal dislike exhibited towards Fascist rule. Why then have civilized countries submitted themselves to the rule of the dictators? Germany is the birth-place of Protestant Christianity and Italy has been the seat of government of Roman Catholicism ever since the time of the Apostles. The submission of these two countries to a form of government that is denounced as unchristian shows that economic and political causes may bring about changes in men's attitude towards the spiritual ideals that sustain civilization. But the ideals themselves are eternal and unchanging. The codes governing

various nations may differ, even within the same nation they may differ from time to time. But law, conceived as the ideal that sustains human society, belongs to the realm of eternal values.

\* \* \*

We in India speak of Manu as our first law-giver. Probably Hammurabi of Babylon who lived four thousand years ago preceded our Manu. Lycurgus was the law-giver of Sparta and Numa Pompilius is reputed to be the law-giver of Rome. The making of constitutions and laws is such a specialized business that it requires the services of specialists. This fact must have made John Austin, the English jurist, to propound the theory that all laws properly so called are commands addressed by a human superior to a human inferior. Later authorities on Jurisprudence have shown that Austin's theory is not correct. Laws are derived from immemorial usage and law-givers only codify them. These usages are again based upon fundamental human instincts as modified by environment. The spark of divinity that resides in the human heart is the final sanction for right and wrong. Probably civilization has run its course for ten thousand years and during this period the human race has been making experiments in corporate living by a system of trial and error. Leaders and law-givers may be considered to be the best embodiments of the corporate will of the communities in which they appear. A prophet may break the established conventions of the society that gives him birth, but the fact that thousands are ready to receive his message shows that deep down in the hearts of the people the conviction regarding the new message had already taken shape even before the advent of the prophet.

\* \* \*

We speak of a Hindu civilization, an Islamic civilization, a Christian civilization, an old civilization, a new civilization and so on, in order to draw attention to some particular ideals which are emphasized by some civilizations more than by others. Those ideals need not by any means be original or unique to the said civilization. There is nothing new under the sun. Communism was in the world millenniums before Lenin and Stalin thought of it. The same may be said of Fascism and all other *isms*. A few decades ago Western historians considered Greece as the very fountain-head of civilization. The Athens of Pericles with its beautiful statues, its immortal poetry and its bold philosophical speculations loomed large in the historian's horizon. The Hebrew civilization which also deeply influenced the West through Christianity was stern and austere with its monotheism and ethical rigidity. It had no gods and goddesses to give the necessary poetic touch to human behaviour. The Hebrew race suffered successive enslavements under Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Persia. In the midst of all trials and tribulations the race clung on to its tribal organizations, its caste regulations, its code of morals and its monotheistic religion. The heritage which it bequeathed to posterity and which has been broadcast over the earth by Christian propaganda contains much that is valuable for humanity. Greek and Hebrew cultures had a profound influence in shaping Western civilization. The Arab carried the torch of learning to the West and Greek and Roman culture exerted a further measure of influence through the channels of the new learning. But the European mind was not a mere *tabula rasa* in which Hellenism and Hebraism left the impress of their respective messages. The Norse legends and Icelandic Sagas show that the races of North

Europe had a culture of their own at the time of their conversion to Christianity. Thus we come to the conclusion that the Christian civilization of the West has been moulded into its present shape by many and varied influences. The original racial cultures formed the background, on which Latin Christianity as influenced by Hellenism and Hebraism painted the picture. But these two cultures which influenced Western thought have themselves been influenced by earlier civilizations. The labours of patient scholars during the last few decades have carried the story of civilization further back almost to its origin. Much work yet remains to be done in deciphering the records unearthed in the Sindh valley and Central Asia. The beginnings of Aryan culture and that of the Mongolian race are yet shrouded in mystery. The origin of Dravidian culture and its influence upon subsequent cultures has also not been worked out. Notwithstanding these, we of the present generation have the opportunity of evaluating the past with greater precision than those who preceded us. Such an opportunity, if properly utilized, is bound to make us more tolerant towards cultures other than our own.

\* \* \*

Various nations such as the Sumerians, the Cretans, the Hittites, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, as well as the Phoenicians and the Egyptians have directly and indirectly contributed to the making of Hellenism and Hebraism. Contemporary with Sumerian civilization and connected with it, there existed a civilization in India, the remains of which have been unearthed in the Sindh valley. It is said to have connections with Dravidian culture which had also

a living contact with the civilization of Egypt. The Mayan civilization that arose in Mexico, Peru and Yucatan is said to have connections with the civilizations of the Old World. The story goes further back to prehistoric times to neolithic cultures from which the later cultures were derived. Surveying thus, we see that the mutual influence of cultures is so great that we can easily conceive of civilization as the common united venture of the human race as a whole. The art creations of all nations, their noblest thoughts, scientific inventions, philosophical speculations and all other spiritual effects are the common property of all mankind. The common elements we find among various cultures may be due to borrowing or spontaneous development under similar circumstances. The recrudescence of forgotten elements shows that values once secured are seldom lost. Hitler in adopting the Aryan Swastika and invoking the ancient gods of the Germanic race is probably trying to erase out from the lives of his people the Hebrew, Greek and Christian influences. That is an impossible task even for a dictator. The official godlessness of the Soviet Union is not different from the godlessness of France after the revolution. It may only be a passing phase. Religious cultures such as Buddhism positing no God have, nevertheless, profoundly influenced the course of civilization. What civilization is, how it arises, how it functions and such other questions may now be taken up for consideration.

\* \* \*

Civilization is that concerted activity which men put forward to acquire the security and freedom necessary for achieving the higher values of life. These higher values are beauty, truth and goodness which in their social aspect

express themselves as art, learning and conduct and in their supersocial aspect as the Supreme Reality. In order to persist, civilization has to develop the necessary power to defend itself against external aggression and internal tyranny. This power may be of two kinds; it may be the spiritual power that wins over the adversary and assimilates him in the body politic or it may be the material power that crushes and destroys the adversary. Both forms of power have their common origin in the faith that men possess in the ideals for which their civilization stands. That faith is necessarily spiritual in so far as it makes man to transcend the flesh and willingly lay down his life for the preservation of the ideals. When the faith in the ideals is intense it develops the fanatic zeal necessary for conquest and expansion; when it is moderate it is satisfied in defending its own; when it is weak it loses ground and succumbs to the onslaught of the adversary. When warm blood courses in the veins of men and they are truly enthusiastic to preserve their national ideals they promulgate laws to put down tyranny, whether this tyranny exists in the person of a king or in an oligarchic group that had risen to power by fair means or foul. If tyranny overrides the laws, men resort to direct action. The difference between effete and living civilizations, is determined by the extent to which the faith in its ideals inspires a nation to action. Excessive wealth corrupts the national soul, makes men cynical and often gives them a false sense of security, based upon mere military strength. When the ideal is lost sight of, nations die. There may be battalions of soldiers and heaps of guns and heavy armaments, but if the men who constitute the civil authority lack the spiritual petrol, that supplies the true driving power, soldiers and gun

will be of no use. The fall of the Roman Empire of ancient times and the collapse of the French nation in contemporary history bear out the fact that battalions and armaments are worthless when the civil authority lacks the driving power. Men lay down their lives for what they consider worth defending.

\* \* \*

In order to acquire the security and freedom necessary for achieving the higher values of life any civilization worth the name takes effective steps to remove poverty, ignorance, injustice and tyranny. The citizens should have sufficient food to nourish their body and sufficient knowledge to understand the functions of civil government. Justice which is the bedrock of all corporate life should be upheld and the corporate will should be made sufficiently strong to check all forms of tyranny. After achieving these, the true function of civilization begins and that is the fostering of the higher values of life. First in order of development comes art which exerts a refining influence upon body, mind and soul. Civilization is certainly connected with cities. We gaze with wonder at the ruins of ancient cities which stand revealed to us by the labours of archaeologists. Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, Ur of the Chaldees, Susa and Nineveh, Gizeh and Luxor, Athens and Persepolis, Anghor Vat and Borobudur, Ajanta and Sigiriya, Amaravati and Isipatana—what dazzling visions of past glory do these names conjure up before the mind's eye! In dwelling houses and clothing, in household utensils and tools of everyday use, men expressed beauty with the same zeal that they manifested in the building of temples and royal palaces. The beautiful statues of Athens had for their models the finely-proportioned bodies of the Athenians. This fact

shows that a truly artistic people regarded physical culture not as a means of piling up muscles but of acquiring well-proportioned bodies. Song and dance and festivals were also conceived as means of expressing the beautiful.

\*                      \*                      \*

‘Voluntary allegiance to the everlasting laws of beauty’ brings joy to the human heart and raises life above the sordidness of mere materialism. It also provides passing glimpses of the spiritual realm, the true home of the soul. Beauty leads to truth. The poet has said that beauty is truth and truth is beauty. There is the truth achieved by higher wisdom and there is also the truth acquired by learning. By patient endeavour man takes possession of the lamp of learning. This reveals to him a wider world. He sees behind him the path which the race had travelled. The experience which past generations gathered slowly and painfully over a long period extending to thousands of years becomes his own in a marvellously short time. The magic lamp of learning brings before him true visions of untravelled countries, supplies him with accurate information regarding the customs and manners of fellow beings living in those distant regions, and lays bare before him their inmost thoughts, hopes and aspirations. It also helps him to peep into the future and by associating cause with effect prognosticate the course of future events. Learning brings in many other blessings and the civilized man takes steps to initiate the young into the mysteries of learning and entrust to them the heritage of the past. Along with the development of art and learning man learns the necessity of discipline and restraint to fill his place worthily. The significance of laws and morals and the need for carefully obeying their dictates in his dealings within his own comm-

unity and also in his relationship with other communities. become apparent to him. Man develops a code of ethics. Although these three phases of civilization are interconnected it is possible to speak of civilizations as predominantly artistic, intellectual and ethical.

Art, learning and morals are indeed worthy achievements. But man’s vision soars higher. He realizes the transitory nature of life on earth. Empires rise and fall. The spider spins its web over the ruins of the palaces of tyrants. The wise men of the race get glimpses of a life beyond. They realize the existence of a Supreme Reality and the possibility of communing with It. ‘Lead us from the unreal to the real, lead us from darkness to light, lead us from death to immortality,’ becomes their prayer. They develop ways and means for obtaining a vision of the Shining One, the source of all beauty, truth and goodness and also of establishing communion with that source. They address that Supreme Reality as father, mother, unfailing friend, the eternal law, the highest truth, the beloved and so forth, choosing the appellation in accordance with their particular method of approach. One among these wise men, a Vedic seer, who had the vision of God, proclaimed the good tidings in a trumpet voice saying : ‘Hear, ye children of Immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again’ With this proclamation religion was born. All art, learning and morals, all worship and philosophizing that went before were only a preparation for this happy consummation.

\*                      \*                      \*



Spiritual realization is the highest value of civilization. The civilization that stresses this supreme end is the highest type of civilization. A preeminently ethical civilization takes the second place. A civilization that has reached only up to the intellectual level and develops pure science considering it to be the highest possible adventure for the human spirit takes the third place. As we have stated above art is the earliest civilizing influence, by itself it ranks below the other values mentioned above. But art soars higher, reveals itself in human conduct and also becomes a means of spiritual realization; thereby its influence permeates through all stages of civilization. Those societies that do not stress these higher values but confine themselves only to money-making and strengthening their defences against external aggression are only candidates for civilization. In such societies men's native predatory instincts would stand revealed under the trappings of wealth and power. He that has risen above greed and covetousness has no necessity to erect a fence to guard his property from the possible depredations of his neighbour. He that has become truly non-violent need fear no violence at the hands of his neighbour. It is given to a few men to reach that height of non-violence and non-attachment to possessions. Society as it exists to-day can only survive by strengthening its defences against military aggression. A greater ethical development and more wide-spread spiritual realization may effect a true advance in civilization. China and India developed these chatacretistics at a very early period. But pressure of circumstances forces even these nations to adopt a lower ideal. Compared to cosmic time the period during which the human race has occupied this planet is very short. Compared with that period the emergence of civilization

is a very recent event. A great contemporary thinker has declared, 'Education is yet to be in the world, civilization has begun nowhere yet' (SWAMI VIVEKANANDA).

\* \* \*

Let us direct our attention to the writings and recorded utterances of Swami Vivekananda and gather some of his thoughts concerning the basis of civilization. 'True civilization should mean the power of taking the animal man out of his sense life by giving him visions and tastes of planes much higher and not external comforts' (Complete Works IV-230). 'The highest type of civilization is found in him who has learnt to conquer self' (C. W. IV-196). 'The more advanced a society or nation in spirituality the more is that society or nation civilized. No nation can be said to have become civilized only because it has succeeded in increasing the comforts of material life by bringing into use lots of machinery and things of that sort' (C. W. VI-417). 'The European civilization may be likened to a piece of cloth, of which these are the materials : its loom is a vast temperate hilly country on the seashore ; its cotton a strong warlike mongrel race formed by the intermixture of various races; its warp is warfare in defence of one's self and one's religion. The one who wields the sword is great, and one who cannot, gives up his independence and lives under the protection of some warrior's sword; Its woof is commerce. The means to this civilization is the sword; its auxiliary—courage and strength; its aim—enjoyment here and hereafter' (C.W.V.-435).

\* \* \*

Contemporary events clearly demonstrate to us the fact that Christianity has not succeeded in civilizing the

Goths and the Vandals. They are out again laying hands on works of art and centres of learning. Beautiful buildings which were erected by the patient toil of many artistic hands are ruthlessly swept away by the destruction that rains from the air. A clergy that has strayed far away from Christ by worshipping the tinsels of power, indulging in the pleasures of the table and displaying its pomp in brocaded raiment has lost the capacity to check the excesses committed in its presence and bring men back to God and to wisdom. Russia, a land of simple innocent peasants who were noted for their piety, the country of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, has broken itself away from the Church of Christ. Mr. Bernard Shaw, after returning from a visit to Russia, is reported to have said that the whole anti-religious movement in Russia was an attack, not upon religion, but on priestcraft. We can understand the spirit of a people rebelling against the tyranny of the ruling classes and the priests. Very little news reach us from that country. We remember to have read in an American paper that a famine was raging in the country and the priests refused to part with their gold and valuables to relieve the suffering of the people and the civil authorities were forced to resort to sequestration. History tells us that such measures had been adopted in the past in other countries also, for less important reasons. It would be so good if ecclesiastical authorities of all countries refrain from denouncing the people and attempt to reform themselves. Religion becomes a civilizing power when it takes its stand upon spiritual realities. Then it is invincible. When it loses its spiritual power and identifies itself with vested interests, its day of reckoning may be said to be close at hand.

The 'new' ideologies such as Fascism and Communism attempt a totalitarian control of the citizen's life promising to give him a new culture, a new religion and a new way of life. Statesmen and politicians may organize churches but cannot found religions, nor can they give new life to an old cult. This function is left to prophets and seers who have established a communion with the Deity. Priests who order their lives in narrow conventional grooves and are intolerant to receive the spiritual treasures of faiths other than their own cannot also bring new life to their own religion. If civilization in the West is to survive the present welter of blood and confusion, the smouldering embers of spiritual life should be fanned into a flame which would consume the dross of sensual enjoyments and the mad rush for power. The West may borrow from the age-old civilizations of the East a little serenity, a little detachment and a true yearning for the higher values of life. Saints, poets and philosophers of all countries form the vanguard of civilization. The values upheld by them in their lives and utterances are the values of a civilized life. Beauty, truth and goodness are much more real than gold and silver. The animals live in their senses for they know nothing further. It is open to man to rise higher and higher, to establish peace within, to love and to be loved, to do creative work that will bring unalloyed joy to his fellow beings, to comfort the distressed, to bring succour to the helpless, to be a blessing to himself and to others and above all to realize God and share in eternal life. It is the function of civilization to help man to achieve these true values of life.

## 11. RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

The search for the supreme truth begun by the Vedic seers and carried on by the Upanishadic sages and the great Badarayana found its fulfilment in the Advaita philosophy of Shankara. He is, therefore, the last great figure in the religious thought of Ancient India. Ramanuja (1027—1137 A. D.) begins a new epoch. Scholars outside Tamil land may not be fully aware of the great debt which Ramanuja owes to Dravidian thought. He is the inheritor of the spiritual treasures garnered by Satakopa, the great Vaishnava mystic. Satakopa, who is lovingly referred to as Nammalvar, 'our saint' by Southern Vaishnavas, enunciated sublime truths which came to him as a result of his profound spiritual realizations. The race which produced many lovers of God has given the world in Satakopa, not only an ardent devotee of God but also a deep thinker and an exquisite poet. His *Tiruvaimozhi* reaches the high-water mark of Tamil poetry. *Vaimozhi* derived from *Vaimai*, 'truth' means 'the word of truth,' of absolute revealed truth, as different from relative truth reached by mere ratiocination. In classical Tamil this word was used to denote the Vedas. *Tiru* means 'sacred', 'auspicious'. *Tiruvaimozhi*, the 'Sacred Book of Revealed Truths' is placed by Southern Vaishnavism on the same high pedestal as the Vedas. Ramanuja himself has given directions for its regular study and chanting in temples and assemblies. He was fully steeped in its wisdom. Vedanta Deshika, the Vaishnava

philosopher of the thirteenth — fourteenth centuries called *Tiruvaimozhi* the *Dramidopanishad*. Nammalvar composed also three other works: the *Thiruviruttam*, the *Tiruvasiriyam* and the *Periya Tiruvandadi*.

\* \* \*

Madhurakavi, counted as one of the Alvars, canonized saints of Southern Vaishnavism, was making a pilgrimage in the North. Standing on the banks of the Ganges, he saw a great light in the southerly direction. Following it, even as the Magi followed the star that appeared in the East, he arrived at a southern city, ever after known as Alvar-tiru-nagari. There, under the spreading branches of a tamarind tree, he saw a boy of about sixteen years of age seated in profound meditation. When he came to normal consciousness, the boy-saint answered the questions of the elderly scholar, who forthwith became his disciple. Satakopa was a Vellala by caste. The Vellala caste of the South has probably the same status as the Kayastha caste of Bengal. Satakopa's father was Karimaran, the chieftain of Thirukkurukur, which as we have already mentioned is now known as Alwar-tiru-nagari. His mother was Udaiya-Nankai. Satakopa, like prince Siddhartha of the Shakya clan, was born on the full-moon day of the month of Vaishakha. The year of his birth is not yet ascertained. It probably lies in the latter part of the fifth century A. D. The works of Nammalvar were recorded by Madhurakavi and were popularized by Natha Muni (824-924 A. D.) Natha Muni was an erudite scholar in the Vedas, Smritis, and other scriptures and a Yogin. It was by chance that he heard the chanting of some beautiful psalms from *Tiruvaimozhi*.

It appeared to him that to contemplate God with the aid of such sweet psalms was preferable to the realization of God by the path of Yoga. Modern scholars, who look for the origin of Indian theism and of the path of love and devotion to alien sources such as Islam and Christianity would, if they listen to the songs of *Tiruvaimozhi*, the *Devara* hymns and the rhapsodies of *Tiruvachakam*, come to the conclusion that Bhakti originated in Tamil-land.

\* \* \*

The four great mystics of Southern Shaivism, Tiru Navukkarasar (574—655 A. D.), a contemporary of the Prophet of Islam, Tiru-Jnana-Sambhandar (639—655 A.D.), the child-saint of Shiyali, Sundara-Murti (807-825 A.D.), the friend and preceptor of Cheraman Perumal, the Kerala King from whom the Kollam era of Malabar begins, and Manikka-Vachaka, the prime minister who turned ascetic and who probably lived in the tenth century A.D., have left behind soul-stirring poems which led to a spiritual and national renaissance that rose to its greatest height in the founding of the Chola Empire of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries and the building of magnificent temples that reveal the aesthetic aspect of Tamilian culture. The history of Tamil-land has a blank space from the third to the sixth centuries A. D. The Pallavas ruled in Kanchi from the middle of the third century and the Imperial Guptas were ruling in Northern India, but the Chera, the Chola and the Pandyan dynasties of Tamil-land were temporarily eclipsed. The resuscitation of the ancient dynasties may be said to begin in the middle of the seventh century, more precisely in 641 A. D. when the Pallava King Narasimhavarman defeated the Chalukya King Pulikesi II in the battle of Vatabhi. It

is known that Chalukya Pulikesi II successfully opposed King Harsha of Kanauj, an account of whom is given by the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang. The general who commanded the Pallava forces against Pulikesi II was Siruthondar, who was later canonized as a saint of southern Shaivism. This Siruthondar was a friend of the child-saint of Shiyali and drew his inspiration from him. The atthesitic doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism, which in their decadent period were stifling the thought-currents of the country and leading men to pessimism and inaction, were cast aside by the light shed by the Shaiva and Vaishnava mystics and the people were put in possession of a new source of strength. The careers of Sambhandar and Sundarar, although brief, were extremely brilliant. They befriended kings, infused new life into old institutions and gave a new impetus to the political life of Tamil-land which carried the country forward till the early part of the fourteenth century. The same may be said of the Vaishnava saints. The fact that faith in God and in the saving power of His grace can rouse a people to action is well illustrated by the history of Tamil-land subsequent to the advent of the Alvars and the Nayanmars (Shaiva saints). After the saints came the Acharyas, who systematized and codified their teachings and consciously or unconsciously limited the spirit of freedom brought down from heaven by the Great Ones. We shall point out one instance in which the heavenly gift of social freedom which the great mystics brought was curbed by the sacerdotalism of subsequent centuries.

\* \* \*

The mystics, who continually lived in the consciousness that they were children of God, friends, servants and helpers

of God, knew no barriers of caste. How touching are some of the episodes connected with their divine lives! Gnana-Sambhandar, a Brahmin of the Kaundinya Gotra, who encouraged the performance of Vedic rituals, befriended the musician Tiru-Neelakantar and his wife, Viraliyar. They travelled with him and set to music the beautiful hymns which he sang *extempore* when he visited temples. The party reached the house of Tiru-Neelanakkar, a saintly Brahmin. In Tamil-land, the professional musician's caste is considered low. But Jnana-Sambhanda asked his host to accommodate the musician and his wife in the inner apartments of the house. The host, an orthodox Brahmin, emulating the good example set up by his saintly guest, accommodated the couple in the holiest apartment of the house, the room in which the sacred Vedic fire was kept. The Fire-god himself approved the action, for it is recorded that the flames joyously turned towards the right. Jnana-Sambhandar young in years, yet old in divine wisdom, addressed Tiru-Navukkarasar who was ripe in age and in wisdom always as 'Appar', the Tamil word for father. This endearing term has come down to us as one of the appellations of the elderly saint. St. Appar like Nammalvar belonged to the Vellala caste. He was eighty-one when he passed away and Sambhanda was barely sixteen. The first meeting of the septuagenarian and the seven-year-old is one of the touching incidents in the annals of the hagiology of Southern Shaivism. Another Brahmin-saint Apputhiyadikal attained the highest by meditating upon the life of St. Appar. Madhurakavi, a Brahmin by caste, informs posterity in ten beautiful soul-stirring stanzas that he knew of no God other than Maran (the family name of Satakopa) who revealed the truth of the Vedas through the Tamil language. Tirup-Panalvar belonged

to the musician caste, but Sri Ranganatha, the Deity of Sri-rangam, ordered that he be brought to the Divine Presence on the shoulders of a Brahmin. Cheraman Perumal, the saintly king of Kerala, whom we have already mentioned as the friend of Sundara-Murti bowed down before a washerman because his body was covered by ashes, the symbol of Shiva Mahadeva. This catholicity in social behaviour among the devotees persisted in the time of the early Acharyas. Arul-Nandi-Shivacharya, a reputed Brahmin scholar of the thirteenth century accepted as his Guru the great Meikandan of the Vellala caste. Umapathi-Shivacharya the fourth in succession in the line of Meikandan belonged to the extremely orthodox priestly class of Chidambaram. He was ostracized by his people and lived in Kotravankudi, in the outskirts of the city of Chidambaram. By divine intervention, his people had to call him back. Umapathi-Shivacharya initiated the untouchable Petran Samban into the highest truth. The catholicity of Ramanuja is well known. From housetops he declared the saving word to one and all and was prepared to go to the direst hell, if that act would bring the consolation of religion to the lowest of the low. He elevated the social status of untouchables and others. When Ramanuja's influence spread in the North, the mystics who drew their inspiration from him as well as others broke down the barriers of caste and democratized religion.

