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The Renaissance of Hinduism

BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY

STUDIES

IN

THE RENAISSANCE

OF

HINDUISM

IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

BY

D. S. SARMA, M.A.

"The Mahātmā of India, by his unique example, has made Hinduism the noblest religion of our time."—*J. H. Holmes of U. S. A.*

BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY

1944

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GENERAL PREFACE

At a time when civilization is in peril and schemes of social reconstruction are in the air, it is wise to know what the seers of the past have said on the deeper problems of thought and life. The question of the nature and destiny of man, the purpose of society, its relation to the individual are near and intimate to each one of us. But only a select few care to spend the greater part of their lives over them, and fewer still their whole lives and energies. But these few, whatever divergent answers they may seem to have found, stand high above ordinary humanity and have struggled to heights which have been gradually won for us. Man is a teachable animal, and by a sympathetic study of the past gropings and stumblings of mankind, he can avoid, if not error, at least its repetition.

In India the problems of philosophy and religion have occupied for centuries an important place. While the leaders of philosophy have attempted to solve the riddle of existence, the teachers of religion have sought to supply us with an ordered scheme of life. The story of Indian thought gives us an important chapter in, what Lessing calls, the education of the human race. What is noteworthy is not the painful ignorance natural to a world over which generations of wild men have swept but the attempt to rise out of that ignorance. The greatness of the ancient thinkers of India is that they struggled persistently and often successfully to discover the spiritual values which enlarge the mind and add to the beauty of life. The progress of man, it is generally admitted today, is a continuous victory of

thought over passion, of tolerance over fanaticism, of persuasion over force.

In this series, it is proposed to bring out studies of Indian classics and thought by competent scholars who have looked at them with new eyes and greater freedom. The author of this book, Professor D. S. Sarma, has long been known to students of Indian Religion for a succession of stimulating studies on the *Bhagavadgītā*. He has a free and flexible English style, easy, natural and dignified. In this book, where he describes the Renaissance of Hindu religious thought in the last hundred years, there is an assessment of life which is of great value to the contemporary mind.

'20—9—'44. S. R.

PREFACE TO THE VOLUME

This book was originally intended to form a companion volume to my *What is Hinduism?*, giving a short account of the history of Hinduism from the beginning up to the present day. But when I proceeded with the work I found the material for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries so abundant and interesting that I thought it best to make this period my main theme.

It is well known that the reaction of Hinduism to the impact of Western civilization at first took the form of four great movements—the Brāhmo Samāj, the Ārya Samāj, the Theosophical Society and the Rāmakrishṇa Mission. That reaction has continued with greater intensity in our own generation and has thrown up two mighty personalities—Tagore and Gāndhi. There seems to be little doubt that the future historian will consider our age the Age of Tagore and Gāndhi. Though, strictly speaking, the sphere of the former is literature and that of the latter politics, both of them are essentially religious souls revealing modern Hinduism at its best and most creative phase. Therefore I make no apology for devoting what may appear at first sight to be disproportionately long chapters to their life and work. Mahātmā Gāndhi's life especially is so crowded with events that even a bare narration of them—which is all that has been attempted here—would make his figure dominate the picture of our times. He teaches his gospel of Truth and Non-violence not through books or discourses, but through deeds. So to give an account of his teachings, without an adequate narration of his doings, which reveal his character and personality, would be to deprive the most dominant figure in the

picture of all its colour and significance. I have no doubt that future generations would look upon the Gāndhian message of non-violence as the greatest contribution made by modern Hinduism to the spiritual progress of man. But that message would ever be inseparable from the life-history of the Mahātmā, who delivered it. The Renaissance of which he is the highest expression is still in progress. So its history which is implicit in the following series of studies of its leading personalities is not complete. But I believe that the achievements of Hinduism during the last one hundred years are sufficiently great to justify the title I have given to this book.

I am very thankful to my friend Sir S. Rādhākrishnan for not only encouraging me to write this book for the series to be published by the Benares Hindu University, but also for allowing me to include in it a chapter on himself and placing at my disposal the manuscripts of his Kamalā Lectures and his Lectures in China, which have not yet been published He is undoubtedly one of the leaders of the present Renaissance, as the chapter in question would convince any unbiassed reader. It would have been very unfair to leave him out of this book, simply because he happened to be a friend of the author.

I have great pleasure in acknowledging the ready help given to me in the course of this work by Professor K. A. Nīlakanta Śāstrī of the Madras University and to my old friends and colleagues in Presidency College—Mr. K. Swāmināthan and Mr. M R Rājagopāla Aiyangār—who patiently read the proofs and offered many valuable suggestions. But for their kind and ungrudging help, this book might have been much more imperfect than it is.

In the original manuscript no diacritical marks had been used. They were introduced at a later stage on

the advice of Sir. S. Rādhākrishṇan. But, as this involved in some cases a change in the spelling of well-known names, it was difficult for me to decide where to draw the line and so I had to be satisfied with a compromise. The consequence is that a few discrepancies have crept in. I hope the reader will not mind them.

MADRAS
15—9—'44.

D. S. S.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

I

One of the characteristics of ancient Hindu thought is its indifference to history. In discussing the contents of a book, for instance, our ancient and even mediaeval writers care very little for the date or the life of the author. They care more for the truth of experience or the soundness of doctrine than for the circumstances that gave it birth. What Sir Charles Eliot says of the religious mind in general is particularly applicable to them: "The truly religious mind does not care for the history of religion, just as, among us, the scientific mind does not dwell on the history of science."[1] But there is no doubt that the Hindu writers went to one extreme in ignoring history altogether, while modern Western writers go to the other extreme in making too much of the historical treatment of thought and art and digging at the roots of a tree instead of enjoying its flower and fruit. What we term history may, no doubt, be far from the many-sided reality which it seeks to record. It may too often be only a very faulty and subjective view of events. All the same, the historical treatment of a subject, however imperfect and one-sided it may be, has its own value. The historical treatment of a religion has its value even for the most religious of men. For instance, it is useful for us to know what doctrines of Hinduism belong to the Vedic period and what doctrines belong to the later Purāṇic period, and what causes contributed to the growth and vigour of Hinduism in one

[1] *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II, P. 166.

period and what causes contributed to its decay in another. And it is certainly useful for us, before we study the great Renaissance of Hinduism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to take a bird's-eye view of its long history going back almost to the beginnings of civilization in this part of the world. Only, we should not forget that the records we possess convey to our minds but an imperfect fragment of the reality as it once existed, that many of the dates and the so-called facts of ancient Indian History are extremely uncertain things and that, in any case, all divisions of history into periods are obviously artificial. With this caution we now proceed in this chapter to give a short historical sketch of Hinduism up to the nineteenth century.

II

First of all, let us take some convenient landmarks in the history of India and divide it into more or less manageable periods about which we can venture some broad generalisations. The first period may be said to extend from the earliest times to the birth of Buddha or, roughly, from 2000 B.C. to 560 B.C.; the second period from the birth of Buddha to the fall of the Mauryan empire or, roughly, from 560 B.C. to 200 B.C.; the third period from the fall of the Mauryan empire to the rise of the Gupta empire or, say, from 200 B.C. to 300 A.D.; the fourth period from the rise of the Gupta empire to the fall of Harṣa's empire, or, say, from 300 A.D. to 700 A.D. These four periods constitute what may be called the ancient period in the history of India.

With the eighth century A.D. begins the mediaeval period of our history. This again may be sub-divided. The first period may be said to extend from the fall of Harṣa's empire to the establishment of a Muslim kingdom in Delhi or, say, from 700 A.D. to 1200 A.D.;

the second period from the establishment of a Muslim kingdom in Delhi to the rise of the Moghul empire under Akbar or to the battle of Talikota in 1565, or, roughly, from 1200 to 1560 A.D.; and the third period from the rise of the Moghul empire to the establishment of the British supremacy or, say, from 1560 to 1800 A.D. These three periods constitute what may be called the mediaeval period of Indian History.

With the establishment of the British supremacy we have the beginning of the modern period, which extends from 1800 up to the present day. Of course, these divisions are artificial, but they are convenient for our purpose here.

III

The period extending from about 2000 B.C. to 560 B.C. is generally called the Vedic period. Modern scholars divide it into (1) the Age of the Mantras (2) the Age of the Brāhmaṇas and (3) the Age of the Upaniṣads. This is a convenient division, provided we understand that these ages are not strictly successive, but that they considerably overlap one another. The Mantras or hymns are the creations of poets, the Brāhmaṇas, which are elaborate ritualistic treatises, are the works of priests and the Upaniṣads, which consist of secret teachings, are the revelations of mystics. We may say that the history of Hinduism practically begins in the dim past with the composition of the hymns recorded in the Ṛg-Veda. In these hymns we have the most astonishing record of the march of the mind of man from the worship of the half-personified forces of Nature like fire, wind and rain to the realization of the Absolute Spirit, of which we, as well as the worlds with which we are surrounded, are only broken fragments.

