

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda-
Volume 4- Translation: Prose

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Chapter 1

The Problem of Modern India and its Solution

THE PROBLEM OF MODERN INDIA AND ITS SOLUTION^[1]

The ancient history of India is full of descriptions of the gigantic energies and their multifarious workings, the boundless spirit, the combination of indomitable action and reaction of the various forces, and, above all, the profound thoughtfulness of a godly race. If the word history is understood to mean merely narratives of kings and emperors, and pictures of society — tyrannised over from time to time by the evil passions, haughtiness, avarice, etc., of the rulers of the time, portraying the acts resulting from their good or evil propensities, and how these reacted upon the society of that time — such a history India perhaps does not possess. But every line of that mass of the religious literature of India, her ocean of poetry, her philosophies and various scientific works reveal to us — a thousand times more clearly than the narratives of the life-incidents and genealogies of particular kings and emperors can ever do — the exact position and every step made in advance by that vast body of men who, even before the dawn of civilisation, impelled by hunger and thirst, lust and greed, etc., attracted by the charm of beauty, endowed with a great and indomitable mental power, and moved by various sentiments, arrived through various ways and means at that stage of eminence. Although the heaps of those triumphal flags which they gathered in their innumerable victories over nature with which they had been waging war for ages, have, of late, been torn and tattered by the violent winds of adverse circumstances and become worn out through age, yet they still proclaim the glory of Ancient India.

Whether this race slowly proceeded from Central Asia, Northern Europe, or the Arctic regions, and gradually came down and sanctified India by settling there at last, or whether the holy land of India was their original native place, we have no proper means of knowing now. Or whether a vast race living in or outside India, being displaced from its original abode, in conformity with natural laws, came in the course of time to colonise and settle over Europe and other places — and whether these people were white or black, blue-eyed or dark-eyed, golden-

haired or black-haired — all these matters — there is no sufficient ground to prove now, with the one exception of the fact of the kinship of Sanskrit with a few European languages. Similarly, it is not easy to arrive at a final conclusion as to the modern Indians, whether they all are the pure descendants of that race, or how much of the blood of that race is flowing in their veins, or again, what races amongst them have any of that even in them.

However, we do not, in fact, lose much by this uncertainty.

But there is one fact to remember. Of that ancient Indian race, upon which the rays of civilisation first dawned, where deep thoughtfulness first revealed itself in full glory, there are still found hundreds of thousands of its children, born of its mind — the inheritors of its thoughts and sentiments — ready to claim them.

Crossing over mountains, rivers, arid oceans, setting at naught, as it were, the obstacles of the distance of space and time, the blood of Indian thought has flowed, and is still flowing into the veins of other nations of the globe, whether in a distinct or in some subtle unknown way. Perhaps to us belongs the major portion of the universal ancient inheritance.

In a small country lying in the eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea, beautiful and adorned by nature, and garlanded by well-formed and beautiful-looking islands, lived a race of men who were few in number, but of a very charming aspect, perfectly formed, and strong in muscles and sinews, light of body, yet possessing steadiness and perseverance, and who were unrivalled for the creation of all earthly beauties, as well as endowed with extraordinary practicality and intellect. The other ancient nations used to call them Yavanas, but they called themselves Greeks. This handful of a vigorous and wonderful race is a unique example in the annals of man. Wherever and in whatever nation there has been, or is, any advance made in earthly science up to the present day — such as social, martial, political, sculptural, etc. — there the shadow of ancient Greece has fallen. Let us leave apart the consideration of ancient times, for even in this modern age, we, the Bengalis, think ourselves proud and enlightened sim-

ply by following the footmarks of these Yavana Gurus for these last fifty years, illumining our homes with what light of theirs is reaching us through the European literature.

The whole of Europe nowadays is, in every respect, the disciple of ancient Greece, and her proper inheritor; so much so that a wise man of England had said, "Whatever nature has not created, that is the creation of the Greek mind."

These two gigantic rivers (Aryans and Yavanas), issuing from far-away and different mountains (India and Greece), occasionally come in contact with each other, and whenever such confluence takes place, a tremendous intellectual or spiritual tide, rising in human societies, greatly expands the range of civilisation and confirms the bond of universal brotherhood among men.

Once in far remote antiquity, the Indian philosophy, coming in contact with Greek energy, led to the rise of the Persian, the Roman, and other great nations. After the invasion of Alexander the Great, these two great waterfalls colliding with each other, deluged nearly half of the globe with spiritual tides, such as Christianity. Again, a similar commingling, resulting in the improvement and prosperity of Arabia, laid the foundation of modern European civilisation. And perhaps, in our own day, such a time for the conjunction of these two gigantic forces has presented itself again. This time their centre is India.

The air of India pre-eminently conduces to quietness, the nature of the Yavana is the constant expression of power; profound meditation characterises the one, the indomitable spirit of dexterous activity, the other; one's motto is "renunciation", the other's "enjoyment". One's whole energy is directed inwards, the other's, outwards; one's whole learning consists in the knowledge of the Self or the Subject, the other's, in the knowledge of the not-Self or the object (perishable creation); one loves Moksha (spiritual freedom), the other loves political independence; one is unmindful of gaining prosperity in this world, the other sets his whole heart on making a heaven of this world; one, aspiring after eternal bliss, is indifferent to all the ephemeral pleasures of this life, and the other, doubting the existence of eternal bliss, or knowing it to be far away, directs his whole energy to the attainment of earthly pleasures as much as possible.

In this age, both these types of mankind are extinct, only their physical and mental children, their works and thoughts are existing.

Europe and America are the advanced children of the Yavanas, a glory to their forefathers; but the modern inhabitants of the land of Bharata are not the glory of the ancient Aryas. But, as fire remains intact under cover of ashes, so the ancestral fire still remains latent in these modern Indians. Through the grace of the Almighty Power, it is sure to manifest itself in time.

What will accrue when that ancestral fire manifests itself? Would the sky of India again appear clouded over by wav-

ing masses of smoke springing from the Vedic sacrificial fire? Or is the glory of Rantideva again going to be revived in the blood of the sacrificed animals? Are the old customs of Gomedha, Ashvamedha, or perpetuating the lineage from a husband's brother, and other usages of a like nature to come back again? Or is the deluge of a Buddhistic propaganda again going to turn the whole of India into a big monastery? Are the laws of Manu going to be rehabilitated as of yore? Or is the discrimination of food, prescribed and forbidden, varying in accordance with geographical dimensions, as it is at the present day, alone going to have its all-powerful domination over the length and breadth of the country? Is the caste system to remain, and is it going to depend eternally upon the birthright of a man, or is it going to be determined by his qualification? And again in that caste system, is the discrimination of food, its touchableness or untouchableness, dependent upon the purity or the impurity of the man who touches it, to be observed as it is in Bengal, or will it assume a form more strict as it does in Madras? Or, as in the Punjab, will all such restrictions be obliterated? Are the marriages of the different Varnas to take place from the upper to the lower Varna in the successive order, as in Manu's days, and as it is still in vogue in Nepal? Or, as in Bengal and other places, are they to be kept restricted to a very limited number of individuals constituting one of the several communities of a certain class of the Varna? To give a conclusive answer to all these questions is extremely difficult. They become the more difficult of solution, considering the difference in the customs prevailing in different parts of the country — nay, as we find even in the same part of the country such a wide divergence of customs among different castes and families.

Then what is to be?

What we should have is what we have not, perhaps what our forefathers even had not — that which the Yavanas had; that, impelled by the life-vibration of which, is issuing forth in rapid succession from the great dynamo of Europe, the electric flow of that tremendous power vivifying the whole world. We want that. We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-reliance, that immovable fortitude, that dexterity in action, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement. Checking a little the constant looking back to the past, we want that expansive vision infinitely projected forward; and we want — that intense spirit of activity (Rajas) which will flow through our every vein, from head to foot.

What can be a greater giver of peace than renunciation? A little ephemeral worldly good is nothing in comparison with eternal good; no doubt of that. What can bring greater strength than Sattva Guna (absolute purity of mind)? It is indeed true that all other kinds of knowledge are but non-knowledge in comparison with Self-knowledge. But I ask: How many are there in the world fortunate enough to gain that Sattva Guna? How many in this land of Bharata? How many have that noble hero-

ism which can renounce all, shaking off the idea of “I and mine”? How many are blessed enough to possess that far-sight of wisdom which makes the earthly pleasures appear to be but vanity of vanities? Where is that broad-hearted man who is apt to forget even his own body in meditating over the beauty and glory of the Divine? Those who are such are but a handful in comparison to the population of the whole of India; and in order that these men may attain to their salvation, will the millions and millions of men and women of India have to be crushed under the wheel of the present-day society and religion?

And what good can come out of such a crushing?

Do you not see — talking up this plea of Sattva, the country has been slowly and slowly drowned in the ocean of Tamas or dark ignorance? Where the most dull want to hide their stupidity by covering it with a false desire for the highest knowledge which is beyond all activities, either physical or mental; where one, born and bred in life-long laziness, wants to throw the veil of renunciation over his own unfitness for work; where the most diabolical try to make their cruelty appear, under the cloak of austerity, as a part of religion; where no one has an eye upon his own incapacity, but everyone is ready to lay the whole blame on others; where knowledge consists only in getting some books by heart, genius consists in chewing the cud of others’ thoughts, and the highest glory consists in taking the name of ancestors: do we require any other proof to show that that country is being day by day drowned in utter Tamas?

Therefore Sattva or absolute purity is now far away from us. Those amongst us who are not yet fit, but who hope to be fit, to reach to that absolutely pure Paramahansa state — for them the acquirement of Rajas or intense activity is what is most beneficial now. Unless a man passes through Rajas, can he ever attain to that perfect Sâttvika state? How can one expect Yoga or union with God, unless one has previously finished with his thirst for Bhoga or enjoyment? How can renunciation come where there is no Vairâgya or dispassion for all the charms of enjoyment?

On the other hand, the quality of Rajas is apt to die down as soon as it comes up, like a fire of palm leaves. The presence of Sattva and the Nitya or Eternal Reality is almost in a state of juxtaposition — Sattva is nearly Nitya. Whereas the nation in which the quality of Rajas predominates is not so long-lived, but a nation with a preponderance of Sattva is, as it were, immortal. History is a witness to this fact.

In India, the quality of Rajas is almost absent: the same is the case with Sattva in the West. It is certain, therefore, that the real life of the Western world depends upon the influx, from India, of the current of Sattva or transcendentalism; and it is also certain that unless we overpower and submerge our Tamas by the opposite tide of Rajas, we shall never gain any worldly good or welfare in this life; and it is also equally certain that we shall meet many

formidable obstacles in the path of realisation of those noble aspirations and ideals connected with our after-life.

The one end and aim of the *Udbodhana* is to help the union and intermingling of these two forces, as far as it lies in its power.

True, in so doing there is a great danger — lest by this huge wave of Western spirit are washed away all our most precious jewels, earned through ages of hard labour; true, there is fear lest falling into its strong whirlpool, even the land of Bharata forgets itself so far as to be turned into a battlefield in the struggle after earthly enjoyments; ay, there is fear, too, lest going to imitate the impossible and impracticable foreign ways, rooting out as they do our national customs and ideals, we lose all that we hold dear in this life and be undone in the next!

To avoid these calamities we must always keep the wealth of our own home before our eyes, so that every one down to the masses may always know and see what his own ancestral property is. We must exert ourselves to do that; and side by side, we should be brave to open our doors to receive all available light from outside. Let rays of light come in, in sharp-driving showers from the four quarters of the earth; let the intense flood of light flow in from the West — what of that? Whatever is weak and corrupt is liable to die — what are we to do with it? If it goes, let it go, what harm does it do to us? What is strong and invigorating is immortal. Who can destroy that?

How many gushing springs and roaring cataracts, how many icy rivulets and ever-flowing streamlets, issuing from the eternal snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, combine and flow together to form the gigantic river of the gods, the Gangâ, and rush impetuously towards the ocean! So what a variety of thoughts and ideas, how many currents of forces, issuing from innumerable saintly hearts, and from brains of geniuses of various lands have already enveloped India, the land of Karma, the arena for the display of higher human activities! Look! how under the dominion of the English, in these days of electricity, railroad, and steamboat, various sentiments, manners, customs, and morals are spreading all over the land with lightning speed. Nectar is coming, and along with it, also poison; good is coming, as well as evil. There has been enough of angry opposition and bloodshed; the power of stemming this tide is not in Hindu society. Everything, from water filtered by machinery and drawn from hydrants, down to sugar purified with bone-ash, is being quietly and freely taken by almost every one, in spite of much show of verbal protest. Slowly and slowly, by the strong dint of law, many of our most cherished customs are falling off day by day — we have no power to withstand that. And why is there no power? Is truth really powerless? “Truth alone conquers and not falsehood.” — Is this Divine Vedic saying false? Or who knows but that those very customs which are being swept away by the deluge of the power of Western sovereignty or of Western education were not real Âchâras, but were Anâchâras

after all. This also is a matter for serious consideration.

बहुजनहिताय बहुजनसुखाय — “For the good of the many, as well as for the happiness of the many” — in an unselfish manner, with a heart filled with love and reverence, the *Udbodhana* invites all wise and large-hearted men who love their motherland to discuss these points and solve these problems; and, being devoid of the feeling of hatred or antagonism, as well as turning itself away from the infliction of abusive language directed towards any individual, or society, or any sect, it offers its whole self for the service of all classes.

To work we have the right, the result is in the hands of the Lord. We only pray: “O Thou Eternal Spirit, make us spiritual; O Thou Eternal Strength, make us strong; O Thou Mighty One, make us mighty.”

Notes

- [1] The above is a translation of the first Bengali article written by Swami Vivekananda as an introduction to the *Udbodhana*, when it was started on the 14th of January, 1899, as the Bengali fortnightly (afterwards monthly) journal of the Ramakrishna Order.

Chapter 2

Ramakrishna, his Life and Sayings

RAMAKRISHNA: HIS LIFE AND SAYINGS^[1]

Among the Sanskrit scholars of the West, Professor Max Müller takes the lead. The Rig-Veda Samhitâ, the whole of which no one could even get at before, is now very neatly printed and made accessible to the public, thanks to the munificent generosity of the East India Company and to the Professor's prodigious labours extending over years. The alphabetical characters of most of the manuscripts, collected from different parts of India, are of various forms, and many words in them are inaccurate. We cannot easily comprehend how difficult it is for a foreigner, however learned he may be, to find out the accuracy or inaccuracy of these Sanskrit characters, and more especially to make out clearly the meaning of an extremely condensed and complicated commentary. In the life of Professor Max Müller, the publication of the Rig-Veda is a great event. Besides this, he has been dwelling, as it were, and spending his whole lifetime amidst ancient Sanskrit literature; but notwithstanding this, it does not imply that in the Professor's imagination India is still echoing as of old with Vedic hymns, with her sky clouded with sacrificial smoke, with many a Vasishta, Vishvâmitra, Janaka, and Yâjñavalkya, with her every home blooming with a Gârghi or a Maitreyi and herself guided by the Vedic rules or canons of Grihya-Sutra.

The Professor, with ever-watchful eyes, keeps himself well-informed of what new events are occurring even in the out-of-the-way corners of modern India, half-dead as she is, trodden down by the feet of the foreigner professing an alien religion, and all but bereft of her ancient manners, rites, and customs. As the Professor's feet never touched these shores, many Anglo-Indians here show an unmixed contempt for his opinions on the customs, manners, and codes of morality of the Indian people. But they ought to know that, even after their lifelong stay, or even if they were born and brought up in this country, except any particular information they may obtain about that stratum of society with which they come in direct contact, the Anglo-Indian authorities have to remain quite ignorant in respect of other classes of people; and the more so, when, of this vast society divided into so many castes, it is very hard even among themselves for one caste to properly know the manners and peculiarities

of another.

Some time ago, in a book, named, *Residence in India*, written by a well-known Anglo-Indian officer, I came across such a chapter as "Native Zenana Secrets". Perhaps because of that strong desire in every human heart for knowledge of secrets, I read the chapter, but only to find that this big Anglo-Indian author is fully bent upon satisfying the intense curiosity of his own countrymen regarding the mystery of a native's life by describing an *affaire d'amour*, said to have transpired between his sweeper, the sweeper's wife, and her paramour! And from the cordial reception given to the book by the Anglo-Indian community, it seems the writer's object has been gained, and he feels himself quite satisfied with his work "God-speed to you, dear friends!" — What else shall we say? Well has the Lord said in the Gîta:

ध्यायतो वषियान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात्सजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभजिायते ॥

—"Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed in a man. From attachment longing, and from longing anger grows."

Let such irrelevant things alone. To return to our subject: After all, one wonders at Professor Max Müller's knowledge of the social customs and codes of law, as well as the contemporaneous occurrences in the various provinces of present-day India; this is borne out by our own personal experiences.