\* \* \*

The influence of the Nayanmars was restricted to Tamil-land, although there were schools of Shaivism in the extreme North in Kashmir, Nepal and Tibet. Paramjyoti Munivar, the spiritual preceptor of Meikandan, the founder of the later Shaiva Siddhanta school, is said to have gone to

Tamil-land from the sacred Mount Kailas, in Tibet. The Pashupata, the Kapalika, the Mahavrata and other forms of Shaivism that drew their inspiration from the North were existing in Tamil-land at the time of the advent of the Nayanmars. Tirumular, probably the founder of the Natha school of mysticism, flourished in Tamil-land in an earlier period. He too is said to have gone to the South from Kailas. The Agamas, twenty-eight in number, considered to be the authoritative texts of the Shaiva religion give elaborate details concerning temple-building and rituals of worship. In the Agamas mention is made of Brahmin priests of Gauda-Desha stating that they are the most competent to perform religious rituals. Some of the Chola kings in their grants to temples make special mention of employing priests from the afore-said country. All these go to show that Southern Shaivism looked northwards for inspiration and attempted to synthesize the original thought of the Nayanmars and Shaiva Acharyas with the Vedic and Tantrik thought from the North. In the case of Southern Vaishnavism the flow of thought was in the other direction. From the fountain-head of Satakopa and the other Alvars torrents of devotion surged northwards until they covered the whole country. Ramanuja was the Bhagiratha who led the waters of the holy Cauvery of the South to mingle in the waters of the sacred Ganges of the North. The commingling took place not at one spot but at various points in the course of the sacred river and the life-giving waters spread over Western India as well. The thousand names of Hari reverberated in the atmosphere of this thrice holy land of Hindusthan.

\* \* \*

It was indeed timely that the religion of Bhakti, Grace and Faith spread throughout the length and breadth of Medieval

India. Coming events cast their shadows before and the country was to receive into its bosom an alien faith that originated in Arabia, a faith which was built upon the cardinal principles of absolute self-surrender to God and the brotherhood of all believers in the faith without distinction of caste, race or nationality. When these principles were taking shape in Arabia, the great mystics of Tamil-land were also building up a new society on the same foundations. How wonderful is the working of the Supreme Spirit that shapes the destinies of nations and individuals! Twelve centuries earlier when Gautama Buddha walked on the soil of this holy land summoning men to a life of discipline and moral perfection, Confucius and Lao-Tze in China and probably Pythagoras in Greece were preaching the same doctrines. The new outlook in national life provided by the lives and teachings of the Alvars, the Nayanmars and their successors democratized Hindu religion, established the brotherhood of the Brahmin and the Pariah and created a solidarity that helped Hindu society to withstand successfully the onslaught of the new religion that came with the conquerors of the country. This outlook also helped towards working out a synthesis of the Semitic religious thought of the conquerors and the indigenous religious thought of the people over whom they ruled. Devotion to God, the love of fellow beings and the emotional aspect of the Hindu religion which encouraged poetry and the fine arts provided the meeting ground for the two parties. The Moghul emperors, who were racially Mongols and whose ancestors were followers of Shamaism, the worship of the 'Everlasting Blue Sky' and of Taoism and Buddhism were great worshippers of the beautiful. They were also greatly influenced by Iranian art and culture.

History tells us that some of the emperors were sons of Hindu mothers, and actively worked for the harmonizing of the two great religious creeds followed by their subjects. We all know of the great Akbar, a Muslim brought up in a Hindu home, who attempted to create a new religion harmonizing the Hindu and the Semitic creeds. Leaders of thought and men who were guiding the political destinies of Medieval India knew that the God of all religions was the same and that it was best to allow the followers of each religion to observe the practices and rituals of their forefathers. Where dry-as-dust philosophy would have observed differences and consequently ended in strife, the religion of the heart, the religion of devotion saw sameness and laboured for the intensifying of the spirit of love in the hearts of one and all. Before we proceed further and see how the movement spread, it might be worth while to get to know something about the life of the great apostle of the South who influenced the thought currents of Medieval India.

\* \* \*

Ramanuja was born in Siriperumbudur. The date of his birth is fixed by orthodox tradition as 1017 A.D. Some would bring it down to 1037 A.D. We follow Sir S. Radhakrishnan and fix it at 1027 A.D. The date of his passing away is accepted on all hands to be 1137 A.D. He thus lived to the full span of human life. So did Natha Muni and the same is said of Yamunacharya and also of Ramananda and Kabir. The sages of Medieval India appear

to have solved the problem of longevity by having faith in God and in relaxing their mind in the midst of activity. Even to-day one can see centenarians among the Vaishnavas of Srirangam and the deeply religious Muslims in South India. Ramanuja studied Vedanta under Yadavaprakasha of Conjeevaram. For centuries Kanchi (Conjeevaram), was a seat of learning in the South. Yamunacharya also known as Alavandar, successor and grandson of Natha Muni, hearing of the learning of Ramanuja sent for him with the view of installing him as his successor. Ramanuja arrived only after Yamuna's death and took upon himself to fulfill the three great tasks left to him by Yamuna. These were the perpetuation of the memory of Parashara, author of the *Vishnu Purana*, the immortalization of the glory of Satakopa and the interpretation of the Brahma Sutras according to the philosophical tenets of the Vishishtadvaita system. He embraced Sannyasa, studied the works of Yamuna and the Prabandha, the collected works of the Alvars. It is said also that he went to Kashmir to copy the commentary of Bodhayana on the Brahma Sutras. He appears to have completed the *Sri Bhashya*, commentary on the Brahma Sutras, in 1100 A.D. and went about from place to place popularizing his teachings. He visited many important places in the North and had a victory over the Buddhists of Benares and Puri and built monasteries in those places. He perpetuated Parashara's name by getting a commentary on the *Vishnu Sahasranama* written by Bhatta, a son of his disciple Kuresha and perpetuated Nammalvar's name by getting an authoritative commentary on the *Tiruvaimozhi* written by Kuruksha, another disciple. He brought all classes of people into the Vaishnava fold and gave them privileges which they never enjoyed before. Owing to the

persecution of the Chola emperors, who were staunch followers of the Shaiva faith, he had to flee to Mysore and there converted the Hoysala ruler Bitti Vishnuvardhana from Jainism to Vaishnavism. He stayed at Melkote for twelve years where he installed the image of Sri Krishna brought from Delhi. This image is said to have been in the possession of a Muslim princess who loved Sri Krishna. Accordingly the Muslim princess was considered as the consort of the Deity. Untouchable devotees were allowed to offer worship in this temple. Ramanuja organized the spiritual ministrations of the Vaishnavas by dividing the country into parishes and appointing priests to preside over each parish. By his learning, spirituality and organizing capacity, he ensured the permanence of the Vaishnava faith.

\* \* \*

"The influence of Ramanuja is visible throughout the later history of Hinduism. The movements of Madhva, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Ramananda, Kabir, and Nanak, and the reform organizations of Brahmoism are largely indebted to Ramanuja's theistic idealism' (Sir S. Radhakrishnan). Kallianpur in the Udipi Taluka of the district of South Kanara is stated to be the birthplace of Madhva (1197-1276 A.D.). He was also called Anandatirtha. He gave the Dvaita, dualistic interpretation of the Brahma Sutras. His pupil Naraharitirtha is said to have held a high position in Orissa. Nimbarka, a Telugu Brahmin, was a junior contemporary of Ramanuja. He also wrote a short commentary on the Brahma Sutras. His Vedantic theory is said to be monistic as well as pluralistic. Ramananda (1300 - 1411 A.D.) was born at Prayaga of Brahmin parentage. We are told that there is a popular verse to the effect that

Bhakti arose first in Dravida land, Ramananda carried it to the North and Kabir spread it to the seven continents and the nine divisions of the world. Ramananda was a disciple of Raghavananda, a teacher of the Visishtadvaita school of Ramanuja. He effectively broke down the barriers of caste by making all devotees of Vishnu dine together and by using the vernaculars as the vehicle for the propagation of his creed.

Noble birth, riches, both these boons it grants;  
It casts aside the ills of votaries  
And gives them heavenly perfection, with  
Eternal life and blissful grace divine;  
Urged by love more than that fond mothers bear,  
Triumph it grants and many other boons;  
That which gives all these I declare, it is  
The sacred name, the name of Narayana.

Thus sang Tiru-Mangai-Mannan, the robber-chief who became a saint and was counted as one of the twelve Alvars. The commentator says that the devotee who takes the name of Narayana ceases to belong to his old caste and enters a new caste, the caste of devotees. This principle was fully put into practice by Ramananda, who accepted Muslims, women and untouchables as his disciples and elevated them to the status of teachers. Perceiving the unity of God, who is the origin of all, Ramananda looked upon humanity as one large family. Such a conception immediately removed all distinctions of caste and creed. 'He held that when a devotee surrendered his life to the divine will his former life was lost in God and a new life began for him.' Ravidas the cobbler, Kabir the Muslim weaver, Dhanna the Jat



peasant, Sena the barber and Padmavati a woman, were among his disciples.

\* \* \*

Kabir (1398-1518 A.D.) is said to have become a disciple of Ramananda in a marvellous way. Thinking that the Brahmin sage might not care to accept as disciple a poor Muslim boy of the weaver caste, Kabir went early to the bathing-ghat in the Ganges frequented by the sage and there laid himself down on the stone pavement. Before the break of dawn Ramananda went to the bathing-ghat and unknowingly trampled on the body of his future disciple. As it was still dark, Ramananda did not know what exactly took place. In his embarrassment he twice repeated the name of Rama, his favourite Deity. Kabir shouted 'Rama, Rama' and ran away, before the sage could demand an explanation. It is said that Kabir was only thirteen years of age when he met Ramananda in this strange fashion. He went about telling people that he had been accepted as a disciple of Ramananda. When the sage sent for Kabir and asked for an explanation, Kabir told him that contact with the sage's feet and the receiving of the holy name of Rama from his lips were in themselves sufficient to constitute discipleship. Ramananda clasped Kabir to his breast and thereafter Kabir regularly attended the Master's classes. The divinely inspired Kabir went about preaching the harmony of Islam and Hinduism. Many of his songs and utterances have become the common heritage of all souls having a real thirst for God. 'The God of the Hindus is in Benares, the God of the Muhammadans is in Mecca, but the God of all is in the hearts of all creatures',

said Kabir. This remarkable saying forms the key-note of Kabir's teachings.

\* \* \*

Ravidas, the cobbler disciple of Ramananda, reminds us of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624 A.D.), the great German mystic, the shoe-maker who inspired the English mystic William Blake. Mirabai, the saintly queen whose beautiful hymns have come down to us, is said to be a disciple of Ravidas. According to Ravidas the highest expression of religion in life is the service of human beings and God can be realized only by the devotee who knows the pain of divine love. Dadu (1544-1603 A.D.) was born in Rajputana and was a follower of Kabir's ideals. He admitted both Hindus and Muhammadans to his discipleship. Tulasidas the author of the Ramayana in Hindi verse lived in the sixteenth century. He was inspired by the spiritual life of Ramananda. Sri Ramachandra, the incarnation of truth, justice, love, obedience and duty was his ideal and hero. Tulasi was a contemporary of the Emperor Akbar and found favour at the royal court. Surdas, the mystic poet also lived about this time. His devotional songs were addressed to Sri Krishna. Love for the Divine Cowherd of Brindaban was the ideal that inspired Vallabhacharya to found a new sect. He was a Telugu Brahmin. His date of birth is said to be 1479 A.D. About this time there appeared in Bengal a great spiritual personage, who stirred the depths of emotion and led men to the love of God and their fellow beings. Sri Chaitanya (1485-1533 A.D.) brought about a revolution in the religious life of Bengal. It was at Gaya that he was initiated into the Bhakti cult by a Vaishnava savant, Ishvara

Muni. He travelled widely and in the South he came into contact with the followers of Ramanuja. In Bengal he organized Sankirtanas, singing the names of God in chorus. Many a thirsting soul was filled by the life-giving waters of devotion. Sri Chaitanya identified himself with Sri Radha, the beloved of the Divine Cowherd of Brindaban.

\*                      \*                      \*

Let us turn westwards and gain some glimpses into the lives of the saints who adorned the Maharashtra province of Medieval India. Nivrittinatha, son of Viththalapant, a monk who gave up the robes, lived in the latter part of the thirteenth century and was a disciple of Gahininatha. Accordingly, the spiritual impetus of Maharashtra has its origin in the Natha cult. Nivrittinatha was the Guru of his brother Jnanadeva, who attained great eminence as a mystic philosopher. Namadeva who was born of a tailor family was a contemporary of Jnanadeva. The devotion of the Maharashtra school of mystics centred upon Pandharpur, where the Deity is known by the names of Viththala and Panduranga. 'The Vaishnavism of the Maratha country found a fertile soil among the lower classes, though it has had followers among Brahmanas and other higher classes also. Like the Vaishnavism of the disciples of Ramananda, it had no learned or Sanskrit-knowing promulgators, but its prophets were Shudras, who, however, had the true religious instinct and possessed a clear spiritual insight. Such were Namdev and Tukaram' (Sir R. G. Bhandarkar). Tukaram (1607-1649 A.D.), the mystic poet, many of whose Abhangs have come down to us, was a contemporary of Shivaji, king of the Maharattas. He refused

offers from King Shivaji and advised him to become a disciple of Ramadasa. This saint who inspired Shivaji was partly affected by the political upheaval of his time. As a practical mystic Ramadasa established monasteries in the country to serve as centres of spiritual and practical activities. His heart was given entirely to God. 'Unite all who are Marathas (men who shrink not from death) together and propagate the Dharma of the Maharashtras' was the advice of Ramadasa.

\*                      \*                      \*

The *Granth Sahib* the authoritative scripture of Sikhism is said to have been first compiled in the year 1604 A.D. Among other things it contains the holy utterances and hymns of some of the mystics, we mentioned above. It was compiled by Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru. Guru Nanak, the first Guru and originator of Sikhism, was born in 1469 A.D. at Talwandi near Lahore. He travelled widely to the west as far as Mecca and Baghdad and to the south as far as Ceylon. He was loved and admired by Hindus and Muslims alike. He believed in the dignity of labour and in the useful life of a devout householder. The early history of Sikhism forms a glorious chapter in the religious history of Medieval India. The Gurus were mystics and at the same time intensely practical men. They demolished the caste system, established practical equality among their disciples by such means as common kitchens, service of humanity and the protection of the weak and the oppressed. The Gurus introduced military training and laid the foundation of an organization for social amelioration. By the advent of the Gurus, a new national

spirit was introduced into the country. In connection with Hindu-Muslim unity, which the mystics practically achieved in Medieval India, we should also make mention of Dara Shikoh, the emperor's son who became a mystic philosopher, of Pranathan who had Hindu and Muslim followers and of Nagore Meeran of the South, who is claimed by both Hindus and Muslims. All these great spiritual personages lived in the early part of the eighteenth century.

\* \* \*

The religious revival of Medieval India, which we briefly surveyed, was intensely dynamic. New races of people and new faiths were assimilated without any break in the national continuity. People who were outside the traditional castes were brought into the Hindu fold, which thereby became strengthened. The energizing of the national consciousness by Bhakti destroyed the individualism of the preceding age, revived social faith and self-confidence and expressed the national life in the language of emotion. From the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin, the whole country pulsated with new life. The Aryan culture of the North was synthesized with the Dravidian culture of the South. The unity of Indian culture was thus established. The rise of the Maharatta power and the military organization of the Sikhs clearly testified to the fact that the theistic revival led by Ramanuja gave birth to the martial spirit of the Maharattas and the Sikhs even as the Advaita doctrine of Shankara gave birth to Rajput chivalry. Every great movement after achieving splendid results loses its momentum and stands in need of a fresh impetus and a new integration. The path of devotion by constantly dwell-

ling on the weakening ideas of man's littleness makes society lose the strength of individual initiative. The new scientific knowledge which the country received from the West has already given a shock to Christianity in Europe and America. Like Vaishnavism Christianity is essentially a path of devotion centering on the personality of the great founder. To withstand the shock of science, it is evident that Hinduism should now lay emphasis on the knowledge aspect. At the same time the spiritual treasures garnered by the mystics of Medieval India should not be lost to the nation. The needed synthesis between the old and the new, the Dvaita and the Advaita, science and mysticism, Eastern religions and Western thought, contemplation and social service has been brought about by the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. His chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda has in his writings and speeches clearly chalked out the path which the nation has to follow in order to achieve its own emancipation and become a torch-bearer to the nations of the world.

ation to homeless vagrants are as much a feature of Indian cities as of other cities in other parts of the world.

\* \* \*

## 12. INDIAN CULTURE THROUGH THE AGES

Ancient India lives to-day in the secluded hermitages scattered over the Himalayas especially near the sources of the sacred rivers, the Ganges and the Jumna. All over the country, in the assemblies of learned pandits and in all places where the young are instructed in the sacred lore and are trained to chant those melodious Vedic hymns that laid the foundations of Aryan culture, the echoes of the past approach our ears reverberating through distant vistas of time. The Taj Mahal and other mausoleums, ancient temples that have withstood the ravages of time, the palaces of Rajahs and other sacred and secular buildings of the past reveal to us some glimpses of the 'gorgeous East' that roused the envy and the cupidity of other nations. The glory that was Medieval India is also faintly reflected in the pageantry associated with temple festivals and religious fairs throughout the length and breadth of the country from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from Dwarka to Jagannath Puri. Side by side with the ancient and the medieval we have our modern cities, quite as crowded as their prototypes of the West, dotted here and there with smoking chimneys brightened up with commercial advertisements and provided with cinema-halls and other cheap forms of entertainment, the mingled noises of which get drowned in the din of traffic of the bustling streets. Slum dwellings and the pavements that provide some sleeping accommo-

A unique characteristic of Indian civilization is that time does not erase out the past. Not only the spirit of ancient times but the very forms in which that spirit expressed itself have been carefully preserved by succeeding generations. It is not so in other countries and among other nations. The pyramids of Egypt, the Parthenon of Greece and the Colosseum of Rome may testify to the past splendour of those countries, Greek philosophy and Roman laws may be found metamorphosed in the philosophies and legal systems of Modern Europe, but the descendanes of the Greeks and Romans do not wear the toga and the tunic and the gods worshipped by the ancestors do not receive the homage of the descendants. In India, on the other hand, we meet with a large variety of living types bearing the genuine impress of the distant past even to the smallest detail. If we visit the west coast of South India, we may meet to-day the Nambudiri Brahmin belonging to the caste that gave birth to the great philosopher Shankaracharya discussing the same Advaita philosophy and living in much the same manner as his ancestors did in the days of Shankara. In Delhi and in other cities of the north we can come across descendants of the Moghuls with sleek paunches and dignified gait, pacing the streets unconcerned about the hooting of automobiles and the busy traffic around. Up in the Himalayas we can meet with monks belonging to the oldest monastic order in the world, living very much like their forbears who retired to the Himalayan forests,

centuries ago. In South India we meet with men of the Dravidian race, whose ancestors, the historians tell us, carried the seeds of civilization to distant countries and were known as Sumerians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Minoans, Etruscans, Egyptians, Numidians, Bereberians, Iberians, and Druids.\* Walking in the streets of London, if we were to be accosted by a brown-skinned, black-haired Druid, in his quaint costume, we will certainly consider the experience as something eerie, something supernatural. But in the streets of South India we can meet with the cousins of the Druids unchanged by the passage of centuries. The Minoans and the Etruscans became merged in the Greeks and the Romans but the Dravidians in India have persisted as a distinct racial type. The Kolarians who peopled this country even before the Dravidians are yet to be found living in their primitive simplicity.

\*                      \*                      \*

In an unthinking moment some Western scholar has floated the rumour that Indians have no historic sense. The imputation has persisted because 'scientific' histories written in the modern style for propaganda purposes are not found among the literary records left by the ancestors of the Indians. This does not mean that glorious deeds and movements of peoples, wars and conquests and the fortunes of dynasties have been left unrecorded in the literatures of India. These as well as the rise and fall of religious movements, the joys

---

\* Vide: 'The Hamitic Indo-Mediterranean Race' by Fr. H. Heras in the *New Review* of Calcutta, September, 1941, also Ragozin, *Vedic India*, A.C. Das, *Rig-Vedic India* and H.R. Hall, *The Ancient History of the Near East*.

and sorrows of common people and such other, material for history are amply recorded in the Sanskrit, the Prakrit and the vernacular literatures of India. They are also found in copper-plate grants and stone edicts and the material available is so large in extent that the student of history finds it difficult to cope with it. Besides these, as we have already pointed out, the ethnic and cultural types of the past have not been obliterated. The student can see the types and study them at first-hand. The cultural history of India is, as it were, an open book, the pages of which are vibrant with life. Indian civilization has succeeded in harmonizing diverse racial and cultural elements and producing an organic whole without destroying the individuality of the parts. Nothing of value has been allowed to fade away. The beauty of each part has been fully recognized and preserved and the sages have found it possible to combine them into a whole of inestimable value. The Indian conception of Dharma will help us to understand the wisdom of the nation-builders of India. 'Better is one's own Dharma (though) imperfect, than the Dharma of another well performed,' says the Gita, thus recognizing the diversity of human nature and the necessary corollary of difference in self-expression. The supreme purpose of each individual life may be conceived as the highest self-expression possible to it. We are reminded of the quarrel between the mountain and the squirrel. Both have their place in the grand scheme of things. If we merely stop at the outposts only observing the diversity, we are apt to mistake the trees for the forests and the pigments for the picture. We have to go further and comprehend the unity amidst the diversity.

The Dharma of individuals differ, no doubt. But all Dharma point to the same ideal and lead to the same end. The paths are many but they lead to the same goal. We shall proceed to see briefly how this unity was practically achieved and why the diversity of types was carefully preserved and maintained.

\* \* \*

We shall begin by making a rapid survey of the outstanding achievements of Ancient India. The Vedas which form the earliest extant literary record of the human race are among the proud possessions of the people of Hindusthan. To the Hindus they form the fountainhead of the religion they profess, but to all Indians they constitute the storehouse of Aryan culture. The Upanishadic sages of India inquired into the eternal verities of existence long before philosophers and thinkers rose among other nations. Their brilliant intuitions provided the material for subsequent thinkers. The artisans of Mohen-jo Daro planned cities and erected brick buildings about the time of Noah's deluge. Very probably the art of making wheeled vehicles also originated with them. They also studied astronomy and music. We are told that the astronomers of Mohen-jo Daro named the constellation Gemini by the Tamil word for harp and represented it by the symbol of the harp. The two great epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, from the time of their composition, have been exerting a living influence upon Indian civilization. The ideals of life and character held up by the epics are universal, and when Indian civilization spread out in Medieval times, it

was the epics that formed the connecting link between the mother country and her colonies. The epics are also encyclopaedic in scope and contain much information concerning the arts and the sciences known to the ancients. From the earliest times we see the Aryan mind engaging itself pre-eminently in intellectual pursuits and evolving the sublime teachings of monistic philosophy, which forms the cream of Aryan thought. The Dravidians on the other hand have been busy constructing roads and cities and buildings ships which carried the merchandise of the country (millenniums before Christ) to distant lands in the West and in later times to the islands of the East Indian Archipelago. Loyalty to a personal God appears to be the key-note of Dravidian thought. The mutual interaction between these two types may be traced from the dawn of history to the present day. This interaction has been fruitful and creative. It has resulted in the development of a complete and virile culture which throughout subsequent ages has shown its capacity to receive and assimilate cultural influences from abroad without in the least endangering its own cherished ideal.