It would be interesting to trace the course of this

development.[1] We find the religious poets in the Veda groping their way towards the Eternal Spirit, now marching, now receding, now triumphant and now dissatisfied, and leaving behind them a trail of broken idols, overthrown divinities and abandoned faiths. Nothing mattered to them except a resolute search for unity. The gods of popular belief, being only half-personified natural phenomena, gave them the clue. One god shaded away into another. The same epithets had been employed to describe more than one god. When there was so much of over-lapping among these divinities it was inferred that they must all be one in essence. Hence the habit of the Vedic poets, while extolling one god, to make him supreme for the moment and ignore the claims of others. Max Müller called this habit Henotheism and thought it was a stage on the way to monotheism. But monotheism did not come in this way to the Vedic poets. Neither Indra, the god of power, nor Varuṇa, the god of righteousness, rose ultimately to the supreme state. On the other hand, there was an attempt to get behind these powerful gods and grasp the power of which they were the manifestations. A well-known hymn says, "That Being is one which the wise call by various names as Agni, Yama and Mātariśvan". Sometimes, again, a striking quality like creative power common to a number of gods is taken and personified and made into a supreme divinity for a time. In this way we get a series of divinities who hold the sceptre for a time—Viśvakarman (Maker of everything), Prajāpati (Lord of all), Brahmaṇaspati (Lord of devotion), Prāṇa (Life), Kāla (Time), etc. But a bold poet here and there makes an attempt at a higher unity than all these foregoing types. Not only the gods but also men and all things are included in his speculative range. All are, according to one such poet, the children of the goddess Aditi, the boundless one. It is

[1] See *The Religion of the Veda* (pp. 228-248) by Bloomfield

therefore no longer a question of monotheism, but of monism—no longer the worship of a supreme God who is separate from the world, but the contemplation of a Spirit in and beyond the world, which is only Its partial manifestation. This stage is fully reached only in the Upaniṣads, but already in the hymns we have the famous Song of Creation in which an attempt is made to reach the One beyond the categories of thought—the Primary Cause of all. Another important development in the Age of the Mantras is the conception of Ṛta or cosmic order from which are derived in later times the characteristically Indian ideas of Dharma and the Law of Karma. Ṛta was originally the order of natural events such as the succession of seasons or the harvest of crops. But soon it came to mean not only the cosmic order but also the moral order. The gods were extolled as the guardians of both, especially Varuṇa, the god of righteousness. The order of the universe was supposed to be maintained by sacrifices. In fact, according to the famous Puruṣa-sūkta, the universe itself is the result of a sacrifice performed by the gods. Thus Yajña or sacrifice became the means, and Ṛta the end.

Gradually sacrifices rose so much in importance and became so complex and varied that in the Age of the Brāhmaṇas sacrificial religion of a mechanical and soulless kind began to prevail. However, there were a few notable developments in the religious thought of even this mechanical age. For it was in this age that the idea was developed that men owed a debt to the gods, the Ṛṣis, the Pitṛs, and men and animals. It was again in this age that the four āśramas were organized along with the four varṇas, which were first mentioned in the later portion of the Ṛg-Veda, and the idea of varṇa-āśrama-dharma began to take shape in the minds of the people. We do not as yet have any clear references to the doctrines of karma and rebirth in the Brāhmaṇas. But we are on the way to them, as it is

believed that all men are born after death in the next world, where they are recompensed according to their deeds in this world.

And as for the old gods they are still worshipped, but Prajāpati becomes the chief god and the creator of the world, Viṣṇu rises in importance and becomes the personification of sacrifice, and Śiva makes his appearance and is soon identified with the Vedic god, Rudra. Thus as early as the age of the Brāhmaṇas, the worship of Śiva, whom some scholars assume to be a pre-Aryan deity, makes its appearance and becomes part and parcel of the faith of the nation. It is inevitable that, in an age which believed in the great magical value of the meticulous performance of sacrifices, the priests should become all-powerful and supreme.

It is after this period of decadence that we have the first renaissance in our religion represented by the Upaniṣads. We can never exaggerate the importance of the Upaniṣads in the history of Hindu religious thought. In fact, these Himālayan treatises form the sources of all later streams of thought. Their relation to the Vedic hymns is similar to the relation of the New Testament of the Bible to the Old. All orthodox schools of Hinduism accept them as authoritative revelation, the famous Bhagavad-Gītā is supposed to be only their essence, the equally important Brahma Sūtra is described to be the thread which strings together all the Upaniṣadic flowers, and even the religion of Buddha rightly interpreted is only a continuation of their deepest intuitions. Thus we may say that in this age the foundations of Hinduism were well and truly laid. The later ages only built a superstructure on them.

The master conceptions of the age of the Upaniṣads are Brahman, Ātman, Mokṣa, Saṁsāra, Karma, Upāsana and Jñāna. The gods recede into the background, the priests are subordinated, sacrifices are looked

down upon, contemplation takes the place of worship and the acquisition of divine knowledge takes precedence of the performance of rites and ceremonies. It is a mistake to say, as some Western critics do, that the robust optimism of the earlier age of the Vedic hymns gives place to pessimism in this age. It would be truer to say that the childish delight in the possession of cattle and crops and victory over the enemy gives place to true spiritual manhood, which sees that the everlasting happiness of man consists not in the possessions of this world but in the possession of the soul. The seers of the Upanisads say, "What shall we do with offspring —we who have this Self and this world of Brahman?" And having risen above the desire for sons, wealth and new worlds, they wander about as mendicants. They do not long for death, they long for infinite life. They teach that sacrifices lead only to a temporary heaven after death, whereas true knowledge leads to immortal bliss even here. Thus in the age of the Upanisads jñāna takes the place of yajña. And the absolute Brahman, with which is identified Ātman or the Spirit in man, takes the place of Prajāpati. Karma is given a wider meaning than ritual and is connected with the idea of rebirth. The twin doctrines of the Law of Karma and the Process of Saṁsāra become the fundamental bases not only of all schools of Hinduism but also of all schools of Buddhism and Jainism. And liberation from the cycle of births and deaths is to be sought only through jñāna or the realization of the identity of Brahman and Ātman—the spirit of the universe and the spirit of man. In this universal religion Brahman is the goal and jñāna is the means of reaching it. These two concepts come to occupy the foreground of religious life. All other things become subsidiary. Varṇa and āśrama, like the gods and the sacrifices, are pushed into the background. Even yoga and tapas, which figure so largely in the religious

life of later ages, are not very prominent in this age. And in place of bhakti, which is the characteristic feature of the religious life of Mediaeval India, we have upāsana or meditation which leads only to conditioned Brahman. We have as yet no temples and images. No congregational worship takes the place of the old congregational sacrifices. The religion of the Upaniṣads is severely individualistic. From its very nature it could only be the religion of the few.

IV

560 B.C.—200 B.C.

The next period, which extends from the birth of Buddha to the fall of the Mauryan empire, brings us to historical times. We are now a little more sure of events and dates. The founder of Buddhism was born about 566 B.C., and the founder of Jainism about 547 B.C. Out of the sixteen kingdoms that are said to have existed in Northern India before the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, Magadha rose into prominence in the sixth century B.C. And Bimbisāra, its first king known to history, probably reigned from 540 to 490 B.C. The Śaiśunāga dynasty to which he belonged was followed by the Nanda dynasty. Ambitious monarchs of these two dynasties, like Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru, Nandivardhana and Mahāpadma Nanda, maintained the supremacy of Magadha, so that when Candragupta, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, seized the sceptre in 325 B.C. "the history of Magadha became the history of India." For Candragupta was able to extend his empire till it covered almost the whole of Northern India including portions of what we know as Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Meanwhile Alexander had invaded India in the north-west, crossed the Indus and fought the battle of Jhelum in 326 B.C., but had to leave the country as his soldiers refused to proceed farther. But the effects of Alexander's invasion were

soon wiped out by Candragupta when he subjugated the Indus valley. Candragupta was followed by his son Bindusāra, who added to the Mauryan empire a large part of South India, and Bindusāra's son Aśoka added the south-eastern kingdom of Kaliṅga. Aśoka's famous inscriptions show the extent as well as the nature of his vast empire. He ruled over the whole of India except the extreme southern kingdoms of the Colas and the Pāṇḍyas. His reign of forty years from 273 to 232 B.C. is one of the most glorious periods in the history of the world. It is as if Yudhiṣṭhira of the Mahābhārata fame had come to life and stepped into history to show that such an ideal was not impossible of realization and that the head of a vast empire could also be the embodiment of Dharma. Aśoka was no doubt a Buddhist, but the ethical ideals of Buddhism are not different from those of Hinduism. In the enthronement of righteousness, toleration, truth and, above all, non-violence, there is nothing in the subsequent history of India equal to Aśoka's endeavour till we come to Mahātmā Gāndhi and his ideal of Swarāj for India. Aśoka died about 232 B.C. and his empire soon broke up under his feeble successors. The last of the Maurya dynasty was killed by Puṣyamitra, the founder of the Suṅga dynasty, in 185 B.C.

This period is, of course, the golden period of Buddhism. But let us look at the circumstances in which Buddhism arose and grew in power. We can have an idea of the older religion in this period from the Śrauta, Gṛhya and Dharma Sūtras and the oldest portions of the Mahābhārata. The conditions seem to be similar to those of the age of the Brāhmaṇas. We have the same old sacrifices, the same old mechanical rites and the same old beliefs in gods, but a more rigorous insistence on varṇas and āśramas, as if the great seers of the Upaniṣads had never lived and taught. The orthodoxy of the priests remains practically

unaffected by the Upaniṣadic philosophy. Their religion is dominated by rites and ceremonies, and their moral code cribbed and confined by the caste system. They organized their own class and their own rituals and prescribed to themselves a rigorous discipline, but they still clung to the old and narrow conceptions of Dharma and maintained the parochial character of their ethics. They do not seem to have made any great attempt to remould the institutions of the people in the light of the new universal religion taught in the Upaniṣads. The period was one of conservation and not of expansion.

But we note one important development which was destined to have a far-reaching influence on the religion of future ages. We have evidences from the Sūtras to show that, as early as the fifth century B.C., there were professional men who were employed to conduct the worship of images in temples[1]. The cult of the worship of images seems to have arisen spontaneously when the Vedic sacrifices became too elaborate and complicated and the various upāsanas recommended in the Upaniṣads came to be substituted in their place. Accordingly the Gṛhya-sūtras in which we have references to this new development became gradually more important than the Śrauta-sūtras which deal with sacrifices. Thus the foundations of temple-worship, which plays so large a part in the Hinduism of mediaeval and modern periods, were laid as early as the fifth century B.C.

While the priests were thus steeped in their sacrifices and their narrow codes of law and the common people in their superstitions and the worship of their sectarian gods, there arose in this period a number of charlatans who aped the seers of the Upaniṣads and put forward fantastic metaphysical theories of their own, wrangled with one another and confused the minds

[1] See Kane's *History of Dharma Śāstra*, p. 710.

of the people with their specious reasoning. We are told that there were as many as sixty-two theories about the world and the soul at the time of Buddha's enlightenment. Some of them were based on the Vedic tradition and some were independent of it. There were sceptics and materialists and dialecticians as well as literalists, dogmatists and fundamentalists. It was a mere Babel of tongues, an age of speculative chaos. True religion and morality were lost in a heap of meaningless rites, childish superstitions and futile discussions[1].