In particular, the Professor observes with a keen eye what new waves of religion are rising in different parts of India, and spares no pains in letting the Western world not remain in the dark about them. The Brâhmo Samaj guided by Debendranâth Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen, the Arya Samaj established by Swami Dayânanda Sarasvati, and the Theosophical movement — have all come under the praise or censure of his pen. Struck by the sayings and teachings of Shri Ramakrishna published in the two well-established journals, the *Brahmavâdin* and the *Prabuddha Bhârata*, and reading what the Brahmo preacher, Mr. Pratâp Chandra Mazumdâr, wrote about Shri Ramakrishna, ^[2] he was attracted by the sage's life. Some time ago, a short sketch of Shri Ramakrishna's life ^[3] also appeared in the well-known monthly journal of England,

The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review, contributed by Mr. C. H. Tawney, M.A., the distinguished librarian of the India House. Gathering a good deal of information from Madras and Calcutta, the Professor discussed Shri Ramakrishna's life and his teachings in a short article ^[4] in the foremost monthly English journal, *The Nineteenth Century*. There he expressed himself to the effect that this new sage easily won his heart by the originality of his thoughts, couched in novel language and impregnate with fresh spiritual power which he infused into India when she was merely echoing the thoughts of her ancient sages for several centuries past, or, as in recent times, those of Western scholars. He, the Professor, had read often India's religious literature and thereby well acquainted himself with the life-stories of many of her ancient sages and saints; but is it possible to expect such lives again in this age in this India of modern times? Ramakrishna's life was a reply in the affirmative to such a question. And it brought new life by sprinkling water, as it were, at the root of the creeper of hope regarding India's future greatness and progress, in the heart of this great-souled scholar whose whole life has been dedicated to her.

There are certain great souls in the West who sincerely desire the good of India, but we are not aware whether Europe can point out another well-wisher of India who feels more for India's well-being than Professor Max Müller. Not only is Max Müller a well-wisher of India, but he has also a strong faith in Indian philosophy and Indian religion. That Advaitism is the highest discovery in the domain of religion, the Professor has many times publicly admitted. That doctrine of reincarnation, which is a dread to the Christian who has identified the soul with the body, he firmly believes in because of his having found conclusive proof in his own personal experience. And what more, perhaps, his previous birth was in India; and lest by coming to India, the old frame may break down under the violent rush of a suddenly aroused mass of past recollections - is the fear in his mind that now stands foremost in the way of his visit to this country. Still as a worldly man, whoever he may be, he has to look to all sides and conduct himself accordingly. When, after a complete surrender of all worldly interests, even the Sannyasin, when performing any practices which he knows to be purest in themselves, is seen to shiver in fear of public opinion, simply because they are held with disapproval by the people among whom he lives; when the consideration of gaining name and fame and high position, and the fear of losing them regulate the actions of even the greatest ascetic, though he may verbally denounce such consideration as most filthy and detestable — what wonder then that the man of the world who is universally honoured, and is ever anxious not to incur the displeasure of society, will have to be very cautious in ventilating the views which he personally cherishes. It is not a fact that the Professor is an utter disbeliever in such subtle subjects as the mysterious psychic powers of the Yogis.

It is not many years since Professor Max Müller "felt

called upon to say a few words on certain religious movements, now going on in India" — "which has often and not unjustly, been called a country of philosophers" — which seemed to him "to have been very much misrepresented and misunderstood at home". In order to remove such misconceptions and to protest against "the wild and over-charged accounts of saints and sages living and teaching at present in India, which had been published and scattered broadcast in Indian, American, and English papers"; and "to show at the same time that behind such strange names as Indian Theosophy, and Esoteric Buddhism, and all the rest, there was something real something worth knowing" — or in other words, to point out to the thoughtful section of Europe that India was not a land inhabited only by "quite a new race of human beings who had gone through a number of the most fearful ascetic exercises", to carry on a lucrative profession by thus acquiring the powers of working such "very silly miracles" as flying through the air like the feathered race, walking on or living fishlike under the water, healing all sorts of maladies by means of incantations, and, by the aid of occult arts fabricating gold, silver, or diamond from baser materials, or by the power of Siddhis bestowing sturdy sons to rich families — but that men, who had actually realised in their life great transcendental truths, who were real knowers of Brahman, true Yogis, real devotees of God, were never found wanting in India: and, above all, to show that the whole Aryan population of India had not as yet come down so low as to be on the same plane as the brute creation, that, rejecting the latter, the living Gods in human shape, they "the high and the low" were, day and night, busy licking the feet of the first-mentioned performers of silly juggleries, — Professor Max Müller presented Shri Ramakrishna's life to the learned European public, in an article entitled "A Real Mahâtman", which appeared in *The Nineteenth Century* in its August number, 1896.

The learned people of Europe and America read the article with great interest and many have been attracted towards its subject, Shri Ramakrishna Deva, with the result that the wrong ideas of the civilised West about India as a country full of naked, infanticidal, ignorant, cowardly race of men who were cannibals and little removed from beasts, who forcibly burnt their widows and were steeped in all sorts of sin and darkness — towards the formation of which ideas, the Christian missionaries and, I am as much ashamed as pained to confess, some of my own countrymen also have been chiefly instrumental — began to be corrected. The veil of the gloom of ignorance, which was spread across the eyes of the Western people by the strenuous efforts of these two bodies of men, has been slowly and slowly rending asunder. "Can the country that has produced a great world-teacher like Shri Bhagavân Ramakrishna Deva be really full of such abominations as we have been asked to believe in, or have we been all along duped by interested organised bodies of mischief-makers, and kept in utter obscurity and error about the real India?" — Such a question naturally arises in the Western mind.

When Professor Max Müller, who occupies in the West the first rank in the field of Indian religion, philosophy, and literature, published with a devoted heart a short sketch of Shri Ramakrishna's life in *The Nineteenth Century* for the benefit of Europeans and Americans, it is needless to say that a bitter feeling of burning rancour made its appearance amongst those two classes of people referred to above.

By improper representation of the Hindu gods and goddesses, the Christian missionaries were trying with all their heart and soul to prove that really religious men could never be produced from among their worshippers; but like a straw before a tidal wave, that attempt was swept away; while that class of our countrymen alluded to above, which set itself to devise means for quenching the great fire of the rapidly spreading power of Shri Ramakrishna, seeing all its efforts futile, has yielded to despair. What is human will in opposition to the divine?

Of course from both sides, unintermittent volleys of fierce attack were opened on the aged Professor's devoted head; the old veteran, however, was not the one to turn his back. He had triumphed many times in similar contests. This time also he has passed the trial with equal ease. And to stop the empty shouts of his inferior opponents, he has published, by way of a warning to them, the book, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, in which he has collected more complete information and given a fuller account of his life and utterances, so that the reading public may get a better knowledge of this great sage and his religious ideas — the sage “who has lately obtained considerable celebrity both in India and America where his disciples have been actively engaged in preaching his gospel and winning converts to his doctrines even among Christian audiences”. The Professor adds, “This may seem very strange, nay, almost incredible to us. . . . Yet every human heart has its religious yearnings; it has a hunger for religion, which sooner or later wants to be satisfied. Now the religion taught by the disciples of Ramakrishna comes to these hungry souls without any untoward authority”, and is therefore, welcomed as the “free elixir of life”. . . . “Hence, though there may be some exaggeration in the number of those who are stated to have become converted to the religion of Ramakrishna, . . . there can be no doubt that a religion which can achieve such successes in our time, while it calls itself with perfect truth the oldest religion and philosophy of the world, viz the Vedanta, the end or highest object of the Vedas, deserves our careful attention.”

After discussing, in the first part of the book, what is meant by the Mahatman, the Four Stages of Life, Ascetic Exercises or Yoga, and after making some mention about Dayananda Sarasvati, Pavhâri Bâbâ, Debendranath Tagore, and Rai Shâligrâm Sâheb Bahadur, the leader of the Râdhâswami sect, the Professor enters on Shri Ramakrishna's life.

The Professor greatly fears lest the Dialogic Process —

the transformation produced in the description of the facts as they really happened by too much favourableness or unfavourableness of the narrator towards them — which is invariably at work in all history as a matter of inevitable course, also influences this present sketch of life. Hence his unusual carefulness about the collection of facts. The present writer is an insignificant servant of Shri Ramakrishna. Though the materials gathered by him for Ramakrishna's life have been well-pounded in the mortar of the Professor's logic and impartial judgment, still he (Max Müller) has not omitted to add that there may be possible “traces of what I call the Dialogic Process and the irrepressible miraculising tendencies of devoted disciples” even in “his unvarnished description of his Master”. And, no doubt, those few harsh-sweet words which the Professor has said in the course of his reply to what some people, with the Brâhmo-Dharma preacher, the Rev. Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, at their head, wrote to him in their anxiety to make out a “not edifying side” of Ramakrishna's character — demand thoughtful consideration from those amongst us of Bengal who, being full of jealousy, can with difficulty bear the sight of others' weal.

Shri Ramakrishna's life is presented in the book in very brief and simple language. In this life, every word of the wary historian is weighed, as it were, before being put on paper; those sparks of fire, which are seen here and there to shoot forth in the article, “A Real Mahatman”, are this time held in with the greatest care. The Professor's boat is here plying between the Scylla of the Christian missionaries on the one hand, and the Charybdis of the tumultuous Brahmos on the other. The article, “A Real Mahatman” brought forth from both the parties many hard words and many carping remarks on the Professor. It is a pleasure to observe that there is neither the attempt made here to retort on them, nor is there any display of meanness — as the refined writers of England are not in the habit of indulging in that kind of thing — but with a sober, dignified, not the least malignant, yet firm and thundering voice, worthy of the aged scholar, he has removed the charges that were levelled against some of the uncommon ideas of the great-soured sage — swelling forth from a heart too deep for ordinary grasp.

And the charges are, indeed, surprising to us. We have heard the great Minister of the Brahmo Samaj, the late revered Âchârya Shri Keshab Chandra Sen, speaking in his charming way that Shri Ramakrishna's simple, sweet, colloquial language breathed a superhuman purity; though in his speech could be noticed some such words as we term obscene, the use of those words, on account of his uncommon childlike innocence and of their being perfectly devoid of the least breath of sensualism, instead of being something reproachable, served rather the purpose of embellishment — yet, this is one of the mighty charges!

Another charge brought against him is that his treatment of his wife was barbarous because of his taking the vow of leading a Sannyasin's life! To this the Professor has

replied that he took the vow of Sannyasa with his wife's assent, and that during the years of his life on this earth, his wife, bearing a character worthy of her husband, heartily received him as her Guru (spiritual guide) and, according to his instructions, passed her days in infinite bliss and peace, being engaged in the service of God as a lifelong Brahmachârini. Besides, he asks, "Is love between husband and wife really impossible without the procreation of children?" "We must learn to believe in Hindu honesty" — in the matter that, without having any physical relationship, a Brahmachari husband can live a life of crystal purity, thus making his Brahmacharini wife a partner in the immortal bliss of the highest spiritual realisation, Brahmânanda — "however incredulous we might justly be on such matters in our own country". May blessings shower on the Professor for such worthy remarks! Even he, born of a foreign nationality and living in a foreign land, can understand the meaning of our Brahmacharya as the only way to the attainment of spirituality, and belies that it is not even in these days rare in India, whilst the hypocritical heroes of our own household are unable to see anything else than carnal relationship in the matrimonial union! "As a man thinketh in his mind, so he seeth outside."

Again another charge put forward is that "he did not show sufficient moral abhorrence of prostitutes". To this the Professor's rejoinder is very very sweet indeed: he says that in this charge Ramakrishna "does not stand quite alone among the founders of religion!" Ah! How sweet are these words — they remind one of the prostitute Am-bâpâli, the object of Lord Buddha's divine grace, and of the Samaritan woman who won the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet again, another charge is that he did not hate those who were intemperate in their habits. Heaven save the mark! One must not tread even on the shadow of a man, because he took a sip or two of drink — is not that the meaning? A formidable accusation indeed! Why did not the Mahâpurusha kick away and drive off in disgust the drunkards, the prostitutes, the thieves, and all the sinners of the world! And why did he not, with eyes closed, talk in a set drawl after the never-to-be-varied tone of the Indian flute-player, or talk in conventional language concealing his thoughts! And above all, the crowning charge is why did he not "live *maritalement*" all his life!

Unless life can be framed after the ideal of such strange purity and good manners as set forth by the accusers, India is doomed to go to ruin. Let her, if she has to rise by the help of such ethical rules!

The greater portion of the book has been devoted to the collection of the sayings, rather than to the life itself. That those sayings have attracted the attention of many of the English-speaking readers throughout the world can be easily inferred from the rapid sale of the book. The sayings, falling direct from his holy lips, are impregnate with the strongest spiritual force and power, and therefore

they will surely exert their divine influence in every part of the world. "For the good of the many, for the happiness of the many" great-souled men take their birth; their lives and works are past the ordinary human run, and the method of their preaching is equally marvellous.

And what are we doing? The son of a poor Brahmin, who has sanctified us by his birth, raised us by his work, and has turned the sympathy of the conquering race towards us by his immortal sayings — what are we doing for him? Truth is not always palatable, still there are times when it has to be told: some of us do understand that his life and teachings are to our gain, but there the matter ends. It is beyond our power even to make an attempt to put those precepts into practice in our own lives, far less to consign our whole body and soul to the huge waves of harmony of Jnâna and Bhakti that Shri Ramakrishna has raised. This play of the Lord, those who have understood or are trying to understand, to them we say, "What will mere understanding do? The proof of understanding is in work. Will others believe you if it ends only in verbal expressions of assurance or is put forward as a matter of personal faith? Work argues what one feels; work out what you feel and let the world see." All ideas and feelings coming out of the fullness of the heart are known by their fruits — practical works.

Those who, knowing themselves very learned, think lightly of this unlettered, poor, ordinary temple-priest, to them our submission is: "The country of which one illiterate temple-priest, by virtue of his own strength, has in so short a time caused the victory of the ancient Sanâtana Dharma of your forefathers to resound even in lands far beyond the seas — of that country, you are the heroes of heroes, the honoured of all, mighty, well-bred, the learned of the learned — how much therefore must you be able to perform far more uncommon, heroic deeds for the welfare of your own land and nation, if you but will its Arise, therefore, come forward, display the play of your superior power within, manifest it, and we are standing with offerings of deepest veneration in hand ready to worship you. We are ignorant, poor, unknown, and insignificant beggars with only the beggar's garb as a means of livelihood; whereas you are supreme in riches and influence, of mighty power, born of noble descent, centres of all knowledge and learning! Why not rouse yourselves? Why not take the lead? Show the way, show us that example of perfect renunciation for the good of the world, and we will follow you like bond-slaves!"

On the other hand, those who are showing unjustified signs of causeless, rancorous hostilities out of absolute malice and envy — natural to a slavish race — at the success and the celebrity of Shri Ramakrishna and his name — to them we say, "Dear friends, vain are these efforts of yours! If this infinite, unbounded, religious wave that has engulfed in its depths the very ends of space — on whose snow-white crest shineth this divine form in the august glow of a heavenly presence — if this be the effect brought about by our eager endeavours in pursuit of

personal name, fame, or wealth, then, without your or any others' efforts, this wave shall in obedience to the insuperable law of the universe, soon die in the infinite womb of time, never to rise again! But if, again, this tide, in accordance with the will and under the divine inspiration of the One Universal Mother, has begun to deluge the world with the flood of the unselfish love of a great man's heart, then, O feeble man, what power dost thou possess that thou shouldst thwart the onward progress of the Almighty Mother's will? "

Notes

- [1] Translation of a review of *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings* by Prof. Max Müller, contributed to the *Udbodhana*, 14th March, 1899.
- [2] "Paramahansa Sreemat Ramakrishna" — *Theistic Quarterly Review*, October, 1879.
- [3] "A Modern Hindu Saint" — January, 1896.
- [4] "A Real Mahâtman."

Chapter 3

The Paris Congress of the History of Religions

THE PARIS CONGRESS OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS^[1]

In the Paris Exhibition, the Congress of the History of Religions recently sat for several days together. At the Congress, there was no room allowed for the discussions on the doctrines and spiritual views of any religion; its purpose was only to inquire into the historic evolution of the different forms of established faiths, and along with it other accompanying facts that are incidental to it. Accordingly, the representation of the various missionary sects of different religions and their beliefs was entirely left out of account in this Congress. The Chicago Parliament of Religions was a grand affair, and the representatives of many religious sects from all parts of the world were present at it. This Congress, on the other hand, was attended only by such scholars as devote themselves to the study of the origin and the history of different religions. At the Chicago Parliament the influence of the Roman Catholics was great, and they organised it with great hopes for their sect. The Roman Catholics expected to establish their superiority over the Protestants without much opposition; by proclaiming their glory and strength and laying the bright side of their faith before the assembled Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Mussulmans, and other representatives of the world-religions and publicly exposing their weakness, they hoped to make firm their own position. But the result proving otherwise, the Christian world has been deplorably hopeless of the reconciliation of the different religious systems; so the Roman Catholics are now particularly opposed to the repetition of any such gathering. France is a Roman Catholic country; hence in spite of the earnest wish of the authorities, no religious congress was convened on account of the vehement opposition on the part of the Roman Catholic world.