\* \* \*

The culture that resulted by the contact of the ancient Aryans and Dravidians is the common Indian culture which has become enriched subsequently by the influx of alien elements. But as we have already remarked, its permanent ideals have not suffered any appreciable change. Vedic thought forms the intellectual foundation of this culture. To us in India Aryan and Vedic are interchangeable terms. We stick, in spite of Western theories, to that definition of

the word "Arya", which we find in our sacred books, and which includes only the multitude we now call Hindus' (Swami Vivekananda). The Nordic races of Europe who speak languages connected with Sanskrit are the descendants of ancestors who worshipped Odin and Thor and other strange blood-thirsty gods. If there is also ethnic affinity between the ancient Aryans of India and the ancestors of the Nordic races, the separation of the two groups must have taken place before the time of composition of the Vedas. To the student of cultural history, Aryan culture means the way of life based upon the teachings of the Vedas. In this restricted sense those alone can claim to be Aryans, who accept the authority of the Vedas; others are outside the pale. Sanskrit was and continues to be the common medium of cultural intercourse for all India, even as Latin was the common language of the intellectuals of Medieval Europe. The Roman Catholic clergy were the custodians of culture of Medieval Europe and Latin became the language of the Church and, therefore, a holy language. Similarly Sanskrit acquired a sacred character in India. With the exception of Tamil, the vernacular literatures of India developed in comparatively recent times. Not only religious and philosophical treatises but also poetical compositions and technical treatises were written in Sanskrit even after the Moghul invasion of India. Study of Sanskrit and the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas brought individuals and groups within the Aryan fold and the process has been going on through the ages down to the present time. Acceptance of the authority of the Vedas meant acceptance of the authority of priests who were the custodians of the Vedas. There have been revolts in the

past against the priests and 'protestant' sects sprang up as a result of such revolts. These sects, however, did not break themselves away from the common cultural life. The old Aryan gods were there, but the prophet who inspired the new sect was elevated above the old gods.

\* \* \*

'Self-abnegation and harmony were the key-notes of the spiritual life of the Vedic sages. In fact, this spirit of sacrifice, restraint and harmony through love, and the desire for the attainment of immortality in life, came to be the dominant factors of the cultural life of the Indo-Aryans from the earliest days of the Rig-Veda. No one can understand the full significance of the spiritual culture of India, both ancient and modern, unless he keeps in view these predominant trends of the inner thought life of the land. **One in the many, unity in variety**, harmony and not discord, is the perennial message of Vedic India' (Swami Sharvananda in *The Cultural Heritage of India* Vol.I). We now realize the spirit that inspired the Vedic sages to preserve intact the forms developed by the Dravidians and other races whom they assimilated and Aryanized. The ideal that they set before themselves and others who came within their fold was spiritual, it aimed at the progressive development of the spiritual life until the consummation of God-realization and the attainment of immortality were achieved. From the earliest times the sages endeavoured to discover unity amidst diversity. Unity should not be confused with uniformity. The means adopted for the securing of unity were non-violent means. For the sages took their stand upon the lofty pinnacles of Truth which leads to Justice, Freedom

and respect for human personality. They were never in a hurry, they perfected the means and gave the aspirants the necessary freedom for growth. We who are witnessing the work of totalitarian regimes overhauling the social order by violent legislation cannot fully appreciate the spirit behind the nation-building activities of the Vedic sages. Nevertheless we can be convinced of the stability of the foundation on which they built. We should however, admit the fact that there were revolts against the order set up by the ancient seers. It behoves us to seek for the causes of revolt. Swami Vivekananda in his *Modern India* (Complete Works, Vol. IV) admirably analyses the causes of the social revolt pointing out that the conflict was between priestly power and royal power. The rivalry between Vishwamitra and Vasishta foreshadows this conflict. The rituals detailed in the Vedas could only be performed by hereditary priests but the supreme knowledge of Brahman, as mentioned in the Upanishads, was also in the possession of the Kshatriyas. Emphasis on the superiority of the knowledge aspect is bound to rob priests of the privileges enjoyed by them. The Jaina and the Buddha revolts took up their stand on Dharma conceived as righteousness and the moral discipline that led to it. They decried Vedic sacrifices, particularly those associated with the shedding of blood.

\* \* \*

Rishabha-deva, the earliest Jain teacher, belongs to the remote past. Neminatha, a contemporary of Sri Krishna, is recognized as the twentysecond Tirthankara, and Parswanatha as the twenty-third. Vardhamana Mahavira the twenty-fourth and the last of the Tirthankaras was, accor-

ding to Jaina tradition, born in a royal family in the year 599 B.C. Gautama Shakyamuni, the Buddha, was also born in a royal family. Scholars place his date of birth in the year 567 B.C. Both these royal prophets have profoundly influenced the cultural history of India. Both denied the authority of the Vedas, the efficacy of Vedic rituals and the exclusive privileges of Aryan priests. But paradoxically, by their democratic teachings they spread the culture of the Aryans among other races and have been instrumental in Aryanizing not only the whole of India but also countries beyond the border. The first wave of Aryanization spread southwards with the sage Agastya and his followers. This happened in the remote past. One of the early Pandya kings bore the honorific title 'Pal-Yaga Salai', 'of many sacrificial halls' and another Chola king bore the name 'Rajasuyam-vetta,' 'he who performed the Rajasuya sacrifice.' This first wave did not very much affect the language and the customs of the Tamils. The second wave went with the Jain monks, who had the patronage of the great emperor, Chandragupta Maurya and the third with the Buddhist monks, who enjoyed the patronage of Asoka, beloved of the gods, the grandson of Chandragupta. Kanchi became a cultural centre of the Buddhists and Madurai of the Jains and the Brahmins. All these took place from the third century B.C. Subsequently from the third to the ninth century A.D., under the patronage of the Pallavas, the process of Aryanization was very rapid. As we have already mentioned the monks and the priests who were the agents of the cultural transformation carried on their work by non-violent means. Similar waves of Aryanization spread to lands beyond the seas : Malay Peninsula, Ceylon,



Java, Siam, Indo-China and China and also to lands to the north-west and beyond the Himalayas. This cultural conquest was a conquest of the heart, carried out unostentatiously with no flourish of trumpets.

\* \* \*

Sankhya and Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika, Mimamsa and Vedanta grew and developed from the undefined philosophical speculations of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Buddhists and the Jains gave an impetus to secular literature also. Not only Sanskrit and Prakrit, but in South India. Tamil also received the attention of the monks. The fine arts and the sciences were also developed. The modern man, both in the East and in the West, attempts to decry the monastic orders. In doing so, he forgets the valuable contribution which the cloistered monk has made to the cultural heritage of the world. All over the world, the monk has been the pioneer of education. Nalanda and Takshasila, Kanchi and Madurai, Vikramasila and Sravana Ballagola as also Sridhanya Kataka at Amaravati have been the centres from which monastic and lay teachers spread the light of sacred and secular learning amidst eager students who flocked to them. Mithila and Benares, and the forest-universities in the Himalayas preceded these as the centres of Brahminical learning. The caves of Ajanta and Sittannavasal in the South testify to posterity the artistic abilities of the medieval monks. Nagarjuna's name is associated with early chemistry and medicine. Dignaga carried the logical theories developed in the South to far off China. When learning was in the hands of monks, it performed

its legitimate function of refining the mind of the student making it a fit receptacle for receiving the highest wisdom.

\* \* \*

Non-violence and pacifism are certainly the ornaments of the monk and the scholar, for learning and quiet contemplation can be fostered only in a peaceful atmosphere. But the Dharma of Kshatriyas and warriors is different. It is their duty to engage themselves in righteous warfare. The Aryan doctrine on this point is unambiguously expounded by the greatest teacher of Hindusthan, the divine author of the Bhagavad-Gita. King Akhenaten of Egypt and our own beloved Asoka were indeed two of the finest flowers of the human race. They idealized kingship and endeavoured their best to alleviate the sufferings of all fellow-beings. Even animals had their loving protection. When these god-like kings sat on the throne all was well, for their character had the beneficent influence of subduing the forces of evil. But the aftermath of the rule of these philosopher-kings brought in confusion and disaster. Let us trace the story in India and see how the pacifist policy of Asoka produced its inevitable results. Bactrian Greeks, Parthians, Sakas and Kushanas pounced upon the country in succession like hungry vultures upon a dead carcass and the people who had lost the power to resist, because of their pacifism under the benign Asoka, were robbed, plundered, massacred and enslaved. After about five centuries of confusion the true Kshatriya Dharma of Aryan polity reasserted itself and the Guptas rose to power and built a mighty empire. The Hindu renaissance under the Imperial Guptas assimilated

lated the best elements in Buddhism and the arts and sciences cultivated by Buddhist monks. In the South the Pallava kings and later on the Imperial Cholas became ardent patrons of renascent Hinduism and helped in the creating of a virile, conquering culture. The Puranas arose in this period popularizing the philosophical doctrines of the previous epochs and consequently the period may be referred to as the Pauranic age. It extended from the third to the eleventh centuries. One of the great achievements of this age was the Aryanization and Hinduization of many who came to this country from outside.

Sanskrit poetry and drama flourished under the patronage of Hindu sovereigns. Kalidasa, whose immortal *Shakuntala* first attracted the attention of the Western world to the rich treasures of Sanskrit literature, Varahamihira, the astronomer, Dhanvantari, the physician, and six other remarkable scholars are referred to as the nine gems that adorned the court of Vikramaditya alias Chandragupta II, whose date is fixed by scholars in the early part of the fifth century A.D. From the earliest times, in addition to language, literature, philosophy, religion and the fine arts, Indian thinkers have been developing mathematics, astronomy, the physical and the biological sciences and medicines. Islam which carried learning to the West has in the opinion of scholars, acted as a purveyor not only of the intellectual fare provided by Greek thought but also of the store given by Indian thought. The colourful pageantry associated with the 'gorgeous East' was also fully developed during this age. It, of course, began in the Buddhist age when

beautiful temples and brilliant festivals took the place of the austere simplicity of the Vedic sacrificial halls. The story of the progress of Indian culture from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries has been briefly told by us in a previous issue, under the caption, 'Religious Revival in Medieval India.'

We come to modern times. The first impact with the West gave a shock that blurred the vision of India. There was a tendency to reject old values and seek new ones. But this was only a transitory phase. For India soon realized that imitation could never lead to a vigorous national life. On the other hand it would lead to decay and death and the end of all creativity. Further she realized that the ancient wisdom, based upon the light of the spirit, had a permanent value for all time. All leading thinkers of Modern India from Raja Ram Mohan Roy downwards took the country back to the Vedas and the Upanishads, the perennial source of Indian thought. The renaissance in India found its fulfilment in the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The Master realized the underlying harmony of all religions, the dignity of human personality and its essential divinity. He stressed the need for freedom in religion and gave a new turn to social service by pointing out that it was a privilege to serve Narayana in the poor and the distressed. He emphasized practical realization and showed that true values were to be found not in mere knowing but in being and becoming. The seeds sown by the Master fell on fertile ground. The chief disciple in his numerous speeches and writings expounds these teachings and in-

doing so gives a new commentary to the Upanishads and the Gita. While not rejecting anything of value from the old, the new interpretation adds immeasurably to the ancient wisdom and makes it a way of life both to the active man of affairs and the contemplative religious aspirant. We are too close to the source to comprehend the full significance of the new teaching.

\* \* \*

Reality is said to reveal itself in the triune aspects of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. There is also a fourth aspect, the aspect of Power, not the power that enslaves but the power that emancipates. The earliest thinkers emphasized Truth. With the tool of unrelenting logic they sought to annihilate the veil of ignorance and succeeded in producing the sublime system of thought known as the Advaita philosophy. The Jains and the Buddhists laid emphasis on the aspect of Goodness and the moral discipline that led to it. The dualistic and qualified non-dualistic thinkers of Medieval India stressed the aspect of Beauty and promulgated the gospel of loving devotion to a personal god, the source of all beauty. The new interpretation accepts all the above and goes a step further by laying emphasis upon the aspect of Power. The prophet of the new age sums up his message in the one word 'Strength.' With a trumpet voice he calls upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds and all sects to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, he tells us, is the watchword of the Upanishads, physical freedom, mental freedom and above all

spiritual freedom. 'Come up, oh lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep ; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal ; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies ; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter', thunders out this inspired seer. India has heard his clarion call and is preparing herself once again for world conquest. The savants of India have assimilated all that is good in the new learning of the West. They have made permanent contributions to the world's store of ideas and are busy working out a dynamic Indian culture which has already begun to influence the nations of the world.

### 13. THE BOOK OF BOOKS OF TAMIL LAND

ANCEINT classical writers of Tamilland, who lived in the early centuries of the Christian era, say about the time Marcus Aurelius, the saintly Roman emperor, ruled over the Western world, have quoted from this book of books, treating it as a well-known classic of established repute, composed long before their age. The more one attempts to lift the veil of time and investigate into the past, the further the date of this book recedes. It is definite that it was written before the close of the first century of the Christian era. Further investigation may fix the date of composition earlier but not later. Perhaps the author was a contemporary of Aristotle. (385-322 B.C.) and like him wrote on Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric and Aesthetics ; or it may be that he was a contemporary of Chanakya (Kautilya) and like him laid down the law for kings to obey. He has much in common with these two great teachers. But the structure of his great work is based on the literary canons formulated by the ancient Tamil rhetorician Tholkappiyanaar. We shall dwell on this point in a subsequent essay. The author is a Yogi, a mystic and at the same time a practical statesman. He discourses on love with soft tenderness and with even greater fervour speaks of renunciation and the life of contemplation. He exhibits no partiality for sects, but from the time he lived many sects endeavour to claim him as their own. For all these, we do not know the name of this great seer ; he is

known merely by his clanname, "Valluvar". The honorific prefix "Thiru", which means, "auspicious" is added to the name and the sage is known to posterity as "Thiruvalluvar". His book is written in the "Kural" metre ("dwarf" couplets). It has also the same honorific prefix added to it and is known as "Thirukkural". Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural is the book of books of the Tamil people. It contains 133 chapters of ten couplets, each making in all 1330 couplets. Each couplet contains on an average eight words and the whole book, therefore, consists of about ten thousand words. The couplets are very terse and condensed like the Sutra literature in Sanskrit and consequently the student of Kural should spend some years over it, studying it with the help of the various commentaries on it.

Before we proceed further and interest ourselves in the contents of Kural, let us listen to the opinions said to be recorded by some of the contemporary poets regarding this book. The Pandya king Ukkirapperu-vazhuthi, who presided over the Madura Tamil Sangam, at that time, has left the following record : "The four-faced Deity (Brahma, the Creator) appearing in the guise of Valluvar has condensed the true essence of the Four Vedas into this treatise divided into three sections. Let our heads bow down before it, our tongues praise it, our hearts ponder over it and our ears listen to it." Here are some of the words of high appreciation left by other poets : "Maha-Vishnu as Vamana the dwarf, measured all the world with his two feet ; like wise Valluvar with his dwarf-couplets has measured the entire realm of thought of the whole human race." (Puranar); "He who has given us this treatise on Virtue, Wealth, Love

and Emancipation is a Deity; the ignorant person, who, even unwittingly calls him a mere man, is not fit for the company of the wise," (Mamulanar); "There is no poet equal to this prince of poets who has condensed into one great work the substance of several sciences and the rare teachings of the Vedas" (Nallanthuvanar); "There is no difference in meaning between the self-existent Vedas and these unerring teachings of the sage Valluvar; the only difference is that the Vedas belong exclusively to Brahmans, whereas these teachings are the common property of all castes and all creeds," (Velliveethiyar); "The excellences of Valluvar's teachings are these: they are easy to learn, difficult to comprehend; they are the essence of the Vedas; when men free from prejudice and other errors contemplate over them they reveal deeper and deeper meanings and melt their hearts." (Mankudi Maruthanar); "This treatise of three sections (Muppai) which teaches all that is worth knowing to all seekers of truth, can be compared to the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Dharmasastra of Manu, the law-giver, and to the ancient Vedas. No other works can be compared to it," (Perum-thevanar, the translator of the Mahabharata). Without committing ourselves to the authenticity or otherwise of the *Thiruvalluvar-Malai* we can say that the seven stanzas quoted above sum up the evaluation of Thiruvalluvar's Kural by Pandits well-versed in the traditional scholarship.

The universality of the teachings of Thirukkural is indeed remarkable. When the student of Kural meets with some arresting thought expressing some universal aspect of human nature or human conduct in the writings of other

thinkers of other ages and climes, he can easily find a parallel in this book of books. Here are a few instances: "I think the first virtue is to restrain the tongue; he approaches nearest to the gods who knows how to be silent, even though he is in the right," (Cato). *Adakkam amararul uikkum adangamai arirul uiththu vidum* (Kural 121). "The true rule, in determining to embrace or reject anything, is not whether it has any evil in it, but whether it has more of evil than of good.... There are few things wholly evil or wholly good. Almost everything, especially of government policy, is an inseparable compound of the two, so that our best judgment of the preponderance between them is continually demanded" (Abraham Lincoln). *Kuna nadik kuttramum nadi avatrrul mikai nadi mikka kolal* (Kural 504). "If you really want to judge of the character of a man look not at his great performances. Every fool may become a hero at one time or another. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of a great man" (Swami Vivekananda). *Perumaikkum enaich chirumaikkum thattham karumame Kattalaikkal* (Kural 505).

In the Yoga Sutras of Bhagavan Patanjali, the second chapter that treats of the discipline and practice of Yoga, is, by far, the most important. The topics treated in this chapter may be found (fully developed, in many cases) in the following chapters of the Kural: 1. Worship of God, 8. Affection, 10. Kind words, 12. Uprightness, 13. Self-control, 14. Purity of Conduct, 15. Non-desiring of another's wife, 16. Forgiveness, 17. Non-envying, 18. Non-coveting, 19. Refraining from Slander, 20. Refraining from vain words,

21. Shunning Evil, 23. Charity, 25. Mercy, 26. Refraining from meat-eating, 27. Austerities, 28. Continence, 29. Non-stealing, 30. Truthfulness, 31. Abstaining from Anger, 32. Non-injuring, 33. Non-killing, 35. Renunciation, 36. Attainment of True Wisdom; Self-realisation, 37. The Conquest of Desire, 40. Learning, 42. Listening to the instruction of the Wise, 43. Knowledge, 44. Freeing from the six Inner faults, 45. Seeking the help of Worthy Men. 46. Keeping away from bad company, 58. Considerateness, 61. Absence of Sloth, 66. Purity of action, 67. Strength of Character, 79. Friendship, 84. Ignorance, 85. Conceit, 90. Refraining from offending the Great Ones, 97. Honour, 98. Greatness, 99. Worthiness, 100. Propriety, 101. Sensitiveness to shame, 107. The dread of beggary. About one-third of Kural is, thus found to be a treatise on Yoga-Sastra. Chapter 36 gives a *resume* of the other topics dealt with by Patanjali. Again chapters 5 to 24 treating of the householder's Dharma and chapters 25 to 38 speaking of Sannyasa Dharma may together be taken as constituting a Dharma-Sastra. Chapters 39 to 108 constitute a treatise on Artha-Sastra, not merely theoretical, but practical—these would have certainly helped the Imperial Cholas to rule over their vast territories with righteousness and firmness. Chapters 109 to 115 treating of courtship and chapters 116 to 133 speaking of chaste wedded love are lyrical in sense. They vastly differ from the writings of Vatsyayana and such other authors: for, the love treated here is the pure love between husband and wife, the tender affection on which the whole fabric of social life is based. These chapters can also be interpreted (in the light shed by another great Tamil work, St. Manikka-

Vachakar's Thirukkovaiyar) as treating of the mystic union between God and the human soul. As such, this section may be said to deal with Prema-bhakti, even as King Solomon's "Songs of Songs" in the Bible expresses the soul's intense devotion to the Lord.

The similarities between Aristotle, Kautilya and Thiruvalluvar are so many that they need separate treatment. We are tempted to point out that chapters 64 to 73 contain the essence of Aristotle's rhetoric. Based on these and other Tamil works, the present writer delivered a course of three special lectures on "Tamil Rhetoric" under the auspices of the Annamalai University. Another great Greek book, *The Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans* bears a very close resemblance to Kural. This is a book of daily meditations, ascribed to Pythagoras who 'has been justly celebrated as a Trainer of Souls'. The Golden Verses do indeed give all the essential principles required for the right ordering of physical, affectional, intellectual, and devotional life. When they are put into regular practice all the real and lasting virtues of the Soul follow spontaneously as natural fruits of a well-ordered life. The book is extremely condensed; the English translation in verse consists of 82 lines. Here are a few extracts from the Golden Verses and the numbers of the Kural couplets which are almost identical in sense and expression :

"Wealth comes and goes  
Of ills, the Goddess Fortune gives to man

Bear meekly thou thy lot, nor grieve at it,  
But cure it as thou canst, Remember this :  
Fate gives the least of evil to the good.  
Many the reasonings that on men's ears  
Fall; good and bad. Admire not all of such  
Nor shun them neither.'

(Kurals 332, 339, 379,423).

"If one speaketh false,  
Be calm. And practise ever this that now  
I say. Let no man's word or deed seduce thee  
To do or say aught not to thy best good.  
First think, then act; lest foolish be thy deed.  
Unhappy he who thoughtless acts and speaks."

(Kurals 159, 157, 467,

The whole of the Golden Verses can be found in about  
forty-four couplets of the Kural.

Another noticeable fact is that the moral themes, the  
grand arguments on which some of the great poems of  
Tamil literature are based can be reduced to two or three  
couplets from the Kural. The story of Silappadhikaram  
is well-known to students of Tamil literature. 'The argu-  
ment' of that poem centres three moral truths:  
(1) He who deviates from the path of righteousness in ad-  
ministering justice will be slain by righteousness itself,  
(2) She that is endowed with the virtue of chastity is praised  
by the wise, (3) Destiny will unerringly pursue and destroy  
its victim. These three truths are enshrined in the couplets,

32, 54 and 380 of the Kural. Jivaka-Chintamani, which  
is counted as the first among the Maha-kavyas of Tamil,  
incorporates many couplets (Chintamani 509—Kural 621,  
Ch. 409—K. 361, Ch. 341—K. 1120 etc.). Kamban, the  
court-poet of the Imperial Cholas, has, in his version of the  
Ramayana, introduced the words and substance of many  
couplets from the Kural. Many ancient authors have directly  
quoted from the Kural; the following may be read with  
interest :

Saththanar, in his Manimekhalai Canto XXII, lines,  
59—61, quotes Kural couplet 55 :

“தெய்வத் தொழாஅள் கொழுநற் றெழுதெழுவான்  
பெய்யெனப் பெய்யும் பெருமழை யென்றவப்  
பொய்யில் புலவன் பொருளுரை தேராய்.”

The Saiva philosopher Umapathisivacharya in his Nenchu-  
vidu-thuthu quotes Kural 348 :

“தலைப்பட்டார் தீரத் துறந்தார் மயங்கி  
வலைப்பட்டார் மற்றையாரென்று—நிலைத் தமிழில்  
தெய்வப் புலமைத் திருவள்ளுவ ருரைத்த.”

Another Saiva philosopher Uyyavanthathevar in his Thiruk-  
kalitruppadiyar quotes Kural 359 and 362 :

“சார்புணர்ந்து சார்புகெட வொழுகி னென்றமையாற்  
சார்புணர்வு தானே தியானமுமாஞ்சார்பு  
கெடவொழுகின் நல்ல சமாதியுமாங் கேதப்  
படவருவ தில்லைனைப் பற்று.”  
“வேண்டுங்கால் வேண்டும் பிறவாமை யென்றமையான்”.

Cheraman Perumal, the saintly king of Kerala, in his Thiruk-kailayajnana-ula quotes Kurals 752 and 1101.

“இல்லாரை எல்லாரும் எள்ளுவர் செல்வரை  
எல்லாருஞ் செய்வர் சிறப்பென்னும்”

“கண்டுக்கேட டுண்டுயிர்த் துற்றறியு மைம்புலனும்  
ஒண்டொடி கண்ணே யுள என்று.”

An exhaustive research in this direction will swell into a fair-sized volume. The instances given are sufficient to show that Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural is indeed the book of books of Tamil-land.

Thiruvalluvar exhibits great erudition, first-hand knowledge of statecraft, of administration, of waging war and of concluding peace, of dealing with friends and foes, and a host of other things which only direct experience can teach. His is the same type of master-mind as that of Chanakya, (Kautilya) of ancient times and Mahatma Gandhi of our own times. He is a teacher (not only in the religious but also in the educational sense), a true philosopher, a mystic seer, a lover of little children, an affectionate husband, a man of disciplined habits, a staunch devotee of God and of the Sages, a wise administrator, and above all an ardent devotee of truth. Unlike the lives of divine incarnations and of great founders of religions, the perfection that Thiruvalluvar attained is something to which the normal man can aspire, if he chooses to lead a life of unbroken discipline, ever keeping the ideal in view. Therein lies the charm of Thiruvalluvar.

We shall conclude this essay by quoting *in extenso* from what the present writer contributed elsewhere (vide “The Origin and Growth of Tamil Literature” in *The Cultural Heritage of India, Volume III* published by Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee—The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 19 Keshab Chandra Sen Street, Calcutta).