It was in these circumstances that Buddhism and Jainism arose as reforming sects. They retained the ethical ideals of the orthodox religion, but repudiated the authority of the Vedas and the ascendancy of priests and turned away from sacrifices. It is a mistake to suppose that Buddha broke away entirely from the religious tradition of his country. According to Rhys Davids, he was born and brought up and lived and died a Hindu.

"Gautama's whole training was Brāhmanism, he probably deemed himself to be the most correct exponent of the spirit, as distinct from the letter, of the ancient faith; and it can only be claimed for him that he was the greatest and wisest and best of the Hindus".[2]

Buddha's teaching was only a restatement of the thought of the Upaniṣads with a new emphasis. The spirit which gave birth to the Upaniṣads is also the life-spring of Buddhism. The religion of Buddha grew and flourished at first within the fold of the orthodox faith, as the Upaniṣads did, and as many free-thinking sects did. Professor Rādhākrishnan has shown[3] that the following points are common to the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the teaching of Buddha:—(1) Both are indifferent to authority and insist on personal experi-

[1] See *Indian Philosophy* by Rādhākrishnan, Vol. I, pp. 352-355.
[2] See *Buddhism* by Rhys Davids, pp. 83-85.
[3] See *Indian Philosophy* by Rādhākrishnan, Vol. I, pp. 676-694.

ence. (2) Both have contempt for ritualism and sacrifices. (3) Both admit that the absolute Reality, called Brahman by the one and Dharma by the other, cannot be comprehended by the intellect. (4) Both assert that there is no peace for the mind of man till the state of changeless reality, call it mōkṣa or nirvāṇa, is reached. (5) Both teach that this Reality can be reached only through renunciation, meditation and the realization of the oneness of all life. (6) Both regard the world and the individual self as impermanent. (7) Both believe in the Law of Karma and rebirth. (8) And Buddha uses in his discourses many phrases and expressions with which we are familiar in the Upaniṣads.

But Buddha was interested much more in providing a remedy for the ills of life than in discussing metaphysical questions. He positively discouraged, on the part of his disciples, the putting of any questions which have no bearing on practical life. His teaching was confined to the Four Aryan Truths and the Eightfold Aryan Path. The Four Aryan Truths are:—(i) that there is suffering in the world, (ii) that it has a cause, (iii) that it can be removed, and (iv) that there is a way to do this. And the way is the famous eightfold path consisting of (i) right belief, (ii) right aim, (iii) right speech, (iv) right action, (v) right living, (vi) right effort, (vii) right mindfulness and (viii) right contemplation. This path strenuously pursued leads one to nirvāṇa, which is the extinction of the flame of desire, the cause of all suffering. Nirvāṇa, properly interpreted, is the name given to the state of perfection reached by one when all desires and passions are overcome.

If Buddhism had stopped with this simple and practical teaching of Buddha, if it had stopped with the shifting of the attention of men from ritualistic observances and metaphysical subtleties to the practical way of securing peace and happiness through a strenuous

moral life, it would have been a useful supplement to the mystical teachings of the Upaniṣads and would have been gradually incorporated into the Vedic tradition. And we should have regarded the rise of Buddhism in the sixth century B.C. as the second Renaissance in Hinduism, as the Upaniṣadic teaching was the first. But this was not to be. And we are not in a position to say whether irreconcilable differences between the reforming sect and the parent religious body arose through the direct teaching of Buddha or the perversion of it by his later followers. For the religious canon of Buddhism took shape only two centuries after Buddha's death and there are many inconsistencies in its teaching. For instance, there is now great difference of opinion among scholars about the views of Buddha on the nature of the world, the soul and the final liberation. It is quite probable that, taking advantage of his silence on metaphysical questions, his later followers gave their own solutions of these as an addition to his practical teaching. Anyway the Buddhist Saṅgha developed in course of time certain doctrines which looked like perversions of the teachings of the Upaniṣads. The most important of them were the doctrines of anitya, anātmā and nirvāṇa.

According to the first two there is nothing permanent in the universe. Everything is in a flux, both the material world and the soul. There is no changeless entity behind either of them. Both the world and the soul are only complexes or aggregates and not entities. They are, like a running stream or a burning flame, a series of states with no fixed principle behind them. There is therefore neither being nor non-being anywhere in the universe, but only becoming.[1] There is only change but nothing that changes, there is only action but no actor, there is only a world-process but no world. It is not the soul that transmigrates,[2] for there is no soul, but only character. This teaching is

a travesty of the teaching of the Upaniṣads. For the Upaniṣads, while holding that the world and the soul are constantly changing and therefore impermanent, emphatically assert that the ground of both is Brahman or Ātman, which is immutable and eternal. Buddhist philosophy totally ignored the positive side of this teaching and over-emphasized the negative side. Similarly, it frequently interpreted nirvāṇa as meaning only annihilation; that is, on the attainment of nirvāṇa the aggregate of five skandhas, which do duty for the soul in this philosophy, is simply broken up and reduced to nothing. This conception is again a truncated form of the Upaniṣadic conception of mōkṣa. For mōkṣa means not the annihilation of the soul, but the annihilation of its finiteness and the consequent realization of its unity or identity with Brahman. It means, therefore, not eternal death, but eternal life.

These negative doctrines of Buddhism without their positive counterparts, which Buddha most probably had in his mind like the seers of the Upaniṣads and which were made explicit in Hinduism, widened the gulf between the two religions—the gulf which already lay implicit in Buddha's rejection of the authority of the Veda and the ecclesiastical organization introduced by him. Moreover, the Buddhist ethical sādhana became, in consequence of these negations, a system of cold, strenuous self-culture, and not, like the Hindu sādhana, a process of joyous union or identification with the supreme Reality, which makes the suffering in the world a mere speck on a heaving ocean. As K. J. Saunders says, we find ourselves, while going through Dhammapada, "in a moonlit world, beautiful yet cold. . . . . Here is no 'sunset touch', no mystic hint of Him 'whose dwelling is the light of setting suns'; our hearts are not stirred by any assurance of the reality of the Unseen"[1]. The Buddhist solution

[1] *The Buddha's Way of Virtue*, p. 16 (Wisdom of the East series).

of the problem of suffering is a monastic solution, it is the very antithesis of the solution offered by the Bhagavad-Gītā. One must quit the world and become a saṁnyāsin for attaining nirvāṇa. The layman is bound to the wheel of saṁsāra and has to be born over and over again till he learns to renounce the world. And in accordance with this doctrine Buddhism organized a church in which monastic life was all-important.

But a life of renunciation and meditation could only be for the few who have the necessary qualification for it and not for all and sundry. According to the Hindu scheme it was only for those who have lived a full life in the world and discharged their obligations to society. Formal saṁnyāsa was the crown of religious life, not its base. Its base is the life of the student and the householder and citizen. There could be exceptions to the rule, of course, like Buddha himself and Śaṁkara. But such exceptions are one in a million. It is dangerous to teach all and sundry that to get rid of suffering and enjoy peace they should renounce the world, become monks or nuns and suppress all desires. To teach such a doctrine even to a select class would be futile, but to teach it to all, high or low, and not only to teach it but also organize institutions on the basis of this teaching was fraught with grave consequences to society. No wonder, therefore, that the leaders of orthodox religion looked upon Buddhism as a heresy and an anti-social force. Their own scheme of life may be too narrow, too rigid and too exclusive. But gradualness was of its very essence and in accordance with natural laws, whereas premature renunciation and monastic life for all were only futile attempts at circumventing Nature.

It is often said that the Brāhman priests opposed the teaching of Buddha because he repudiated their ascendancy and condemned sacrifices which were their source of income. But all Brāhmaṇs were not sacri-

ficial priests even in those days, and it was not the sacrificial priests who always guided the religious thought of the community. In the Upaniṣads it is not the sacrificial priests that decide religious questions, but those who have transcended sacrificial religion. Nor are Brāhmans always considered supreme teachers. They often give place to Kṣatriya teachers.

Again, it is said that the Brāhmans opposed the teaching of Buddha because he abolished caste distinctions. But Buddha did not abolish caste among the laity. He abolished it only in the Saṅgha, only among those who renounced the world and took monastic vows. Even according to the Hindu theory, those who renounced the world and became saṁnyāsins were above caste distinctions. No, it is not these selfish considerations, but the Buddhist conception of the world and the soul in a perpetual flux without any substratum whatever, the Buddhist interpretation of nirvāṇa as utter extinction, the Buddhist substitution of reason in place of Vedic authority, the Buddhist over-emphasis on monastic life and the Buddhist system of cold self-culture without a God and without worship and without any warm feeling of piety that proved insuperable objections to reconciliation between the two faiths. But during the lifetime of Buddha the charm of his own wonderful personality and the story of his great renunciation overcame everything. For he was the most lovable of the world-teachers. No harsh word ever escaped his lips. He ever radiated peace, gentleness and serenity, and he had boundless compassion for all beings. The success of his simple practical teaching conveyed in the language of the people was immediate. But we do not know much of its history for a long time after his death till we come to the time of Aśoka. When the emperor embraced Buddhism and sent religious embassies far and near

and carved his edicts on rocks and pillars, it may be said to have started on its career of world-conquest.

Of the many creeds that arose in opposition to Vedic orthodoxy during this period, Jainism is the only one that has survived in India to the present day. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, who was born about 547 B.C. and was therefore a contemporary of Gautama Buddha, was not so much the founder as the reformer of Jainism. The Jain tradition ascribes the origin of the creed to one Ṛṣabha of very remote antiquity. The name Ṛṣabha occurs in the Veda, and there is, in the Viṣṇupurāṇa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, a story of Ṛṣabha which tallies with the Jain account. And we know that in the time of the Upaniṣads, when the new Ātmavidyā was propounded, there were some sages who looked with disfavour on sacrifices and tried to give allegorical explanations of the various parts of the ritual. Whether Ṛṣabha was one of such sages or not, we may safely infer that Jainism, which rejects Vedic sacrifices and with them the texts that enjoin them, had its origin, like Buddhism, in the discontent which had been prevailing for a long time among some sections of the population at the sacrificial ritualism of the orthodox Vedic priests. But Jainism was an older creed than Buddhism and more conservative. For, though its first twenty-two Tīrthaṁkaras or prophets beginning with Ṛṣabha are more or less legendary figures, the twenty-third prophet called Pārśvanātha, the immediate predecessor of Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth prophet, is a historical figure belonging to the eighth century B.C.