The Congress of the History of Religions at Paris was like the Congress of Orientalists which is convened from time to time and at which European scholars, versed in Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic, and other Oriental languages, meet; only the antiquarianism of Christianity was added to this Paris Congress.

From Asia only three Japanese Pandits were present at the Congress. From India there was the Swami Vivekananda.

The conviction of many of the Sanskrit scholars of the West is that the Vedic religion is the outcome of the worship of the fire, the sun, and other awe-inspiring objects of natural phenomena.

Swami Vivekananda was invited by the Paris Congress to contradict this conviction, and he promised to read a paper on the subject. But he could not keep his promise on account of ill health, and with difficulty was only able to be personally present at the Congress, where he was most warmly received by all the Western Sanskrit scholars, whose admiration for the Swami was all the greater as they had already gone through many of his lectures on the Vedanta.

At the Congress, Mr. Gustav Oppert, a German Pandit, read a paper on the origin of the Shâlagrâma-Shilâ. He traced the origin of the Shalagrama worship to that of the emblem of the female generative principle. According to him, the Shiva-Linga is the phallic emblem of the male and the Shalagrama of the female generative principle. And thus he wanted to establish that the worship of the Shiva-Linga and that of the Shalagrama — both are but the component parts of the worship of Linga and Yoni! The Swami repudiated the above two views and said that though he had heard of such ridiculous explanations about the Shiva-Linga, the other theory of the Shalagrama-Shila was quite new and strange, and seemed groundless to him.

The Swami said that the worship of the Shiva-Linga originated from the famous hymn in the Atharva-Veda Samhitâ sung in praise of the Yupa-Stambha, the sacrificial post. In that hymn a description is found of the beginningless and endless Stambha or Skambha, and it is shown that the said Skambha is put in place of the eternal Brahman. As afterwards the Yajna (sacrificial) fire, its smoke, ashes, and flames, the Soma plant, and the ox that used to carry on its back the wood for the Vedic sacrifice gave place to the conceptions of the brightness of Shiva's body, his tawny matted-hair, his blue throat, and the riding on the bull of the Shiva, and so on — just so, the Yupa-Skambha gave place in time to the Shiva-Linga, and was

deified to the high Devahood of Shri Shankara. In the Atharva-Veda Samhita, the sacrificial cakes are also extolled along with the attributes of the Brahman.

In the *Linga Purâna*, the same hymn is expanded in the shape of stories, meant to establish the glory of the great Stambha and the superiority of Mahâdeva.

Again, there is another fact to be considered. The Buddhists used to erect memorial topes consecrated to the memory of Buddha; and the very poor, who were unable to build big monuments, used to express their devotion to him by dedicating miniature substitutes for them. Similar instances are still seen in the case of Hindu temples in Varanasi and other sacred places of India where those, who cannot afford to build temples, dedicate very small temple-like constructions instead. So it might be quite probable that during the period of Buddhistic ascendancy, the rich Hindus, in imitation of the Buddhists, used to erect something as a memorial resembling their Skambha, and the poor in a similar manner copied them on a reduced scale, and afterwards the miniature memorials of the poor Hindus became a new addition to the Skambha.

One of the names of the Buddhist Stupas (memorial topes) is Dhâtu-garbha, that is, "metal-wombed". Within the Dhatu-garbha, in small cases made of stone, shaped like the present Shalagrama, used to be preserved the ashes, bones, and other remains of the distinguished Buddhist Bhikshus, along with gold, silver, and other metals. The Shalagrama-Shilas are natural stones resembling in form these artificially-cut stone-cases of the Buddhist Dhatu-garbha, and thus being first worshipped by the Buddhists, gradually got into Vaishnavism, like many other forms of Buddhistic worship that found their way into Hinduism. On the banks of the Narmadâ and in Nepal, the Buddhistic influence lasted longer than in other parts of India; and the remarkable coincidence that the Narmadeshvara Shiva-Linga, found on the banks of the Narmadâ and hence so called, and the Shalagrama-Shilas of Nepal are given preference to by the Hindus to those found elsewhere in India is a fact that ought to be considered with respect to this point of contention.

The explanation of the Shalagrama-Shila as a phallic emblem was an imaginary invention and, from the very beginning, beside the mark. The explanation of the Shiva-Linga as a phallic emblem was brought forward by the most thoughtless, and was forthcoming in India in her most degraded times, those of the downfall of Buddhism. The filthiest Tântrika literature of Buddhism of those times is yet largely found and practiced in Nepal and Tibet.

The Swami gave another lecture in which he dwelt on the historic evolution of the religious ideas in India, and said that the Vedas are the common source of Hinduism in all its varied stages, as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India. The seeds of the multifarious growth of Indian thought on religion lie buried in the

Vedas. Buddhism and the rest of India's religious thought are the outcome of the unfolding and expansion of those seeds, and modern Hinduism also is only their developed and matured form. With the expansion or the contraction of society, those seeds lie more or less expanded at one place or more or less contracted at another.

He said a few words about the priority of Shri Krishna to Buddha. He also told the Western scholars that as the histories of the royal dynasties described in the *Vishnu Purâna* were by degrees being admitted as proofs throwing light on the ways of research of the antiquarian, so, he said, the traditions of India were all true, and desired that Western Sanskrit scholars, instead of writing fanciful articles, should try to discover their hidden truths.

Professor Max Müller says in one of his books that, whatever similarities there may be, unless it be demonstrated that some one Greek knew Sanskrit, it cannot be concluded that ancient India helped ancient Greece in any way. But it is curious to observe that some Western savants, finding several terms of Indian astronomy similar to those of Greek astronomy, and coming to know that the Greeks founded a small kingdom on the borders of India, can clearly read the help of Greece on everything Indian, on Indian literature, Indian astronomy, Indian arithmetic. Not only so; one has been bold enough to go so far as to declare that all Indian sciences as a rule are but echoes of the Greek!

On a single Sanskrit Shloka —

म्लेचछ्वा वै यवनाः तेषु एषा वदिया प्रतषिठति । ऋषवित्
तेऽपि पूज्यन्ते . . .

— "The Yavanas are Mlechchhas, in them this science is established, (therefore) even they deserve worship like Rishis, . . ." — how much the Westerners have indulged their unrestrained imagination! But it remains to be shown how the above Shloka goes to prove that the Aryas were taught by the Mlechchhas. The meaning may be that the learning of the Mlechchha disciples of the Aryan teachers is praised here, only to encourage the Mlechchhas in their pursuit of the Aryan science.

Secondly, when the germ of every Aryan science is found in the Vedas and every step of any of those sciences can be traced with exactness from the Vedic to the present day, what is the necessity for forcing the far-fetched suggestion of the Greek influence on them? "What is the use of going to the hills in search of honey if it is available at home?" as a Sanskrit proverb says.

Again, every Greek-like word of Aryan astronomy can be easily derived from Sanskrit roots. The Swami could not understand what right the Western scholars had to trace those words to a Greek source, thus ignoring their direct etymology.

In the same manner, if on finding mention of the word Yavanikâ (curtain) in the dramas of Kâlidâsa and other Indian poets, the Yâvanika (Ionian or Greek) influence on

the whole of the dramatic literature of the time is ascertained, then one should first stop to compare whether the Aryan dramas are at all like the Greek. Those who have studied the mode of action and style of the dramas of both the languages must have to admit that any such likeness, if found, is only a fancy of the obstinate dreamer, and has never any real existence as a matter of fact. Where is that Greek chorus? The Greek Yavanika is on one side of the stage, the Aryan diametrically on the other. The characteristic manner of expression of the Greek drama is one thing, that of the Aryan quite another. There is not the least likeness between the Aryan and the Greek dramas: rather the dramas of Shakespeare resemble to a great extent the dramas of India. So the conclusion may also be drawn that Shakespeare is indebted to Kalidasa and other ancient Indian dramatists for all his writings, and that the whole Western literature is only an imitation of the Indian.

Lastly, turning Professor Max Müller's own premisses against him, it may be said as well that until it is demonstrated that some one Hindu knew Greek some time one ought not to talk even of Greek influence.

Likewise, to see Greek influence in Indian sculpture is also entirely unfounded.

The Swami also said that the worship of Shri Krishna is much older than that of Buddha, and if the Gîtâ be not of the same date as the Mahâbhârata, it is surely much earlier and by no means later. The style of language of the Gita is the same as that of the Mahabharata. Most of the adjectives used in the Gita to explain matters spiritual are used in the Vana and other Parvans of the Mahabharata, respecting matters temporal. Such coincidence is impossible without the most general and free use of those words at one and the same time. Again, the line of thought in the Gita is the same as in the Mahabharata; and when the Gita notices the doctrines of all the religious sects of the time, why does it not ever mention the name of Buddhism?

In spite of the most cautious efforts of the writers subsequent to Buddha, reference to Buddhism is not withheld and appears somewhere or other, in some shape or other, in histories, stories, essays, and every book of the post-Buddhistic literature. In covert or overt ways, some allusion is sure to be met with in reference to Buddha and Buddhism. Can anyone show any such reference in the Gita? Again, the Gita is an attempt at the reconciliation of all religious creeds, none of which is slighted in it. Why, it remains to be answered, is Buddhism alone denied the tender touch of the Gita-writer?

The Gita wilfully scorns none. Fear? — Of that there is a conspicuous absence in it. The Lord Himself, being the interpreter and the establisher of the Vedas, never hesitates to even censure Vedic rash presumptuousness if required. Why then should He fear Buddhism?

As Western scholars devote their whole life to one Greek work, let them likewise devote their whole life to one Sanskrit work, and much light will flow to the world thereby.

The Mahabharata especially is the most invaluable work in Indian history; and it is not too much to say that this book has not as yet been even properly read by the Westerners.

After the lecture, many present expressed their opinions for or against the subject, and declared that they agreed with most of what the Swami had said, and assured the Swami that the old days of Sanskrit Antiquarianism were past and gone. The views of modern Sanskrit scholars were largely the same as those of the Swami's, they said. They believed also that there was much true history in the Puranas and the traditions of India

Lastly, the learned President, admitting all other points of the Swami's lecture, disagreed on one point only, namely, on the contemporaneousness of the Gita with the Mahabharata. But the only reason he adduced was that the Western scholars were mostly of the opinion that the Gita was not a part of the Mahabharata.

The substance of the lecture will be printed in French in the General Report of the Congress.

Notes

- [1] Translated from a Paris letter written to the *Udbodhana*.

Chapter 4

Knowledge: Its Source and Acquirement

KNOWLEDGE: ITS SOURCE AND ACQUIREMENT^[1]

Various have been the theories propounded as regards the primitive source of knowledge. We read in the Upanishads that Brahmâ, who was the first and the foremost among the Devas, held the key to all knowledge, which he revealed to his disciples and which, being handed down in succession, has been bequeathed as a legacy to the subsequent age. According to the Jains, during an indefinite period of cycle of Time, which comprises between one thousand and two thousand billions of "oceans" of years, are born some extraordinary, great, perfected beings whom they call Jinas, and through them the door to knowledge is now and shell opened to human society. Likewise Buddhism believes in, and expects at regular intervals, the appearance of the Buddhas, that is, persons possessed of infinite universal wisdom. The same is the reason also of the introduction of Incarnations of God by the Paurânika Hindus, who ascribe to them, along with other missions, the special function of restoring the lost spiritual knowledge by its proper adjustment to the needs of the time. Outside India, we find the great-souled Zoroaster bringing down the light of knowledge from above to the mortal world. So also did Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, who, possessed of heavenly authority, proclaim to fallen humanity the tidings of divine wisdom in their own unique ways.

Brahma is the name of a high position among the Devas, to which every man can aspire by virtue of meritorious deeds. Only a selected few can become Jinas, while others can never attain to Jinahood; but they can only go so far as to gain the state of Mukti. The state of being a Buddha is open to one and all without distinction. Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed are great personalities who incarnated themselves for the fulfilment of some special mission; so also did the Incarnations of God mentioned by the Pauranika sages. For others to look up to that seat of these divine personages with a longing eye is madness.

Adam got his knowledge through the tasting of the forbidden fruit. Noah was taught social science by the grace of Jehovah. In India, the theory is that every science has its presiding deity; their founders are either Devas or

perfected beings; from the most menial arts as that of a cobbler to the most dignified office of the spiritual guide, everything depends on the kind intervention of the gods or supreme beings. "No knowledge is possible without a teacher." There is no way to the attainment of knowledge unless it is transmitted through an apostolic succession from disciple to disciple, unless it comes through the mercy of the Guru and direct from his mouth.

Then again, the Vedantic and other philosophers of the Indian schools hold that knowledge is not to be acquired from without. It is the innate nature of the human soul and the essential birthright of every man. The human soul is the repository of infinite wisdom; what external agency can illuminate it? According to some schools, this infinite wisdom remains always the same and is never lost; and man is not ordinarily; conscious of this, because a veil, so to speak, has fallen over it on account of his evil deeds, but as soon as the veil is removed it reveals itself. Others say that this infinite wisdom, though potentially present in a human soul, has become contracted through evil deeds and it becomes expanded again by the mercy of God gained by good deeds. We also read in our scriptures various other methods of unfolding this inborn infinite power and knowledge, such as devotion to God, performance of work without attachment, practicing the eight-fold accessories of the Yoga system, or constant dwelling on this knowledge, and so on. The final conclusion, however, is this, that through the practice of one or more or all of these methods together man gradually becomes conscious of his inborn real nature, and the infinite power and wisdom within, latent or veiled, becomes at last fully manifest.

On the other side, the modern philosophers have analysed the human mind as the source of infinitely possible manifestations and have come to the conclusion that when the individual mind on the one hand, and favourable time, place, and causation on the other can act and react upon one another, then highly developed consciousness of knowledge is sure to follow. Nay, even the unfavourableness of time and place can be successfully surmounted by the vigour and firmness of the individual. The strong individual, even if he is thrown amidst the worst conditions of place or time, overcomes them and affirms his own strength. Not only so, all the heavy burdens heaped upon

the individual, the acting agent, are being made lighter and lighter in the course of time, so that any individual, however weak he may be in the beginning, is sure to reach the goal at the end if he assiduously applies himself to gain it. Look at the uncivilised and ignorant barbarians of the other day! How through close and studious application they are making long strides into the domains of civilisation, how even those of the lower strata are making their way and are occupying with an irresistible force the most exalted positions in it! The sons of cannibal parents are turning out elegant and educated citizens; the descendants of the uncivilised Santals, thanks to the English Government, have been nowadays meeting in successful competition our Bengali students in the Indian Universities. As such, the partiality of the scientific investigators of the present day to the doctrine of hereditary transmission of qualities is being gradually diminished.

There is a certain class of men whose conviction is that from time eternal there is a treasure of knowledge which contains the wisdom of *everything* past, present, and future. These men hold that it was their own forefathers who had the sole privilege of having the custody of this treasure. The ancient sages, the first possessors of it, bequeathed in succession this treasure and its true import to their descendants only. They are, therefore, the only inheritors to it; as such, let the rest of the world worship them.

May we ask these men what they think should be the condition of the other peoples who have not got such forefathers? "Their condition is doomed", is the general answer. The more kind-hearted among them is perchance pleased to rejoin, "Well, let them come and serve us. As a reward for such service, they will be born in our caste in the next birth. That is the only hope we can hold out to them." "Well, the moderns are making many new and original discoveries in the field of science and arts, which neither you dreamt of, nor is there any proof that your forefathers ever had knowledge of. What do you say to that?" "Why certainly our forefathers knew all these things, the knowledge of which is now unfortunately lost to us. Do you want a proof? I can show you one. Look! Here is the Sanskrit verse" Needless to add that the modern party, who believes in direct evidence only, never attaches any seriousness to such replies and proofs.

Generally, all knowledge is divided into two classes, the *Aparâ*, secular, and the *Parâ*, spiritual. One pertains to perishable things, and the other to the realm of the spirit. There is, no doubt, a great difference these two classes of knowledge, and the way to the attainment of the one may be entirely different from the way to the attainment of the other. Nor can it be denied that no one method can be pointed out as the sole and universal one which will serve as the key to all and every door in the domain of knowledge. But in reality all this difference is only one of degree and not of kind. It is not that secular and spiritual knowledge are two opposite and contradictory things; but they are the same thing — the same infinite knowledge

which is everywhere fully present from the lowest atom to the highest Brahman — they are the same knowledge in its different stages of gradual development. This one infinite knowledge we call secular when it is in its lower process of manifestation, and spiritual when it reaches the corresponding higher phase.