“Thiruvalluvar, poet, philosopher and law-giver of ancient Tamil-land, is one of those master thinkers, whose writings have a worldwide significance. The sage lived probably in the first half of the first century A.D., when Ugra Pandya the Great was ruling over Pandinadu and the Chola throne was occupied by Perunar-killi who performed the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. The contemporary king of Cheranadu was Cheraman Mavanko. The three kings of this period were living in amity and there was peace in the land. The chieftain Atiyaman Neduman-Anji, his son Poguttelini and Nanjil-valluvan, a great patron of letters, also flourished about this time. The poetess Avvaiyar, who has addressed verses to all the kings and chieftains mentioned above, appears to be an elder contemporary of Thiruvalluvar. The great poets Kapilar, Puranar and Nakkirar<sup>1</sup> probably had passed away from the scene of their earthly activities at the time in which Thiruvalluvar came into prominence. The authors of the twin epics the *Silappadhikaram* and *Manimekhalai* were possibly junior contemporaries. In the realm of religious thought, the influence of Buddhism and Jainism, combining with the teachings of the Vedic religion, was producing a harmonious synthesis which in course of time

<sup>1</sup> *Thiruvalluva-malai* makes these poets contemporaries of Thiruvalluvar.



was to give birth to modern Hinduism as it evolved in South India. The Agamas and the Yoga philosophy, we have reason to believe, existed in the country in this remote age. They probably were treated as "Secret doctrines". The freer social life of the heroic age was, at this time, giving place to the *varnashrama dharma* (scheme of duties according to caste and order of life) introduced from the North. A contemporary king's performing the *rajasuya* sacrifice testifies to the fact that kingship had attained a high standard of development. The period under consideration was certainly an age of intellectual ferment which demanded a revaluation of life's ideals. Tholkappiyanaar, who lived in an earlier age, codified the social and civic ideals that existed at his time. These were found insufficient to meet the changes that had taken place in the modes of life, form of government, etc. A new formulation was needed and this was supplied by the profound thinker whose work carries the seal of authority from the time in which it originated up to the present day. A careful perusal of the Kural would show that Thiruvalluvar has gathered his ideas and expressions from the older Tamil poets and has marked on them the stamp of his own personality. The universal elements in the Kural may, by a careful analysis, be separated from the essentially Dravidian elements and the essentially Aryan elements contained in it.

"Many legends have gathered round the name of this great poet. One is the legend concerning his birth. We do not know how far these legends are tenable. Merely from the name Valluvan, and from the reference made by the author of *Jnanamritam*, a comparatively recent work, we

may not conclude that the poet was of low origin. The Valluvars were not considered low. A contemporary chieftain eulogized by many great poets and befriended by ruling monarchs is known as "Nanjil-Valluvan" or "Valluvan, lord of the Nanjil hill". It is more plausible to consider the poet as a kinsman of the said chieftain. The chieftain as well as the poet may have arisen from the old clan of Valluvars who sounded the great drum and broadcast the king's proclamation. The ripe wisdom in matters of statecraft exhibited in the Kural cannot be explained by any other means than by seeing the poet as a man who had not only a deep theoretical knowledge of political philosophy but also as a person well-acquainted with the practical details of administration. In the first chapter and a few other chapters of the book we are face to face with a mystic of profound spiritual realization, a veritable *rajarishi*. The lessons given in the chapter on "The Realization of Truth" give the essentials of Yoga philosophy in a nutshell. The chapters on "Love" which form the third part of the book are in truth the most exquisite gems that adorn the Tamil Muse."

Aristotle and Chanakya, the two great teachers of ancient times, were the preceptors of two great emperors, Alexander the Great and Chandragupta Maurya. They had the capacity to mould heroes out of common clay. The same potency is present in the teachings of Thiruvalluvar. Every son and daughter of Tamil-land can achieve the maximum amount of self-realization possible to him or her by applying assiduously to the teachings of their greatest book.

The book has been translated into Latin, English and other European languages by Beschi, Graul, Pope, Drew, V.V.S. Aiyar and others, but none has so far attempted a translation of the text along with Parimelazhagar's commentary. The text standing alone will obviously lead to errors of judgement, the chances for which will be much less if the translation of the commentary also is given. In our subsequent essays we shall say more about the contents of this great book.

"In ancient times society centred on the king, who as the *princeps* took the first place among his nobles and presided over the courts of justice. The executive functions relating to the administration of the country were in the hands of ministers who were personally responsible to the sovereign. The framing of laws was done by the five great assemblies whose enactments were subject to the approval of the supreme head of the State. There were various ways in which the people and the ministers could signify their discontent and disapproval of the king's actions, but all power was vested in the sovereign's hands and consequently arose the necessity for giving the proper kind of training to the person who is expected to succeed to the throne. All measures had to be taken to ensure his becoming a man of superior excellence. The teacher's oral instruction, his personality and conduct had a great deal to do with the mental and moral training of the prince; and at the same time a suitable text-book was also considered necessary. Such a book, by its very nature, should be practical and concise giving the necessary information.

precisely and unerringly. It should be sufficiently terse to be committed to memory and sufficiently elaborate to provide the solution for all practical problems of life.

Tolkappiyana's treatise on Rhetoric contains a chapter dealing with the king's conduct in war and peace and incidentally has something to say about the codes of conduct of others. It was primarily intended for the use of the bards and minstrels who sang the glories of the king. The information conveyed was, however, scanty and insufficient for practical purposes. According to traditional accounts Tolkappiyana was the first among the twelve disciples of the sage Agastya who led the first band of Aryan settlers, to Tamil-land. His treatise on Tamil Grammar and Rhetoric has been preserved throughout the centuries and modern scholarship has not utilized the treasures lying hidden in it. The second chapter of the third book throws a great deal of light upon the social and civic life of ancient Tamil people. Under the head of "Conquest" (*vakai*), Tolkappiyana treats of the supreme ethical ideal of his times. He defines "Conquest" as the attaining of excellence naturally and non-violently in the particular vocation to which one is called by birth and other circumstances. The commentator Nachnarkiniyar cites the case of Hiranyakasipu, the Titan who achieved world-domination as an example of non-conquest, for the achievement was based on undue effort and brute-force and consequently gained no recognition from righteous men. Annexing another's territory by aggressive warfare is classed under the head of "aggression" (*vanchi*). The Chera king Senguttuvan's leading an expedition northwards and subduing several Aryan kings merely for the pur-

pose of exhibiting the military prowess of the South is classed under this head. He who aspires to wear the *Vakai* garland, that is to gain the laurels of true "Conquest" should be acclaimed by righteous men as worthy of such recognition.

It is indeed remarkable to see that in the ancient Tamil society as it existed perhaps four or five millenniums ago the ideal of "Conquest" was held up as the supreme ethical ideal for all classes of people. Buddhism, when it was introduced into the South, rapidly spread because the Buddha was held up as the "Great Conqueror". Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte would have been classed by ancient Tamil people as mere "aggressors" and not conquerors. After defining "Conquest," Tolkappiyanar proceeds to enumerate the classes into which the society of his time was divided and the duties in life which they were expected to perform. First there were the Brahmans, referred to in Tamil as *Parppanar*. Their duties were six-fold; learning, the imparting of education, the performance of Vedic sacrifices, getting others to perform them, making gifts and accepting gifts. Conquest for the Brahman consisted in attaining excellence in one or more of the above six. To the second category belonged the ruling monarchs. Their duties were five-fold: learning, performing Vedic sacrifices such as the *Rajasuya* and *Aswamedha*, making gifts, protecting the people and punishing wrong-doers. The last mentioned duty may be directed towards unrighteous kings of other countries, in which case it was the duty of the conqueror to protect the people of the conquered territories. To the third category belonged the people, the general public, the fourth were the *Ariyars* (Sages) who could dis-

cern the past, the present and the future. The commentator gives the Buddha as an example and quotes an ancient poem which may be translated as follows :

Under the shade afforded by the unfading emerald  
leaves of the Bodhi tree he sat;

They say that his great heart was softer than a soft  
flower and shed the honey of compassion on one and all;

Yet we learn that the Piercing sword-like glances  
of Mara's handsome daughters were powerless to  
cut through that heart ;

How may it then be considered to be softer than a soft  
flower?

To the fifth category belonged the men who performed austerities; the soldiers constituted the sixth and other combatants the seventh. Under other combatants the commentators include all those who contested for the first place in oratory, dancing, music, composing poems *extempore*, various games of skill, cock-fighting, ram-fighting and also gambling.

The special and general excellences of the above seven classes are grouped by Tolkappiyanar under twice nine categories. It is outside the scope of this brief essay to deal with them exhaustively. It would suffice for our present purpose to state that the commentators quote freely from several chapters of the later work Tiruvalluvar's *Kural* to exemplify the principles laid down by Tolkappiyanar.

The supreme ethical ideal, as well as the principles of social life laid down by the ancient work of Tolkappi-

yanar are elaborated by Thiruvalluvar which is primarily a handbook for the Prince, the ideal man of ancient Tamil society. Retiring into solitude for treading the path of self-realization is considered to be the crowning phase of a good life. Harmonious social organization is laid down as a factor necessary for individual right living. The pursuit of truth and the application of truth for the enrichment and elevation of human life are emphasized in Tiruvalluvar's philosophy. Beauty, harmony, knowledge, wisdom and creative power are placed among the values that make life worth living. Self-discipline is considered to be the means for the achievement of these values.

Of the 133 chapters into which the *Kural* is divided the first four form the Introduction; the caption of these four are : (1) In praise of God. (2) In praise of rain, (3) On the greatness of those who have renounced the world, and (4) On the glorification of Righteousness (Tamil *Aram*, Sanskrit *Dharma*). Then follows the book on Righteousness. This is divided into two sections: the life of the householder and the life of the ascetic. The life of the householder, consisting of twenty chapters, treats of family life, the blessings of a good helpmate, offspring, love, hospitality, kindness of speech, gratitude, uprightness of heart, self-control, purity of conduct, non-desiring of another man's wife, forgiveness, non-envying, non-coveting, refraining from slander and idle talk, shunning evil, complaisance, the making of gifts and the acquiring of fame. Under the life of the ascetic, Tiruvalluvar lays down the discipline of compassion, the abjuring of fleshmeat, the practice of truth and abstaining from anger, fraud and all kinds of injury

to living beings. Such a discipline is meant to lead to the acquisition of wisdom which is treated under the heads, "The vanity of all things, Renunciation, Self-realization and the Cessation of all desires." Then follows a chapter on 'Destiny'.

The second book, which treats of national and civic life, is divided into three sections entitled (i) The Prince, (ii) The members of the Body Politic and (iii) Miscellaneous. Section one, which is primarily intended for the prince and incidentally for all who strive to attain their highest in national and civic life is divided into twenty-five chapters and lays down the fundamental principles that should govern the education of the prince. These are treated under the following heads: the ideal of kingship, the worth of true learning, the evils of illiteracy, the acquisition of knowledge by means of listening, the cultivation of the understanding, eschewing faults of character with a view to the cultivation of desirable habits, seeking the society of worthy people, keeping away from vulgar company, deliberating before acting, judging one's own strength and that of one's opponent, judging the opportune time, judging the field of action, testing the men on whom confidence is to be placed, choosing the men for action, cherishing of kindred, guarding against procrastination, just government, tyranny, abstaining from extreme harshness, practising considerateness, making use of spies, putting the whole soul into the work in hand, abstaining from sloth, cultivating manly exertion, intrepidity in the face of misfortune.

The first sub-division of section two consisting of ten chapters treats of the qualifications necessary for ministers and ambassadors. These are treated under the heads: the minister, his eloquence, purity of action, power of decision capacity for conducting affairs, the ambassador, his behaviour before princes, his capacity to judge men, his discernment of the attitude of an assembly, and his self-confidence in facing an audience. Then follows a chapter on the characteristics of a well-ordered country, another on fortifications and a third on the acquisition of wealth. Then follow two chapters on the characteristics of a well-ordered army and the virtues of a warrior. These are followed by five chapters on friendship treated under the heads: friendship, the testing of fitness for friendship, intimacy, the friendship that injures, and false friendship. Next come eleven chapters on the social evils arising from folly, excessive anger and lust and a chapter on the laws of health. Section three speaks of various factors that go to form a well-ordered civic life and these are treated under the heads: birth, honour, greatness, social graces, culture, the mishandling of wealth, sensitiveness to shame, advancing the interests of one's people, husbandry, indigence, beggary, the dread of beggary, the degraded life. The second book which treats of national and civic life contains on the whole seventy chapters. The third book which treats of love contains twenty-five chapters of which seven treat of courtship and eighteen of wedded love. The philosophy of life in its individual and social aspects is dealt with such fulness and precision by the sage Tiruvalluvar that his immortal work has been a guide-book throughout the centuries not only to the men and women speaking his mother tongue but to nations who live far outside the limits of Tamil-land.

#### 14. ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA

"May you come closer together,  
May there be harmony in your speech,  
May your minds apprehend alike,  
Even as the gods of yore shared in  
agreement the oblations  
that were offered to them.

"May you be united in your prayers  
and may your congregation  
be directed to the same end;  
May you be one in your resolution  
and also in your deliberations.

"Alike be your affections,  
and unified be your hearts,  
Based upon a common determination,  
May the amity amongst you  
be perfect and complete."

With these words of benediction, taken from the ancient scriptures, let us usher in the New Year. On this auspicious occasion, we offer our humble salutations to the Great Master, whose life stands as the beacon light that guides us on our path. To our brothers and sisters, the men and women of all nationalities and races, we send our cordial greetings and wish them all a happy and prosperous New Year.

\* \* \*

We beg to announce that the Prabuddha Bharata (Awakened India) is entering into the fortyfifth year of its public life. As in the past, so in the future its endeavour would be to serve the cause of Truth, to the best of its abilities. "Be bold and face the Truth! Be one with it," was the injunction given to this journal when it first entered its Himalayan home. The affectionate tone in which that injunction was given and the apostolic blessings with which it was conveyed provide the Prabuddha Bharata not only with a never-failing source of strength, but also with a clear-cut programme for its whole career. The full text of the poem addressed to "The Awakened India" may be seen on the opening page of the Prabuddha Bharata of August 1898; we give below the two concluding stanzas.

"Then speak, O Love!—

Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how  
Visions melt and fold after fold of dreams  
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone,  
In all its glory shines,—

And tell the world—

Awake, arise, dream no more !  
This is the land of dreams, where Karma  
Weaves unthreaded garlands, with our thoughts,  
Of flowers sweet or noxious,— and none  
Has root or stems, being born in naught, which  
The softest breath of Truth drives back to  
Primal nothingness! Be bold, and face  
The Truth ! Be one with it ! Let visions cease,  
Or, if you cannot, dream then truer dreams,  
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free."

In the lines quoted above, the world is referred to as "the land of dreams". Under existing conditions, particularly with reference to those regions, where armed conflicts have brought about wretchedness and utter desolation, this said planet of ours has become "a land of nightmares." The powers of evil appear to hold the whole world in bondage. Nations seem to have lost the capacity of coming closer together and settling up differences. The warclouds enveloping both the hemispheres seems to be so dense as to defy removal by mere human ingenuity. Partial philosophies appearing under the guise of various "ideologies" seem to work for strife and confusion. Men who hold in their hands the destinies of nations seem to be caught by an abject fear that prevents them from taking a bold stand for saving humanity from the dangerous whirlpool towards which it is drifting.

\* \* \*

Is there no way to help the human race to get rid of the fear and the despair that threaten the breakdown of institutions built by centuries of patient effort? Statesmen may fail, but where are the ministers of religion? Where are the men and women who profess to lead the consecrated life, they who claim to owe allegiance to the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe? Can they not come together and deliver the world from the nightmare to which it is subjected? They can, provided they set aside all shades of intolerance, meet together on a common platform and pool their resources in order to give the world a new lead and a new social order. History testifies to the fact that religious intolerance is as

much a cause of strife as national jealousies, racial antipathies and class hatreds. Leaders of organized religions can never hope to put forward workable programmes for establishing "peace among men, justice in human relationships, and right order in a troubled world" until they are tolerant enough to agree among themselves and speak with one voice. The four great religions of the world had their origin in Asia. All of them carry the message of peace and goodwill, sympathy and tolerance. They claim as their adherents the overwhelming majority of the human race. If they can come together and act in harmony, they can fight the forces of irreligion and help a wearied world to set its house in order. This is expected of them, will they do it ?

\* \* \*

"A truly religious man should think that other religions are also so many paths leading to the Truth. He should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions."

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Herein lies the formula for establishing the world's fellowship of faiths, a fellowship that can bring about "peace among men, justice in human relationships and right order in a troubled world". Of the three desirable consummations enumerated above, justice in human relationships occupies the key position, for when that is established, the other two necessarily follow. Mutual respect based upon

toleration is indeed the corner-stone of the edifice of justice in human relationships. It, therefore, becomes necessary for men of culture to study the religions of humanity in order to understand the other man's point of view and respect the other man's faith. The world's fellowship of faiths should endeavour to discover and utilize all sources of moral and spiritual strength found in the various religious faiths. What contribution can Hinduism in its broadest sense, the religion of the Vedanta, make towards the common endeavour mentioned above; what constructive ideas can it put forward for giving the world a new lead and a new social order ?

"The ideal society, according to the Vedanta is not a millennium on earth, nor a reign of angels, where there will be nothing but a thorough equality of men, and peace and joy—the Vedanta indulges in no such chimeras—but one, where religious toleration, neighbourly charity, and kindness even to animals form the leading features, where the fleeting concerns of life are subordinated to the eternal, where man tries not to externalise but to internalise himself more and more, and where the whole social organism moves as it were, with a sure instinct towards God." This fairly comprehensive statement made by the Prabuddha Bharata at the very outset of its career, holds good today and we make ourselves bold to say that it will hold good for all time to come. The ideals stated herein are wholly non-sectarian—they are based upon the Upanishads, the teachings of which, we are glad to note, are spreading among the thinkers of all nations both of the East and of the West.

\* \* \*

The history of Science in the West and of Philosophy in the East exhibit a brilliant record of the patient effort and rigorous discipline which the best among the human race had to undergo to perceive a few of the infinite aspects in which Reality can reveal Itself to Its votaries. It would be presumptuous for men to imagine that the end of human achievement has already been reached. The human race may have to scale much greater heights before it can attain the full consummation of its glorious destiny. Civilizations may decline and fall; Gibbons and Spenglers may trace the causes that bring about such declines and downfalls, but the things of permanent value received as a reward of the struggle extending over centuries shall continue to persist amidst all changes and vicissitudes. These form the real wealth of humanity; it is the function of religion to preserve these values and transmit them to posterity. The glorious achievements of the ancient Greeks, lay hidden under a bushel during the Dark Ages in Europe. When these were brought to light, European civilization took a long step forward. Likewise in ancient manuscripts and in the seclusion of monasteries lie hidden the spiritual treasures of the Hindus, which if brought to light will immeasurably benefit the whole of the human race. The existence of an inner spiritual realm of inconceivable grandeur and inexhaustible vastness was first announced here, in these Himalayan solitudes, amidst the silence of these snow-clad peaks. The glorious realm that stood revealed to the gaze of the Vedic seers, the pioneers in this mighty adventure, was explored by successive generations of sages and seers not only of India but also of all the neighbouring coun-

tries of the East. The inestimable spiritual treasures patiently gathered by the wise men of the East have been jealously guarded against the ravages of time and are, as it were, ready for distribution. But alas, how few of the sons and daughters of India have a real recognition of the value of their own priceless possessions.

\* \* \*

Texts may be studied, commentaries may be mastered, and as a result of deep thought a clear intellectual comprehension of a principle may be secured; yet for all that the same principle would be of no practical value until it is fully integrated into the life of the thinker. When once it becomes integrated it turns out to be a dynamic force. Innumerable are the life-giving principles that lie deeply buried in the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, for as we have already remarked, infinite are the aspects in which Reality reveals Itself to Its votaries. Some of the great sons of Modern India, among whom we count saints, sages, poets, philosophers, scientists, statesmen, artists and reformers, have shown to an admiring world the value of some of the teachings of the Upanishads.

Man's divine heritage was merely a phrase, a dream, and a pious hope to many of us, until a God-man appeared on the stage of Modern India and demonstrated the full implications of this great Truth. Everything around him reflected his inner glory and stood, as it were, transfigured by his very presence. Then for a moment, we felt, that we were also sons of God, heirs to the divine heritage. Thus we became aware of the grandest and all-inclusive truth stated in the Upanishads.



There came along with this God-man, a messenger of Truth, almost a stranger to our convention-ridden, power-worshipping world. His great heart melted on seeing the diverse forms of social injustice inflicted by man upon his brother man. To him, the pretensions of society and the emptiness of the teachings of conventional social reforms appeared to be an insult to human nature. The deeper truths of social order based upon the divinity of man stood revealed to the steady gaze of this great Yogi, this man among men.

He diagnosed our social ills and discovered that the unfailing remedy for all our maladies was to be found in the Upanishads. Says he, "My friends, as one of your blood, as one that lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world: the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads. Aye, this is the one scripture in the world, of all others, that does not talk of salvation, but of freedom." All his utterances, extending over seven volumes form, as it were, a fourth commentary on the Upanishads synthesising and completing the three classical commentaries.

\*

\*

\*

Another great triumph which the ancient Dharma scored was in a quarter where its influence was least expected. In a world where national jealousies were rampant, where the pledged word counted for nothing, where false propaganda polluted the very ether that pervades all space, politicians naturally thought that as far as their department of life was concerned the claims of truth may be set aside, when national interests were at stake. Fortunately for India and the world a great leader appeared at the right time, to uphold the highest ideal and to declare to all the world that Truth alone leads to real emancipation. The far-reaching effects of this noble declaration would be seen in the years to come, when the nations of the world would be thankful to this country for showing them the way to live and let live.

\*

\*

\*

The great Upanishadic truth that one Life pulsates through all beings, sentient and insentient was objectively demonstrated to the world by a scientist of India. A philosopher leaving these shores went amidst the learned savants of the West and brilliantly upheld the Upanishadic doctrine which states that the ultimate truth transcends the limitations of intellect and reason. Our poet who is also an educationist showed by his life and writings that the Upanishads are the source of all true art and of all true principles of education. The glory of the ancient scriptures has been upheld from all sides and India stands upon the threshold of a new era, wherein she discovers a new responsibility, the responsibility of teaching the world those glorious truths which will save humanity from the chaos that threatens to

deserted all civilization. Paradoxical as it may seem, the message of a new freedom has to go forth from a nation that has not as yet won its own political emancipation. On deeper thought, one finds that there is nothing strange about it; for herein history is merely repeating itself. Was it not the enslaved Hebrew race that carried to Imperial Rome the message of a new deliverance ?

\* \* \*

In his foreword to the volume on "Contemporary Indian Philosophy," the General Editor of the Library of Philosophy says, "as in politics so in philosophy, India stands at the opening of a new era in her history which requires above all things, along with an abiding admiration of her past achievements, a forward-looking faith in the power of the soul of her people to rise as high as, and perhaps even to excel the greatest of them." Fully endorsing the opinion expressed by the learned savant, the Prabuddha Bharata exhorts the sons and daughters of India to study, to understand and to realise in their life the great truths of all religions. We all know that Islam, Christianity and Buddhism have much in common with the ancient Aryan Path. What was attempted in the present discussion was to show that here on the soil of India, religion entered into all the concerns of life and that when nations outside were endeavouring to go farther and farther away from religion, we in India were trying to draw ourselves closer and closer to it. Further, let the sons and daughters of India cultivate that forward-looking faith which would help them to rise to heights never before attempted either by their ancestors or

by the other nations of the world. Philosophy, in this country, never stood isolated from life and experience. The new era of philosophical thought in India should be directed towards the discovery of essential values in all departments of life and thereby enable the nation to play its part worthily among the nations of the world.

## 15. THE APPLICATION OF THE VEDANTIC IDEAL TO EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

The concluding portion of Dr. Syed's thoughtful contribution published in this issue prompts us to add our own quota to the discussion of a subject that appeals to parents, teachers, philosophers and others interested in the future of the race. We shall endeavour to indicate the lines on which it is possible to work out a complete system of education based upon the principles of Vedanta philosophy. Such a system, elaborated from first principles accepted universally, would solve not merely a national problem, but a very urgent international problem. Education is one of the means for raising man above the limitations of group loyalties such as are put forward by militant nationalism and investing him with that true humility which welcomes light from whatever source it may come. "All countries are my countries, all men are my kinsmen," says a truly educated man. "The realms of kings are limited territorially, the empire over which a man of learning rules is not limited by national frontiers." Viewed in this light, "national education" becomes something like "hot ice," a contradiction in terms.