Jainism resembles Buddhism in (1) its rejection of animal sacrifices, (2) its repudiation of Vedic authority, (3) its disbelief in a Supreme Deity and (4) its use of the dialect of the people in religious teaching. But it differs from Buddhism in (1) its recognition of permanent entities like jīva and ajīva, (2) its belief in

the practice of severe austerities, (3) its positive interpretation of nirvāṇa, (4) its attempt at closer integration of its clergy and laity and (5) its closer relationship to Hinduism in religious observances, customs and manners.

It is well known that, though Jainism had its own Aśokas and Kaniṣkas, royal patrons who gave it the support of the State, it had not the wide expansion which Buddhism had. It never stepped out of India. It never entered on a career of world-conquest. But neither did it die out, like Buddhism, in the land of its birth. Mrs. Stevenson explains the survival of Jainism in India thus:—

"The character of Jainism, however, was such as to enable it to throw out tentacles to help it in its hour of need. It had never, like Buddhism, cut itself off from the faith that surrounded it, for it had always employed Brāhmans as its domestic chaplains, who presided at its birth rites and often acted as officiants at its death and marriage ceremonies and temple worship. Then, too, amongst its chief heroes, it had found niches for some of the favourites of the Hindu pantheon, Rāma, Kṛṣna and the like. Mahāvīra's genius for organization also stood Jainism in good stead now, for he had made the laity an integral part of the community, whereas in Buddhism they had no part or lot in the order. So, when storms of persecution swept over the land, Jainism simply took refuge in Hinduism, which opened its capacious bosom to receive it; and to the conquerors it seemed an indistinguishable part of that great system."[1]

According to Jainism, the way to nirvāṇa is a three-fold way. It consists of (1) samyak-darśana or right faith, (2) samyak-jñāna or right knowledge and (3) samyak-cāritra or right conduct. These three are called the ratnatraya, the three jewels of Dharma. Religious life is incomplete when any one of them is absent. Right faith is faith in the Jain scriptures, right knowledge is the knowledge of Jain philosophy and right conduct is putting into practice right

[1] *The Heart of Jainism*, pp. 18-19.

faith and right knowledge. In the case of a householder, right conduct consists of the observance of the aṇuvratas or lesser vows, namely, ahiṁsā (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacarya (chastity) and aparigraha (non-attachment to worldly things). But the householder's life is only a preparation for the life of a monk. The five aṇuvratas are only a probation for the five mahāvratas or greater vows, which a monk has to observe. The greater vows are the same as the lesser vows, but with no concessions allowed and with no limits set. For instance, in the case of a householder, the last two vows mean only chastity and non-attachment, while, in the case of a monk, they mean absolute celibacy and renunciation—renunciation which, according to one school, must extend even to his clothing.

It will be observed that ahiṁsā occupies the first place in Jain ethics as in Hindu ethics generally. The Jains are not the originators of the ahiṁsā doctrine. The doctrine is an old one and has a long history. Ahiṁsā was originally part and parcel of the vānaprastha and saṁnyāsa stages of life. The Sūtras of Gautama give a prominent place to this virtue. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad teaches that non-violence towards all creatures should be observed except at sacrifices. But to Jainism belongs the glory of making ahiṁsā the fundamental basis of all its teaching. The Jains are specialists in ahiṁsā. Their teachers analyse hiṁsā or injury to others into four classes—accidental, occupational, self-defensive and intentional. A layman is enjoined to abstain fully from the fourth kind of hiṁsā and abstain as far as possible from the other three kinds. But a monk is enjoined to abstain fully from all the four kinds. He should, under no circumstances whatsoever, injure any living being, however small it may be, in thought, word or deed—not even to save his life. That is why the Jain monks carry a bunch of pea-

cock feathers for driving away small insects from places where they intend to walk or sit, and that is also why the Jains as a rule do not take their meal at nights, lest they should unconsciously cause injury to flies, ants and the like. Again, according to Jain ethics, it is not enough that one does no injury to any creature directly. One should not cause injury even indirectly through an agent or approve in any way of the injury caused by others. In this respect the Jain teaching on kindness to animals is more advanced than the Buddhist teaching. A Buddhist may not kill or do injury to any creature himself. But apparently he is allowed to purchase meat from a butcher. A Jain, on the other hand, is bound to be a strict vegetarian, as he cannot be a party to taking life directly or indirectly. In fact, that is the first article of his creed. Therefore, wherever Jainism gained ground, as in Gujarāt and Karnātaka, it served to underline and emphasize ahiṁsā, one of the cardinal virtues of Hinduism, and helped people to put it into practice in their daily life.

We know very little about the early history of Jainism. There is a tradition that, about two centuries after the death of Mahāvīra, there was a migration of Jain monks under the leadership of Bhadrabāhu to Śrāvana Belgola in Mysore and that the Mauryan emperor Candragupta abdicated and went with these monks to Southern India and ended his life there. But many scholars do not consider this to be a trustworthy tradition, though there is evidence to show that, by the time of Candragupta, Jainism had had considerable expansion in Northern India. If Bhadrabāhu's migration is a historical fact, it must have occurred about 298 B. C., for by that time Candragupta's son, Bindusāra, had succeeded to the Mauryan throne. The glorious period of Jain prosperity, however, came much later. It may be said to begin with the Council of Vallabhī in the middle of the fifth century

A.D., when the Jain scriptures were first reduced to writing, and it lasted down to the thirteenth century.

In spite of these developments, Hinduism was never eclipsed by Buddhism or Jainism. Vincent Smith says,

"It must be clearly understood that Brāhmanical Hinduism continued to exist and to claim innumerable adherents throughout the ages. It may well be doubted if Buddhism can be correctly described as having been the prevailing religion of India as a whole at any time. The phrase 'Buddhist period' to be found in many books is false and misleading. Neither a Buddhist nor a Jain period ever existed. From time to time either Buddhism or Jainism obtained exceptional success and an unusually large percentage of adherents in the population of one kingdom or another, but neither heresy ever superseded Brāhmanical Hinduism."[1]

V

200 B.C.—300 A.D.

Nevertheless we may say that, after the fall of the Mauryan empire, there was a revival of Hinduism consequent on the loss of prestige that Buddhism had suffered. The Aśvamedha sacrifice performed by Puṣyamitra, who founded the Suṅga dynasty on the ruins of the Mauryan empire, may be taken as the signal for this second Renaissance of Hinduism. It may be said to usher the so-called Epic Age during which the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata received their final shape as didactic epics. In this long period of five hundred years from the fall of the Mauryas to the rise of the Guptas, there was no single paramount power in India. The country was ruled by the Bactrian Greeks, the Śākas, the Palḥavas and the Kuṣāṇs in the north-west, by the Suṅgas and the Kaṇvas in the north, by the Āndhra Śātavāhanas in the Deccan and the Tamil dynasties in the south with varying fortunes. It should

[1] *The Oxford History of India*, p. 55.

be noted that the dynasties that ruled the north-western kingdoms were those of foreigners who invaded India, settled down and were converted to either Buddhism or Hinduism and were absorbed.

To this period belong not only the two great epics in their final form, but also the code of Manu and the code of Yājñavalkya, the minor Upaniṣads and some at least of the Purāṇas and some of the philosophical Sūtras. A new school of Hinduized Buddhism known as the Mahāyāna arose under Kaniṣka in the north-west and from there spread to the northern countries of Asia. One of the Mahāyāna scriptures, namely, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, is said to be a parallel to the Bhagavad Gītā in Buddhism. The other achievements of Buddhism in this period are the works of Aśvaghoṣa and Nāgārjuna, the caityas of Karle and Nāsik, the stūpas of Bārhut and Sānchi, the sculptures of Gāndhāra, Mathurā and Amarāvatī and the earliest of the cave paintings in Ajanta. Lastly, we should note that it was in this period that Indians went abroad and colonized Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Malaya and Indo-China and established many kingdoms which were ruled by Indian princes for about fifteen centuries and which remained either Hindu or Buddhist till they were overthrown by Muslims.

Thus the Epic Age was a period of great expansion and of a new political outlook. Memories of the Aśokan empire made the Hindus feel that India, in spite of all its complexity of races, kingdoms and creeds, was really one. This fundamental unity is enforced in several passages in the Mahābhārata, and its recognition is one of the great landmarks of our history. The heroes of the great epic are significantly represented as having under their sway the whole of India. The special problem of India then was, as it is again today, how to bring about unity in a vast mass of heterogeneous population containing various races with diffe-

rent levels of culture. The Brāhmans had learnt a lesson from the Buddhist Saṅgha. They saw the mistake they had committed in not carrying the masses with them. They had made their knowledge a sort of secret doctrine and not a rule of life applicable to all. If the peculiar circumstances of the country made the levelling down of all social distinctions undesirable, it was their duty to begin the work of levelling up. As they had failed to do this, Buddhism, which they regarded as heresy, became the religion of the paramount state under Aśoka. That state was now declining and along with it the religion it supported. When the moral severity of the early Bhikkus gave place to the fantastic beliefs of all the tribes that were taken into the fold of Buddhism their religion began to decline. Moreover the great emphasis laid by Buddha on monastic life robbed society of its most efficient members. According to the Buddhist scheme of life, as we have seen, domestic virtues were at a discount and many necessary steps in the spiritual growth of man were skipped. Renunciation and contemplation were always preferred to citizenship and action and the principle of saṁnyāsa was believed to be of universal validity. The reaction soon came and there was a chance for the orthodox religion to recover the lost ground. The Hindu Renaissance which was a result of this reaction is best studied in the existing recensions of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. The ancient stories which the people loved were made the instruments of a great religious revival. The old ballads were re-written, supplemented and so overlaid with didactic matter that they became the Vedas of the multitude. In fact, the descendants of the early colonists in the islands to the east of India still professing Hinduism look upon the epics as their final authority in religion. The teaching of the Upaniṣads was brought home to the understanding of the common man through the

stories, the dialogues and the ideal characters in the epics. The gates of the temple were thus at last thrown open to all classes. The knowledge which had remained the exclusive possession of a small class was made available for all. Not only that, there was a great fusion of the Aryan culture with the Dravidian culture. The principle on which Śiva had been identified with the Vedic Rudra and included among the gods was now extended. The gods and goddesses worshipped by the common people were given honoured places in the Hindu Pantheon. As a result we find in this period the extension of organized sects, the worshippers of Viṣṇu, of Śiva and of Śakti, in addition to the Smārtas, who were the followers of the Vedic tradition. We have frequent references to such sects in the Mahābhārata. Śiva and Durgā henceforth become as great deities as Viṣṇu.