"All knowledge is possessed exclusively by some extraordinary great men, and those special personages take birth by the command of God, or in conformity to a higher law of nature, or in some preordained order of Karma; except through the agency of these great ones, there is no other way of attaining knowledge." If such a view be correct and certain, there seems to be no necessity for any individual to strive hard to find any new and original truth — all originality is lost to society for want of exercise and encouragement; and the worst of all is that, society tries to oppose and stop any attempt in the original direction, and thus the faculty of the initiative dies out. If it is finally settled that the path of human welfare is for ever chalked out by these omniscient men, society naturally fears its own destruction if the least deviation be made from the boundary line of the path, and so it tries to compel all men through rigid laws and threats of punishment to follow that path with unconditional obedience. If society succeeds in imposing such obedience to itself by confining all men within the narrow groove of these paths, then the destiny of mankind becomes no better than that of a machine. If every act in a man's life has been all previously determined, then what need is there for the culture of the faculty of thought — where is the field for the free play of independent thought and action? In course of time, for want of proper use, all activity is given up, all originality is lost, a sort of *Tâmasika* dreamy lifelessness hovers over the whole nation, and headlong it goes down and down. The death of such a nation is not far to seek.

On the other hand, if the other extreme were true that that society prospers the most which is not guided by the injunctions of such divinely-inspired souls, then civilisation, wisdom, and prosperity — deserting the Chinese, Hindus, Egyptians, Babylonians, Iranians, Greeks, Romans, and other great nations of ancient and modern times, who have always followed the path laid down by their sages — would have embraced the Zulus, the Kafirs, the Hottentots, and the aboriginal tribes of the Andamans and the Australian islands who have led a life of guideless independence.

Considering all these points, it must be admitted that though the presence of knowledge everywhere in every individual is an eternal truism, yet the path pointed out by the great ones of the earth has the glory peculiar to it, and that there is a peculiar interest attached to the transmission of knowledge through the succession of teachers and their disciples. Each of them has its place in the development of the sum total of knowledge; and we must learn to estimate them according to their respective merits. But, perhaps, being carried away by their over-zealous and blind devotion to their Masters, the successors and fol-

lowers of these great ones sacrifice truth before the altar of devotion and worship to them, and misrepresent the true meaning of the purpose of those great lives by insisting on personal worship, that is, they kill the principle for the person.

This is also a fact of common experience that when man himself has lost all his own strength, he naturally likes to pass his days in idle remembrance of his forefathers' greatness. The devoted heart gradually becomes the weakest in its constant attempt to resign itself in every respect to the feet of its ancestors, and at last a time comes when this weakness teaches the disabled yet proud heart to make the vainglory of its ancestors' greatness as the only support of its life. Even if it be true that your ancestors possessed all knowledge, which has in the efflux of time been lost to you, it follows that you, their descendants, must have been instrumental in this disappearance of knowledge, and now it is all the same to you whether you have it or not. To talk of having or losing this already lost knowledge serves no useful purpose at present. You will have to make new efforts, to undergo troubles over again, if you want to recover it.

True, that spiritual illumination shines of itself in a pure heart, and, as such, it is not something acquired from without; but to attain this purity of heart means long struggle and constant practice. It has also been found, on careful inquiry in the sphere of material knowledge, that those higher truths which have now and then been discovered by great scientific men have flashed like sudden floods of light in their mental atmosphere, which they had only to catch and formulate. But such truths never appear in the mind of an uncultured and wild savage. All these go to prove that hard Tapasyâ, or practice of austerities in the shape of devout contemplation and constant study of a subject is at the root of all illumination in its respective spheres.

What we call extraordinary, superconscious inspiration is only the result of a higher development of ordinary consciousness, gained by long and continued effort. The difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary is merely one of degree in manifestation. Conscious efforts lead the way to superconscious illumination.

Infinite perfection is in every man, though unmanifested. Every man has in him the potentiality of attaining to perfect saintliness, Rishihood, or to the most exalted position of an Avatâra, or to the greatness of a hero in material discoveries. It is only a question of time and adequate well-guided investigation, etc., to have this perfection manifested. In a society where once such great men were born, there the possibility of their reappearance is greater. There can be no doubt that a society with the help of such wise guides advances faster than the one without it. But it is equally certain that such guides will rise up in the societies that are now without them and will lead them to equally rapid progress in the future.

[1] Translated from a Bengali contribution by Swami Vivekananda to the *Udbodhana*, 12th February, 1899.

Notes

Chapter 5

Modern India

MODERN INDIA

*(Translated from a Bengali contribution to the
Udbodhana, March 1899)*

The Vedic priests base their superior strength on the knowledge of the sacrificial Mantras.^[1] By the power of these Mantras, the Devas are made to come down from their heavenly abodes, accept the drink and food offerings, and grant the prayers of the Yajamānas.^[2] The kings as well as their subjects are, therefore, looking up to these priests for their welfare during their earthly life. Raja Soma^[3] is worshipped by the priest and is made to thrive by the power of his Mantras. As such, the Devas, whose favourite food is the juice of the Soma plant offered in oblation by the priest, are always kind to him and bestow his desired boons. Thus strengthened by divine grace, he defies all human opposition; for what can the power of mortals do against that of the gods? Even the king, the centre of all earthly power, is a supplicant at his door. A kind look from him is the greatest help; his mere blessing a tribute to the State, pre-eminent above everything else.

Now commanding the king to be engaged in affairs fraught with death and ruin, now standing by him as his fastest friend with kind and wise counsels, now spreading the net of subtle, diplomatic statesmanship in which the king is easily caught — the priest is seen, oftentimes, to make the royal power totally subservient to him. Above all, the worst fear is in the knowledge that the name and fame of the royal forefathers and of himself and his family lie at the mercy of the priest's pen. He is the historian. The king might have paramount power; attaining a great glory in his reign, he might prove himself as the father and mother in one to his subjects; but if the priest is not appeased, his sun of glory goes down with his last breath for ever; all his worth and usefulness deserving of universal approbation are lost in the great womb of time, like unto the fall of gentle dew on the ocean. Others who inaugurated the huge sacrifices lasting over many years, the performers of the Ashvamedha and so on — those who showered, like incessant rain in the rainy season, countless wealth on the priests — their names, thanks to the grace of priests, are emblazoned in the pages of history. The name of Priyadarshi Dharmāshoka,^[4] the beloved of the gods, is nothing but a name in the priestly world, while

Janamejaya,^[5] son of Parikshit, is a household word in every Hindu family.

To protect the State, to meet the expenses of the personal comforts and luxuries of himself and his long retinue, and, above all, to fill to overflowing the coffers of the all-powerful priesthood for its propitiation, the king is continually draining the resources of his subjects, even as the sun sucks up moisture from the earth. His especial prey — his milch cows — are the Vaishyas.

Neither under the Hindu kings, nor under the Buddhist rule, do we find the common subject-people taking any part in expressing their voice in the affairs of the State. True, Yudhishthira visits the houses of Vaishyas and even Shudras when he is in Vâranāvata; true, the subjects are praying for the installation of Râmachandra to the regency of Ayodhyâ; nay, they are even criticising the conduct of Sitâ and secretly making plans for the bringing about of her exile: but as a recognised rule of the State they have no direct voice in the supreme government. The power of the populace is struggling to express itself in indirect and disorderly ways without any method. The people have not as yet the conscious knowledge of the existence of this power. There is neither the attempt on their part to organise it into a united action, nor have they got the will to do so; there is also a complete absence of that capacity, that skill, by means of which small and incoherent centres of force are united together, creating insuperable strength as their resultant.

Is this due to want of proper laws? — no, that is not it. There are laws, there are methods, separately and distinctly assigned for the guidance of different departments of government, there are laws laid down in the minutest detail for everything, such as the collection of revenue, the management of the army, the administration of justice, punishments and rewards. But at the root of all, is the injunction of the Rishi — the word of divine authority, the revelation of God coming through the inspired Rishi. The laws have, it can almost be said, no elasticity in them. Under the circumstances, it is never possible for the people to acquire any sort of education by which they can learn to combine among themselves and be united for the accomplishment of any object for the common good of the people, or by which they can have the concerted intellect to conceive the idea of popular right in the

treasures collected by the king from his subjects, or even such education by which they can be fired with the aspiration to gain the right of representation in the control of State revenues and expenditure. Why should they do such things? Is not the inspiration of the Rishi responsible for their prosperity and progress?

Again, all those laws are in books. Between laws as codified in books and their operation in practical life, there is a world of difference. One Ramachandra is born after thousands of Agnivarnas^[6] pass away! Many kings show us the life of Chandâshoka^[7]; Dharmâshokas are rare! The number of kings like Akbar, in whom the subjects find their life, is far less than that of kings like Aurangzeb who live on the blood of their people!

Even if the kings be of as godlike nature as that of Yudhishtira, Ramachandra, Dharmashoka, or Akbar under whose benign rule the people enjoyed safety and prosperity, and were looked after with paternal care by their rulers, the hand of him who is always fed by another gradually loses the power of taking the food to his mouth. His power of self-preservation can never become fully manifest who is always protected in every respect by another. Even the strongest youth remains but a child if he is always looked after as a child by his parents. Being always governed by kings of godlike nature, to whom is left the whole duty of protecting and providing for the people, they can never get any occasion for understanding the principles of self-government. Such a nation, being entirely dependent on the king for everything and never caring to exert itself for the common good or for self-defence, becomes gradually destitute of inherent energy and strength. If this state of dependence and protection continues long, it becomes the cause of the destruction of the nation, and its ruin is not far to seek.

Of course, it can be reasonably concluded that, when the government a country, is guided by codes of laws enjoined by Shâstras which are the outcome of knowledge inspired by the divine genius of great sages, such a government must lead to the unbroken welfare of the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the king and the subjects alike. But we have seen already how far the operation of those laws was, or may be, possible in practical life. The voice of the ruled in the government of their land — which is the watchword of the modern Western world, and of which the last expression has been echoed with a thundering voice in the Declaration of the American Government, in the words, “That the government of the people of this country must be by the people and for the good of the people” — cannot however be said to have been totally unrecognised in ancient India. The Greek travellers and others saw many independent small States scattered all over this country, and references are also found to this effect in many places of the Buddhist literature. And there cannot be the least doubt about it that the germ of self-government was at least present in the shape of the village Panchâyat,^[8] which is still to be found in existence in many places of India. But the

germ remained for ever the germ; the seed though put in the ground never grew into a tree. This idea of self-government never passed beyond the embryo state of the village Panchayat system and never spread into society at large.

In the religious communities, among Sannyasins in the Buddhist monasteries, we have ample evidence to show that self-government was fully developed. Even now, one wonders to see how the power of the Panchayat system of the principles of self-government, is working amongst the Nâgâ Sannyasins — what deep respect the “Government by the Five” commands from them, what effective individual rights each Naga can exercise within his own sect, what excellent working of the power of organisation and concerted action they have among themselves!

With the deluge which swept the land at the advent of Buddhism, the priestly power fell into decay and the royal power was in the ascendant. Buddhist priests are renouncers of the world, living in monasteries as homeless ascetics, unconcerned with secular affairs. They have neither the will nor the endeavour to bring and keep the royal power under their control through the threat of curses or magic arrows. Even if there were any remnant of such a will, its fulfilment has now become an impossibility. For Buddhism has shaken the thrones of all the oblation-eating gods and brought them down from their heavenly positions. The state of being a Buddha is superior to the heavenly positions of many a Brahmâ or an Indra, who vie with each other in offering their worship at the feet of the Buddha, the God-man! And to this Buddhahood, every man has the privilege to attain; it is open to all even in this life. From the descent of the gods, as a natural consequence, the superiority of the priests who were supported by them is gone.

Accordingly, the reins of that mighty sacrificial horse — the royal power — are no longer held in the firm grasp of the Vedic priest; and being now free, it can roam anywhere by its unbridled will. The centre of power in this period is neither with the priests chanting the Sâma hymns and performing the Yajnas according to the Yajurveda; nor is the power vested in the hands of Kshatriya kings separated from each other and ruling over small independent States. But the centre of power in this age is in emperors whose unobstructed sway extend over vast areas bounded by the ocean, covering the whole of India from one end to the other. The leaders of this age are no longer Vishvâmitra or Vasishtha, but emperors like Chandragupta, Dharmashoka, and others. There never were emperors who ascended the throne of India and led her to the pinnacle of her glory such as those lords of the earth who ruled over her in paramount sway during the Buddhist period. The end of this period is characterised by the appearance of Râjput power on the scene and the rise of modern Hinduism. With the rise of Rajput power, on the decline of Buddhism, the sceptre of the Indian empire, dislodged from its paramount power, was again broken into a thousand pieces and wielded by small

powerless hands. At this time, the Brâhminical (priestly) power again succeeded in raising its head, not as an adversary as before, but this time as an auxiliary to the royal supremacy.

During this revolution, that perpetual struggle for supremacy between the priestly and the royal classes, which began from the Vedic times and continued through ages till it reached its climax at the time of the Jain and Buddhist revolutions, has ceased for ever. Now these two mighty powers are friendly to each other; but neither is there any more that glorious Kshatra (warlike) velour of the kings, nor that spiritual brilliance which characterised the Brahmins; each has lost his former intrinsic strength. As might be expected, this new union of the two forces was soon engaged in the satisfaction of mutual self-interests, and became dissipated by spending its vitality on extirpating their common opponents, especially the Buddhists of the time, and on similar other deeds. Being steeped in all the vices consequent on such a union, e.g., the sucking of the blood of the masses, taking revenge on the enemy, spoliation of others' property, etc., they in vain tried to imitate the Râjasuya and other Vedic sacrifices of the ancient kings, and only made a ridiculous farce of them. The result was that they were bound hand and foot by a formidable train of sycophantic attendance and its obsequious flatteries, and being entangled in an interminable net of rites and ceremonies with flourishes of Mantras and the like, they soon became a cheap and ready prey to the Mohammeden invaders from the West.

That priestly power which began its strife for superiority with the royal power from the Vedic times and continued it down the ages, that hostility against the Kshatra power, Bhagavân Shri Krishna succeeded by his superhuman genius in putting a stop to, at least for the tired being, during his earthly existence. That Brâhmanya power was almost effaced from its field of work in India during the Jain and Buddhist revolutions, or, perhaps, was holding its feeble stand by being subservient to the strong antagonistic religions. That Brahmanya power, since this appearance of Rajput power, which held sway over India under the Mihira dynasty and others, made its last effort to recover its lost greatness; and in its effort to establish that supremacy, it sold itself at the feet of the fierce hordes of barbarians newly come from Central Asia, and to win their pleasure introduced in the land their hateful manners and customs. Moreover, it, the Brahmanya; power, solely devoting itself to the easy means to dupe ignorant barbarians, brought into vogue mysterious rites and ceremonies backed by its new Mantras and the like; and in doing so, itself lost its former wisdom, its former vigour and vitality, and its own chaste habits of long acquirement. Thus it turned the whole Âryâvarta into a deep and vast whirlpool of the most vicious, the most horrible, the most abominable, barbarous customs; and as the inevitable consequence of countenancing these detestable customs and superstitions, it soon lost all its own internal strength and stamina and became the weakest of the

weak. What wonder that it should be broken into a thousand pieces and fall at the mere touch of the storm of Mussulman invasions from the West! That great Brahmanya power fell — who knows, if ever to rise again?

The resuscitation of the priestly power under the Mussulman rule was, on the other hand, an utter impossibility. The Prophet Mohammed himself was dead against the priestly class in any shape and tried his best for the total destruction of this power by formulating rules and injunctions to that effect. Under the Mussulman rule, the king himself was the supreme priest; he was the chief guide in religious matters; and when he became the emperor, he cherished the hope of being the paramount leader in all matters over the whole Mussulman world. To the Mussulman, the Jews or the Christians are not objects of extreme detestation; they are, at the worst, men of little faith. But not so the Hindu. According to him, the Hindu is idolatrous, the hateful Kafir; hence in this life he deserves to be butchered; and in the next, eternal hell is in store for him. The utmost the Mussulman kings could do as a favour to the priestly class — the spiritual guides of these Kafirs — was to allow them somehow to pass their life silently and wait for the last moment. This was again sometimes considered too, much kindness! If the religious ardour of any king was a little more uncommon, there would immediately follow arrangements for a great Yajna by way of Kafir-slaughter!