\* \* \*

When learning was resuscitated in Europe after the Dark Ages, it was customary for reigning monarchs and cabinet ministers of one country to shower honours and

presents upon the scholars of another country. The same thing happened in Asia also. Indian scholars were welcomed in China and men of learning from China were patronized by Indian kings. The salvation of the world and the freeing of man from the chaos in which he finds himself today appear to lie in the direction of making all great centres of learning truly international, so that 'the spirit of truth may enjoy full independence, untrammelled by frontiers or by political interests.' An educational system based upon the principles of Vedanta philosophy would lead towards such a desirable consummation. The oneness of existence, the divinity of man, the unity of God and the harmony of religions are the four cardinal principles on which the Vedanta philosophy is based. Education can be the means for the realization of all the above-mentioned principles. Thus we see that there is much in common between Education and Vedanta.

\* \* \*

Before we enter into the subject itself, we may mention that the science of pedagogy had its votaries in mediaeval India. Pavananthi, a Jain philosopher, grammarian and educationist who flourished in the South probably in the twelfth century, has given in his *Nannool* a complete system of pedagogics which has guided generations of teachers to approach their high calling in the right spirit. For many centuries the Jain monasteries performed the dual function of spreading sacred and secular knowledge, the sacred being looked upon as the end and the secular the means for the attainment of that end. The traditions created by Jain edu

cationists are persisting to this day in Tamil-land. Dr. Das Gupta's essay on "Lord Buddha and His educational philosophy," published in the pages of this Journal (February, 1940), throws light upon the principles which must have guided the educational theory of another monastic order which devoted itself to the training of the young and the imparting of both forms of knowledge.

\* \* \*

As we direct our eyes further back to the hermitages of ancient India, we find that they were also centres for the providing of a complete education, not only intellectual and spiritual but also moral and physical. We may get some glimpses of the educational theory of the teachers of the Upanishadic times by examining the Upanishadic literature from this particular point of view. The Upanishads are the fountain-head of the Vedanta school of thought and as we propose to speak of the application of the Vedantic ideal to educational problems, we may begin by giving some illustrative examples drawn from the *Chhandogya*, one of the major Upanishads.

\* \* \*

"Satyakama, the son of Jabala, addressed his mother and said: 'I wish to become a Brahmacharin (religious student), mother. Of what family am I?' She said to him: 'I do not know, my child, of what family thou art. In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant (waiting on the guests in my father's house), I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama. Say that thou art Satyakama Jabala.'

He, going to Gautama Haridrumata said to him, 'I wish to become a Brahmacharin with you, Sir. May I come to you, Sir?' He said to him: 'Of what family are you, my friend?' He replied: 'I do not know, Sir, of what family am; I asked my mother and she answered: "In my youth when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama." I am, therefore, Satyakama Jabala, Sir.' He said to him: 'No one but a true Brahmana would thus speak out. Go and fetch fuel, friend, I shall initiate you. You have not swerved from the truth.' Having initiated him, he chose four hundred lean and weak cows, and said: 'Tend these, friend.' He drove them out and said to himself, 'I shall not return unless I bring back a thousand.' He dwelt a number of years (in the forest)."

\* \* \*

When the herd became a thousand, it is said that the bull of the herd spoke to Satyakama and taught him one phase of the Ultimate Truth; the fire taught him another phase; a flamingo (meaning the Sun) taught him a third phase and a diver-bird (meaning the vital breath) taught him still another phase. When the student returned to the teacher, the latter observing the shining countenance of the student observed: 'Friend, you shine like one who knows the Ultimate Truth; who has taught you?' Whereupon the student replied that it was not men that gave him instruction and added that he desired to receive instruction from the teacher, for he said that only knowledge which is learnt

from a teacher led to real good. The teacher then taught him the same knowledge.

\* \* \*

"There lived once Svetaketu Aruneya. To him his father Uddalaka Aruni said : 'Svetaketu, go to school ; for there is none belonging to our race, darling, who not having studied the Veda, is, as it were, a Brahmana by birth only'. Having begun his apprenticeship (with a teacher), when he was twelve years of age, Svetaketu returned to his father, when he was twenty-four, having then studied all the Vedas,—conceited, considering himself well-read and stern. His father said to him : 'Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern, my dear, have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known ?' 'What is that instruction, Sir ?' he asked. The father replied : 'My dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay ; and as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold and as, my dear, by one pair of nail-scissors all that is made of iron is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is iron,—thus, my dear, is that instruction.' The son said : 'Surely those venerable men (my teachers) did not know that. For if they had known it why should they not have told it me? Do you, Sir, therefore tell me that.' 'Be it so', said the father."

\* \* \*

" 'Fetch me from thence a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree'. 'Here is one, Sir'. 'Break it'. 'It is broken, Sir'. 'What do you see there ?' 'These seeds, almost infinitesimal'. 'Break one of them'. 'It is broken, Sir'. 'What do you see there ?' 'Not anything, Sir'. The father said : 'My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there, of that very essence this great Nyagrodha tree exists. Believe it, my son. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it'. 'Please, Sir, inform me still more', said the son. 'Be it so, my child', the father replied. 'Place this salt in water, and then wait on me in the morning'. The son did as he was commanded. The father said to him : 'Bring me the salt, which you placed in the water last night.' The son having looked for it, found it not, for, of course, it was melted. The father said : 'Taste it from the surface of the water. How is it ?' The son replied : 'It is salt'. 'Taste it from the middle. How is it ?' The son replied : 'It is salt'. 'Taste it from the bottom. How is it ?' The son replied : 'It is salt'. The father said : 'Throw it away and then wait on me'. He did so ; but salt exists for ever. Then the father said : 'Here also, in this body, forsooth, you do not perceive the True (Sat) my son ; but there indeed it is. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.'"

\* \* \*

The very first thing that strikes us is the atmosphere of freedom in which instruction was imparted. The harmony between the minds of the teacher and the taught seems to

be the basis of that freedom. In this connection we may quote the words of the Vedic sage, Jaimini: "Now the teaching which is the function of the teacher cannot be fulfilled without the learning which is the function of the pupil, and therefore the very injunction to teach implies and establishes a corresponding obligation to learn, since the influencer's efforts fail without those of the one to be influenced." Satyakama and Svetaketu went to their teachers seeking instruction and, therefore, prepared to receive it. The pupil was free to choose his teacher and on the other hand it was open to the teacher to refuse to accept a pupil. Family was taken into consideration, the exceptional case of Satyakama proves the rule. The fact that the would-be student was of a good family was not enough to qualify him for studentship. He should possess the necessary mental and moral qualities. Turning to Pavananthi's pedagogics, we find that "drunkenness, dullness, shyness, lust, deceit, disease, cowardice, obstinacy, anger, sloth, slowness of understanding, mental confusion, cruelty, sinfulness and faithlessness" are enumerated by him as the qualities that make a person unfit to receive instruction.

An exceptionally high standard of mental and moral qualities was expected of the teacher. The student was initiated into knowledge. This ceremony was in form a religious ceremony and in spirit it conveyed to the pupil the good wishes of the teacher and created an indissoluble tie between the teacher and the pupil. The method of imparting instruction was highly practical. The illustrations given above clearly show that the teacher led the pupil to discover

facts and relationships. His own function was merely to confirm the pupil's discoveries and whenever necessary point out to him other possible methods of approach. The curriculum of studies was very wide. In the same Upanishad we find Narada approaching Sanatkumara asking for instruction, whereupon Sanatkumara says: "Relate unto me what you know, I shall then teach you what is beyond." Narada gives a formidable list of the subjects that he had studied. Sanatkumara, after listening to Narada says: 'Whatever you have read, is only a name'. The old teachers insisted upon the students' going deep into the essence of things. Hearing the truth, meditating upon it and realizing it were the three stages of assimilating the instruction.

We are painfully aware of the fact that the rigid timetables, the examinations and the crowded class-rooms of the present day cannot be made to breathe in that atmosphere of freedom, tranquillity and beauty that characterized the old forest schools of Vedic times. The schoolmaster of the present-day cannot also pick and choose his pupils. In spite of all these drawbacks, let us proceed to see to what extent the present curricula of studies and methods of instruction can be attuned to harmonize with the Vedantic ideal. The principle of the oneness of existence would be the background on which all instruction in the physical and the biological sciences would be given. The fact that the same energy manifests itself as mechanical movement, as heat, as light and as electro-magnetic waves and that the same electrons and protons go to build up an amazing variety of chemical elements and that the same consciousness mani-

feels itself in the sentient and insentient, and furthermore that the aforesaid energy, electrons and protons and the consciousness are linked to one another bears out the oneness of existence and also testifies to the law and harmony underlying Nature. Modern scientists like Eddington, Jeans and Einstein would lead the student from Nature to God. The old Newtonian mechanical conception of the universe which made the mind of the student tend towards intellectual conceit and atheism has gone to the limbo of discarded facts. Today matter itself stands spiritualised, and the sciences have become the allies of religious philosophy. Miss Evelyn Underhill, the well-known writer on mysticism, asks us to regard the mystic life as a matter of biology. Oscar Ljungstrom, the engineer philosopher of Sweden, starting from mathematical kinetics and kinematics passes on to crystals, plants, animals, man, superman and the gods, showing how the same conscious spirit manifests throughout nature (vide Hibbert Journal, April, 1938). Bergson tells us that "the universe is a machine whose function is to make possible the emergence of gods." The method of teaching the sciences is the empirical method of observation and experiment and this we have seen, in the story of Svetaketu, was the method adopted by the Upanishadic teachers for teaching the highest truth.

\* \* \*

Next we come to the principle of the divinity of man. The Hebrew prophet Moses tells us in the Genesis that God made man in His own image. Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish seer would have us believe that the human form resembles the form of heaven. The Hindu philosophers

tell us that potentially man possesses infinite existence, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss. May be; but as he is now, sorrowstricken, frail and limited, in what way does man resemble his Creator? Man is also a creator: in that way he resembles God. Artistic expression is, therefore, the common factor between the Creator and the creature that was made in His own image. In teaching the fine arts and poetry, this principle of the divinity of man should be the guiding principle. The student should be encouraged to give creative expression to his ideas; correctness of technique can follow later. How few are the teachers who evaluate the creative genius of a pupil in reading through the pupil's attempts at composition. Errors of grammar and spelling are the only things that catch the eye of the average schoolmaster; no wonder the present system produces faultless clerks and fails to develop originality and initiative.

\* \* \*

Music, which, as the poet Dryden observes, has the power to draw angels to the earth and make an Alexander feel like a god, has great potentiality in expressing the divine in man. It is, of course, extremely necessary to see that the sublime does not descend to the ridiculous as it often does in the present day in cheap entertainment halls. The ancient Greeks had only two subjects in their curriculum of studies; music and gymnastics. The word music, derived from the Muses, included many other subjects such as oratory, dancing and play-acting. What gymnastics was to the body, music was to the mind. Both aimed at harmony, a balanced many-sidedness. The beautiful Yogic poses handed down to us by the Hatha Yogis of old aim at strength

and harmony in repose, the system of physical culture developed by the ancient Greeks aimed at beauty of form and harmony in movement. Military drill of the present day aims at making automata of human beings, it often emphasises muscular development at the cost of the internal organs. The ascetic ideal of discarding the claims of the body was not meant for students. The later-day Greek ideal of worshipping beauty of form is equally pernicious for it leads to effeminacy. The Spartan ideal set up by that wise lawgiver Lycurgus has many points of excellence which would appeal to the teacher who is keen on developing fitness and endurance in his pupils. A word of caution may be necessary here, an over-emphasis on the merely physical often results in a neglect of the mental and the spiritual. Man is essentially a spirit, his interest in the physical is limited to the preserving of his physical vesture in a state of efficiency, so as to make it a fit instrument for carrying out the will of God, the captain of his soul.

\* \* \*

Taking his stand upon his inherent divinity, man should learn to see the eternal in the midst of the evanescent. A prince does not cease to be a prince even when he chooses to appear in pauper's clothes. The Hindu scriptures speak of the human soul as a prince held captive in a hamlet of lowly huntsmen. The spiritual teacher is compared to the king, the father of the prince. The teaching consists in letting the disciple know his true identity. Once the aspirant becomes aware of his heritage, taking possession of it is only a matter of time. What is true of spiritual teaching is equally true in other forms of teaching also. Courtesy,

tolerance, generosity, compassion, dignity of bearing and such other qualities naturally come to one who knows that he is the heir-apparent of the king of kings. Here the teacher is the visible manifestation of the Deity, the model which the student is called upon to hold before his mind's eye. Great indeed is the responsibility of the teacher.

\* \* \*

Ideas make men. Men influence one another by means of ideas, hence the necessity for assimilating true and proper ideas. The earlier this is begun the better. Modern psychology has a great deal to tell us of the potency of suggestion, conscious as well as unconscious. It is a wise providence that has set in the mother's heart the love that beholds the good points in her offspring. The truly sympathetic teacher would also see the good points in his pupil; by timely suggestion and words of encouragement, he would draw out the virtues of his pupil and help him to manifest them properly. Even in intellectual matters, nothing is gained by harping upon faults and drawbacks. "You have done well, try to do better" is the advice which the wise teacher gives to his pupils. Virtue is a teachable thing, it is taught not by words but by actions. There is very little value in mere sermonizing.

\* \* \*

We pass on to the third Vedantic principle of the unity of God. The implication of this is more than the conception of monotheism. The principle urges us to accept all the gods of all the nations as the manifestations of one God.



The path of knowledge leads man to the conception of the unity of Godhead; the cult of beauty on the other hand leads to various forms of polytheism. The religion of the Greeks was polytheistic. Such a religion leads to poetry, drama, sculpture and architecture. Strict monotheism leads to a stern and disciplined life, the readiness to follow the call of duty unquestioningly. The harmonising of the two aspects and observing the unity in diversity is secured as the result of a wide culture. We shall say more about this under harmony of religions. Here let us say something about the study of religion and ethics. The Roman empire had a State religion, the emperor being the Supreme pontiff. The existence of a State religion did not in any way restrict the freedom of conscience of the individual citizen. Likewise, some modern States also have State religions and at the same time extend the right of freedom of worship to the citizens. Totalitarian States try to make the State the object of the highest allegiance and thereby discard God and religion. Schools, specially those that are aided or conducted by the State, labour under certain difficulties in the matter of religious instruction. In their attempt to hold the balance even to all denominations, they often take the line of least resistance and drop religious instruction altogether or substitute a course in ethics in place of religion.

Apart from their spiritual value, the major religions of the world have a cultural value, which a seeker after education cannot afford to miss. World history can be viewed as the story of religious prophets and great saviours. Can a full course of world history afford to omit the accounts

connected with the following great names : Moses, Krishna, Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammed and Luther? We advocate a course of religious instruction which would include all the great religions of the world. Studied with religion as its background, history will have a new meaning and a fresh significance, and geography will interpret world-synthesis.

\* \* \*

Now let us take up the fourth principle ; the principle of the harmony of religions. The Vedanta wants the Christian to be a better Christian, a Hindu to be a better Hindu and a Muslim to be a better Muslim. It does not want the world to become a dull uniformity. Each religion, while manifesting to the full all its special characteristics, should practise that tolerance which would permit a similar right to neighbouring religions. What is the educational value of the attitude of harmony ? It would promote the solidarity of mankind, cultivate true love and understanding, wide knowledge and sympathy and as a final result would emancipate the intellect, freeing it from passions and prejudices. Crusades led by religious fanaticism lead to bitterness and mutual loss, whereas the attitude of harmony augments the gains of all parties concerned. To a careful observer, even the working of the markets of the world would reveal the need for tolerance and mutual understanding. World-peace and the setting up of a new world-order would altogether lose their meaning unless seen in the light of the harmony of religions.

Limitation of space forbids us to pursue the subject further. The study of Vedanta is in itself a mental discipline of a very high order. It also provides a rational basis for ethics and the social sciences. Accepting the conclusions of physical sciences it goes a step further and demonstrates the unity underlying them. In short it provides the needed formulae for the harmonising of all human endeavours and aspirations.

## 16. AS A NATION THINKETH

“A nation becomes whatever she believes herself to be. She is made great, not by her relative superiority, but by her thought about herself. It becomes important, therefore, to ask—what conception of her own nature and power forms the inheritance of India”.

—*Sister Nivedita*

The Aryan scriptures declare that the ‘real man’ is eternally free. All truth, all beauty and all goodness are already in him. They are, as it were, shrouded in the darkness of ignorance; the moment the light of wisdom appears, the enveloping darkness departs and the soul comes to know itself. Then the mortal becomes immortal and all the powers that were lying latent in the soul begin to manifest themselves. So long as man is unaware of his own spiritual inheritance, no external power can assist him to attain the fullness of his growth. Once he becomes aware of it, no power on earth can retard his progress to the ultimate goal of life. The slave who hugs his chains continues to be a slave. The free in spirit is free in whatever circumstances he may find himself. Self-knowledge alone helps a man to solve the problems of life.

\* \* \*

“Know thyself” is as applicable to the nation as to the individual. The same spiritual forces that bring about the

regeneration of the individual act in shaping the destinies of nations. Before we proceed to apply the principle of self-realization to the problems of national regeneration let us examine a little more closely the way in which it is applicable to the problems of individual growth and development. At the very outset we may notice that the words of the Delphic Oracle have their bearing not only on the ultimate goal of life but also on all the varied expressions of life in all its stages of development. The true evaluation of one's own nature and power is the first essential step in the path of self-development. Such an evaluation would serve as an integrating factor that would enable the individual to gather together the scattered forces of his mind and personality and direct them towards well-defined aims. A fully integrated personality is more powerful than one that is divided against itself. Again, it may be noted that nothing is gained by directing one's attention to errors, imperfections and weaknesses. In the very nature of things these exist in all growing organisms. Otherwise growth would be meaningless. But dwelling upon negative aspects tends to retard growth, whereas affirmations strengthen the mind. Progress is not from error to truth, but from lesser perfection to greater perfection. The positive aspects should, therefore, be seen and brought to the surface. Nachiketas in the Upanishadic story says : "I am first among many, and again among many I occupy a middle position, but never have I been the worst." Life is so full, so rich and so varied that every individual can like Nachiketas find several positive traits in which he would stand foremost and several others in which he would occupy a moderately good place. The discovery of these would help the

individual to visualize clearly his immediate aim. It may also give him a sufficiently clear view of the ultimate goal to which he should direct his life's energies.

\* \* \*

Another point needs clearing up before we proceed further. What should be the individual's attitude towards his own past? We have already noted that it is profitless to dwell upon past weaknesses, neither is it helpful to rest contented with the laurels gained in the past. It is the present that matters. The past is valuable in so far as it illumines the present. "The dead never return; the past night does not reappear; a spent-up tidal wave does not rise anew; neither does man inhabit the same body over again. So from the worship of the dead past, O man, we invite you to the worship of the living present; from the regretful brooding over by-gones, we invite you to the activities of the present; from the waste of energy in retracing lost and demolished pathways, we call you back to broad newlaid highways lying very near. He that is wise, let him understand." (Swami Vivekananda).

\* \* \*

The past and the future have their share in determining the present. In the pathway of life, if the past indicates the milestone which the wayfarer has reached, the forward-looking faith that plans the future is the distant mountain peak that determines the direction in which the wayfarer has to proceed. He that proceeds steadily with faith in his heart reaches the goal sooner or later. Having made

these observations regarding the application of the principle of self-realization to the growth and development of the individual, let us proceed to see how far the same principle can be applied to the problems of national regeneration. "A nation becomes whatever she believes herself to be." The belief here referred to is not a mere acceptance but a living faith, a confidence that remains unshaken by the vicissitudes of fortune. The scion of a noble family having inherited certain moral and spiritual characteristics persists in them throughout his life-time. Neither prosperity nor adversity has the power to shake him off from his moorings. This steady attitude towards life is known as a man's character. It is this character that determines the manhood of a man. Similarly also, it is the national character that determines the nationhood of a nation.

\* \* \*

There are ebbs and flows in the life-current of an individual. Likewise periods of prosperity and adversity alternate in the history of a nation. Neither elated by prosperity nor depressed by adversity the life of the nation goes on giving expression to the national character. The moral and spiritual ideals for which the nation lives form, as it were, the soul of the nation. Once a nation loses sight of these and attempts to walk in paths which are not her own, then inevitably death ensues. Egypt and Babylonia, Assyria and Chaldea, Greece and Rome, where are they? They appeared on the stage of the world, played their parts and made their exits. India and China endure. How is it that India continues to live when nations younger than her in point of time have passed away leaving only a memory

behind. Evidently because India has not yet finished playing her whole part. The role that she has chosen to play is so vast that several millenniums should elapse before it becomes exhausted. The function of India is to uphold righteousness on earth, to win over the whole of humanity to self-mastery, purity of heart, truth and compassion.

\* \* \*

The emperor Asoka, the noblest monarch to grace this planet of ours, sent expeditions to the four corners of the then-known world not for aggrandizement or exploitation, nor for crippling others mentally and morally so that he and his people may keep others in eternal subjection. The Buddhist missionaries sent by Asoka to the courts of Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus did not strive to effect any conversions to Buddhism. They preached the noble Law, lived according to its highest dictates, and their teachings permeated men's minds ennobling their hearts, broadening their outlook and making them better men. This was the aim of the missionaries sent by Asoka, and this aim they fully achieved.

\* \* \*

The Chola dynasty of South India in the heyday of its glory extended its sway not only over a great part of India, but also over Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Java and other places commonly spoken of as Greater India? What was the foreign policy of the Chola emperors? It was not different from the foreign policy of emperor Asoka. Buddhism and Hinduism flourished side by side in the Chola dominions.

Both enjoyed royal patronage. Religious toleration is nothing new to the soil of India, and it is not based upon mere expediency as some communally-minded politicians of today attempt to maintain.

\* \* \*

With her broad-based spiritual conception of life and toleration of all religions, India welcomed into her fold men of various races and religions, and assimilated them into her national life, giving them the Indian outlook on life. The sons and daughters of India were free to adopt the mode of worship and religious practice that appealed to them. Even in the same family two brothers may have different *Ishtams*; that would not in any way diminish the fraternal affection between them. But whatever religions the sons and daughters of India followed, they brought to bear upon those religions the national ideals of righteousness, self-mastery, purity of heart, truth and compassion. One may say that these qualities are found in religions that rose outside the soil of India. We admit. Truth is universal; and no one has any patent right over it. What then is the peculiarly Indian national ideal? The toleration that concedes that divine revelation is not confined to any one religion, and the conviction that righteousness (*Dharma*) should be the basis of national and international relationships appear to be the permanent national ideal of India. This age-long ideal has been upheld by Asoka. His edict declares: "Honour should be paid to all, laymen and recluses alike, belonging to other sects. No one should disparage other sects to exalt his own. Self-restraint in words

is the right thing. And let a man seek rather after the growth in his own sect of the essence of the matter."

\* \* \*

Throughout the centuries, India has not lost sight of her national ideal. Liberty of conscience was one of the things which the Indian people demanded of their rulers. This was seldom denied. Whenever this matter formed the basis of a conflict between the rulers and the people, the people's will always prevailed. Loyalty as understood in India is to the principle and not to the person. The sovereign and the subject alike had to conform to the *Dharma*. When the destinies of the nation passed into the hands of alien rulers, the national ideal did not undergo any change. Men deeply versed in the laws and customs of the people continued to administer justice and uphold the national *Dharma*. Men in whom the national ideal manifested itself more fully were looked upon as the natural leaders of the nation. They who attempted to foist upon India ways of life not in conformity with her national ideal were judged as mere pretenders and were instinctively cast aside. This does not mean that India was impervious to ideas and ideals that came from outside. She was quite as eager to learn as any of the younger nations, she would assimilate the new, integrate it into her own thought-life and produce a synthesis fully in accord with her national ideal. India's method has always been the method of peaceful evolution.