At the same time the Hindu scheme of life which is expressed by the formula of Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa and which had originated in the preceding period was now definitely fixed and widely taught. The nation-builders of the epic age clearly laid down that the purpose of life was four-fold, namely, dharma (duty), artha (wealth), kāma (desire) and mokṣa (liberation). The first three of these constitute the path of pravṛtti (active life) and have to be gained in domestic life. That is, a man has to be a member of society and discharge his duties as a householder and citizen. He has to acquire wealth, gratify his legitimate desires and at the same time practise virtue. The final stage of life for which his whole career has been a preparation is one of nivṛtti or complete surrender and hence of mokṣa or liberation. Thus the formula of Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa which indicates the ideal of complete life taking into account all the facts of human nature without doing violence either to the flesh or to the spirit was a corrective to the mo-

nastic Buddhism of the times. It was proclaimed in a thousand different ways in all the literature of the Hindu Renaissance—the two epics, the code of Manu and the subsequent Purāṇas.

In accordance with the scheme of life thus outlined, domestic virtues were glorified and a philosophy of active life was developed. Ideal types of character representing all stages of life were clothed in epic grandeur and set before the nation. We have in the epics not only the ideal saṁnyāsin or hermit, but also the ideal king, the chaste wife, the loyal brother, the disciplined student, the virtuous citizen and the faithful servant. It is difficult to exaggerate the educative influence exerted on the national mind by such concrete examples as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā, Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma. These characters have moulded the Hindu society as Homeric characters moulded the Hellenic society. Thus the abstract truths of the Upaniṣads became vital forces holding together a great civilization, when they were incarnated in epic types. The formula of Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa would have remained only a formula if it had not been exemplified in a thousand ways by the innumerable lives of the characters in the epics and the Purāṇas. True, many of these stories are rather wild and fantastic. But behind all their extravagant imagery, one can see the single unalterable and perfect scheme of life which has sustained Hindu society througout its chequered history.

When religion was thus brought home to the masses, it inevitably underwent some modifications. As we have seen, a highly metaphysical or mystical religion could only be for the few. Buddha wisely refrained from all metaphysical discussions and confined himself to the practical question of finding a remedy for human suffering. The Vedāntic Absolute, which, according to the famous words of Yājñavalkya in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka

Upaniṣad, could only be described by the expression "Not this, not that," is not for the multitude. On the other hand, if it was to become popular, an appeal had to be made to the hearts and imaginations of men. Therefore the cold and austere metaphysic was kept in the background and the warm theistic elements in the Upaniṣads were developed and emphasis was laid on the personal aspect of the Deity. In place of the impersonal or supra-personal Absolute, we have now an Īśvara, a personal God who has created all things, who upholds the order of the universe and who readily responds to the call of bhakti or devotion. For instance, the Bhagavān of the Gītā is not only an immanent principle in the universe, not only "the thread on which the pearls of creation are strung" but also the Friend and the Saviour of men. He assures us that no man who does good ever treads the path of woe, that no devotee of His will ever perish and that those who love Him will soon find Him "entering their hearts and dispelling the darkness of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom." He assures us that, in times of national decadence, He appears on the scene to protect righteous men, that no sin can really pursue a man who has taken refuge in Him and that peace comes to the soul which recognises Him as "the Lord of all the worlds, the Friend of all beings and the Recipient of all sacrifices and austerities." Thus He is not only a creator and destroyer, but also a loving protector. Hence arose in this period the Hindu conception of Trimūrti or the threefold form of God. One and the same Īśvara was viewed from three different points of view, namely, of creation, protection and destruction.

But the most noteworthy development in the epic age is the popularization of the doctrine of Avatāra or incarnation. The doctrine of divine incarnation is but a step from that of Trimūrti. In the Upaniṣads the Absolute is described as a Being not only transcenden-

tal but also immanent. All created beings are only His partial manifestations. All men are inherently divine. The divinity in man becomes most resplendent when he identifies himself with the eternal order of the universe and carries out the will of God. Great national heroes, whose lives or teachings have become a permanent possession to posterity, are therefore to be reckoned as special manifestations of God on earth. It is Viṣṇu, the protector, himself, that out of his compassion for mankind comes down from time to time in the shape of such godlike men. Thus the feeling for the concrete in religion led not only to the development of theism, but also to the conceptions of Trimūrti and Avatāra. The further logical steps in the same process are images, temples, processions, pilgrimages—in a word, all the paraphernalia of a popular religion with which we are well acquainted. It was inevitable, therefore, that there should be in this period a more systematic organization of temple worship than in the preceding period. In the Age of the Sūtras the sacrificial altar was more important than the temple, in the Age of the Epics the relations are reversed. The temple becomes more important than the altar, and image worship takes the place of sacrifices. The change is all the more significant, because it implies that the Dravidian forms of worship and the Dravidian and other non-Aryan deities are placed at last on a footing of equality with the Aryan forms of worship and Aryan deities. And the wisdom of the leaders of religion in this period is seen in their exalting the priests who officiated in the Dravidian temples to the rank of Brāhmans. The result of all the far-reaching changes that took place in the Epic Period is sometimes briefly expressed by saying that in this period Brāhmanism became Hinduism. The age was undoubtedly one of Renaissance, probably the greatest in our religious history. And the

finest flower of this Renaissance is the Bhagavad-Gītā, which, though somewhat earlier than this period, is most typical of the new spirit.

The great popularity of this scripture is due to the marvellous way in which it remains faithful to the Upaniṣadic tradition and at the same time re-interprets it and applies it to practical life. The Vedāntic Absolute is there, but it becomes a personal God. The old ideal of saṁnyāsa is there, but it is a saṁnyāsa to be practised in active life. The spirit of saṁnyāsa should pervade all the activities of a man, whether he is a student or a householder or a recluse. We should learn to live in the world without becoming worldly, as a lotus leaf rests on water without becoming wet. Our senses should learn to move freely amidst sense-objects without feeling attraction or repulsion and to act always in obedience to the higher self. True saṁnyāsa does not consist merely in retiring from the world but in subduing it to the purposes of the soul. Pravṛtti and nivṛtti need not be two different paths opposed to each other. On the other hand, the former should be a preparation for the latter.

Similarly, nothing is more typical of the wisdom and the progressive spirit of the Gītā than the way in which it extends the traditional concepts of Yoga, Karma, Yajña, Varṇa and Dharma. Yoga in the Gītā is not merely thought-control as in the technical Yoga-śāstra, but the whole of spiritual life which aims at union with the Supreme. Karma in the Gītā does not mean mere obligatory or optional rites as in the ritualistic codes, but all human actions having any moral or spiritual value. And the status of one's soul is to be determined ethically and not ritualistically. It is to be judged by standards of moral purity and not of ceremonial purity. So also yajña in the Gītā does not mean animal sacrifices, nor sacrifices of merely material objects, but all activities of man prompted by a spirit

of sacrifice. A life of self-control is a sacrifice, a life of disinterested scholarship is a sacrifice and even a simple exercise in breath-control for the purification of the mind is a sacrifice in its own way. Lastly, dharma in the Gītā is not simply the caste duty of popular ethics, but the duty imposed on man by his own nature and tendencies as well as by his birth and profession, and it has always to be judged in the light of the end viz., yoga, which it has in view. Thus the Gītā everywhere follows the old tradition, but everywhere extends it in such a way as to re-create it. It retains the old Upaniṣadic ideal of jñāna, but balances it with karma and bhakti. No wonder, therefore, that the Gītā is looked upon as one of the greatest scriptures of the world.

The Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa in their final form mark the end of a great epoch. For by this time Hinduism had already developed almost all the main features and characteristics with which we are familiar today viz., the conception of the impersonal Brahman and the personal Īśvara, the supreme authority of the Veda, the Law of Karma and re-birth, the formulas of Varna-āśrama-dharma and Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa, the threefold path of Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna, the doctrines of Trimūrti and Avatāra, of Iṣṭa-Devatā and Adhikāra, the rituals of image and temple worship, the sectarian beliefs and practices of the Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas and Śāktas, faith in pilgrimages, the sanctity of the cow, etc. Subsequent ages only added a few details here and there and systematized the ideals that lay scattered before. Even the various systems of philosophy and the schools of bhakti that arose afterwards are only ramifications of the ideas contained in the literature of the epic age.

VI

300 A.D.—700 A.D.

We next come to the period of the Guptas which is considered the golden age in the history of the Hindu rule of India. Samudragupta, the second Gupta monarch, who ruled probably from 330 to 375 succeeded in making himself the paramount power in Northern India. His empire was the greatest in India since the time of Aśoka. It extended from the Brahmaputrā in the east to the Jumnā in the west and the Narmadā in the south. And he received tribute from five frontier kingdoms. Thus he conquered most of Northern India and successfully raided far into the south till he came into conflict with the Pallava ruler of Conjeevaram. The golden age of the Guptas extends from 320 A.D. to 480 A.D. comprising the reigns of five sovereigns. The empire founded by Samudragupta was finally shattered by waves of invasions of the Huns. Vincent Smith says:—

"The barbarian invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, although slurred over by the Indian authorities, constitute a turning point in the history of Northern and Western India, both political and social. The political system of the Gupta period was completely broken up and new kingdoms were formed. No authentic family or clan traditions go back beyond the Hun invasions."

In the seventh century the paramount power thus overthrown was partially recovered by Harṣa, who ruled at Kanauj from 606 to 647. His death again threw the country into disorder and the unity of Indian History was again lost till it was restored by the Sultans of Delhi in the 13th century. With the fall of Harsa's empire the ancient period of the history of India may be said to close.