On one side, the royal power is now centred in kings professing a different religion and given to different customs. On the other, the priestly power has been entirely displaced from its influential position as the controller and lawgiver of the society. The Koran and its code of laws have taken the place of the Dharma Shâstras of Manu and others. The Sanskrit language has made room for the Persian and the Arabic. The Sanskrit language has to remain confined only to the purely religious writings and religious matters of the conquered and detested Hindu, and, as such, has since been living a precarious life at the hands of the neglected priest. The priest himself, the relic of the Brahmanya power, fell back upon the last resource of conducting only the comparatively unimportant family ceremonies, such as the matrimonial etc., and that also only so long and as much as the mercy of the Mohammedan rulers permitted.

In the Vedic and the adjoining periods, the royal power could not manifest itself on account of the grinding pressure of the priestly power. We have seen how, during the Buddhistic revolution, resulting in the fall of the Brahminical supremacy, the royal power in India reached its culminating point. In the interval between the fall of the Buddhistic and the establishment of the Mohammedan empire, we have seen how the royal power was trying to raise its head through the Rajputs in India, and how it failed in its attempt. At the root of this failure, too, could be traced the same old endeavours of the Vedic priestly class to bring back and revive with a new life their original (ritualistic) days.

Crushing the Brahminical supremacy under his feet the Mussulman king was able to restore to a considerable extent the lost glories of such dynasties of emperors as the Maurya, the Gupta, the Andhra, and the Kshâtrapa.^[9]

Thus the priestly power — which sages like Kumârila, Shankara, and Râmânuja tried to re-establish, which for some time was supported by the sword of the Rajput power, and which tried to rebuild its structure on the fall of its Jain and Buddhist adversaries — was under Mohammedan rule laid to sleep for ever, knowing no awakening. In this period, the antagonism or warfare is not between kings and priests, but between kings and kings. At the end of this period, when Hindu power again raised its head, and, to some extent, was successful in regenerating Hinduism through the Mahrattas and the Sikhs, we do not find much play of the priestly power with these regenerations. On the contrary, when the Sikhs admitted any Brahmin into their sect, they, at first, compelled him publicly to give up his previous Brahminical signs and adopt the recognised signs of their own religion.

In this manner, after an age-long play of action and reaction between these two forces, the final victory of the royal power was echoed on the soil of India for several centuries, in the name of foreign monarchs professing an entirely different religion from the faith of the land. But at the end of this Mohammedan period, another entirely new power made its appearance on the arena and slowly began to assert its prowess in the affairs of the Indian world.

This power is so new, its nature and workings are so foreign to the Indian mind, its rise so inconceivable, and its vigour so insuperable that though it wields the suzerain power up till now, only a handful of Indians understand what this power is.

We are talking of the occupation of India by England.

From very ancient times, the fame of India's vast wealth and her rich granaries has enkindled in many powerful foreign nations the desire for conquering her. She has been, in fact, again and again conquered by foreign nations. Then why should we say that the occupation of India by England was something new and foreign to the Indian mind?

From time immemorial Indians have seen the mightiest royal power tremble before the frown of the ascetic priest, devoid of worldly desire, armed with spiritual strength — the power of Mantras (sacred formulas) and religious lore — and the weapon of curses. They have also seen the subject people silently obey the commands of their heroic all-powerful suzerains, backed by their arms and armies, like a flock of sheep before a lion. But that a handful of Vaishyas (traders) who, despite their great wealth, have ever crouched awe stricken not only before the king but also before any member of the royal family, would unite, cross for purposes of business rivers and seas, would, solely by virtue of their intelligence and wealth, by degrees make puppets of the long-established Hindu and

Mohammedan dynasties; not only so, but that they would buy as well the services of the ruling powers of their own country and use their valour and learning as powerful instruments for the influx of their own riches — this is a spectacle entirely novel to the Indians, as also the spectacle that the descendants of the mighty nobility of a country, of which a proud lord, sketched by the extraordinary pen of its great poet, says to a common man, "Out, dunghill! darest thou brave a nobleman?" would, in no distant future, consider it the zenith of human ambition to be sent to India as obedient servants of a body of merchants, called The East India Company — such a sight was, indeed, a novelty unseen by India before!

According to the prevalence, in greater or lesser degree, of the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas in man, the four castes, the Brahmin, Kashatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, are everywhere present at all times, in all civilised societies. By the mighty hand of time, their number and power also vary at different times in regard to different countries. In some countries the numerical strength or influence of one of these castes may preponderate over another; at some period, one of the classes may be more powerful than the rest. But from a careful study of the history of the world, it appears that in conformity to the law of nature the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra do, in every society, one after another in succession, govern the world.

Among the Chinese, the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Areas, the Iranians, the Jews, the Arabs — among all these ancient nations, the supreme power of guiding society is, in the first period of their history, in the hands of the Brahmin or the priest. In the second period, the ruling power is the Kshatriya, that is, either absolute monarchy or oligarchical government by a chosen body of men. Among the modern Western nations, with England at their head, this power of controlling society has been, for the first time, in the hands of the Vaishyas or mercantile communities, made rich through the carrying on of commerce.

Though Troy and Carthage of ancient times and Venice and similar other small commercial States of comparatively modern times became highly powerful, yet, amongst them, there was not the real rising of the Vaishya power in the proper sense of the term.

Correctly speaking, the descendants of the royal family had the sole monopoly of the commerce of those old days by employing the common people and their servants under them to carry on the trade; and they appropriated to themselves the profits accruing from it. Excepting these few men, no one was allowed to take any part or voice an opinion even in the government of the country and kindred affairs. In the oldest countries like Egypt, the priestly power enjoyed unmolested supremacy only for a short period, after which it became subjugated to the royal power and lived as an auxiliary to it. In China, the royal power, centralised by the genius of Confucius,

has been controlling and guiding the priestly power, in accordance with its absolute will, for more than twenty-five centuries; and during the last two centuries, the all-absorbing Lamas of Tibet, though they are the spiritual guides of the royal family, have been compelled to pass their days, being subject in every way to the Chinese Emperor.

In India, the royal power succeeded in conquering the priestly power and declaring its untrammelled authority long after the other ancient civilised nations had done so; and therefore the inauguration of the Indian Empire came about long after the Chinese, Egyptian, Babylonian, and other Empires had risen. It was only with the Jewish people that the royal power, though it tried hard to establish its supremacy over the priestly, had to meet a complete defeat in the attempt. Not even the Vaishyas attained the ruling power with the Jews. On the other hand, the common subject people, trying to free themselves from the shackles of priestcraft, were crushed to death under the internal commotion of adverse religious movements like Christianity and the external pressure of the mighty Roman Empire.

As in the ancient days the priestly power, in spite of its long-continued struggle, was subdued by the more powerful royal power, so, in modern times, before the violent blow of the newly-risen Vaishya power, many a kingly crown has to kiss the ground, many a sceptre is for ever broken to pieces. Only those few thrones which are allowed still to exercise some power in some of the civilised countries and make a display of their royal pomp and grandeur are all maintained solely by the vast hordes of wealth of these Vaishya communities — the dealers in salt, oil, sugar, and wine — and kept up as a magnificent and an imposing front, and as a means of glorification to the really governing body behind, the Vaishyas.

That mighty newly-risen Vaishya power — at whose command, electricity carries messages in an instant from one pole to another, whose highway is the vast ocean, with its mountain-high waves, at whose instance, commodities are being carried with the greatest ease from one part of the globe to another, and at whose mandate, even the greatest monarchs tremble — on the white foamy crest of that huge wave the all-conquering Vaishya power, is installed the majestic throne of England in all its grandeur.

Therefore the conquest of India by England is not a conquest by Jesus or the Bible as we are often asked to believe. Neither is it like the conquest of India by the Moguls and the Pathans. But behind the name of the Lord Jesus, the Bible, the magnificent palaces, the heavy tramp of the feet of armies consisting of elephants, chariots, cavalry, and infantry, shaking the earth, the sounds of war trumpets, bugles, and drums, and the splendid display of the royal throne, behind all these, there is always the virtual presence of England — that England whose war flag is the factory chimney, whose troops are the merchantmen, whose battlefields are the market-places of the

world, and whose Empress is the shining Goddess of Fortune herself! It is on this account I have said before that it is indeed an unseen novelty, this conquest of India by England. What new revolution will be effected in India by her clash with the new giant power, and as the result of that revolution what new transformation is in store for future India, cannot be inferred from her past history.

I have stated previously that the four castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra do, in succession, rule the world. During the period of supreme authority exercised by each of these castes, some acts are accomplished which conduce to the welfare of the people, while others are injurious to them.

The foundation of the priestly power rests on intellectual strength, and not on the physical strength of arms. Therefore, with the supremacy of the priestly power, there is a great prevalence of intellectual and literary culture. Every human heart is always anxious for communication with, and help from, the supersensuous spiritual world. The entrance to that world is not possible for the generality of mankind; only a few great souls who can acquire a perfect control over their sense-organs and who are possessed with a nature preponderating with the essence of Sattva Guna are able to pierce the formidable wall of matter and come face to face, as it were, with the supersensuous — it is only they who know the workings of the kingdom that bring the messages from it and show the way to others. These great souls are the priests, the primitive guides, leaders, and movers of human societies.

The priest knows the gods and communicates with them; he is therefore worshipped as a god. Leaving behind the thoughts of the world, he has no longer to devote himself to the earning of his bread by the sweat of his brow. The best and foremost parts of all food and drink are due as offerings to the gods; and of these gods, the visible proxies on earth are the priests. It is through their mouths that they partake of the offerings. Knowingly or unknowingly, society gives the priest abundant leisure, and he can therefore get the opportunity of being meditative and of thinking higher thoughts. Hence the development of wisdom and learning originates first with the supremacy of the priestly power. There stands the priest between the dreadful lion — the king — on the one hand, and the terrified flock of sheep — the subject people — on the other. The destructive leap of the lion is checked by the controlling rod of spiritual power in the hands of the priest. The flame of the despotic will of the king, maddened in the pride of his wealth and men, is able to burn into ashes everything that comes in his way; but it is only a word from the priest, who has neither wealth nor men behind him but whose sole strength is his spiritual power, that can quench the despotic royal will, as water the fire.

With the ascendancy of the priestly supremacy are seen the first advent of civilisation, the first victory of the divine nature over the animal, the first mastery of spirit over matter, and the first manifestation of the divine power

which is potentially present in this very slave of nature, this lump of flesh, to wit, the human body. The priest is the first discriminator of spirit from matter, the first to help to bring this world in communion with the next, the first messenger from the gods to man, and the intervening bridge that connects the king with his subjects. The first offshoot of universal welfare and good is nursed by his spiritual power, by his devotion to learning and wisdom, by his renunciation, the watchword of his life and, watered even by the flow of his own life-blood. It is therefore that in every land it was he to whom the first and foremost worship was offered. It is therefore that even his memory is sacred to us!

There are evils as well. With the growth of life is sown simultaneously the seed of death. Darkness and light always go together. Indeed, there are great evils which, if not checked in proper time, lead to the ruin of society. The play of power through gross matter is universally experienced; everyone sees, everyone understands, the mighty manifestation of gross material force as displayed in the play of battle-axes and swords, or in the burning properties of fire and lightning. Nobody doubts these things, nor can there ever be any question about their genuineness. But where the repository of power and the centre of its play are wholly mental, where the power is confined to certain special words, to certain special modes of uttering them, to the mental repetition of certain mysterious syllables, or to other similar processes and applications of the mind, there light is mixed with shade, there the ebb and flow naturally disturb the otherwise unshaken faith, and there even when things are actually seen or directly perceived, still sometimes doubts arise as to their real occurrence. Where distress, fear, anger, malice, spirit of retaliation, and the like passions of man, leaving the palpable force of arms, leaving the gross material methods to gain the end in view which every one can understand, substitute in their stead the mysterious mental processes like *Stambhana*, *Uchchâtana*, *Vashikarana*, and *Mârana*^[10] for their fructification — there a cloud of smoky indistinctness, as it were, naturally envelops the mental atmosphere of these men who often live and move in such hazy worlds of obscure mysticism. No straight line of action presents itself before such a mind; even if it does, the mind distorts it into crookedness. The final result of all this is insincerity — that very limited narrowness of the heart — and above all, the most fatal is the extreme intolerance born of malicious envy at the superior excellence of another.

The priest naturally says to himself: "Why should I part with the power that has made the *Devas* subservient to me, has given me mastery over physical and mental illnesses, and has gained for me the service of ghosts, demons, and other unseen spirits? I have dearly bought this power by the price of extreme renunciation. Why should I give to others that to get which I had to give up my wealth, name, fame, in short, all my earthly comforts and happiness?" Again, that power is entirely men-

tal. And how many opportunities are there of keeping it a perfect secret! Entangled in this wheel of circumstances, human nature becomes what it inevitably would: being used to practice constant self-concealment, it becomes a victim of extreme selfishness and hypocrisy, and at last succumbs to the poisonous consequences which they bring in their train. In time, the reaction of this very desire to concealment rebounds upon oneself. All knowledge, all wisdom is almost lost for want of proper exercise and diffusion, and what little remains is thought to have been obtained from some supernatural source; and, therefore, far from making fresh efforts to go in for originality and gain knowledge of new sciences, it is considered useless and futile to attempt even to improve the remnants of the old by cleansing them of their corruptions. Thus lost to former wisdom, the former indomitable spirit of self-reliance, the priest, now glorifying himself merely in the name of his forefathers, vainly struggles to preserve untarnished for himself the same glory, the same privilege, the same veneration, and the same supremacy as was enjoyed by his great forefathers. Consequently, his violent collision with the other castes.

According to the law of nature, wherever there is an awakening of a new and stronger life, there it tries to conquer and take the place of the old and the decaying. Nature favours the dying out of the unfit and the survival of the fittest. The final result of such conflict between the priestly and the other classes has been mentioned already.

That renunciation, self-control, and asceticism of the priest which during the period of his ascendancy were devoted to the pursuance of earnest researches of truth are on the eve of his decline employed anew and spent solely in the accumulation of objects of self-gratification and in the extension of privileged superiority over others. That power, the centralization of which in himself gave him all honour and worship, has now been dragged down from its high heavenly position to the lowest abyss of hell. Having lost sight of the goal, drifting aimless, the priestly power is entangled, like the spider, in the web spun by itself. The chain that has been forged from generation to generation with the greatest care to be put on others' feet is now tightened round its own in a thousand coils, and is thwarting its own movement in hundreds of ways. Caught in the endless thread of the net of infinite rites, ceremonies, and customs, which it spread on all sides as external means for purification of the body and the mind with a view to keeping society in the iron grasp of these innumerable bonds — the priestly power, thus hopelessly entangled from head to foot, is now asleep in despair! There is no escaping out of it now. Tear the net, and the priesthood of the priest is shaken to its foundation! There is implanted in every man, naturally, a strong desire for progress; and those who, finding that the fulfilment of this desire is an impossibility so long as one is trammelled in the shackles of priesthood, rend this net and take to the profession of other castes in order to earn money thereby — them, the society immediately dispossesses of their

priestly rights. Society has no faith in the Brahminhood of the so-called Brahmins who, instead of keeping the Shikhâ,^[11] part their hair, who, giving up their ancient habits and ancestral customs, clothe themselves in semi European dress and adopt the newly introduced usages from the West in a hybrid fashion. Again, in those parts of India, wherever this new-comer, the English Government, is introducing new modes of education and opening up new channels for the coming in of wealth, there hosts of Brahmin youths are giving up their hereditary priestly profession and trying to earn their livelihood and become rich by adopting the callings of other castes, with the result that the habits and customs of the priestly class, handed down from their distant forefathers, are scattered to the winds and are fast disappearing from the land.

In Gujarat, each secondary sect of the Brahmins is divided into two subdivisions, one being those who still stick to the priestly profession, while the other lives by other professions. There only the first subdivisions, carrying on the priestly profession, are called "Brâhmanas", and though the other subdivisions are by lineage descendants from Brahmin fathers, yet the former do not link themselves in matrimonial relation with the latter. For example, by the name of "Nâgara Brâhmana" are meant only those Brahmins who are priests living on alms; and by the name "Nâgara" only are meant those Brahmins who have accepted service under the Government, or those who have been carrying on the Vaishya's profession. But it appears that such distinctions will not long continue in these days in Gujarat. Even the sons of the "Nagara Brahmanas" are nowadays getting English education, and entering into Government service, or adopting some mercantile business. Even orthodox Pandits of the old school, undergoing pecuniary difficulties, are sending their sons to the colleges of the English universities or making them choose the callings of Vaidyas, Kâyasthas, and other non-Brahmin castes. If the current of affairs goes on running in this course, then it is a question of most serious reflection, no doubt, how long more will the priestly class continue on India's soil. Those who lay the fault of attempting to bring down the supremacy of the priestly class at the door of any particular person or body of persons other than themselves ought to know that, in obedience to the inevitable law of nature, the Brahmin caste is erecting with its own hands its own sepulchre; and this is what ought to be. It is good and appropriate that every caste of high birth and privileged nobility should make it its principal duty to raise its own funeral pyre with its own hands. Accumulation of power is as necessary as its diffusion, or rather more so. The accumulation of blood in the heart is an indispensable condition for life; its non-circulation throughout the body means death. For the welfare of society, it is absolutely necessary at certain times to have all knowledge and power concentrated in certain families or castes to the exclusion of others, but that concentrated power is focussed for the time being, only to be scattered broadcast over the whole of society in future. If this diffusion be withheld, the destruction of

that society is, without doubt, near at hand.