\* \* \*

The Indian genius of assimilating new ideas and forming a lasting synthesis is well-illustrated by India's response to

Islamic culture. not only in religion, but also in art, architecture, language and music a grand synthesis has been built up which while conforming to the ancient ideal provided newer and more beautiful ways of expression. Kabir, the great mystic, manifested the religious synthesis to such an extent, that when he passed away his Hindu and Muslim disciples claimed his body, of course, forgetting for a while that the great teacher came to unify and not to disunite.

\* \* \*

The architecture of the temple and the mosque influenced each other. In music and painting new schools came into existence, and perhaps the greatest achievement in synthesis was the making of a language which united the ancient Sanskrit and Persian.

\* \* \*

The synthesis that started at the time of the Mughals was yet incomplete when a third party stepped in and brought in the necessity for a broader synthesis. Without loss of time India has taken up the task. The rapidity with which India learnt the English language and assimilated all that is best in the scientific and philosophic thought of the West is indeed remarkable. But what is more remarkable is that India has not succumbed to alien influences. The bed-rock of her national ideal remains unshaken. She has not called forth an intellectual, or a captain of industry or a military man to guide her destinies. Much to the chagrin of the modernists, she has called forth a saint to guide her on her path. It is left to the future to testify to the wisdom

of the choice. But one thing is certain, that India has been true to herself, her genius and her national ideal.

\* \* \*

Is then the mission of India to produce saints? Has she not to concern herself with production of goods and their distribution, with industry and commerce? Should she not follow the leading nations of the world and find markets for her goods? Should she not build up a navy to protect the vessels that carry her merchandise and an army to enforce her will upon those who may not care to listen to milder forms of persuasion? In short, should not India modernise herself? India would certainly take advantage of modern scientific methods of production and develop her vast resources. Her commerce as well as her foreign policy will be based upon righteousness. She would call upon the rich to renounce and distribute their belongings to the poor. She would see that the poorest of the poor are cared for and given full opportunities for developing their mind and soul. She would not permit overcentralization of production and all its attendant evils. An economic programme such as this would suit her genius. The economic ideas all over the world are undergoing modification and it is almost possible that other nations who based their economic ideas on violence may turn to this country for a new lead and a new inspiration, for violence is a sort of a double-edged weapon that does harm to the victim as well as to the aggressor.

\* \* \*

The awakened India is steadily becoming conscious of the great part she has to play in shaping the destinies

of the world; she knows that the dark night has passed away and that she has to launch into a period of intense activity in several directions. It is indeed heartening to see that in all movements for the promotion of inter-communal unity, and in all nation-building activities the Indian masses and the women of India are taking the leading part. Speaking more than three decades ago Sister Nivedita said : "For, when looking to the growth of a sentiment of nationality as the solution of Indian problems, we are of course turning away from kings and priests and appealing to Woman and the People." Politicians may squabble over the loaves and fishes of office, and may attempt to create discord where there is harmony, and hatred where there is love, just for the purpose of achieving their petty personal ends; but the Indian masses and the women of India with unerring insight will stand for national unity, inter-communal harmony and the reign of righteousness. The proceedings of the fourteenth session of the All-India Women's Conference confirms our conviction that the future of India is going to be far more glorious than her past. For in the past India was more or less confined within her own frontiers; now that circumstances have brought about closer interdependence between the various parts of the world, the voice that is uttered from an Indian hamlet will have its reverberations all over the civilized world.

\* \* \*

The quickening influence of the spirit has energised all national activities, and this spiritual revival was brought about by a reorientation of the philosophy of the nation. "The philosophy of a nation is important for it foreshadows

a nation's fate." Swami Vivekananda, the patriot-saint of Modern India knew this great truth and accordingly he gave a new orientation to the philosophy of monism, making it a philosophy of action. The man of renunciation who in the old order of things spent his whole time in study and meditation has given place to the new type who voluntarily takes up the garb of poverty to offer himself as a willing sacrifice for the welfare of the many. Ochre-clad or white-clad, all those who have voluntarily given up their small personal concerns for the service of humanity belong to this new type of ascetics. Their labours are already beginning to bear fruit. Dr. Paul Carus in his *Primer of Philosophy* observes: "We learn from India's fate how important are our basic religio-philosophical convictions. The once greatest nation, foremost among all peoples on the earth in learning, literature, science, wealth, war-like power and religious enthusiasm now lies in the most wretched state of helpless dependence. Their one-sided monism led to a dualism and taught asceticism as the highest virtue." The same writer in another place says: "Monism is not merely a denial of dualism; on the contrary, it is a recognition of dualities and their re-conciliation in higher unities. The principle of genuine Monism is consistency. It proposes to build up a harmonious world conception based on the principle that there is but one truth. There may be contrasts, but there are no contradictions in truth and all truths should form one great system of verities". Swami Vivekananda has formulated once again the harmonious philosophy of monism that guided India's path in the heyday of her glory. He has given us a system that harmonises the life of action and the life of contemplation. The life of action

standing by itself would lead to restlessness, confusion and national disaster; again the life of contemplation standing by itself will lead to passivity, inertia and national decay. When the blind energy that prompts action is directed into fruitful channels by contemplation national prosperity results. There were two brothers; one was a cripple and the other was a blind man. Each by himself was not able to reach a distant town. The cripple seated himself on the shoulders of the blind man, who submitted himself to his brother's guidance and both were able to reach their destination. This little fable illustrates the important truth that society always needs the philosopher to guide its activities. But we shall never more commit the blunder of attempting to become a nation of philosophers.

\* \* \*

"The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awakening, and a voice is coming to us. Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward power can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet." (Swami Vivekananda).

## 17. THE RIGHTS OF MAN

Mr. H.G. Wells has initiated a world-debate on the above subject. (1) The sanctity of the human body, (2) the right of personal freedom, (3) the right to legislate, (4) the right to challenge misrepresentation, (5) the right to subsistence consequent upon the political and economic collectivization of the world's resources, (6) rights regarding education and freedom of worship, (7) the right to employment (8) the right to acquire property, (9) the right of protection of property and of property and, (10) the right of free movement,—are roughly the topics around which the debate is to be conducted. The draft submitted by Mr. Wells for discussion, his own contribution to the debate and the views of other thinkers appeared in the *Hindu*. After the discussion is over, Mr. Wells proposes to redraft the clauses, which would then form a sort of *Magna Carta* for all mankind irrespective of race, creed and nationality. We do not propose to enter into the debate or offer any comments on any of the ten clauses drafted by Mr. Wells; as Vedantists we are concerned with the philosophical and spiritual issues involved in the present world situation, which make it necessary for thinking men in certain parts of the world to initiate a symposium and formally discuss the Rights of Man.

\* \* \*

Is the proposed debate a mere academic discussion which might probably form a chapter of a new Utopia that



is going to be written; or is it something that can be and will be translated into practical politics, so as to enable humanity to open a new chapter in its progress towards the goal of universal freedom? This is the first question that confronts us. We shall attempt to answer it by seeking out the parties who are concerned in the matter and trying to get at their points of view. In the English *Magna Carta* of personal and political liberties, the people of England formed the party that demanded the rights and the king of England, a single man, constituted the party that attempted to withhold the rights. The single man had perforce to yield to the united demand of a whole people, for the demand was irresistible. Who are the parties concerned in the proposed *Magna Carta* of the world, the charter of personal and political liberties for humanity as a whole? Who demand these rights; who withhold them and who again are merely indifferent to the whole question? This planet of ours is peopled by about two hundred crores of human beings of various pigments of skin—black, yellow, red, brown and white and other intermediate shades. They speak different languages, have different religious beliefs, different customs and traditions, and different standards of wealth and knowledge. They enjoy different degrees of civil liberties. Some have submitted themselves to the unlimited suzerainty of individuals or groups who have inherited or acquired the power to curtail or withhold their personal liberties. Others have what are known as responsible governments which possess widely differing ideologies. The governments themselves are often not wholly emancipated, for the men who form them oftentimes happen to be puppets in the hands of

organized groups that possess the power of money and others that wield a mighty influence over the great propaganda machine known as the world's press. Then there are conflicts between sections of humanity. From the dawn of history wars, great and small, have been a perpetual phenomenon occurring in some parts or other of this world. Quarter of a century ago, the world witnessed a great war, by far greater than any that ever occurred before. We were then told that that was the war to end war. Disillusionment of our fond hopes for peace arrived in the shape of another great war in which the entire planet appears to be involved. The complexity of the world-situation makes it impossible to single out national, racial, political, economic or other well-defined groups that put forth a united demand for the fundamental rights of the whole of humanity. Each of the groups above referred to and other such groups have their own particular interests that militate against the interests of other groups and of humanity as a whole.

\* \* \*

In the midst of this strife and confusion, isolated voices are heard speaking on behalf of the human race. These cries in the wilderness often go unheeded. The men who utter these cries belong to all countries, all nations and all religious beliefs. Transcending the limitations of country, nation and religion, they speak for humanity; they are not bound down by political and economic group-loyalties. They are rebels and are often persecuted by normal people who stick to their limited interests and look askance at these other men who attempt to disturb the existing order of things. These rebels who speak on behalf of humanity as if they were the accredited representatives of the human race are

variously known as prophets, poets and philosophers. They are all fashioned out of the same metal, the shining gold of idealism. To them ideals are more real than the so-called real interests of work-a-day life. They live for their ideal and are prepared to die for it. They are the finest flowers of the human race. Every age produces them; the Invisible King who presides over the destinies of the human race with infinite mercy and eternal alertness sends them as His messengers. They bear His mark on their foreheads. Theirs is the voice that pleads on behalf of humanity as a whole. Turning to the men in bondage they say : "Brothers! shake off the shackles that bind you and be free." To the tyrants who make bondsmen of their brethren they say : "Beware of the retribution that awaits you." The oppressed and the exploited of all nationalities are their chief concern.

\* \* \*

Prophets, poets and philosophers are then the party that demand the rights of man. Men in power whose loyalty is not directed to humanity as a whole but stands restricted to the group to which they belong form the party that withholds the inherent rights of man. As for the common people, they are incapable of taking either of these positions and consequently stand apart from the discussion. The solidarity of mankind is a commonplace idea with prophets, poets and philosophers who are the unrecognised, nevertheless potent legislators of the world. The idea is new to statesmen and politicians whose interests are mainly confined to national frontiers. Philosopher-statesmen now and again appear and attempt to direct the course of events, viewing the world as a whole. One doubts their survival value, for under

present conditions their colleagues, most of whom are "practical" men, will throw them out as "idealistic dreamers", unfit to have any voice in the practical concerns of national life. The world may have outgrown the stage in which it suppressed the voice of its prophets by stoning them or burning them or sending them to the stake. But it has not come anywhere near to entrusting them with national responsibility. The philosopher-statesmen of Plato are yet to come.

\* \* \*

The human race as a whole, in the present stage of its evolution, is governed by the law of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest formulated by Darwin. "Mutual devouring, hunger and conscious desire, the sense of a limited room and capacity and the struggle to increase, to expand, to conquer and to possess" are the springs of action of national, racial, political, economic and such other groups. There are of course men and women whose lives are governed by the law of love, the working of which necessitates self-giving, self-denial and self-immolation. They find the fulfilment of their lives by denying their own inherent rights for the service of others. A society based upon the law of love will be guided more by Duty and Faith than by Right and Reason. Individuals in such a society will consider it their duty to surrender their own rights for safe-guarding the rights of others. There is a middle position of consciously co-operating for mutual welfare. The attainment of this stage by humanity as a whole is almost an impossible proposition. The intellectual and moral level of the whole race should be raised to such a high extent as to enable the rank and file to perceive the beauty

of an ordered world in which each man will conserve his inherent rights by safe-guarding the rights of others. The three stages outlined above are applicable to individuals, nations and humanity as a whole. The struggle for survival blossoms into conscious co-operation for mutual welfare which ripens into the law of love. "Precisely because the struggle for survival, the impulse towards permanence is contradicted by the law of death, the individual life is compelled and used to secure permanence rather for its species than for itself, and this it cannot do without the co-operation of others and the principle of co-operation and mutual help, the desire of others, the desire of the wife, the child, the friend and helper, the associated group, the practice of association of conscious joining and interchange are the seeds out of which flowers the principle of love." (Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chap. XXI).

\*                      \*                      \*

In the very nature of things the race as a whole lags behind the individual. Prophets, poets and philosophers who form the vanguard of humanity are guided by the law of love. Humbler men who are saintly are also guided by this law, Duty and Faith are the working principles for this group which considers the Sermon on the Mount not as an unpractical ideal, but as a living doctrine applicable to the practical concerns of everyday life. They forego their own rights, but strongly uphold the rights of others. The foremost intellectuals of the race belong to the middle group of persons who are ready for conscious co-operation leading to mutual welfare. Right and Reason are the working principles of this group. The best of them would not accept

any particular advantage that they deny to others. In the third group we find militant nationalists and so-called men of action who despise thinkers and philosophers as mere dreamers. They are always prepared to fight for their rights regardless of the rights of other individuals and groups. This is the group that brings about world-wars and international conflicts. The above analysis has revealed to us the true parties concerned in the matter and has also given us some idea of their points of view. We also note that in the very nature of things, intellectuals will frame and put forward programmes for human justice and social amelioration, but will lack the necessary driving power to translate them into action.

\*                      \*                      \*

As already noted above, the governments of nations are at present dominated by men who are guided by the Darwinian law of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. The voice that arose in Nazareth nineteen hundred years ago is not taken seriously by men who profess to be followers of the Nazarene. The human race that is so slow to catch the celestial fire brought down to the earth by the Great Teacher is not going to be caught in the finely spun cobwebs of programmes put forward by intellectuals. Facing the bare facts, we see around us nations whose very principle of existence is self-assertion associated with the destruction or enslavement of others. The passion for mutual destruction has reached such a degree that in the name of efficiency and national-preparedness, statesmen curtail the civil liberties of their own nationals and pile up huge debts which would seriously restrict the liberties of generations

yet unborn. True reason and higher self-interest appear to be altogether absent in this mad world. In this slate of affairs it is mere mockery to speak of fundamental human rights.

\* \* \*

The League of Nations has disillusioned humanity of the possibility of achieving collective security by negotiation and mutual agreement. The fond hopes of a United States of Europe has receded into the background consequent upon the onslaught on the established religion by two of the major powers and complete indifference to religion by several others. Will Durant writing in the *Saturday Evening Post* of Philadelphia says: 'Half of Europe has rejected Christianity—explicitly in Russia, implicitly in Germany. Two-thirds of Europe and half of South America have deposed democracy, have established martial law over life and industry, and have submitted to the rule of "super-men". Nearly all of Europe has put aside the ethics of Christ as incompatible with military vigour and has adopted the Nietzschean "master morality" of power. In Russia and Germany, and in less degree in Italy, men have accepted these developments not as passing tyrannies but as a new religion capable of stirring their hearts to sacrifice and heroic enterprise. Perhaps Christianity like democracy is doomed by the victory of force over persuasion, of efficiency over freedom, of war over peace. The First World War did more harm to Christianity than all the Voltaires in history; the Second World War may complete its destruction. Possibly the age of Nietzsche has already begun.'

Is there no hope for Europe and the world? Will not true Christianity rise up again as a civilizing force? Has the Man of Sorrows irretrievably lost ground to the prophet of Superman? Will not the wails of the world reach the Throne of Mercy? Has God forsaken His world? These are the questions that engage the attention of lovers of humanity all over the world. They are not anxious to consider programmes of fundamental human rights. For they know that humanity is divided against itself, and the assertion of fundamental rights by one section is the surest way of driving the men of the other section to trample upon those rights, if they can possibly do it; or they may discard their own rights and take refuge under a Dictator, "a Superman" who would perform the ruthless work of destruction for them. In a divided house self-assertion by one side leads to self-assertion by the other and a conflict results. It is again a question of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. We may sincerely wish that the whole of humanity should settle down as members of a united household, a large joint family such as we know in India, share the world's resources equally among themselves and live happily ever afterwards. The very laws guiding human evolution deny such a possibility.

\* \* \*

In an individual human life the youth of strife and self-assertion is followed by the middle age of sweet reasonableness and conscious co-operation for mutual welfare and then the last stage of self-abnegation and law of love is reached. The movement takes place as if it were in a straight

line. The analogy does not hold good for nations and for humanity as a whole. In these cases the course of movement is something like the swings of a pendulum; or if we credit nations and humanity with the wisdom of conserving accumulated experience, the movement may be said to take place in a spiral ever expanding in its radius nevertheless swinging alternately from one direction to the other. Self-assertion has in it the seeds of self-denial and self-denial in its turn has in it the seeds of self-assertion. Earlier in this discussion we quoted the words of Sri Aurobindo to testify to the first fact that the seeds of love are found in the principle of co-operation that arises from the struggle for survival. What about the other fact? The course of Christianity and the successive stages through which a monastic institution passes illustrate the fact of self-denial leading to self-assertion. By practice and precept Jesus enjoined upon His followers the virtues of poverty and humility. Early Christians and saintly founders of monastic sects such as St. Francis of Assisi strictly followed the teachings of the Master. As the community of monks grew, the extreme self-denial of the individual monk slowly gave place to accumulation of wealth under the convenient pretext of making provision for the permanence of the community or the house. The Evil One who is ever alert often starts his game by whispering into the ears of a wearied monk, "Well, austerities are all right for you, but what about the poor brethren? Should you not keep back some funds for them? Seeing your extreme self-denial the faithful are bringing costly gifts to you; why should you distribute the whole of it to the poor in the streets? Are not the brethren also poor? Do keep back something for them; for after

your demise the faithful may not respond so well as they do now." The poor monk succumbs to the temptation, never knowing that it was the Evil One that prompted him to take the decision. Accumulated property and along with it power and influence and other entanglements come. Self-denial thus swings on to self-assertion.

\* \* \*

A nation that is down and out seeks avenues for strengthening itself and finds them. When it has achieved what is wanted, it does not stop short, it goes a step further and becomes a menace to neighbouring nations. They then pounce upon it and despoil it of its goods; thereafter they fall out among themselves in the act of sharing the loot, then form fresh combinations and start the game anew. This in short is the international game that we are witnessing before our eyes day after day. Taking humanity as a whole we may note that the age of Right and Reason alternates with the age of Duty and Faith. Self assertion alternates with self-denial. Science has ushered in new forces, and fresh experiences. Croesus of Lydia, if he were to return to the earth, will be dumb-founded to see the magnitude of the wealth owned by his successors, the modern multimillionaires. What would strike him more than anything else is the ingenuity with which the present-day Croesuses are guarding their pile by hiring ministers of established religions, unscrupulous politicians and foremost intellectuals to do the job for them by proclaiming the fundamental rights of property. Property is the symbol of self-assertion. At a certain stage of progress of the individual and the nation, the acquisition of property is a virtue and also a necessity. At a certain other stage the distribution of accumulated property is a virtue and a neces-

sity. The mistake is not in accumulating property but in continuing to accumulate it ceaselessly and limitlessly. The ancient philosophy of India has solved this question once for all by laying down the *Pravritti Marga* of self-assertion and accumulation of property and the *Nivritti Marga* of self-denial and distribution of accumulated property. If Europe is suffering today from the evil results of extreme self-assertion and the over-accumulation of property, India is suffering from extreme self-denial and the poverty consequent upon it. As we have already pointed out, the cure is contained in the malady itself, and tendencies are not wanting to show that the rhythm of national life will soon re-adjust itself in both parts of the world.

\* \* \*

Christianity will certainly persist as the higher doctrine of self-abnegation founded on the law of love. Let us also not forget that the teachings of Nietzsche will continue to persist as the lower doctrine of self-assertion founded on the Darwinian law of struggle for survival. Although apparently contradictory as night and day, fire and water, rest and activity, and so forth, both the principles are necessary for the functioning of a well-ordered world. In the heat of temper, particularly in times of war, people are apt to forget the fact that Germans and Jews, Japs and Chins are all sons of the same Heavenly Father, no matter whether they fight among themselves or maintain an attitude of peace. Despair leads us to hope; darkness brings with it the expectation of light. "We need not despair, for life is a fountain of everlasting exhilaration. No creature of earth has so tortured himself as Man, and none has raised a more

exultant Alleluia. It would still be possible to erect places of refuge, cloisters wherein life would yet be full of joy for men and women determined by their vocation to care only for beauty and knowledge, and so to hand on to a future race the living torch of civilization. But of such ashes a new world might well arise. Sunset is the promise of dawn." (Havelock Ellis—quoted in the *Unity*).

\* \* \*

Now to come back to the proposed *Magna Carta* of the world. Although the practical realization of the proposal is extremely remote, it is very useful and of very great educative value to let people know that humanity has certain inherent fundamental rights which give men and women the necessary freedom for living a fuller life and sharing the world's resources as members of the same household. To achieve this the rich should be willing to give away some part of their property to the poor. We do not advocate for all men the extreme step contained in the advice. "If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come *and* follow me." There is one thing which the world can nationalise and also internationalise and that is education. All men who are capable of profiting by it have a right to knowledge and enlightenment. The universities of the world should open their doors to rich and poor alike. The wealthy men of the world should make such endowments as to provide the best facilities for learning and acquisition of knowledge open to all men and women who are able to prove by strict intellectual tests their capacity to derive profit from such facilities. The labours of scientists and phi-

losophers and of all men who labour and reach the peaks of learning are beneficial to the whole world, regardless of colour, creed and nationality. Why shouldn't the world as a whole help them to acquire that knowledge? The propagation of the fundamental and universal principles of religion is another direction to which the collective resources of the world could be directed. Health work such as the eradication of malaria is still another direction. The League of Nations as the one institution founded to express the collective will of the nations can do much, in spite of its past failures. Let us hear what the League has to say of its own future : "The present century has seen remarkable developments in every field of physical science, but perhaps an even more striking feature of the past two decades has been the effort to apply the method of scientific investigation to problems of human personality and relations, and to employ the results of research in physiology, medicine, chemistry and engineering for the betterment of the conditions of life. There is in every part of the world an effort to improve standards of living in the light of modern scientific and technological advance ; there is growing a clearer conviction that really to serve mankind such techniques must be employed not merely to make enterprise more efficient and human existence more comfortable, but to minimise conflict between different elements of the population, to extend understanding and to build up an order based upon law whose sanction is free and common consent.

"If this may be said to be the desire of civilised people, the League of Nations has still much to do even in

time of war. Count Carton de Wiart, who has for many years represented Belgium on League Committees dealing with legal problems and social questions, made this declaration of faith upon opening the recent (twentieth) session of the Assembly. It was in hours of darkness that men dreamt of the dawn, and that dawn, he was sure, would see the revival of the League, stronger and better adapted to the true possibilities of international life. The work of the League during this difficult period 'will be watched everywhere by men of good-will. With them, I believe in a Higher Power which, in the words of Maurice Maeterlinck, has pity on the heart of man. I believe in human reason, which, where necessary, corrects its own shortcomings : and I believe with staunch faith in the dignity and freedom of mankind, which remain the condition and basis of all true civilisation.'

Upon this faith was based Count Carton de Wiart's conviction that efforts must be made during wartime to keep in being the essential services of the League—the research and wide human contacts maintained by the League Secretariat, the study of conditions of work continued by the International Labour Office and the juridical activity of the Permanent Court of International Justice, which reminds the world of an essential standard at a time when law is being transgressed."

## 18. THE COMMON SPIRITUAL BASIS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORDER

"To discriminate between what is right and wrong, true and false, we shall have to know the test of truth which is Purity, Oneness. Everything that makes for Oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is hatred that separates man from man; therefore, it is wrong and false. It is a disintegrating power; it separates and destroys."

"As soon as this idea of separation comes, it opens the door to all mischief and leads to all misery. If a very small fractional part of human beings living today can put aside the idea of selfishness, narrowness and littleness, this earth will become a paradise tomorrow; but with machines and improvements of material knowledge only, it will never be. These only increase misery, as oil poured on fire increases the flame all the more. Without the knowledge of the spirit, all material knowledge is only adding fuel to fire, only giving into the hands of selfish man one more instrument to take what belongs to others, to live upon the life of others, instead of giving up his life for them".

—Swami Vivekananda.

In the very nature of things, the present world-tension cannot continue indefinitely. Sooner or later, the conflict

must come to an end. Victor and vanquished will then sit together and make the attempt to reconstruct the shattered edifice of civilization. Humanity hopes that the leaders of nations will make an earnest attempt to lay the foundations of an enduring peace. Such a consummation will become possible only if the underlying causes that produce conflicts are carefully sought for and exterminated. National jealousies, racial animosities, economic disparities, religious discords and political dissensions are all factors of disintegration. They are all various manifestations of hatred. They separate man from man, race from race and nation from nation. The separation brings about the conflict that leads to misery and ultimate destruction. Hatred makes for multiplicity. Love unites. Hatred cannot be overcome by hatred. Hatred can only be overcome by love.