It is not quite correct to speak of a new Hindu Renaissance during the Gupta period. The Renaissance of the preceding period was simply continued

under these famous Hindu emperors and carried to unprecedented heights. The popularization of Hindu dharma which began with the epics was carried on to a further stage by the Purāṇas. Farquhar says:—

"It would be difficult to exaggerate the popularity and importance of the religious poems known as Purāṇas. They are very widely used among the common people both in the original and in numerous vernacular versions and adaptations. Indeed the Epics and the Purāṇas are the real Bible of the common people, whether literate or illiterate, and they are the source of half the vernacular literature."[1]

Also the spirit of sectarianism which is seen in a mild form in the epics becomes more and more aggressive in the Purāṇas with the result that we have often a sort of sectarian monotheism intolerant of other faiths. And the most important sects are, of course, the worshippers of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Śakti. Next to them come the worshippers of Sūrya and Gaṇapati.

A typical Purāṇa is said to consist of five parts—cosmogony, creation at the beginning of each kalpa, genealogies of gods, the ages of the world and the dynasties of kings. Inevitably, therefore, every Purāṇa contains some of the oldest materials handed down by oral tradition which had already found its way into the codes of law and the epics. And, though many of the Purāṇas that we have took shape in this period, there have been numerous interpolations and modifications in the later periods in the interests of the sects which appropriated them to themselves. But there is not much advance in religious thought in these popular and lengthy treatises except the extension of the doctrine of Avatārs and of the concept of the divine Śakti personified as the Mother-goddess.

The concept of Śakti or the Divine Power personified as the Mother-goddess is the foundation of Śāktism, which had a remarkable development in this

[1] *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 136.

period and gave rise to a mass of literature known as the Tantras. There is often no hard and fast line between a Tantra and a Purāṇa. Both types of literature flourished side by side and often coalesced. But the Tantras contain, in general, more of ritualistic matter and less of historical and legendary matter than the Purāṇas. From the point of view of religious life their importance lies (i) in their emphasis on the destructive as well as the beneficent side of the divine power, (ii) in their figurative representation of God as the Eternal Mother and (iii) in the severely practical nature of the schemes of salvation that they advocate through organized ritual.

There is no doubt that Śāktism is the result of the Aryanization on a vast scale of non-Aryan cults and beliefs of earlier ages. We should never forget that Hinduism is a fusion of Aryan and Dravidian faiths. We go wrong when we ignore either of the two elements. In the Hindu forms of worship today, it is almost impossible to separate the one element from the other. For instance, the influence exerted by Śāktism on Hindu ritual and practice is almost incalculable. It has permeated all parts of it including even such a purely Aryan form of meditation as Gāyatrī-upāsana. And its influence on Buddhism was as great. Some scholars even go to the length of saying that it was Śāktism or its later phase known as Tāntrism that finally ruined Buddhism. While Śāktism thus affected the religious practices of all sects, its own theory was profoundly influenced by the Sāṁkhya and Vedānta philosophies, for Śakti came to be identified with Prakṛti of the former and Māyā of the latter. And just as the Advaita Vedānta teaches that the soul ultimately recognises its identity with Brahman, so many Tantras teach that ultimately the worshipper of Devī becomes Devī herself.

But more important than the Purāṇas and the

Tantras from the point of view of religious thought are the philosophical sūtras of the six orthodox schools which exist even at the beginning of this period—*viz.*, Mīmāṁsā, Vedānta, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika—though the classical commentaries on them, except Śabarasvāmī's commentary on the Mīmāṁsā sūtras and Vātsyāyana's commentary on the Nyāya sūtras, belong to the next period. It is evident from the sūtras themselves that they are the result of earlier teachings which have been superseded. Their very perfection of form shows that a good deal of hard thinking and elaborate discussion on the part of each school must have preceded them. Each school is called a Darśana because it sets forth a view of life. Of these six schools, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta are not independent philosophies, but merely systematic expositions of the two parts of the Veda—the Karma-Kāṇḍa and the Jñāna-Kāṇḍa. Hence the two taken together form the systematic philosophy of Hinduism. It is here that we find formulated the doctrines of (1) the relative value of the Pramāṇas—perception, inference and scripture, (2) the eternity and the infallibility of the Veda, (3) the Apūrva result of karma which comes to fruition after death, and (4) the identity or the difference between Jīvātman and Paramātman. In fact, all the doctrines which divide the later schools of philosophy and upon which innumerable commentaries were written in the mediaeval period of Indian History were tersely formulated in this period. Of all the sūtras of the period those of Vedānta became so popular among the educated classes that the work was raised to the rank of a Prasthāna—scripture of authority. So we may say that from this period dates the well-known Hindu formula of Prasthāna-traya or the three-fold authority of the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad-Gītā.

Thus the brilliant age of the Guptas carried on the Hindu Renaissance of the preceding period by popularizing Hinduism on a vast scale through Purānas and Tantras on the one hand and by systematizing Hindu philosophy through the philosophical sūtras on the other.

VII
700 A.D.—1200 A.D.

The fall of Harṣa's empire marks the beginning of the mediaeval period of Indian History, and the period extending from the death of Harṣa to the Muslim conquest of Hindustan may be looked upon as a period of transition during which hordes of foreign invaders were absorbed in the body politic and a new set of kingdoms arose out of the old. The most important feature of the period is the rise of the Rajput clans which begin to play a prominent part in Indian History. In fact, Vincent Smith suggests that this period might be called the Rajput period.

The origin of the Rajput clans is still a matter for controversy. Some scholars maintain that they are the descendants of the old Kṣatriyas, as they claim to be, on the ground that they belong to the same racial type as the Aryans. It is admitted that many Brāhman dynasties like the Suṅga and Kaṇva dynasties, which established kingdoms and ruled them for a long time, became Kṣatriyas by intermarriage with Kṣatriya royal families. For in ancient times there was no sharp line of demarcation between Brāhmans and Kṣatriyas. But some scholars, while admitting the indigenous origin of some of the Rajput clans like the Rāṣṭrakūtas, the Rāthors, the Candels and the Bundelas, still maintain that the most distinguished of the clans like Parihārs, the Cauhāns, the Pawārs, the Cālukyas and the Śiśodias are descended from the

foreign hordes of Hūṇas, Gūrjaras, Maitrakas and others, and that, when once the foreigners were absorbed into the Hindu fold, the Brāhmans decided to recognize the new aristocracy as the descendants of the old Kṣatriyas by giving them fictitious genealogies. However this may be, there is no doubt that during this period nearly all the kingdoms of Northern India and the Deccan were governed by families or clans which are collectively known as Rajputs or Chattris, the vernacular equivalent of the Sanskrit Kṣatriyas. The Gūrjara-Pratīhāras ruled a wide empire with Kanauj as their capital, the Cauhāns ruled in Ajmere, the Pālas ruled in Bengal, the Candels in Bundelkhand, the Cālukyas and Rāṣṭrakūtas in the Deccan and the Kadambas and Gaṅgas in Mysore. In the south the ascendancy of the Pallavas comes to a close practically by the middle of the eighth century, and the Colas become supreme under Rājarāja in the eleventh century.

From Hieun Tsang's account of his travels in India we see that, about the middle of the seventh century, Buddhism was in a state of decline in Central and Southern India. It had allied itself with Śāktism and was scarcely different from being a sect of popular Hinduism. But its final defeat is generally connected with the activities of the two great protagonists of the Vedic faith, Kumārila and Śaṁkara. Kumārila Bhatta is the founder of the Bhātta School of Karma Mīmāṁsā. From his works we see that he was a violent opponent of Buddhism and tried to weaken its influence in every way. And that was probably responsible for the tradition that he instigated a Hindu king to exterminate the Buddhists. Kumārila takes his stand on the infallibility of the Veda and the necessity of the Vedic rites and ceremonies. His militant activity in the eighth century was the first manifestation of the Hindu revival of this period. Then came Śaṁkara in the early years of the ninth

century to complete the work begun by Kumārila. He was more pliant than Kumārila and assimilated some of the strong points of Buddhism and erected his mighty edifice of Advaita in the field of religious philosophy and established his four famous monasteries as centres of religious organization.

While Kumārila and Śaṁkara fought Buddhism on the ground of karma and jñāna respectively, the Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite saints of Southern India fought it on the ground of bhakti and vanquished it. It is said that they have sung Buddhism and Jainism out of their province. There is a legend that the Śaivite saint Jñānasambandar, the opponent of Jainism, had a friendly meeting with the Vaiṣnavite saint, Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār, the opponent of Buddhism, at Ṣiyāḷi in Tanjore District. We are told that the Vaiṣṇavite saint at first refused to set foot in the town which had no temple of Viṣṇu and that the Śaivite saint met his objection by informing him that an old image of Viṣṇu taken out of a temple which had fallen into disuse was being regularly worshipped in the house of a priest in Ṣiyāli. On this legend Professor Nīlakaṇṭha Śāstrī comments as follows:—

"Impossible as history this beautiful legend enshrines the belief in the common mission of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism entertained by the Tamil Vaiṣṇavas of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In stemming the strong current of anti-Vedic heresy, the Āḷvārs and Nāyanārs had laboured together in the past and what was more natural for their successors than to bring together the great Śaiva antagonist of Jainism and the equally great Vaiṣnava opponent of Buddhism?"[1]

Jainism, however, still remains as a separate religion in some parts of India, though its ascendancy is lost. To the great influence it once had in Western and Southern India we probably owe the strict vegetarianism of many classes of Hindus in these regions. For Buddhism only taught the doctrine of the sanctity

[1] *The Colas*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 474.

of animal life, but Jainism not only taught it but also put it into practice.

Though it is sad to contemplate that the religion of Buddha at last practically disappeared from the sacred land of his birth, we should not forget that it was not really driven out but assimilated. Sir Charles Eliot is of opinion that the Hinduism of the present day owes to Buddhism (1) the doctrine of the sanctity of animal life, (2) the rejection of animal sacrifices by most sects, (3) monastic institutions and ecclesiastical discipline, especially in Southern India, (4) the development of Indian Logic and (5) some of the features of the Advaita philosophy.