On the other side, the king is like the lion; in him are present both the good and evil propensities of the lord of beasts. Never for a moment his fierce nails are held back from tearing to pieces the heart of innocent animals, living on herbs and grass, to allay his thirst for blood when occasion arises; again, the poet says, though himself stricken with old age and dying with hunger, the lion never kills the weakest fox that throws itself in his arms for protection. If the subject classes, for a moment, stand as impediments in the way of the gratification of the senses of the royal lion, their death knell is inevitably tolled; if they humbly bow down to his commands, they are perfectly safe. Not only so. Not to speak of ancient days, even in modern times, no society can be found in any country where the effectiveness of individual self-sacrifice for the good of the many and of the oneness of purpose and endeavour actuating every member of the society for the common good of the whole have been fully realised. Hence the necessity of the kings who are the creations of the society itself. They are the centres where all the forces of society, otherwise loosely scattered about, are made to converge, and from which they start and course through the body politic and animate society.

As during the Brâhminical supremacy, at the first stage is the awakening of the first impulse for search after knowledge, and later the continual and careful fostering of the growth of that impulse still in its infancy — so, during the Kshatriya supremacy, a strong desire for pleasure pursuits has made its appearance at the first stage, and later have sprung up inventions and developments of arts and sciences as the means for its gratification. Can the king, in the height of his glory, hide his proud head within the lowly cottages of the poor? Or can the common good of his subjects ever minister to his royal appetite with satisfaction?

He whose dignity bears no comparison with anyone else on earth, he who is divinity residing in the temple of the human body — for the common man, to cast even a mere glance at his, the king's, objects of pleasure is a great sin; to think of ever possessing them is quite out of the question. The body of the king is not like the bodies of other people, it is too sacred to be polluted by any contamination; in certain countries it is even believed never to come under the sway of death. A halo of equal sacredness shines around the queen, so she is scrupulously guarded from the gaze of the common folk, not even the sun may cast a glance on her beauty! Hence the rising of magnificent palaces to take the place of thatched cottages. The sweet harmonious strain of artistic music, flowing as it were from heaven, silenced the disorderly jargon of the rabble. Delightful gardens, pleasant groves, beautiful galleries, charming paintings, exquisite sculptures, fine and costly apparel began to displace by gradual steps the natural beauties of rugged woods and the rough and coarse dress of the simple rustic. Thousands of intelligent men

left the toilsome task of the ploughman and turned their attention to the new field of fine arts, where they could display the finer play of their intellect in less laborious and easier ways. Villages lost their importance; cities rose in their stead.

It was in India, again, that the kings, after having enjoyed for some time earthly pleasures to their full satisfaction, were stricken at the latter part of their lives with heavy world-weariness, as is sure to follow on extreme sense-gratification; and thus being satiated with worldly pleasures, they retired at their old age into secluded forests, and there began to contemplate the deep problems of life. The results of such renunciation and deep meditation were marked by a strong dislike for cumbrous rites and ceremonials and an extreme devotion to the highest spiritual truths which we find embodied in the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Jain and the Buddhist scriptures. Here also was a great conflict between the priestly and the royal powers. Disappearance of the elaborate rites and ceremonials meant a death-blow to the priest's profession. Therefore, naturally, at all times and in every country, the priests gird up their loins and try their best to preserve the ancient customs and usages, while on the other side stand in opposition kings like Janaka, backed by Kshatriya prowess as well as spiritual power. We have dealt at length already on this bitter antagonism between the two parties.

As the priest is busy about centralising all knowledge and learning at a common centre, to wit, himself, so the king is ever up and doing in collecting all the earthly powers and focusing them in a central point, i.e. his own self. Of course, both are beneficial to society. At one time they are both needed for the common good of society, but that is only at its infant stage. But if attempts be made, when society has passed its infant stage and reached its vigorous youthful condition, to clothe it by force with the dress which suited it in its infancy and keep it bound within narrow limits, then either it bursts the bonds by virtue of its own strength and tries to advance, or where it fails to do so, it retraces its footsteps and by slow degrees returns to its primitive uncivilised condition.

Kings are like parents to their subjects, and the subjects are the kings' children. The subjects should, in every respect, look up to the king and stick to their king with unreserved obedience, and the king should rule them with impartial justice and look to their welfare and bear the same affection towards them as he would towards his own children. But what rule applies to individual homes applies to the whole society as well, for society is only the aggregate of individual homes. "When the son attains the age of sixteen, the father ought to deal with him as his friend and equal"^[12] — if that is the rule, does not the infant society ever attain that age of sixteen? It is the evidence of history that at a certain time every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people. The life of the society, its expansion and civilisation, depend on its victory

or defeat in this conflict.

Such changes, revolutionizing society, have been happening in India again and again, only in this country they have been effected in the name of religion, for religion is the life of India, religion is the language of this country, the symbol of all its movements. The Chârvâka, the Jain, the Buddhist, Shankara, Ramanuja, Kabir, Nânak, Chaitanya, the Brâhmo Samâj, the Arya Samaj — of all these and similar other sects, the wave of religion, foaming, thundering, surging, breaks in the front, while in the rear follows the filling-up of social wants. If all desires can be accomplished by the mere utterance of some meaningless syllables, then who will exert himself and go through difficulties to work out the fulfilment of his desires? If this malady enters into the entire body of any social system, then that society becomes slothful and indisposed to any exertion, and soon hastens to it, ruin. Hence the slashing sarcasm of the Charvakas, who believed only in the reality of sense-perceptions and nothing beyond. What could have saved Indian society from the ponderous burden of omnifarious ritualistic ceremonialism, with its animal and other sacrifices, which all but crushed the very life out of it, except the Jain revolution which took its strong stand exclusively on chaste morals and philosophical truth? Or without the Buddhist revolution what would have delivered the suffering millions of the lower classes from the violent tyrannies of the influential higher castes? When, in course of time, Buddhism declined and its extremely pure and moral character gave place to equally bad, unclean, and immoral practices, when Indian society trembled under the infernal dance of the various races of barbarians who were allowed into the Buddhistic fold by virtue of its universal all-embracing spirit of equality — then Shankara, and later Ramanuja, appeared on the scene and tried their best to bring society back to its former days of glory and re-establish its lost status. Again, it is an undoubted fact that if there had not been the advent of Kabir, Nanak, and Chaitanya in the Mohammedan period, and the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj in our own day, then, by this time, the Mohammedans and the Christians would have far outnumbered the Hindus of the present day in India.

What better material is there than nourishing food to build up the body composed of various elements, and the mind which sends out infinite waves of thought? But if that food which goes to sustain the body and strengthen the mind is not properly assimilated, and the natural functions of the body do not work properly, then that very thing becomes the root of all evil.

The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole; apart from the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable — this is an eternal truth and is the bed-rock on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its happiness and being distressed in its affliction, is the individ-

ual's sole duty. Not only is it his duty, but in its transgression is his death, while compliance with this great truth leads to life immortal. This is the law of nature, and who can throw dust into her ever-watchful eyes? None can hoodwink society and deceive it for any length of time. However much there may have accumulated heaps of refuse and mud on the surface of society — still, at the bottom of those heaps the life-breath of society is ever to be found pulsating with the vibrations of universal love and self-denying compassion for all. Society is like the earth that patiently bears incessant molestations; but she wakes up one day, however long that may be in coming, and the force of the shaking tremors of that awakening hurls off to a distance the accumulated dirt of self-seeking meanness piled up during millions of patient and silent years!

We ignore this sublime truth; and though we suffer a thousand times for our folly, yet, in our absurd foolishness, impelled by the brute in us, we do not believe in it. We try to deceive, but a thousand times we find we are deceived ourselves, and yet we do not desist! Mad that we are, we imagine we can impose on nature! With our shortsighted vision we think ministering to the self at any cost is the be-all and end-all of life.

Wisdom, knowledge, wealth, men, strength, prowess and whatever else nature gathers and provides us with, are all only for diffusion, when the moment of need is at hand. We often forget this fact, put the stamp of "*mine only*" upon the entrusted deposits, and *pari passu*, we sow the seed of our own ruin!

The king, the centre of the forces of the aggregate of his subjects, soon forgets that those forces are only stored with him so that he may increase and give them back a thousandfold in their potency, so that they may spread over the whole community for its good. Attributing all Godship to himself, in his pride, like the king Vena^[13] he looks upon other people as wretched specimens of humanity who should grovel before him; any opposition to his will, whether good or bad, is a great sin on the part of his subjects. Hence oppression steps into the place of protection — sucking their blood in place of preservation. If the society is weak and debilitated, it silently suffers all ill-treatment at the hands of the king, and as the natural consequence, both the king and his people go down and down and fall into the most degraded state, and thus become an easy prey to any nation stronger than themselves. Where the society is healthy and strong, there soon follows a fierce contest between the king and his subjects, and, by its reaction and convulsion, are flung away the sceptre and the crown; and the throne and the royal paraphernalia become like past curiosities preserved in the museum galleries.

As the result of this contest — as its reaction — is the appearance of the mighty power of the Vaishya, before whose angry glance the crowned heads, the lords of heroes, tremble like an aspen leaf on their thrones —

whom the poor as well as the prince humbly follow in vain expectation of the golden jar in his hands, that like Tantalus's fruit always recedes from the grasp.

The Brahmin said, "Learning is the power of all powers; that learning is dependent upon me, I possess that learning, so the society must follow my bidding." For some days such was the case. The Kshatriya said, "But for the power of my sword, where would you be, O Brahmin, with all your power of lore? You would in no time be wiped off the face of the earth. It is I alone that am the superior." Out flew the flaming sword from the jingling scabbard — society humbly recognised it with bended head. Even the worshipper of learning was the first to turn into the worshipper of the king. The Vaishya is saying, "You, madmen I what you call the effulgent all-pervading deity is here, in my hand, the ever-shining gold, the almighty sovereign. Behold, through its grace, I am also equally all-powerful. O Brahmin! even now, I shall buy through its grace all your wisdom, learning, prayers, and meditation. And, O great king! your sword, arms, valour, and prowess will soon be employed, through the grace of this, my gold, in carrying out my desired objects. Do you see those lofty and extensive mills? Those are my hives. See, how, swarms of millions of bees, the Shudras, are incessantly gathering honey for those hives. Do you know for whom? For me, this me, who in due course of time will squeeze out every drop of it for my own use and profit."

As during the supremacy of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, there is a centralization of learning and advancement of civilization, so the result of the supremacy of the Vaishya is accumulation of wealth. The power of the Vaishya lies in the possession of that coin, the charm of whose clinking sound works with an irresistible fascination on the minds of the four castes. The Vaishya is always in fear lest the Brahmin swindles him out of this, his only possession, and lest the Kshatriya usurps it by virtue of his superior strength of arms. For self-preservation, the Vaishyas as a body are, therefore, of one mind. The Vaishya commands the money; the exorbitant interest that he can exact for its use by others, as with a lash in his hand, is his powerful weapon which strikes terror in the heart of all. By the power of his money, he is always busy curbing the royal power. That the royal power may not anyhow stand in the way of the inflow of his riches, the merchant is ever watchful. But, for all that, he has never the least wish that the power should pass on from the kingly to the Shudra class.

To what country does not the merchant go? Though himself ignorant, he carries on his trade and transplants the learning, wisdom, art, and science of one country to another. The wisdom, civilization, and arts that accumulated in the heart of the social body during the Brahmin and the Kshatriya supremacies are being diffused in all directions by the arteries of commerce to the different market-places of the Vaishya. But for the rising of this Vaishya power, who would have carried today the culture,

learning, acquirements, and articles of food and luxury of one end of the world to the other?

And where are they through whose physical labour only are possible the influence of the Brahmin, the prowess of the Kshatriya, and the fortune of the Vaishya? What is their history, who, being the real body of society, are designated at all times in all countries as “baseborn”? — for whom kind India prescribed the mild punishments, “Cut out his tongue, chop off his flesh”, and others of like nature, for such a grave offence as any attempt on their part to gain a share of the knowledge and wisdom monopolised by her higher classes — those “moving corpses” of India and the “beasts of burden” of other countries — the Shudras, what is their lot in life? What shall I say of India? Let alone her Shudra class, her Brahmins to whom belonged the acquisition of scriptural knowledge are now the foreign professors, her Kshatriyas the ruling Englishmen, and Vaishyas, too, the English in whose bone and marrow is the instinct of trade, so that, only the Shudra-ness — the-beast-of-burdenness — is now left with the Indians themselves.

A cloud of impenetrable darkness has at present equally enveloped us all. Now there is neither firmness of purpose nor boldness of enterprise, neither courage of heart nor strength of mind, neither aversion to maltreatments by others nor dislike for slavery, neither love in the heart nor hope nor manliness; but what we have in India are only deep-rooted envy and strong antipathy against one another, morbid desire to ruin by hook or by crook the weak, and to lick dog-like the feet of the strong. Now the highest satisfaction consists in the display of wealth and power, devotion in self-gratification, wisdom in the accumulation of transitory objects, Yoga in hideous diabolical practices, work in the slavery of others, civilisation in base imitation of foreign nations, eloquence in the use of abusive language, the merit of literature in extravagant flatteries of the rich or in the diffusion of ghastly obscenities! What to speak separately of the distinct Shudra class of such a land, where the whole population has virtually come down to the level of the Shudra? The Shudras of countries other than India have become, it seems, a little awake; but they are wanting in proper education and have only the mutual hatred of men of their own class — a trait common to Shudras. What avails it if they greatly outnumber the other classes? That unity, by which ten men collect the strength of a million, is yet far away from the Shudra; hence, according to the law of nature, the Shudras invariably form the subject race.

But there is hope. In the mighty course of time, the Brahmin and the other higher castes, too, are being brought down to the lower status of the Shudras, and the Shudras are being raised to higher ranks. Europe, once the land of Shudras enslaved by Rome, is now filled with Kshatriya valour. Even before our eyes, powerful China, with fast strides, is going down to Shudra-hood, while insignificant Japan, rising with the sudden start of a rocket, is throwing off her Shudra nature and is invading by degrees the rights

of the higher castes. The attaining of modern Greece and Italy to Kshatriya-hood and the decline of Turkey, Spain, and other countries, also, deserve consideration here.

Yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, *with their Shudra-hood*; that is to say, not like that as at present when the Shudras are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the Vaishya or the Kshatriya, but a time will come when the Shudras of every country, with their inborn Shudra nature and habits — not becoming in essence Vaishya or Kshatriya, but remaining as Shudras — will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world, and the thoughtful are at their wits' end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism,^[14] and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow. As the result of grinding pressure and tyranny, from time out of mind, the Shudras, as a rule, are either meanly senile, licking dog-like the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts. Again, at all times their hopes and aspirations are baffled; hence a firmness of purpose and perseverance in action they have none.

In spite of the spread of education in the West, there is a great hindrance in the way of the rising of the Shudra class, and that is the recognition of caste as determined by the inherence of more or less good or bad qualities. By this very qualitative caste system which obtained in India in ancient days, the Shudra class was kept down, bound hand and foot. In the first place, scarcely any opportunity was given to the Shudra for the accumulation of wealth or the earning of proper knowledge and education; to add to this disadvantage, if ever a man of extraordinary parts and genius were born of the Shudra class, the influential higher sections of the society forthwith showered titular honours on him and lifted him up to their own circle. His wealth and the power of his wisdom were employed for the benefit of an alien caste — and his own caste-people reaped no benefits of his attainments; and not only so, the good-for-nothing people, the scum and refuse of the higher castes, were cast off and thrown into the Shudra class to swell their number. Vasishta, Nârada, Satyakâma Jâbâla, Vyâsa, Kripa, Drona, Karna, and others of questionable parentage^[15] were raised to the position of a Brahmin or a Kshatriya, in virtue of their superior learning or valour; but it remains to be seen how the prostitute, maidservant, fisherman, or the charioteer^[16] class was benefited by these upliftings. Again, on the other hand, the fallen from the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, or the Vaishya class were always brought down to fill the ranks of the Shudras.