\* \* \*

The twentieth century has taken great strides in the acquisition of material knowledge. The progress made by physical science is something phenomenal. Has it brought happiness to humanity? It has added a few amenities to life, but at the same time material knowledge has become a potent instrument in the hands of selfish men to exploit the poor. Mass production by machinery has thrown thousands of manual workers out of employment. The old human relationship between the employer and the employed has receded to the background and man has become a slave of the machine. If the higher knowledge of the Spirit would throw its light upon human relationships and regulate human conduct, then the progress in material knowledge may become a real acquisition and a blessing to



humanity. The knowledge of the Spirit is not confined to religious dogmas only, for these also lead to strife and confusion. The test of truth is Purity, Oneness. "Everything that makes for Oneness is truth." The Spirit manifests itself in Truth, Beauty and Righteousness. These are three aspects of the one Reality which theists call God and all sentient beings comprehend as Love. The votaries of Truth, the devotees of Beauty and the upholders of Righteousness pay their homage to the same Deity. Their conduct towards their fellow-men stands regulated by the light of the Spirit. Their actions lead to harmony and ever-increasing integration.

\* \* \*

Love manifesting itself as the principle of non-violence regulates the social life of human beings. The unlettered peasant tutored in the principle of non-violence shows greater refinement in his behaviour towards his fellowmen than the university graduate who has not learned to control his tongue and his temper. Wisdom does not consist in the mere acquisition of knowledge; the heart should be trained as much as the head. The foremost lesson which every man should acquire is to behave towards his fellowmen with sympathy and understanding. The fratricidal strife that meets our eyes on all sides clearly exhibits the fact that the primitive savage still lurks beneath the skin of the apparently civilized man. What is the test of civilization? Co-operation based upon non-violence is the unerring mark of civilized life. The law of the jungle and the law of civilized men may be summed up in the two words, violence

and non-violence. Violence disintegrates and destroys. Non-violence unifies and integrates. The common bond of fellow-feeling and mutual understanding that brings men together is based upon the principle of non-violence. There is nothing metaphysical or impractical about this principle and its applications; it is quite as universal and quite as necessary to human life as fresh air and clean water. The first postulate of corporate life is that violence should be eschewed in all dealings between the component units of the corporation. Non-violence is the ruling principle in the parliaments of free men. If the same principle could be applied to international relationships, the arbitrament of war would give way to peaceful negotiation and mutual adjustment.

\* \* \*

The value of love has been recognised not only by saints but also by statesmen. President Roosevelt addressing the Pan-American Union is said to have observed as follows: "The inner strength of a group of free people is irresistible when they are prepared to act. I affirm that life must be based on positive values. The value of love will always be stronger than the value of hate, since any nation or group of nations which employs hatred is eventually torn to pieces by hatred within itself. The value of belief in humanity was always stronger than the value of belief in force as, in the latter case, each man or group of men was finally compelled to measure his strength against his own brother."

Non-violence is the basis of national unity; it is also the only possible basis of international amity. It is now admitted that the treaty of Versailles was conceived in an

atmosphere of violence, hence it failed to bring peace to the nations of the world. In postwar Europe, many earnest attempts were made to bring about universal disarmament and settle disputes by arbitration instead of resorting to force. These attempts failed in the past and are bound to fail in the future unless the leaders of nations are prepared to carry out root and branch reforms in all spheres of life. Strife and tension exist not only in the political sphere but also in the economic and religious spheres. There should be simultaneous disarmament in all directions. Human activities are very much inter-related. A change of attitude in one sphere cannot but produce a transformation in all the other spheres. Nations are obsessed by greed and fear ; they distrust their neighbours and drift into a state of mutual antipathy. This antipathy manifests itself as hatred and violence; these lead to strife and confusion. The existence of groups within groups makes the confusion worse confused. Within a group of people who profess to be united in their political allegiance there exist smaller groups whose economic or religious allegiance make them lean over to the side of the enemy and betray their friends in the political sphere.

\*                      \*                      \*\*

To a really farsighted leader who has the vision to perceive the true interest of generations yet unborn, the general welfare of humanity and the particular interests of the group to which he belongs would appear quite harmonized. Who lives if the world perishes and who would fail to realise the fulness of life if the whole of human society is so organized as to give each individual the opportunities for self-

expression ? As matters stand today, it appears that no natural catastrophe need befall this planet to wipe away humanity out of existence. There seems to be enough violence to poison the springs of life and induce mankind to hasten towards mutual destruction. Those who sincerely desire that such an end should be averted should be prepared to undergo the necessary intellectual discipline to enable them to understand the general welfare of humanity and the necessary moral discipline to rise above pettiness and narrow selfishness and work for the welfare of the entire human race.

\*                      \*                      \*

Whosoever desires to serve humanity as a whole must come to the conclusion that non-violence, truth, non-possession and brahmacharya are the principles that should guide their life so as to enable them to undergo the two fold discipline mentioned above and serve humanity regardless of caste, creed, race or nationality. Such workers are found all over the world. They are the true nation-builders and at the same time they are the true lovers and servants of humanity. They are silent and unknown except among the small circle of their neighbours and acquaintances. Civilization, nay mankind itself, might have been wiped away long ago, had it not been for the silent constructive work of these unknown devoted workers. They know no national frontiers, they go everywhere and serve all mankind. Some of these workers belong to established clerical and monastic orders, others are laymen who follow the same discipline of life. Wherever distress is to be removed or ignorance is to be dispelled you will find them

tackling the job. They serve the land of their birth best by rising above the claims of narrow nationalism and directing their attention to humanity as a whole.

Religion was meant to promote universal brotherhood by freeing mankind from the obsession of greed and fear. Religion transcends nationality, its outlook is universal. It is grotesque to think of confining religion to national frontiers or of delimiting national frontiers on the basis of religion. Freedom of conscience is one of the most essential factors of democracy. The particular religious tenets which a man holds should not in any way disqualify him for full rights of citizenship. Be he theist or atheist, agnostic or nihilist, if he possesses the necessary merit the highest offices in the State should be open to him. It is neither good for religion nor for democracy to inquire into a man's religious beliefs before he is entrusted with national responsibilities.

\* \* \*

What should be the attitude of a democratic state towards the different religious sects that may be found within its confines? Two attitudes are possible. The State may follow the example of Emperor Asoka and respect all religions or it may remain neutral, at the same time extending to all whatever facilities it is prepared to extend to one. The third possible attitude of giving exclusive patronage to one and shutting out all the others or closing the doors to all and forcing the citizens to accept one philosophy of life, much in the way in which the dictators of totalitarian states

of the West are doing, would amount to a denial of democracy. Religious toleration and democracy are bound up together; if one falls, the other falls and with them will fall freedom of thought and human civilization. The best minds of the world are, therefore, ranged on the side of religious toleration. It is also a necessary corollary of the principle of non-violence which as we have already stated forms the bed-rock of national unity and international amity. All great religions preach love and amity as essential ideals. Persons who attempt to divide man from his brother man in the name of religion serve neither the cause of religion nor of humanity. Those who raise the cry of religion being in danger and those others who push themselves forward as champions of minorities often care little or naught for the religion they profess to follow or the minorities whose interests they claim to protect. When vested interests are at stake any cry is as good as any other, provided it serves to rally round the flag the masses whose aid is indispensable for any struggle.

\* \* \*

Enough suffering has been caused to humanity by the claims of narrow nationalism and exclusive religious fanaticism. Ideologies based on particular economic theories have also created strife and disharmony. The world undergoing a travail, as it were, to create order in the midst of chaos and bring into being a harmony where discord prevails. Such a harmony would by no means exclude any particular set of ideals in favour of any other. Two ideals which at first sight may appear diametrically opposed can be brought within the orbit of a broader conception

where they would stand correlated, each fulfilling the deficiencies of the other. The finite fleeting concerns of everyday life should be harmonized with the permanent eternal values of spiritual life; the restless active life of the man of affairs should be harmonized with the peaceful secluded life of the man of contemplation; the light-hearted buoyancy of youth should be harmonized with the serene seriousness of old age and likewise with other conditions and activities of life. The harmony is achieved by each party confining itself to its own particular function. Discarding its *Svadharmā* if one party attempts to take over the functions of the other, confusion will arise. When old age attempts to play the pranks of youth and young men losing their natural buoyancy become overserious, discord is bound to result. When the philosopher tries to play the man of affairs and in turn the latter attempts to philosophise in the field of action, discord is bound to result. When that which is due to Caesar is rendered unto God and that which is due to God is made over to Caesar, discord is sure to follow. These discords can be avoided and apparent contradictions can be reconciled by conceiving a wider harmony which can be achieved by looking deeper and understanding the spiritual aspect of the problem in hand.

## 19. THE TEN IDYLLS OF EARLY TAMIL LITERATURE

To the west of the city of Madura, lies the hill of Param-Kunram with its shrine dedicated to Murugan, the war-god, the manifestation of the ideals of youth, beauty and valour. Murugan, the tutelary deity of the hill-men of Tamil-land, the son of "Kotravai, the goddess of victory," has been identified with Subrahmanya. According to Northern traditions, the eternally youthful war-god remains unmarried, whereas the traditions of the South give him two spouses: Devasena, the daughter of the king of the gods, and Valli, the daughter of a sage and the foster-daughter of the chief of the hill-men. The former represents wealth and prowess (the fruits of Action, *Kriya-Shakti*) and the latter love and beauty (the objects of Desire, *Ichchha-Shakti*). His weapon, the celestial lance (*Vel*), represents wisdom (*Jnana-Shakti*). The Titans (Asuras) whom he conquered represent the forces of darkness. Some of the poems of the *Pari-Padal* one of the Eight Anthologies, give full accounts of the birth of the war-god, his youthful exploits, his victory over the Asuras and other details. Param-Kunram, the hill near Madura is one of his camps, Alai-vai (Tiru-Chendur), Avinan-kudi (Palani), Erakam, the hills (generally), and Pazham-uthir-cholai are the other camps. *Tiru-Murugatruppada*i the first of the ten idylls, a poem consisting of 317 lines, is a

panegyric on the war-god and is attributed to the poet Nak-kirar. It is divided into six sections devoted to the six camps mentioned above. The prevailing *Rasa* (sentiment) of the poem is heroism, the substance of which may be translated, but the majestic rhythm of the unrhymed verse in which it is written defies translation. In this brief account it may be profitable to record the visions that pass before the mind's eye on reading the poem, for such a record might give a fair idea of the contents and the "atmosphere" of the poem. Dawn : the sun's rays break through the azure surface of the sea, exhibiting the cosmic painter's picture of the youthful god of red complexion, seated upon his vehicle, the blue peacock; the deep recesses of a dense forest where the first rains have fallen; a band of celestial nymphs, resplendent with precious jewels, singing the glories of the youthful god and dancing on the peak of a hill; the sea again; the celestial lance attacking the chief of the Titans in his last hiding-place, the mid-ocean; the battle-field; a demoness with owls and snakes adorning her ear-lobes dancing amidst the carnage singing the praise of the hero. A poet in quest of wisdom appears and gets himself directed to Param-Kunram; here ends section one.

A description of the divine form of Murugan with six faces and twelve arms is given in section two. One of the faces dispels universal darkness, by shedding forth rays of light; the second, of a gracious aspect, grants boons to devotees; the third protects the Vedic rites of the brahmins; the fourth, shining with the mild lustre of moonbeams, expounds the sacred lore to the sages; the fifth, flashing forth sparks of anger, views the battle-field; the

sixth, beaming with a smile, speaks words of love to Valli; the functions of the arms corresponding to these six faces are next described. Section three gives a picture of the sages, who had overcome passion and anger and also of the guardian deities, Vishnu, Rudra, and Indra, celestial damsels with harps, the thirtythree gods and the eighteen *ganas*, all of whom are seen moving across the emphyrean and assembling at Avinan-kudi to pay their homage to Murugan. Section four gives a picture of the twice-born brahmins, who tend the threefold fires, coming at the break of dawn to worship in Tiru-Erakam. Section five brings to view the hillmen wearing garlands of red and white flowers, carrying drums, flutes and timbrels, hoisting up Murugan's banner on which the emblem of the cock is drawn. They and the hill-maidens sing and dance while the priest, possessed by the lance-bearing god, offers worship. In the last section, we see Murugan worshipped in forests, in groves, in beautiful islets in the midst of rivers, in the junctions of three or more pathways, under *Kadamba* trees, and in hamlets; goats are sacrificed and their blood mixed with rice is offered; turmeric-paste and sandal-paste are sprinkled on the floors of the shrines; garlands of red oleander are hung; amidst the ringing of bells and the blowing of horns, the officiating priestess—who is a hill-maiden—offers incense along with red flowers and *thinai* grains soaked in goat's blood. From the highest Devas down to the hill-folk all offer worship in their own way. Finally the poet addressing his brother-poet commends to him the worship of Murugan, telling him how the god will appear to him and grant all prayers. The poem ends with a beautiful description of the grove surrounding the sixth camp referred to above.

We shall now proceed to the seventh idyll which is also attributed to poet Nakkirar. This poem, named *Nedunai-vadai* has for its hero, the Pandya King, Nedun-Cheliyan, victor of the field of Talaiyalankanam. "Vadai" is the north-wind; here it refers to the season in which the north-east monsoon blows, the season of sleet and rain, when normal outdoor activities are ordinarily avoided. The king is away in the camp, personally inspecting the forces and issuing orders. His moral triumph in casting aside the pleasures of the court and responding to the call of duty is celebrated by the poet, who, therefore, distinguishes this particular rainy season from those that went before it, by adding the attributes "Nedu" and "Nal." The title of the poem may be rendered into English as, "The long-remembered and auspicious rainy season." The first 75 lines give a vivid picture of the season and its effect upon man and beast; the king's palace and its interior furnishings are described in lines 76 to 135, which incidentally give a good deal of information on ancient architecture and the taste with which the ancients furnished their dwelling-houses; lines 136 to 166 paint a picture of the love-lorn queen sighing for her absent lord; in the next two lines the chamber-maid, who is the narrator of the poem addresses a prayer to the goddess of victory for the king's triumph in arms and speedy return; the remaining twenty lines bring to view the king in the camp, going behind his torch-bearers, in the small hours of the night, visiting the wounded soldiers, and cheering them up with words of encouragement.

A certain amount of similarity as regards subject-matter exists between the seventh idyll, just mentioned and the fifth

idyll *Mullaippattu* (103 lines) of Napputhanar, the son of a goldmerchant of the city of Kavirippumpattinam. In Napputhanar's poem also, the hero goes round and visits the wounded soldiers. The poem gives a realistic picture of camp-life and detailed accounts of the functions of various officers attending the king. The *Mahouts* addressing the elephants in the northern tongue (Sanskrit) is another point of interest in the poem.

The eighth idyll *Kurinchippattu* (261 lines) ascribed to Kapilar contains beautiful sketches of highland scenery and describes a day in the life of a chieftain's daughter who, accompanied by her attendant maid, repairs to a park in the outskirts of the town, where she meets with various adventures and finally falls in love with a young hunter. The attendant maid narrates the incidents to the mother urging upon her the necessity of joining the hands of the two whose hearts were already joined. The poem gives a long list of hill-flowers.

The sixth idyll *Maduraikkanchi* running up to 782 lines, is the longest poem in the collection. In subject-matter and treatment also it differs from the remaining nine. Mankudi Marutanar addresses it to his sovereign, friend and patron, the Pandya King Nedun-Cheliyan of Talaiyalankanam fame. We have already mentioned the name of this king in connection with the seventh idyll. He is a great warrior and in the battle referred to, he fought against the combined armies of the Chola and Chera kings and five minor chieftains. The poem is partly benedictory and partly didactic; in outspoken words it exhorts the king to walk

in the path of righteousness. How greatly the king valued the friendship of the poet may be seen from *Purananuru* 72. We shall refer to this more fully in a subsequent essay. The valour of the king, his generosity and other noble traits are beautifully sketched in the poem, which also gives an account of some of his great ancestors. With the help of this poem one can visualize the city of Madura as it stood two thousand years ago. The marketplace, the streets of the *hetaerae*, the police who went their rounds in the night and the burglars who eluded the grasp of the law are all drawn with such precision and detail so as to make the ancient city live and move before our very eyes. This poem contains a great deal of historical material and scholars have largely drawn upon it.

The ninth idyll *Pattinappalai* (801 lines) is addressed by Rudrankannanar of Kadiyalur to the Chola king Karikal, the Great. It is said that the king rewarded the poet with sixteen lakhs of gold coins. We doubt whether the history of world's literature has another well-attested case of munificence approaching to that of Karikal, the Great. This poem also contains a great deal of historical material which has been largely drawn upon by authors and students of history. Kaverippumpattinam, the chief city and seaport of the Cholas, its export trade, the lives of sea-faring men, the extent of the wealth drawn from countries beyond the seas, the youthful exploits of Karikal, his conquests, the prisoners he brought to the city, these and other matters are beautifully described in this noble poem.

The second idyll *Porunar-atruppadai* (248 lines) addressed to the same Chola monarch Karikal, the Great, by the

poetess. Muda-thamak-kanniyar, the third *Sirupan-atruppadai* (169 lines) by Na-Tattanar, addressed to the chieftain Nalliyakkodan, the fourth *Perumpan-atruppadai* (500 lines) by Rudrankannanar, addressed to Thondaiman Ilanthiraiyan and the tenth, *Malaipadu-kadam* (583 lines) by Perum-Kausikanar, addressed to Nannan, son of Nannan, may all be considered together, for their "arguments" are similar. Bands of wandering minstrels accompanied by dancers and carrying with them musical instruments such as the harp, the flute and drums of various sizes meet on the way others of the same vocation, returning from the court of some patron or other, after receiving valuable gifts. The latter give directions to the former regarding the path to be taken and incidentally describe the character of the patron and the fertile lands over which he rules. This extremely simple framework serves as the basis for beautiful effects of colour, movement and character. The present writer made use of these poems in preparing a course of special lectures on "Ancient Tamil Music", delivered by him under the auspices of the Madras University. The information contained in these and in certain other Early Tamil Classics enabled him to reconstruct the four kinds of harps (*Yazh*) which were used by the minstrels of ancient Tamil-land and which have gone out of use now.

Ever since Mr. V. Kanakasabai published his "Tamil Eighteen Hundred Years Ago" various scholars have gone into the subject of Tamil culture and have published their studies. Although much has been achieved, a great deal more remains to be done.

## 20. THE QUEST OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Manasarowar, the fairy lake of Tibet, lay in front of us. *Hamsa* birds were moving gracefully over its blue waters. It was dawn. The azure blue lake with the snow-covered peaks surrounding it presented the appearance of a precious sapphire set in the midst of diamonds. The sun peeped over the eastern peak, and rays of light fell on the surface of the lake making it golden here and green there. The silvery summit of Kailas was seen towering above the northern horizon. A celestial calmness pervaded the atmosphere. The party of pilgrims stood watching the scene, their hearts throbbing with silent wonder. The turmoil of the world below was forgotten. The long trek across the Himalayas daily revealed varying scenes of beauty and splendour. But there was nothing to equal the glory of sunrise over the silent waters of Manasarowar. This beautiful lake and that holy peak which were cherished as dream-visions, a few days before, have now assumed the shape of reality. Objects which were considered real have now receded into the background of memory. The sea with its roaring waves, ships carrying merchandise across the water to distant lands, busy ports, crowded streets of men, schools with their merry crowds of boys and girls, churches, temples and mosques, lawcourts and market-places, factories and warehouses have all turned out to be a mere memory, a confused dream unconnected with reality.

Hindu and Buddhist scriptures and the age-long traditions of China and India tell us that the gods abide here. The racial memories of the Aryans and Mongols ascribes a great antiquity to this holy spot. Long before the Himalayas raised its lofty peaks above the waters of the primal ocean, the lake Manasarowar and the four great rivers -Indus, Brahmaputra, Sutlej and Karnali, which are said to be fed by its waters through sub-terranean channels, lent beauty to the table-land of Tibet. The seismic disturbance that brought about the upheaval of the Himalayas must have been a tremendous event in the annals of this remote past. In some mysterious way, these annals have been preserved in the memories of the race. In the dim past, the Mongols referred to in Puranic legends as Yakshas must have lived in these peaks and valleys, which in all probability, had a more temperate climate than what is experienced now. In those days, there might have been other fauna besides the wild horse and the yak that roam over the hill-sides to-day. The conditions might have been more favourable to plants and flowers also. Now only stunted juniper bushes grow on the sides of the wind-swept mountain-peaks, the summits of which are covered with perpetual snow. The beauty of the place is of an austere type; it resembles the heavenly beauty seen on the face of a Yogi seated in meditation. The scriptures tell us that the lake Manasarowar presents the picture of the human mind as it lies absorbed in the blissful state of Samadhi. If 'beauty is truth' as the poet says, the pilgrims who are on the quest of the beautiful are also earnest seekers after truth.

\* \* \*



The scene changes; we are back in our Himalayan monastery, the Ashrama at Mayavati. During the night it was raining heavily. With the approach of dawn, the sky has cleared up. Far in the foreground the snow-covered peak of Nandadevi appears tinged with the golden rays of the morning sun. The rose-plants in the golden are in full bloom. The sun-beams softly caressing the flowers produce that blush and that beauty so characteristic of the queen of flowers. The warbling of birds and the sound of flowing water in the neighbouring valley enhance the beauty of the calm morning. In the midst of this loveliness our constant companion, the philosopher, whose interests are somewhat different from ours, steps forward and interferes with the train of our thoughts. Here let us confess that our companion who is always at our heels, seldom leaves us alone to an hour of pure enjoyment without proposing some of his never-ending questions. Now he meets us with the poser: "Whence do roses receive their blush and their beauty?" We try to answer in the layman's fashion by proposing a number of similar questions and attempting to deduce the factor common to all of them. Whence do babies get their pretty dimples, the golden glow-worms their aerial hues, rainbows their enchanting colours, and stars their celestial brilliance? The hand that touched the baby's face with a dimple, the same divine hand lighted up the star and the glow-worm, painted the rainbow and caressed the rose-petals into a beautiful blush. Our companion mildly protests and says, "This is religion, poetry, mysticism, this pious thought offered by way of explanation stands unsupported by reason."

At this juncture, the gardener arrives. We turn round to him and repeat the philosopher's question. "Brother, whence do roses get their blush and their beauty?" Being a scientific gardener, well-versed in horticulture and other allied sciences, he links up cause with effect and offers us an explanation. As far as we remember, these were his words: "This time, we had a severe winter; thirty inches of snow fell; the rose beds were dug up two months before the snow-fall; the roots were exposed to the autumn sun for a fortnight; the beds were manured; the plants were pruned leaving healthy stocks about a foot long; in winter the stocks remained covered with snow for a fortnight; the spring came; the snow melted away; new buds appeared; the roots, strengthened by exposure to the sun, assimilated the manure of the soil and sent up the life-giving sap to the buds; the new leaves drank the sunlight; the flower buds opened up and there you have the roses." Saying this, he handed over to each of us a pretty flower. The philosopher was fully satisfied.

\* \* \*

The other questions remained unanswered. Perhaps, other scientists may tell us that the baby's dimples came from the patent food on which she was fed, that the glow-worm's hues came from the phosphorescent substances contained in its body, that the rainbow's colours were not colours at all, but the light refracted by minute particles of water, and that the stars were not softly brilliant, but that they were burning suns emitting fiery rays from inconceivably long distances. Our attempt to deduce the factor common to the beauty of the rose, the baby's face,

the glow-worm, the rainbow and the star receives a rude shock. We sought for a universe; the scientist and the philosopher present us with a multiverse in the labyrinths of which we find it difficult to thread our way.

\*       \*       \*

Is a pretty baby nothing more than skin, flesh and bones? Is the moon's surface nothing but bare hard rocks that resulted from some sub-lunar volcanic eruption? Are not flowers anything more than some organic compounds, all of which the scientist can synthetically produce in his laboratory? Have not all these something in common, something that touches our souls, as different from that which appeals to our senses? Is not the beauty that holds the mind of the lover and the poet, one aspect of the Reality for which the philosopher is seeking? Reality is commonly said to reveal itself in the threefold aspect of truth, beauty and goodness. Is the philosopher justified in confining himself to a fraction of one of these aspects, the truth arrived at by reasoning? All these questions that seriously disturb the mind of the layman, perhaps, do not arise in the specialized mind of the philosopher.