The first systematic exponent of the Advaita philosophy was Gauḍapāda who wrote a Kārikā on the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. He was the teacher of Govinda, who afterwards became the teacher of Śaṁkara. Śaṁkara, who was born probably in 788 A.D. at Kāḷaḍi in North Travancore, became a saṁnyāsin, while he was still a boy, and grew into a great religious teacher. He wandered from place to place all over India and established four monasteries at Śringeri in Mysore, at Purī in Orissa, at Dvārakā in Gujarāt and at Badrīnāth in the Himālayas. He was both a great champion of the orthodox faith and an ardent reformer. He opposed not only the doctrines of Buddhism, but also the soulless ritualism of the Mīmāṁsakas, the atheistic dualism of the Sāṁkhyas and all the erroneous interpretations of the Vedānta. He put down some of the grosser forms of Śāktism and Śaivism and encouraged all the purer forms of popular worship. In his famous commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras, the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-Gītā, he constructed a system of philosophy which is a monument of intellectual subtlety as well as of spiritual insight. Thibaut, the translator of Śaṁkara's and Rāmānuja's commentaries on the

Brahma Sūtras, says:—

"The doctrine advocated by Śaṁkara is, from a purely philosophical point of view, and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which has arisen in the Indian soil; neither those forms of the Vedānta which diverge from the view represented by Śaṁkara nor any of the non-Vedāntic systems can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedānta in boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation."[1]

Millions of Hindus today accept Śaṁkara's interpretation of the Upaniṣads as the correct interpretation and formulate their faith in terms of his philosophy and call themselves Advaitins. And thousands of scholars all over the world regard his system as one of the grandest ever conceived by the mind of man.

Without going into the details of Śaṁkara's Advaita, we may say that the central principles of his teaching are (1) that the eternal, impersonal Absolute which the Upaniṣads call Brahman and of which we can have no conceptual knowledge is the only ultimate Reality, (2) that Māyā is the power by which the Absolute without undergoing any change in itself appears to us as the changing universe under conditions of time and space, (3) that the notion of causality with which we explain the evolution of the universe is not applicable to the Absolute, (4) that the spirit in man is identical with the Supreme Spirit, as indicated by the famous Upaniṣadic sentences—'Thou art that' and "I am Brahman", (5) that all our sin and suffering are due to our not realizing this identity, and (6) that mokṣa or liberation could be had not through karma (action) or upāsana (devotion), which are only subsidiary helps, but through jñāna (illumination) which comes as a result of meditation on the Upaniṣadic passages declaring this identity.

There is a popular misapprehension about Śaṁkara's system. It is often said even by those who

[1] *Introduction to Brahma Sūtras*, p. xiv.

ought to know better that Śaṁkara taught that the world was unreal and illusory like a dream. The great philosopher never taught such a doctrine. On the other hand he contradicted it as part of Buddhist heresy. In his system he refers to three orders of being—Prātibhāṣika (illusory), Vyāvahārika (empirical) and Pāramārthika (transcendental). Prātibhāṣika experience is illusory as that of our seeing a serpent in a dream. Here there is no object forming the basis of our experience. Vyāvahārika experience is erroneous as that of our mistaking a rope for a serpent in the dark. Here there is an object, but we form a wrong impression about it. And Pāramārthika experience is the true experience as that of our recognizing the rope as rope when a light is brought. Here the object and our impression of it are identical. Śaṁkara's contention is that our everyday experience of the world is of the second variety, not of the first. Things are not what they seem. Owing to avidyā or ignorance which is common to us all, we see diversity where there is unity, separateness where there is integrity, and many where there is one. This imperfect experience of ours is relative to our finite minds. When we emancipate ourselves from our minds and transcend in spirit the conditions of time and space—as a saint does in his rapt moments of meditation—we have perfect experience of the Reality, the Absolute, as it verily is. In this experience being and knowing are one. As the Upaniṣad says, "He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman."

The powerful influence which Śaṁkara's Advaita had on the minds of Hindus is shown by the overwhelming majority of Advaitins and by the large body of literature that has grown around it, both in support of it and in opposition to it. Śaṁkara's philosophy has also influenced some sectarian philosophies—those of the Bhāgavatas, the

Śāktas and the Northern school of Śaivas. For, though these are all theistic sects, their theologies have a background of Advaitic thought.

As important as the philosophy of Śaṁkara, but making its appearance much earlier in this period, is the great Bhakti movement in Southern India which runs on the two parallel lines of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. Śaṁkara's philosophy was a remarkable intellectual achievement, while this movement was an extraordinary overflowing of the heart. In both Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism we have first a school of mystics and saints who composed devotional songs in the vernacular and then, at a later stage, a school of philosophers who created theistic systems of thought.

The Vaiṣṇava mystics and saints are known as Āḻvārs. It has been well said that they fill the place between the Bhagavad-Gītā and Rāmānuja.[1] For the fountain of Vaiṣṇava bhakti rises in the Gītā, passes through the songs of the Āḻvārs, gathers its waters in the system of Rāmānuja and flows out later, as we shall see, in varied streams all over India. The Āḻvārs flourished during the seventh and eighth centuries. They were all wandering singers who were popularly supposed to be mad after God. The greatest of them are Naṁmāḻvār and Tirumaṅgai Āḻvār. In fact, it is the religious experience of the former that gives a clue to the reconciliation effected by the later Ācāryas of the traditional Vedānta with the bhakti cult. His four works in Tamil are regarded by the southern Vaiṣṇavas as equivalent to the four Vedas. The hymns of the Āḻvārs are collectively known as the Nālāyira Prabandham, and they contain some of the most moving devotional poetry in the world. One pleasing feature of the Āḻvār movement is that in it distinctions of caste, rank and sex were

[1] *Hymns of the Āḻvārs* by J. S. M. Hooper.

ignored. The Āḷvārs include among them a king, a beggar, a woman, a man of the depressed class and non-Brāhmaṇs as well as Brāhmans. In fact, the most characteristic feature of their teaching is that God is accessible to all without any distinctions of caste, rank or culture, and that by love and self-surrender every man and woman can obtain salvation.

The age of the Āḷvārs was succeeded by the age of the Ācāryas. The Āḷvārs were mystics and poets, whereas the Ācāryas were scholars and thinkers. The aim of the latter was to reconcile the Vedānta with the Tamil Prabandha, to unite bhakti with karma and jñāna. The first of these Ācāryas is Nāthamuṇi, who introduced the Tamil Prabandha into public worship and raised it to the rank of the Veda in the eyes of the Vaiṣṇavas. The next important Ācārya is Yāmunācārya, the grandson of Nāthamuni. He established the orthodoxy of the Pāñcarātra school, refuted Śaṁkara's doctrine of Avidyā, determined the nature of the individual soul and advocated the doctrine of Prapatti or self-surrender. Thus he laid the foundations on which Rāmānuja erected his edifice of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy in the early years of the twelfth century.

Rāmānuja's chief works are *Vedārtha Saṁgraha,* in which he attacks the Advaitic interpretation of the Upaniṣads, his commentary on the Gītā and his famous commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras, called *Śrī Bhāṣya,* in which he develops his philosophy. Though *Śrī Bhāṣya* is an important work, which gives a philosophic basis to Vaiṣṇavism, we should not forget that Rāmānuja was not the first to give a theistic interpretation of the Brahma Sūtras. Even before Śaṁkara such an interpretation had been given by Bodhāyana, Taṁka and Drāmiḍa. Rāmānuja's chief object was to give a philosophic basis to bhakti and to prove that bhakti was the central teaching not only of the Tamil Prabandha,

but also of the Prasthāna-traya. He tried to be faithful to the spirit of the Brāhmanical tradition as well as to the spirit of the Āḷvārs. From the former he derives the philosophy of the Absolute and from the latter his Theism. Thus Rāmānuja did in his day what the Bhagavad-Gītā did in its day, but in a more systematic manner. The pivot of his whole system is the manner in which he conceives the relation between God and the world of matter and souls. He recognizes three ultimate realities—God, soul and matter. But the last two are absolutely dependent on the first. Their relation to him is like the relation of the body to the soul. They are organically connected with Him and are inseparable from Him, as inseparable as the attribute from the substance, as viśeṣaṇa from viśeṣya. The three form one living organism. They are a complex whole, an organic unity. Hence Rāmānuja's philosophy is called Viśiṣṭa-advaita to differentiate it from the Advaita of Śaṁkara, according to which there is only one simple ultimate Reality, Brahman. The famous Upaniṣadic sentence Tat tvam asi is interpreted by Rāmānuja in the light of his Viśiṣṭa-advaita as meaning that God who is the Cause of the world (tat) is identical with God who is the In-dweller of the soul (tvam). Again, as Rāmānuja's is a system of theism, bhakti holds a higher place in it than jñāna. According to him jñāna-yoga is only meditation on the nature of the soul for the purpose of realizing that it is different from its physical sheath. But bhakti-yoga is a higher stage of meditation, accompanied by love, on the nature of God for the purpose of realizing the soul's relation to Him. And mokṣa, which comes only after death to one who has perfected his bhakti, is the enjoyment of bliss with a superior body in the presence of God in Vaikuṇṭha. But easier than the path of karma, jñāna and bhakti, which is open only to the first three castes, is the path of prapatti or absolute

self-surrender to God which is open to all and is also the quickest path.

Thus Rāmānuja was anxious, on the one hand, to maintain all the ancient restrictions of the higher castes, and, on the other, to open the portals of the City of God even to the lowest castes. He did all that was possible in his day for the religious uplift of the lower classes. He brought thousands of them into the Vaiṣṇava fold, gave them a religious faith and made them adopt Vaiṣṇava customs and manners without in any way violating the principles of the Vedic Brāhmans. Rāmānuja died in 1137 and soon there was a schism among his followers who could not maintain the balance that he did between the Sanskrit Veda and the Tamil Prabandha. To Rāmānuja the philososphy of Vedānta was the same as the philosophy of the Prabandha. But some of his followers exalted the former and others the latter. The Sanskritists came to be known as the Northern School, and the Tamilians as the Southern School. The subsequent history of this schism belongs to the next period.