In modern India, no one born of Shudra parents, be he a millionaire or a great Pandit, has ever the right to leave his own society, with the result that the power of his wealth, intellect, or wisdom, remaining confined within his own caste limits, is being employed for the betterment of his

own community. This hereditary caste system of India, being thus unable to overstep its own bounds, is slowly but surely conducing to the advancement of the people moving within the same circle. The improvement of the lower classes of India will go on, in this way, so long as India will be under a government dealing with its subjects irrespective of their caste and position.

Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolise learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this source, by so much is it sure to become weak. But such is the strange irony of fate, such is the queer working of *Mâyâ*, that they from whom this power is directly or indirectly drawn, by fair means or foul — by deceit, stratagem, force, or by voluntary gift — they soon cease to be taken into account by the leading class. When in course of time, the priestly power totally estranged itself from the subject masses, the real dynamo of its power, it was overthrown by the then kingly power taking its stand on the strength of the subject people; again, the kingly power, judging itself to be perfectly independent, created a gaping chasm between itself and the subject people, only to be itself destroyed or become a mere puppet in the hands of the *Vaishyas*, who now succeeded in securing a relatively greater co-operation of the mass of the people. The *Vaishyas* have now gained their end; so they no longer deign to count on help from the subject people and are trying their best to dissociate themselves from them; consequently, here is being sown the seed of the destruction of this power as well.

Though themselves the reservoir of all powers, the subject masses, creating an eternal distance between one another, have been deprived of all their legitimate rights; and they will remain so as long as this sort of relation continues.

A common danger, or sometimes a common cause of hatred or love, is the bond that binds people together. By the same law that herds beasts of prey together, men also unite into a body and form a caste or a nation of their own. Zealous love for one's own people and country, showing itself in bitter hatred against another — as of Greece against Persia, or Rome against Carthage, of the Arab against the Kafir, of Spain against the Moor, of France against Spain, of England and Germany against France, and of America against England — is undoubtedly one of the main causes which lead to the advancement of one nation over another, by way of uniting itself in hostilities against another.

Self-love is the first teacher of self-renunciation. For the preservation of the individual's interest only one looks first to the well-being of the whole. In the interest of one's own nation is one's own interest; in the well-being of one's own nation is one's own well-being. Without the co-operation of the many, most words can by no means go on — even self-defence becomes an impossibility. The joining of friendly hands in mutual help for the protection

of this self-interest is seen in every nation, and in every land. Of course, the circumference of this self-interest varies with different people. To multiply and to have the opportunity of somehow dragging on a precarious existence, and over and above this, the condition that the religious pursuits of the higher castes may not suffer in any way, is of the highest gain and interest for Indians! For modern India, there is no better hope conceivable; this is the last rung of the ladder of India's life!

The present government of India has certain evils attendant on it, and there are some very great and good parts in it as well. Of highest good is this, that after the fall of the *Pâtaliputra* Empire till now, India was never under the guidance of such a powerful machinery of government as the British, wielding the sceptre throughout the length and breadth of the land. And under this *Vaishya* supremacy, thanks to the strenuous enterprise natural to the *Vaishya*, as the objects of commerce are being brought from one end of the world to another, so at the same time, as its natural sequence, the ideas and thoughts of different countries are forcing their way into the very bone and marrow of India. Of these ideas and thoughts, some are really most beneficial to her, some are harmful, while others disclose the ignorance and inability of the foreigners to determine what is truly good for the inhabitants of this country.

But piercing through the mass of whatever good or evil there may be is seen rising the sure emblem of India's future prosperity — that as the result of the action and reaction between her own old national ideals on the one hand, and the newly-introduced strange ideals of foreign nations on the other, she is slowly and gently awakening from her long deep sleep. Mistakes she will make, let her: there is no harm in that; in all our actions, errors and mistakes are our only teachers. Who commits mistaken the path of truth is attainable by him only. Trees never make mistakes, nor do stones fall into error; animals are hardly seen to transgress the fixed laws of nature; but man is prone to err, and it is man who becomes God-on-earth. If our every movement from the nursery to the death-bed, if our every thought from rising at day-break till retirement at midnight, be prescribed and laid down for us in minutest detail by others — and if the threat of the king's sword be brought into requisition to keep us within the iron grasp of those prescribed rules — then, what remains for us to think independently for ourselves? What makes a man a genius, a sage? Isn't it because he thinks, reasons, wills? Without exercise, the power of deep thinking is lost. *Tamas* prevails, the mind gets dull and inert, the spirit is brought down to the level of matter. Yet, even now, every religious preacher, every social leader is anxious to frame new laws and regulations for the guidance of society! Does the country stand in want of rules? Has it not enough of them? Under the oppression of rules, the whole nation is verging on its ruin — who stops to understand this?

In the case of an absolute and arbitrary monarchy, the

conquered race is not treated with so much contempt by the ruling power. Under such an absolute government, the rights of all subjects are equal, in other words, no one has any right to question or control the governing authority. So there remains very little room for special privileges of caste and the like. But where the monarchy is controlled by the voice of the ruling race, or a republican form of government rules the conquered race, there a wide distance is created between the ruling and the ruled; and the most part of that power, which, if employed solely for the well-being of the ruled classes, might have done immense good to them within a short time, is wasted by the government in its attempts and applications to keep the subject race under its entire control. Under the Roman Emperors, foreign subjects were, for this very reason, happier than under the Republic of Rome. For this very reason, St. Paul, the Christian Apostle, though born of the conquered Jewish race, obtained permission to appeal to the Roman Emperor, Caesar, to judge of the charges laid against him^[17] Because some individual Englishman may call us "natives" or "riggers" and hate us as uncivilized savages, we do not gain or lose by that. We, on account of caste distinctions, have among ourselves far stronger feelings of hatred and scorn against one another; and who can say that the Brahmins, if they get some foolish unenlightened Kshatriya king on their side, will not graciously try again to "cut out the Shudras' tongues and chop off their limbs"? That recently in Eastern Aryavarta, the different caste-people seem to develop a feeling of united sympathy amidst themselves with a view to ameliorating their present social condition — that in the Mahratta country, the Brahmins have begun to sing paeans in praise of the "Marâthâ" race — these, the lower castes cannot yet believe to be the outcome of pure disinterestedness.

But gradually the idea is being formed in the minds of the English public that the passing away of the Indian Empire from their sway will end in imminent peril to the English nation, and be their ruin. So, by any means whatsoever, the supremacy of England must be maintained in India. The way to effect this, they think, is by keeping uppermost in the heart of every Indian the mighty prestige and glory of the British nation. It gives rise to both laughter and tears simultaneously to observe how this ludicrous and pitiful sentiment is gaining ground among the English, and how they are steadily extending their *modus operandi* for the carrying out of this sentiment into practice. It seems as if the Englishmen resident in India are forgetting that so long as that fortitude, that perseverance, and that intense national unity of purpose, by which Englishmen have earned this Indian Empire — and that ever wide-awake commercial genius aided by science' which has turned even India, the mother of all riches, into the principal mart of England — so long as these characteristics are not eliminated from their national life, their throne in India is unshakable. So long as these qualities are inherent in the British character, let thousands of such Indian Empires be lost, thousands will be earned again. But if the flow of the stream of those qualifier be retarded,

shall an Empire be governed by the mere emblazoning of British prestige and glory? Therefore when such remarkable traits of character are still predominant in the English as a nation, it is utterly useless to spend so much energy and power for the mere preservation of meaningless "prestige". If that power were employed for the welfare of the subject-people, that, would certainly have been a great gain for both the ruling and the ruled races.

It has been said before that India is slowly awakening through her friction with the outside nations; and as the result of this little awakening, is the appearance, to a certain extent, of free and independent thought in modern India. On one side is modern Western science, dazzling the eyes with the brilliancy of myriad suns and driving in the chariot of hard and fast facts collected by the application of tangible powers direct in their incision, on the other are the hopeful and strengthening traditions of her ancient forefathers, in the days when she was at the zenith of her glory — traditions that have been brought out of the pages of her history by the great sages of her own land and outside, that run for numberless years and centuries through her every vein with the quickening of life drawn from universal love — traditions that reveal unsurpassed valour, superhuman genius, and supreme spirituality, which are the envy of the gods — these inspire her with future hopes. On one side, rank materialism, plenitude of fortune, accumulation of gigantic power, and intense sense-pursuits have, through foreign literature, caused a tremendous stir; on the other, through the confounding din of all these discordant sounds, she hears, in low yet unmistakable accents, the heart-rending cries of her ancient gods, cutting her to the quick. There lie before her various strange luxuries introduced from the West — celestial drinks, costly well-served food, splendid apparel, magnificent palaces, new modes of conveyance, new manners, new fashions dressed in which moves about the well-educated girl in shameless freedom — all these are arousing unfelt desires. Again, the scene changes, and in its place appear, with stern presence, Sitâ, Sâvitri, austere religious vows, fastings, the forest retreat, the matted locks and orange garb of the semi-naked Sannyasin, Samâdhi and the search after the Self. On one side is the independence of Western societies based on self-interest; on the other is the extreme self-sacrifice of the Aryan society. In this violent conflict, is it strange that Indian society should be tossed up and down? Of the West, the goal is individual independence, the language money-making education, the means politics; of India, the goal is Mukti, the language the Veda, the means renunciation. For a time, Modern India thinks, as it were, I am ruining this worldly life of mine in vain expectation of uncertain spiritual welfare hereafter which has spread its fascination over one; and again, lo! spellbound she listens —

इति संसारे स्फुटतरदोषः कथमहि मानव तव सन्तोषः
— "Here, in this world of death and change, O man, where is thy happiness?"

On one side, new India is saying, "We should have full freedom in the selection of husband and wife; because the marriage, in which are involved the happiness and misery of all our future life, we must have the right to determine according to our own free will." On the other, old India is dictating, "Marriage is not for sense-enjoyment, but to perpetuate the race. This is the Indian conception of marriage. By the producing of children, you are contributing to, and are responsible for, the future good or evil of the society. Hence society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry and whom you shall not. That form of marriage obtains in society which is conducive most to its well-being; do you give up your desire of individual pleasure for the good of the many."

On one side, new India is saying, "If we only adopt Western ideas, Western language, Western food, Western dress, and Western manners, we shall be as strong and powerful as the Western nations"; on the other, old India is saying, "Fools! By imitation, other's ideas never become one's own; nothing, unless earned, is your own. Does the ass in the lion's skin become the lion?"

On one side, new India is saying, "What the Western nations do is surely good, otherwise how did they become so great?" On the other side, old India is saying, "The flash of lightning is intensely bright, but only for a moment; look out, boys, it is dazzling your eyes. Beware! "

Have we not then to learn anything from the West? Must we not needs try and exert ourselves for better things? Are we perfect? Is our society entirely spotless, without any flaw. There are many things to learn, he must struggle for new and higher things till we die — struggle is the end of human life. Shri Ramakrishna used to say, "As long as I live, so long do I learn." That man or that society which has nothing to learn is already in the jaws of death. Yes, learn we must many things from the West: but there are fears as well.

A certain young man of little understanding used always to blame the Hindu Shāstras before Shri Ramakrishna. One day he praised the Bhagavad-Gita, on which Shri Ramakrishna said, "Methinks, some European Pandit has praised the Gita, and so he has also followed suit."

O India, this is your terrible danger. The spell of imitating the West is getting such a strong hold upon you that what is good or what is bad is no longer decided by reason, judgment, discrimination, or reference to the Shastras. Whatever ideas, whatever manners the white men praise or like are good; whatever things they dislike or censure are bad. Alas! what can be a more tangible proof of foolishness than this?

The Western ladies move freely everywhere, therefore that is good; they choose for themselves their husbands, therefore that is the highest step of advancement; the Westerners disapprove of our dress, decorations, food, and ways of living, therefore they must be very bad; the Westerners condemn image-worship as sinful, surely then, image-worship is the greatest sin, there is no doubt

of it!

The Westerners say that worshipping a single Deity is fruitful of the highest spiritual good, therefore let us throw our gods and goddesses into the river Ganga! The Westerners hold caste distinctions to be obnoxious, therefore let all the different castes be jumbled into one! The Westerners say that child-marriage is the root of all evils, therefore that is also very bad, of a certainty it is!

We are not discussing here whether these customs deserve continuance or rejection; but if the mere disapproval of the Westerners be the measure of the abominableness of our manners and customs, then it is our duty to raise our emphatic protest against it.

The present writer has, to some extent, personal experience of Western society. His conviction resulting from such experience has been that there is such a wide divergence between the Western society and the Indian as regards the primal course and goal of each, that any sect in India, framed after the Western model, will miss the aim. We have not the least sympathy with those who, never leaving lived in Western society and, therefore, utterly ignorant of the rules and prohibitions regarding the association of men and women that obtain there, and which act as safeguards to preserve the purity of the Western women, allow a free rein to the unrestricted intermingling of men and women in our society.

I have observed in the West also that the children of weaker nations, if born in England, give themselves out as Englishmen, instead of Greek, Portuguese, Spaniard, etc., as the case may be. All drift towards the strong. That the light of glory which shines in the glorious may anyhow fall and reflect on one's own body, i.e. to shine in the borrowed light of the great, is the one desire of the weak. When I see Indians dressed in European apparel and costumes, the thought comes to my mind, perhaps they feel ashamed to own their nationality and kinship with the ignorant, poor, illiterate, downtrodden people of India! Nourished by the blood of the Hindu for the last fourteen centuries, the Parsee is no longer a "native"! Before the arrogance of the casteless, who pretend to be and glorify themselves in being Brahmins, the true nobility of the old, heroic, high-class Brahmin melts into nothingness! Again, the Westerners have now taught us that those stupid, ignorant, low-caste millions of India, clad only in loin-cloths, are non-Aryans. They are therefore no more our kith and kin!

O India! With this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others this slavish weakness, this vile detestable cruelty — wouldst thou, with these provisions only, scale the highest pinnacle of civilisation and greatness? Wouldst thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic? O India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Shankara,

the Lord of Umâ; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, "I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother." Say, "The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother." Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: "The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age." Say, brother: "The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good," and repeat and pray day and night, "O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a Man!"

Notes

- [1] Vedic hymns uttered by the priests to invoke the Devas at the time of sacrifice.
- [2] The men who perform sacrifices.
- [3] The name of the Soma plant as commonly found in the Vedas. The priests offered to the Devas the juice of this plant at the time of sacrifice.
- [4] The name given to the great king, Asoka, after he embraced Buddhism
- [5] The performer of the great snake-sacrifice of Mahâbhârata.
- [6] Agnivarna was a prince of the Solar race, who never used to come out of the seraglio, and died of consumption due to excessive indulgence.
- [7] The great king Asoka was at first called Chandashoka, i.e. Fierce Asoka, because of his ascending the throne by killing his brother and his other cruel deeds. After nine years of reign he became a convert to Buddhism and his character underwent a complete transformation; he was thenceforth known for his good deeds by the name of Dharmashoka, Virtuous Asoka.
- [8] Literally, "government by five", in which the village-men sit together and decide among themselves, all disputes.
- [9] The Persian governors of Âryāvarta and Gujarat.
- [10] Suppression of any bodily faculty, thereby causing a person's ruin, removing him from a position, subduing and getting mastery over him, and killing him by means of magical incantations.
- [11] The sacred tuft or lock of hair left on the crown of the head at tonsure.
- [12] Taken from one of the well-known didactic verses of the statesman-Pandit, Chânakya, which runs thus: "Let the father treat with tenderness the child till he is five, let him (the father) reprove him (the child) for the next ten years; when the son attains the age of sixteen, the father ought to deal with him as his friend."
- [13] His story occurs in the *Bhâgavata*. The King Vena thought himself higher than Brahmâ, Vishnu, and Maheshvara, and declared accordingly that all worship should be offered to him. The Rishis once sought him and tried by good advice to make him give up such egoism, but he in return insulted them and ordered them to worship him, whereupon, it is said, he was destroyed by the fire of the anger of the Rishis.
- [14] Socialism took its birth in 1835 A.D. The initiator of Anarchism was Bakunin, who was born in 1814 A.D. Nihilism was first inaugurated in Russia in 1862.
- [15] (1) Vasishtha's father was Brahmâ and mother unknown. (2) Narada's mother was a maidservant and father unknown. (3) Satyakama Jabala's mother was a maidservant, by name Jabâlâ, and father unknown. (4) Vyasa's father was a Brahmin sage Parâshara, and mother Matsyagandhâ, the virgin daughter of a fisherman. (5) Kripa's father was a Brahmin sage, Sharadvân Gautama, and mother the goddess Jânâpadi. (6) Drona's father was the Brahmin sage, Bharadvâja, and mother the goddess Ghritâchi. (7) Karna's mother was Kunti, who conceived during her maidenhood, and father the god sun. For detailed information vide the accounts of their births: for (1), see chapter 174, Âdiparva, Mahabharata, or in Rigveda, 7, 33, 11-13; for (2), chapter 6, Skandha I, *Srimad Bhagavata*, for (3) section 4 Prapâthaka iv, Chhândogya Upanishad; for (4), (5), (6) and (7) chapters 105, 130, 130 and 111, respectively of the Âdiparva of the Mahabharata.
- [16] In her anxiety to save her reputation, Kunti threw the newborn child Karna, into water. A charioteer found the child in his pitiable condition and adopted him as his son.
- [17] The Acts, xxv. 11.