\*       \*       \*

The universe in its final analysis reveals not only the ninety-two or more chemical elements and various mechanical stresses and strains but also a living soul with psychological strains and stresses expressed by loves and hates, dictator's ambitions, poor men's hopes, widow's wails, the beauty of smiling landscapes and of thunder and of lightning, the "fretful fever" of life and the balmy sleep of

death. If these are not real life is not real. At every stage of his progress the seeker of Reality should provide us with a harmonious and integrated Whole in its threefold aspect of truth, beauty, and goodness, leaving to the scientist the investigation of the parts and the necessarily partial truths that Reality reveals to him within the limitations he had set to himself. For about three centuries science has interested itself in the investigation of nature and with all its efforts has only ploughed a few furrows in the wide fields of truth, the fields of beauty and goodness are untouched by it. On the other hand, the true seer climbing up the peak of wisdom, at every stage of his journey views the Whole and within the range of his view, gives a complete unified picture. Such a view satisfies our whole mind appealing to its cognitive, affective and conative aspects, thus opening the path that leads to God, the source of all truth, beauty and goodness.

\*       \*       \*

The earliest teachers of the human race were inspired men, prophets and seers, who consciously or unconsciously communed with the Deity. The words that they spoke originated from a Higher Power which possessed them and led them on to a vision of the Whole. That is why their words live not merely in books but in the hearts of men, who dedicate their lives for the preservation of those words and their transmission to posterity. The eternal Vedas, the holy Bible, the sacred Koran and the scriptures of the other great religions are the greatest books of humanity. In lofty rhymes or in beautiful prose they incessantly declare the Divine message, the message of truth, beauty and goodness. They

are not mere philosophical treatises that help men to lift the veil of appearances and discern the truth behind them; these books transcend the limits of philosophy and often speak in a tongue which the pure in heart understand, but philosophers fail to comprehend. Are then these books poetical utterances? They certainly contain the sublimest poetry, a poetry that unites Heaven to the Earth, asserting Eternal Providence and justifying the ways of God to men; but these are more than poetical compositions. Is it their function to map out a path that leads to the good life and finally raise man beyond himself to the threshold of heaven? They certainly perform this function in the best possible manner, but they are higher than mere ethical treatises. Their message, being a message of synthesis, transcends the limitations of the partial messages expressed by the philosopher, the poet and the moralist. Their message is not merely an aggregate of the partial message, but a unified Whole, a single message that consists of all the three phases.

Garden from which the first man and woman were exiled. Poets realize this truth more than other men and offer their homage to the Spirit that hovers over all that is beautiful. Unfortunately, man, giving vent to his insatiable greed for possessing things, has defaced Nature. It all began with looking out for food, a little space to live in and a shelter for protection from the inclemencies of the weather. These bare necessities were needed to give freedom to the mind to soar into higher regions and live in the serene atmosphere in which saints and seers live perpetually. But very soon greed captured the mind of man and the true purpose of life was forgotten. Messengers came to us and delivered the message of the Most High. We heeded them not and the result is the ugly mess in which we find ourselves to-day.

\* \* \*

Long before Christianity was born, pagan Greece with her sublime ideals of beauty exerted a mighty influence in raising the Western nations from savagery to civilization; when in the Middle Ages, Christianity fell into the hands of ignorant priests and failed to carry out its mission, the pagan ideals of beauty fostered by Greece, resuscitated under the guise of the New Learning, led the nations to great achievements and gave new strength to Christianity itself; now that Christianity is losing its hold over men's minds and becoming increasingly incapable of stirring up men's imaginations, once more the same ideals of beauty should be set up before the nations to lead them back to sanity and human decency, from the abyss of ugliness and degradation into which they have hurled themselves.

\* \* \*

Next to seers, poets stand as the great teachers of the human race. True poetry transcends the limitations of time and space. The lofty rhymes of Milton are for all nations and all times and so is Kalidasa the common property of the East and the West, of the past, the present and the future. Through these men the race regains its lost heritage, it acquires the companionship of angels and celestial beings. There is a deep truth behind the old legend concerning man's fall. We are all exiles; nevertheless our foster-mother Earth in her snow-clad hills and ocean's blue expanse, in her woodlands and rivers, presents to our view some aspects of the

Men who call themselves progressive often fail to understand the pious Hindu who undertakes the arduous journey across the Himalayas to obtain a sight of the holy peak of Kailas and the sacred lake Manasarowar. They fail to comprehend the mind of the devotee who is prepared to spend all his worldly possessions to erect a beautiful temple to his chosen Deity. The sight of old and decrepit men trudging along forest-paths to some shrine hidden by encircling forests may evoke a note of pity in the heart of the progressive; but he fails to understand the mind of the pilgrims. If the progressive would only give some thought to the matter, he would realize that pilgrims and temple-builders seek after something more permanent than material acquisitions, for these men are on the quest of the beautiful and are seeking for

“An endless fountain of immortal drink,  
Pouring unto us from the heaven’s brink.”

\*

\*

\*

Beauty is the philosopher’s stone that raises the worth of all that it touches; but unlike the object of the alchemist’s search, it lies close at hand, it surrounds its votaries and becomes an unfailing source of joy and true happiness. He who has realized the worth of beauty becomes a changed man, his actions and his thoughts become life-giving, ennobling, and elevating to himself and to others. Sunlight flowing from the empyrean floods the earth with new life making it fruitful and abundant. Likewise Beauty coursing down from the high heavens brings joy to the earth. Even as sunlight falls upon poor men’s cottages and the mansions of the rich, beauty pervades everywhere. On the way back

from Kailas, in the midst of a deep Himalayan forest far removed from the haunts of men, we came across a placid mountain lake, the surface of which was covered with a wealth of pink lotuses. It was a glorious sight, and for a moment we were wondering why Mother Nature was playing the prodigal and wasting all those pretty blossoms in the deep recesses of a forest. Then the thought occurred to us that Nature never disowned man, but man impelled by his own perversity has gone away from Nature’s gardens to live in the proximity of ugly factories with smoking chimneys. Man, the rebel child, can go back to his mother’s lap, whenever he chooses to do so.

\*

\*

\*

Music is one of the forms in which Heavenly Beauty expresses herself on Earth. It is said that when St. Cecilia played the organ an angel hovered near the saint, for the moment mistaking earth for heaven. When the Divine Cowherd played upon His flute in the flowery parks of Brindaban, the gods must have considered our earth itself as the highest heaven. Music has the power to tame wild-beasts. The martial music, that urges the soldier to march fearlessly into the arms of Death, does its work by making man forget, at any rate temporarily, his physical vesture and the bondage of the mind, even as the moth forgets itself, when it approaches the naked flame. The devotees of God have invariably given expression to their deepest thoughts in musical language, for their thoughts were not merely intellectual, but were suffused with deep feelings, which music alone can express. Hinduism and Christianity as

well as the pagan religions of old have given a high place to music in their temples and churches. Heaven itself is described as a place softly resounding to the sweet harmonies of music. It is a place

‘Where the bright Seraphim in burning row  
Their loud up-lifted Angel trumpets blow,  
And the Cherubic host in thousand choirs  
Touch their immortal Harps of golden wires.”

\* \* \*

Language has its own harmonies and cadences, which find expression not only in the utterances of poets but also in the ordinary conversation of men and women whose mind has been touched by the magic wand of beauty. The conversation of such people is a constant source of delight. They may talk to young children, within the limitations of a child's vocabulary; they may address their servants or their equals; or they may hold converse with those who are more erudite and better informed than themselves; in all these cases, the words that they choose would be the most appropriate, the sentiments that they express would be elevated and pleasing to the hearer and the very tone in which they speak would be musical and refined. A man can never be truly cultured until he can use his mother-tongue with ease and elegance. The joy that we feel in social intercourse mostly centres round the charm of the spoken word. This charm so spontaneous to its possessor may not be achieved by studying the rules of rhetoric, for it is the outward expression of a pure mind that had subjected itself to the influence of the beautiful.

Even as the holy touch of beauty is revealed in conversation and social intercourse, so also it becomes manifest in every movement and every action of its votary. Perfect manners appear as a result of a certain inner perfection attained by men and women. It is perhaps a mistake to think that social contact is necessary for developing the social virtues. The son of a sage, brought up in the seclusion of a forest with no companion save his father, enters the king's court and behaves with perfect decorum. The communion he had with God and Nature has given him that inner perfection which puts him at ease in royal palaces as well as in poor men's cottages. The *poseur* who strives for the mere form often misses the substance and is held up to ridicule. Beauty also finds expression in a person's apparel. The statuary of Greece and Rome reveals the fact that the ancient people of those countries, men as well as women, wore flowing garments so very different from the tailor-cut, tight-fitting clothes of contemporary West. The Eastern nations still retain something of the ancient models of clothing. The taste as regards colours may perhaps be profitably copied from the flowers, which are of a bright colour in the tropics and of weaker tints in more temperate climates. Men and women are as much a part of nature as flowers are, and may express themselves in their vesture in the best possible manner by conforming to their surroundings.

\* \* \*

Ever since man emerged from primitive conditions of living in caves and tree-tops, he began to exhibit his artistic sense in his dwelling-houses. “The house that Jack built” exhibits permanently a portion of Jack's mind; in its turn, the house influences Jack's mind. “Lines” consisting of

houses built on the same model often fail to please because, they do not reveal the individuality of the dweller. While harmonizing with the surroundings a house should exhibit a certain amount of individuality. Within the means of the dweller, it ought to be well-built, well-proportioned and furnished in a manner suitable to the requirements of the dweller. Good pictures, properly chosen and properly hung, form an essential part of the humblest dwelling.

\*                      \*

Apart from revealing itself in dwelling-houses, clothes, manners and speech, the beautiful is revealed at its best in the character of its possessor. Ethical values transform themselves to a certain extent into aesthetic values. Drunkenness, debauchery, morbid lust, violent crimes and such other sins are extremely ugly. Ostentation and pride offend good taste, as much as they offend the moral sense. Viewed from the intellectual point of view, all the above fall under the category of ignorance. On the other hand humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forbearance, uprightness, service to the teacher, purity, steadiness, self-control and other beautiful moral qualities are declared by the Gita (XIII. 7-11) to be true knowledge. From the testimony of the Hindu Scriptures, we recognize the identity of truth, beauty and goodness. The beautiful is not only the true, it is also the good. It may be noted that the Gita does not stop with saying that the moral qualities enumerated above lead to true knowledge, it definitely declares their identity with true knowledge.

\*                      \*

In the mystic land of Tibet, religious leaders and founders of monasteries have built their *Gumphas* and houses of prayer in such surroundings as would lead the mind naturally to lofty thoughts. There are as many as eight monasteries around the Manasarowar and four around the peak of Kailas. The large monastery at Taklakot is built on the top of a hill. Water for the needs of the two hundred and fifty inmates has to be carried daily from the plains below, the carriers have to walk a weary mile to reach the monastery. The writer, when he visited this monastery, was wondering why the wise lamas had chosen a site where water was not available. Just then the full moon rose with all its splendour between two snowclad peaks and there was silence all around. The writer immediately realized that the wise men of Tibet had exercised great wisdom in choosing the site of the monastery at Taklakot.

## 21. HUMILITY AND TOLERANCE NECESSARY FOR THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

The pursuit of truth has its own technique; it also demands a certain discipline. Students of truth who have taken up for investigation the external world of nature invariably approach their quest with an open mind. Freeing themselves of all prejudices, they cultivate the power of accurate observation and the capacity for weighing all available evidence. By patient endeavour, guided by a keen receptive mind, they arrive at conclusions, which they are ready to lay aside if further evidence disproves their validity. Science knows no limitations of caste, creed or nationality or even of time. The scientist of to-day fully utilizes the achievements of all his predecessors and freely bequeaths his own achievements to his successors. There is nothing hidden or occult in the wide fields of science; a new discovery, a fresh addition to the store of scientific knowledge is immediately declared from the house-tops, as it were. Periodicals in all progressive languages speedily set about to circulate the new truth to scientists all over the world. The scientist seeks no material gain; we are not concerned here with the prostitution of science for private gain by men who are not scientists. The truth-seeker, the pure scientist who is sustained in his arduous endeavours by intellectual curiosity and the earnest

desire to advance the bounds of human knowledge is fully engrossed in his work; he has neither the leisure nor the inclination to think of the stock exchanges and such other money-making avenues. Even his own personal emolument, he usually makes over to the advancement of the cause that is near and dear to his heart. Another characteristic of the scientist is his extreme humility. It was a great scientist who said that knowledge was as broad as the sea and that the individual seeker was like a little child which busied itself picking pebbles on the sea-shore.

\* \* \*

Now coming to those truth-seekers who have taken up for exploration of the internal realm of the spirit, we find that the best among them are even humbler and more tolerant than the scientists. They whom the world reveres as prophets, spiritual giants and sons of God, call themselves the servants of humanity; they plainly tell us that other prophets and seers have preceded them and that they themselves have come not to destroy, but to fulfil. In unequivocal language they acknowledge that there are many paths leading to the same goal and that 'all religions are in substance one and the same.' The humility and tolerance of the little child is held up by them as an example for us to follow. 'Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,' are the words spoken by a son of God. Truth-seekers in the spiritual realm divest themselves of all worldly possessions; voluntary poverty is enjoined by them on all who seek to follow their teachings. Great prophets have appeared in the world to help humanity in the critical periods of its

chequered history. But the race has never been extinct at any time. The lesser prophets are known as saints, seers and mystics. They have appeared in all countries, in all ages. Although separated by time and space, they bear among themselves a very close family resemblance. Their spiritual experiences are so similar and carry conviction to all earnest souls by their universality and simplicity. All that are pure in heart and seek truth with an open mind pay the highest respect to the prophets, seers, saints and mystics of all nations and of all lands.

\* \* \*

Mystics are the finest flowers of the human race, and as such, they belong to the race as a whole. They stand outside the limitations, restrictions and codes of regulations of organized religions; nevertheless, institutional religions, in order to promote their own ends, have often freely drawn upon the teachings of the sons of the spirit. Mystics care more for the spirit of truth than for the forms in which it expresses itself; whereas, institutional religions seldom tolerate any deviation from form and procedure and by their insistence on externals often miss the spirit of truth. As investigators in the domain of the spirit, mystics transcend the conventional limitations of society; nevertheless, they have been potent centres around which widespread organizations for social amelioration have often sprung up. Mystics are creative; their writings exhibit originality and testify to the fact that their thoughts had their origin in the depths of the spirit; the professors of institutional religions on the other hand, are commentators, their function seems to be to interpret religious truths to conform to the theory and practice of the religious sect to which they belong. These

considerations lead us to the conclusion that religion is a social activity, whereas the quest of the highest spiritual truth is super-social.

Society needs a religion as much as it needs a judicial system, an economic programme and a scheme of education. In ancient and medieval societies all these were brought within the framework of religion. Religion in those days had a sort of a totalitarian control over the body, the mind and the spirit of its votaries. Priests and prelates were vested with spiritual and temporal power. They controlled education and framed the laws of the country. The growth of the universities, the general advancement in knowledge, and the widespread attempt in all countries to attain the ideal of universal literacy had the effect of weakening priestly power. The new vistas opened up by astronomical and physical science gave a rude shock to the smug and comfortable cosmology of ancient religions. Archaeological and historical research and the conclusions of biological science gave a different story about the origin of man and the incredibly long time that elapsed before civilization and recorded history began. The spread of science has also effected a revolution in men's modes of thinking. Personal authority does not count in the domains of science. The investigator is called upon to prove his conclusions before accepting them.

\* \* \*

The tools of science, we mean the technique which positive science adopts for arriving at truth, have been found to be so valuable that thinkers began using the same tech-



nique for the investigation of other subjects also. Higher criticism aims at subjecting the Christian religious scriptures to the same scrutiny as that to which other historical documents are subjected. The doctrine of special creation mentioned in the Genesis is questioned by science which also challenges the right of any individual or body of men to check any other individual from pursuing truth in his own chosen way. This attitude on the part of thinking men has given rise to the classical conflict between science and religion. Throughout the ages, there have been men who, blinded by a mistaken zeal for what they considered their religion, have persecuted other men for holding slightly differing views. We have heard of the horrors of the Inquisition of the medieval ages and the concentration camps of modern times. The reasons for such violent methods adopted by religion are not far to seek. In spite of its super-social pretensions, religion as it exists in practice is entirely a social activity ; and it is well known that the social organism resents any uncalled for intrusion into its settled order of life. India solved this problem by putting the Sannyasin, the disinterested seeker of truth, outside the pale of society. He was free to carry out his experiments with truth in his own way unobstructed and unobstructing.

\* \* \*

The professors of institutional religions have also strongly held the view that certain religious truths should be accepted on the basis of faith, for such truths, they say, do not admit of proof in terms of the established canons of reasoning known to logic and methodology. Reason being a product of life cannot prove life, much less can it prove

the spirit, is the usual argument advanced by them. There is a certain amount of weight in this argument as may be seen from the controversies raging between the rival schools of rational thought and intuitional insight. The case for the professors of organized religions becomes weak when they make claims of special revelation and apostolic succession. When they want us to accept on their word that the highest truth was revealed to only a single individual who lived in some place at some definite time and that they who are the successors in the legitimate line of discipleship hold the keys to that revealed truth and further tell us that we should accept that truth on their own terms, or be damned eternally, the bold spirits, among us prefer eternal damnation to the accepting of such patent drugs advertised as a sure cure for all our spiritual ills. The Vedantists—by which term we shall denote all seekers of the highest truth, regardless of the official label attached to them—are always humble and tolerant and extremely reasonable. They are always ready to undergo the necessary discipline and win truth by their own efforts. If you prescribe forty day's fasting, or the maintaining of absolute silence for the same number of months, or the observing of unbroken celibacy for the same number of years, the Vedantist is quite prepared to give a fair trial to your suggestions. He is ready to undergo any arduous discipline to secure that freedom which the realization of the highest truth brings in its wake. But let it be clearly understood that the Vedantist seeks that freedom and that truth as his inalienable birthright and not as a free gift from any person or group of persons.

\* \* \*

Let us try to state briefly the attitude of the Vedantist towards science and religion. The Vedantist accepts the claims of positive science within the limitations it has set for itself. In the domain of the spirit he is prepared to accept intuition as a means of discerning truth provided it is universal, that is, accessible to all sons of men who are prepared to undergo the necessary discipline. God, according to the Vedantist, is no respecter of persons. If He revealed Himself in the midst of a burning bush, some thirty-five centuries ago, to a certain individual in far-off Egypt, He is sure to reveal Himself now and for all time to come to other individuals of other lands. Subject to this condition the Vedantist is ready to accept all religions as so many pathways to the same Reality. Soham or the Hebrew version of it I Am That I Am is the name of that Reality. It is the goal of all men, some have already reached It, others are approaching It and yet others are loitering on the pathway, sightseeing. They have temporarily lost sight of the goal. Ultimately all have to reach the goal, there is no exception. There is no chosen race and there is no eternal damnation, says the Vedantist. The idea of a chosen people is Semitic; it was necessary to rouse up from lethargy a fallen and enslaved race such as the Israelites who sojourned in Egypt. By persisting in the claim, the Jew has become a very much unwanted individual in all countries among all nations.

\* \* \*

The Vedantist never picks up a quarrel with those who make the claim of special revelation and apostolic succession. More than one sect makes the claim and the Vedantist is

perfectly contented to be a mere spectator and allow the rival claimants for special revelation to fight among themselves and settle the issue. Further, he values his time and would forge ahead with an open mind to seek for the pearl of great price. Has the Vedantist the right to interpret other religious scriptures? There is no question of "other." Even as the scientist claims to make full use of the material furnished by all his predecessors, so does the student of truth claim the right to peruse all religious scriptures of all lands. The Christians may put forward special claims to the ownership of the Holy Sepulchre and the Muslims may claim exclusive rights over the Kaaba in Mecca. We do not contest their claims.

But the words uttered by Christ and Muhammad, two of the greatest sons of humanity, form the common heritage of mankind. They spoke in the name of God, our common Father. They declared that they received the truth from God, the source of all truth, all beauty and all goodness. With humility and tolerance we approach these great teachers and listen to their voice. We love them, we revere them and none shall stand between us and our beloved teachers.

\* \* \*

In this connection, we desire to quote *in extenso* from the *Harijan* the reply given by Mahatma Gandhi to a Muslim research scholar who questioned his right to interpret the Quran. Mahatmaji makes mention of the distinguished Muslim friends who presented him with copies of translations of the holy book and also mentions the fact that many pious Muslims had remarked that he was a better Mus'im

than most Muslims in that he acted in the spirit of the Quran and knew more of the life of the Prophet than most Muslims. He then proceeds to say :

“The research scholar is right in imputing to me the desire to read my meaning into the Quran. Surely there is no harm in it so long as I remain absolutely faithful to the text and approach my task with a prayerful and open mind. My correspondent should know as a scholar that an interpretation of a life or a book is not necessarily correct because it has been handed down for generations. An error does not cease to be one after a given number of repetitions by a given number of men for a given number of years. The Biblical texts are still being corrected. And many good Christians believe that the Christianity of the West is a negation of Christ's central teaching. It is just possible that the research scholar's views about the qualifications required for reading and interpreting the Quran and his own interpretation are wrong, and that my being a non-Muslim is no bar to my reading the Quran or interpreting it. And it is not at all impossible that my interpretation may be found to be right. It will be an evil day if the reading and interpreting of religious books are to be confined only to those who wear particular religious labels. I ask my correspondent and his companions, as their friend, to shed what in my opinion is their gross intolerance and give the same credit to others for seeing truth as they claim for themselves. No one has a monopoly of truth. All truth represented by imperfect humans that we are is relative. We can each act according to our lights. God alone knows the reality. That being

so, it behoves research scholars at least to be humble and tolerant. Fanaticism and intolerance can neither conduce to research work nor advance the cause they represent.”

These words admirably sum up the whole situation. With characteristic lucidity Mahatmaji expresses in a few well-chosen words many profound truths. In the coming age of closer world co-operation it is necessary for us all, Hindus, Christians, Muslims and others, to dine together and pray together. In many of the Ramakrishna Mission monasteries, we observe the Christmas Day with as much fervour as devout Christians. In the residential schools in Ceylon conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu children dine together and whenever they wish to do so attend each other's prayers and no parent ever objected to this. The present writer has also very pleasant memories of participating several times in the birthday celebrations of the Prophet and speaking on that great life which it was the proud privilege of Arabia to bestow on the whole world.

The Vedantist lays emphasis on the super-social aspect of religion. That is why it is possible for him to fraternize with the followers of all faiths. In a way, it is considered necessary by him for his own spiritual development to approach all faiths with a prayerful and open mind. Think of the joy of realizing the same truth, through seemingly different paths. Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of the harmony of religions has given the modern world the lead for the achieving of inter-religious unity and inter-communal concord. His message is for all castes, creeds and nationa-

lities. The best minds of the world have expressed them, selves in favour of it. The message is old, it belongs to all great faiths and has been expressed by many prophets-saints, seers and mystics. Sri Ramakrishna lived it, realized it in all its bearings and thereby made it dynamic. It certainly elevates human character and makes man more social and sociable.

\* \* \*

Humility and tolerance are of paramount value for the earnest aspirant for spiritual realization. They also play a very important part in the pursuit of truth in the domains of science and philosophy. No sane man refuses to be inoculated against hydrophobia because Louis Pasteur, the discoverer of the serum and the method of inoculation happens to be a Frenchman. No one will credit with sanity the unfortunate individual who refuses to study the *Transcendental Aesthetic* on the ground that Immanuel Kant is a German. If Carlyle and Gibbon without assuming the label of Muslims derived profit and pleasure by studying the life and teachings of the Prophet, why should the same profit and pleasure be denied to any one of us? At the approach of peaceful eventide the muezzin from the minaret calls the faithful to prayer. At the break of the new dawn of toleration, harmony and mutual understanding, the Sage of Dakshineshwar calls upon all mankind to sink all differences and bend down in prayer to the All-Merciful. Through the mouth of his chief disciple, he offers this prayer on behalf of all who stand for harmony and toleration : 'May He who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura-Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea.'



Ancient Thoughts for  
Modern Man Rs. 25. 00