Chapter 6

The Education that India needs

THE EDUCATION THAT INDIA NEEDS^[1]

In reply to your questions about the methods of work, the most important thing I have to say is that the work should be started on a scale which would be commensurate with the results desired. I have heard much of your liberal mind, patriotism, and steady perseverance from my friend Miss Müller; and the proof of your erudition is evident. I look upon it as a great good fortune that you are desirous to know what little this insignificant life has been able to attempt; I shall state it to you here, as far as I can. But first I shall lay before you my mature convictions for your deliberation.

We have been slaves for ever, i.e. it has never been given to the masses of India to express the inner light which is their inheritance. The Occident has been rapidly advancing towards freedom for the last few centuries. In India, it was the king who used to prescribe everything from Kulinism down to what one should eat and what one should not. In Western countries, the people do everything themselves.

The king now has nothing to say in any social matter; on the other hand, the Indian people have not yet even the least faith in themselves, what to say of self-reliance. The faith in one's own Self, which is the basis of Vedānta, has not yet been even slightly carried into practice. It is for this reason that the Western method — i.e. first of all, discussion about the wished-for end, then the carrying it out by the combination of all the forces — is of no avail even now in this country: it is for this reason that we appear so greatly conservative under foreign rule. If this be true, then it is a vain attempt to do any great work by means of public discussion. "There is no chance of a headache where there is no head" — where is the public? Besides, we are so devoid of strength that our whole energy is exhausted if we undertake to discuss anything, none is left for work. It is for this reason, I suppose, we observe in Bengal almost always — "Much cry but little wool." Secondly, as I have written before, I do not expect anything from the rich people of India. It is best to work among the youth in whom lies our hope — patiently, steadily, and without noise.

Now about work. From the day when education and culture etc. began to spread gradually from patricians to ple-

beians, grew the distinction between the modern civilisation as of Western countries, and the ancient civilisation as of India, Egypt, Rome, etc. I see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolising of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way, i.e. by spreading education among the masses. A great fuss has been made for half a century about social reform. Travelling through various places of India these last ten years, I observed the country full of social reform associations. But I did not find one association for them by sucking whose blood the people known as "gentlemen" have become and continue to be gentlemen! How many sepoys were brought by the Mussulmans? How many Englishmen are there? Where, except in India, can be had millions of men who will cut the throats of their own fathers and brothers for six rupees? Sixty millions of Mussulmans in seven hundred years of Mohammedan rule, and two millions of Christians in one hundred years of Christian rule — what makes it so? Why has originality entirely forsaken the country? Why are our deft-fingered artisans daily becoming extinct, unable to compete with the Europeans? By what power again has the German labourer succeeded in shaking the many-century-grounded firm footing of the English labourer?

Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith in one's own Self, and through faith in one's own Self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant. In New York I used to observe the Irish colonists come — down-trodden, haggard-looking, destitute of all possessions at home, penniless, and wooden-headed — with their only belongings, a stick and a bundle of rags hanging at the end of it, fright in their steps, alarm in their eyes. A different spectacle in six months — the man walks upright, his attire is changed! In his eyes and steps there is no more sign of fright. What is the cause? Our Vedānta says

that that Irishman was kept surrounded by contempt in his own country — the whole of nature was telling him with one voice, “Pat, you have no more hope, you are born a slave and will remain so.” Having been thus told from his birth, Pat believed in it and hypnotised himself that he was very low, and the Brahman in him shrank away. While no sooner had he landed in America than he heard the shout going up on all sides, “Pat, you are a man as we are. It is man who has done all, a man like you and me can do everything: have courage!” Pat raised his head and saw that it was so, the Brahman within woke up. Nature herself spoke, as it were, “Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached” (Katha Upanishad, I. ii. 4.)

Likewise the education that our boys receive is very negative. The schoolboy learns nothing, but has everything of his own broken down — want of Shraddhâ is the result. The Shraddha which is the keynote of the Veda and the Vedanta — the Shraddha which emboldened Nachiketâ to face Yama and question him, through which Shraddha this world moves the annihilation of that Shraddha!

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्धानश्च संशयात्मा वनिश्यति

— “The ignorant, the man devoid of Shraddha, the doubting self runs to ruin.” Therefore are we so near destruction. The remedy now is the spread of education. First of all, Self-knowledge. I do not mean thereby, matted hair, staff, Kamandalu, and mountain caves which the word suggests. What do I mean then? Cannot the knowledge, by which is attained even freedom from the bondage of worldly existence, bring ordinary material prosperity? Certainly it can. Freedom, dispassion, renunciation all these are the very highest ideals, but

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्

— “Even a little of this Dharma saves one from the great fear (of birth and death).” Dualist, qualified-monist, monist, Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shâkta, even the Buddhist and the Jain and others — whatever sects have arisen in India — are all at one in this respect that infinite power is latent in this Jivatman (individualised soul); from the ant to the perfect man there is the same Âtman in all, the difference being only in manifestation. “As a farmer breaks the obstacles (to the course of water)” (Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutra, Kaivalsapâda, 3). That power manifests as soon as it gets the opportunity and the right place and time. From the highest god to the meanest grass, the same power is present in all — whether manifested or not. We shall have to call forth that power by going from door to door.

Secondly, along with this, education has to be imparted. That is easy to say, but how to reduce it into practice? There are thousands of unselfish, kind-hearted men in our country who has renounced every thing. In the same way as they travel about and give religious instructions without any remuneration, so at least half of them can be trained as teachers or bearers of such education as we need most. For that, we want first of all a centre in the capital of each

Presidency, from whence to spread slowly throughout the whole of India. Two centres have recently been started in Madras and Calcutta; there is hope of more soon. Then, the greater part of the education to the poor should be given orally, time is not yet ripe for schools. Gradually in these main centres will be taught agriculture, industry, etc., and workshops will be established for the furtherance of arts. To sell the manufactures of those workshops in Europe and America, associations will be started like those already in existence. It will be necessary to start centres for women, exactly like those for men. But you are aware how difficult that is in this country. Again, “The snake which bites must take out its own poison” — and that this is going to be is my firm conviction; the money required for these works would have to come from the West. And for that reason our religion should be preached in Europe and America. Modern science has undermined the basis of religions like Christianity. Over and above that, luxury is about to kill the religious instinct itself. Europe and America are now looking towards India with expectant eyes: this is the time for philanthropy, this is the time to occupy the hostile strongholds.

In the West, women rule; all influence and power are theirs. If bold and talented women like yourself versed in Vedanta, go to England to preach, I am sure that every year hundreds of men and women will become blessed by adopting the religion of the land of Bharata. The only woman who went over from our country was Ramâbâi; her knowledge of English, Western science and art was limited; still she surprised all. If anyone like you goes, England will be stirred, what to speak of America! If an Indian woman in Indian dress preach there the religion which fell from the lips of the Rishis of India — I see a prophetic vision — there will rise a great wave which will inundate the whole Western world. Will there be no women in the land of Maitreyi, Khanâ, Lilâvati, Sâvitri, and Ubhayabhârati, who will venture to do this? The Lord knows. England we shall conquer, England we shall possess, through the power of spirituality.

नान्यः पन्था वदियतेऽयनाय

— “There is no other way of salvation.” Can salvation ever come by getting up meetings and societies? Our conquerors must be made Devas by the power of our spirituality. I am a humble mendicant, an itinerant monk; I am helpless and alone. What can I do? You have the power of wealth, intellect, and education; will you forgo this opportunity? Conquest of England, Europe, and America — this should be our one supreme Mantra at present, in it lies the well-being of the country. Expansion is the sign of life, and we must spread over the world with our spiritual ideals. Alas! this frame is poor, moreover, the physique of a Bengali; even under this labour a fatal disease has attacked it, but there is the hope:

उत्पत्स्यतेऽस्तमिम कोऽपि समानधर्मा ।
कालो ह्ययं नरिवधरिवपिला च पृथ्वी ॥

—"A kindred spirit is or will be born out of the limitless time and populous earth to accomplish the work" (Bhav-abhuti).

About vegetarian diet I have to say this — first, my Master was a vegetarian; but if he was given meat offered to the Goddess, he used to hold it up to his head. The taking of life is undoubtedly sinful; but so long as vegetable food is not made suitable to the human system through progress in chemistry, there is no other alternative but meat-eating. So long as man shall have to live a Râjasika (active) life under circumstances like the present, there is no other way except through meat-eating. It is true that the Emperor Asoka saved the lives of millions of animals by the threat of the sword; but is not the slavery of a thousand years more dreadful than that? Taking the life of a few goats as against the inability to protect the honour of one's own wife and daughter, and to save the morsels for one's children from robbing hands — which of these is more sinful? Rather let those belonging to the upper ten, who do not earn their livelihood by manual labour, not take meat; but the forcing of vegetarianism upon those who have to earn their bread by labouring day and night is one of the causes of the loss of our national freedom. Japan is an example of what good and nourishing food can do.

May the All-powerful Vishveshvari inspire your heart!

Notes

- [1] Written to Shrimati Saralâ Ghosal, B.A., Editor, *Bhârati*, from Darjeeling, 24th April, 1897. Translated from Bengali.

Chapter 7

Our Present Social Problems

OUR PRESENT SOCIAL PROBLEMS^[1]

स ईशोऽनर्िवचनीयप्रेमस्वरूपः

— “The Lord whose nature is unspeakable love.” That this characteristic of God mentioned by Nârada is manifest and admitted on all hands is the firm conviction of my life. The aggregate of many individuals is called Samashti (the whole), and each individual is called Vyashti (a part). You and I — each is Vyashti, society is Samashti. You, I, an animal, a bird, a worm, an insect, a tree, a creeper, the earth, a planet, a star — each is Vyashti, while this universe is Samashti, which is called Virât, Hiranyagarbha, or Ishvara in Vedânta, and Brahmâ, Vishnu, Devi, etc., in the Purânas. Whether or not Vyashti has individual freedom, and if it has, what should be its measure, whether or not Vyashti should completely sacrifice its own will, its own happiness for Samashti — are the perennial problems before every society. Society everywhere is busy finding the solution of these problems. These, like big waves, are agitating modern Western society. The doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism, while that which advocates the cause of the individual is called individualism.

Our motherland is a glowing example of the results and consequence of the eternal subjection of the individual to society and forced self-sacrifice by dint of institution and discipline. In this country men are born according to Shâstric injunctions, they eat and drink by prescribed rules throughout life, they go through marriage and kindred functions in the same way; in short, they even die according to Shastric injunctions. The hard discipline, with the exception of one great good point, is fraught with evil. The good point is that men can do one or two things well with very little effort, having practiced them every day through generations. The delicious rice and curry which a cook of this country prepares with the aid of three lumps of earth and a few sticks can be had nowhere else. With the simple mechanism of an antediluvian loom, worth one rupee, and the feet put in a pit, it is possible to make kincobs worth twenty rupees a yard, in this country alone. A torn mat, an earthen lamp, and that fed by castor oil — with the aid of materials such as these, wonderful savants

are produced in this country alone. An all-forbearing attachment to an ugly and deformed wife, and a lifelong devotion to a worthless and villainous husband are possible in this country alone. Thus far the bright side.

But all these things are done by people guided like lifeless machines. There is no mental activity, no unfoldment of the heart, no vibration of life, no flux of hope; there is no strong stimulation of the will, no experience of keen pleasure, nor the contact of intense sorrow; there is no stir of inventive genius, no desire for novelty, no appreciation of new things. Clouds never pass away from this mind, the radiant picture of the morning sun never charms this heart. It never even occurs to this mind if there is any better state than this; where it does, it cannot convince; in the event of conviction, effort is lacking; and even where there is effort, lack of enthusiasm kills it out.

If living by rule alone ensures excellence, if it be virtue to follow strictly the rules and customs handed down through generations, say then, who is more virtuous than a tree, who is a greater devotee, a holier saint, than a railway train? Who has ever seen a piece of stone transgress a natural law? Who has ever known cattle to commit sin?

The huge steamer, the mighty railway engine — they are non-intelligent; they move, turn, and run, but they are without intelligence. And yonder tiny worm which moved away from the railway line to save its life, why is it intelligent? There is no manifestation of will in the machine, the machine never wishes to transgress law; the worm wants to oppose law — rises against law whether it succeeds or not; therefore it is intelligent. Greater is the happiness, higher is the Jiva, in proportion as this will is more successfully manifest. The will of God is perfectly fruitful; therefore He is the highest.

What is education? Is it book-learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education. Now consider, is that education as a result of which the will, being continuously choked by force through generations, is well-nigh killed out; is that education under whose sway even the old ideas, let alone the new ones, are disappearing one by one; is that education which is slowly making man a machine? It is more blessed, in my opinion, even to go

wrong, impelled by one's free will and intelligence than to be good as an automaton. Again, can that be called society which is formed by an aggregate of men who are like lumps of clay, like lifeless machines, like heaped up pebbles? How can such society fare well? Were good possible, then instead of being slaves for hundreds of years, we would have been the greatest nation on earth, and this soil of India, instead of being a mine of stupidity, would have been the eternal fountain-head of learning.

Is not self-sacrifice, then, a virtue? Is it not the most virtuous deed to sacrifice the happiness of one, the welfare of one, for the sake of the many? Exactly, but as the Bengali adage goes, "Can beauty be manufactured by rubbing and scrubbing? Can love be generated by effort and compulsion?" What glory is there in the renunciation of an eternal beggar? What virtue is there in the sense control of one devoid of sense-power? What again is the self-sacrifice of one devoid of idea, devoid of heart, devoid of high ambition, and devoid of the conception of what constitutes society? What expression of devotedness to a husband is there by forcing a widow to commit Sati? Why make people do virtuous deeds by teaching superstitions? I say, liberate, undo the shackles of people as much as you can. Can dirt be washed by dirt? Can bondage be removed by bondage? Where is the instance? When you would be able to sacrifice all desire for happiness for the sake of society, then you would be the Buddha, then you would be free: that is far off. Again, do you think the way to do it lies through oppression? "Oh, what examples or self-denial are our widows! Oh, how sweet is child-marriage! Is another such custom possible! Can there be anything but love between husband and wife in such a marriage!" such is the whine going round nowadays. But as to the men, the masters of the situation, there is no need of self-denial for them! Is there a virtue higher than serving others? But the same does not apply to Brâhmins — you others do it! The truth is that in this country parents and relatives can ruthlessly sacrifice the best interests of their children and others for their own selfish ends to save themselves by compromise to society; and the teaching of generations rendering the mind callous has made it perfectly easy. He, the brave alone, can deny self. The coward, afraid of the lash, with one hand wipes his eyes and gives with the other. Of what avail are such gifts? It is a far cry to love universal. The young plant should be hedged in and taken care of. One can hope gradually to attain to universal love if one can learn to love one object unselfishly. If devotion to one particular Ishta-Deva is attained, devotion to the universal Virat is gradually possible.

Therefore, when one has been able to deny self for an individual, one should talk of self-sacrifice for the sake of society, not before. It is action with desire that leads to action without desire. Is the renunciation of desire possible if desire did not exist in the beginning? And what could it mean? Can light have any meaning if there is no darkness?

Worship with desire, with attachment, comes first. Commence with the worship of the little, then the greater will come of itself.

Mother, be not anxious. It is against the big tree that the great wind strikes. "Poking a fire makes it burn better"; "A snake struck on the head raises its hood" — and so on. When there comes affliction in the heart, when the storm of sorrow blows all around, and it seems light will be seen no more, when hope and courage are almost gone, it is then, in the midst of this great spiritual tempest, that the light of Brahman within gleams. Brought up in the lap of luxury, lying on a bed of roses and never shedding a tear, who has ever become great, who has ever unfolded the Brahman within? Why do you fear to weep? Weep! Weeping clears the eyes and brings about intuition. Then the vision of diversity — man, animal, tree — slowly melting away, makes room for the infinite realisation of Brahman everywhere and in everything. Then —

समं पश्यन् ह्यसर्वत्र समवस्थतिमीश्वरम् ।
न हनिस्त्यात्मानात्मानं ततो याति परां गतम् ॥

— "Verily, seeing the same God equally existent every where, he does not injure the Self by the self, and so goes to the Supreme Goal" (Gitâ, XIII. 28).

Notes

- [1] Translated from a Bengali letter written to Shrimati Mrinalini Bose from Deoghar (Vaidyanâth), on 23rd December, 1898.

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