There was a similar bhakti movement in Śaivism also. Corresponding to the Āḻvārs in Vaiṣṇavism, we have Nāyanārs in Śaivism, and corresponding to the Ācāryas whose teaching culminated in Viśiṣṭādvaita are the Ācāryas whose teachings culminated later in Śaiva-Siddhānta. The traditional number of the Śaiva saints of the Tamil country is sixty-three. But the most important of them are Appar, Jñānasambandar, Sundaramūrti and Mānikkavācagar. Their images are seen in all Śiva temples in Southern India. Appar and Jñānasambandar belong to the seventh century and Sundaramūrti to the eighth. The date of Mānikkavācagar is still unsettled. Some think that he is earlier than the other three, and others that he is later. Nambi-āṇḍār-Nambi, who was a contemporary of the Vaiṣṇava teacher Nāthamuni in

the time of the Cola king, Rājarāja the Great, collected, towards the end of the tenth century, all the hymns of the Śaivite saints then in existence and arranged them in the form of eleven books called Tirumurai or Sacred Books. This collection includes Tevāram of Appar, Jñānasambandar and Sundaramūrti and Tiruvācakam of Mānikkavācagar. These hymns with their intimate personal appeal to Śiva as the Lord, the Father and the Lover of human souls rank very high in the devotional literature of the world.

But side by side with this pure stream of bhakti, it must be confessed there were, at this time, some repulsive manifestations of Śaivism in the practices of sects like Pāśupatas and Kāpālikas, references to whom we find in the biographies of Śaṁkara and in dramas like *Mālatī-Mādhava* and *Prabodha-Candrodaya*. But it is more pleasant to turn from these to an important off-shoot of Śaivism, known as Vīra Śaivism, which came into existence in the middle of the twelfth century. The founder was Basava, the prime minister of a king at Kalyān. Though he was a Brāhman, he rejected caste, denied the supremacy of Brāhmans, condemned sacrifices and other ceremonies and insisted on bhakti and the worship of one god—Śiva. His followers are called Vīra Śaivas or stalwart Śaivas, because they worship Śiva and Śiva only, and no other god or goddess. They are also called Liṅgāyats, because they worship the Liṅgam, which is the emblem of Śiva, and no other image, and carry it with them always hung round their necks. They are thus a strictly puritan, monotheistic sect. They are all strict vegetarians and total abstainers.

Like Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, Śāktism also had a remarkable development in this period. The Tantras of the previous period were now systematized and classified into three groups—(1) those which teach the means to knowledge and liberation, (2) those which

teach the means to power and wealth, and (3) those which teach both. To the first group of śubha or pure Tantras also belong a number of Śākta Upaniṣads, whose philosophy is that of Vedānta, but whose psychology and yoga are those of Śāktism. This alliance with Vedānta philosophy, probably due to the influence of Śaṁkara, gave rise to what is known as Śrī-Vidyā, which is the purest form of the worship of Devī and hence is designated sometimes as Dakṣināćāra or right-handed worship, while the impure forms of worship with questionable practices were designated as Vāmāćāra or left-handed worship. It is the latter that has brought Śāktism into bad repute.

Thus the establishment of Śaṁkara's Advaita philosophy and the progress of the great bhakti movements in Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, culminating in the theistic systems of a later date, and the rise of Śrī-Vidyā in Śāktism are the outstanding achievements of this period. It is remarkable that the two streams of Advaita and Bhakti meet together not only in Śrī-Vidyā but also in one of the most important works of this period, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa[1] which had a far-reaching influence on the later bhakti movements of the next period. It is difficult to say whether the author of the Bhāgavata meant to write a religious allegory or a religious romance when he took the materials he found in Harivaṁśa and Viṣṇupurāṇa for the early life of Kṛṣṇa and shaped them into a story of marvellous beauty which has made a profound impression on the imagination of India. Five schools of bhakti arose, as we shall see, out of this wonderful book—those of Nimbārka, Madhva, Viṣṇusvāmī, Vallabha and Caitanya. In all of them the worship of Kṛṣṇa, the eternal Lover of Souls, is the central feature. But it

[1] It is assumed here that Farquhar's conclusion that the Bhāgavata was written about 900 A.D. is correct. See his *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 233.

is not only the schools of philosophy that have been influenced by the love of Kṛṣṇa. Innumerable songs, pictures, stories and dramas about the childhood and youth of Kṛṣṇa, which we find throughout India and in all languages, show how the heart of the common people was stirred by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Undoubtedly the Purāṇa is one of the most seminal books in the religious literature of India, like the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. The familiar picture of Kṛṣṇa in which he is found playing on a flute under the shade of a greenwood tree, while a cow licks his foot—a picture which adorns almost every Hindu home along with that of the Coronation of Rāma—is derived from the Bhāgavata. It is this picture that comes to our minds when the name Kṛṣṇa is mentioned rather than that of Kṛṣṇa teaching the Gītā to Arjuna on the field of battle. The Avatār of the Bhagavad-Gītā is only for the thinking few. But the Avatār of the Bhāgavata is enshrined in the loving hearts of millions of men and women in India.

Finally, it may be mentioned that in this period began the movements for translating the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa into the vernacular languages of the south. By the end of the twelfth century both the epics had been translated into Tamil, Telugu and Canarese. The translations of the Purāṇas came later, in the next period.

VIII

1200 A.D.—1565 A.D.

This period begins with the establishment of a Turkish kingdom at Delhi. During the thirteenth century this kingdom became the paramount power over a large part of Northern India, and in the fourteenth it extended its sway over a large part of the south also. But it began to break up in the middle of

the fourteenth century and was finally overthrown by the Moghuls in 1526. Several dynasties ruled over this kingdom. The Slave dynasty which began to rule in 1206 was succeeded by the Khiljīs in 1290, by the Tughlaks in 1320, and, finally, after the devastating invasion of Tīmūr in 1398, by the Lodi dynasty. The Lodis were Pathāns and ruled in Delhi from 1450 to 1520, till Bābur defeated the last of the line in the Battle of Panipat and founded the Moghul empire, which rose to its zenith under Akbar about the middle of the sixteenth century. In the Deccan, in the thirteenth century, there were three Hindu kingdoms. The Yādavas ruled at Deogir, the Kākatīyas at Warangal and the Hoysalas at Dhora-Samudra. And in the south the power of the Colas decayed and the Pāṇḍyas became the over-lords of practically the whole of the Tamil country. But as usual there were conflicts among these four Hindu kingdoms, and so they were unable to present a united front to the Muslim invader. They all fell an easy prey to the raids of Malik Kāfūr and other Muslim generals. But in the middle of the fourteenth century, as a result of a series of rebellions against the mad tyranny of Muhammad Tughlak, two great kingdoms, one Muslim and another Hindu, established themselves in South India—the Bhāmini kingdom with Gulburga as its capital and the kingdom of Vijayanagar with the city of Vijayanagar as its capital. The Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, which was established in 1336, soon extended its sway over the whole of South India from the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra to Cape Comorin and remained the citadel of Hinduism for more than two centuries, till it fell in the famous battle of Talikota in 1565—a date which is as decisive as 1206 in the history of the Hindus. As far as we can see, the life of the common people was little affected by these political changes. At times they suffered and suffered terribly on ac-

count of wars, expeditions and raids and on account of outbursts of religious fanaticism on the part of the conquerors. There were forcible conversions, here and there, accompanied by the destruction of temples and monasteries. But when peace returned, the people pursued their old avocations, listened to their own teachers and clung to their old ideals. They became more and more conservative in their customs and manners as a result of this new menace to their social structure.

However, the establishment of Muslim power in India broke up once for all the unity of the cultural life of this country. Innumerable foreign hordes had come into India before and established kingdoms and ruled them for a long time. But, as they had no definite religion or culture of their own, they were easily assimilated and Hinduized. Innumerable religious cults had arisen in the country before, but they were all within the fold of Hinduism, like dialects in a common language. Even the various schools of Buddhism and Jainism were looked upon as sects of Hinduism, as they had the same ethical ideals, the same forms of worship and the same moulds of thought. India had therefore a common culture till the Mohammedan conquest. The Muslim invaders came with a powerful and militant world-religion which was alien in character and therefore incapable of being assimilated by us. Hinduism, no doubt, still remains undefeated in spite of political conquests and forcible conversions. It has not fallen an easy prey either to Islam or to Christianity. But it no longer enjoys an undivided supremacy in India as in former centuries. We have to say that, from the thirteenth century onwards, the life of India flows in two distinct currents, which run side by side, and touch each other at a few points, but do not unite to form a single stream.

At the beginning of this period two important

schools of philosophy arose in the south, namely, the Dvaita system of Madhvācārya and the Śaiva Siddhānta system of Meykaṇḍar. Madhvācārya, the founder of the Dvaita philosophy, was born in a village near Uḍipi in South Kanara about the end of the twelfth century. He became a saṁnyāsin when he was quite young and studied Śaṁkara's system. But he soon broke away from it and worked out his own system based on the bhakti of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. To elucidate his philosophy he wrote commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Brahma Sūtras and an epitome of the Mahābhārata and a gloss on the Bhāgavata. His system is an unqualified dualism. He reads the great Upaniṣadic sentence Tat-tvaṁ-asi as (A)tattvamasi meaning 'Thou art *not* That'. He insists on what he calls the five great distinctions—that God is distinct from the soul, that He is distinct from matter, that individual souls are distinct from one another, that they are distinct from matter and that one form of matter is distinct from another. According to him there are three eternal entities fundamentally different from one another—God, the soul and the world. Of these God is said to be Svatantra or independent reality and the other two are paratantra or dependent realities. The distinction between God and the world is absolute and unqualified. Madhva does not admit, like Rāmānuja, that the world is the body of God. Therefore his system is different from that of Rāmānuja as well as from that of Śaṁkara, though it has many points in common with that of Rāmānuja, such as salvation through grace and the classification of souls into nitya, mukta and baddha.

Meykaṇḍar, the founder of the Śaiva Siddhānta system of philosophy, likewise belonged to the early years of the thirteenth century and was therefore a contemporary of Madhva. He is the author of twelve sūtras in Tamil, to which he added some expository

notes. This work is known as *Śiva-jñāna-bodha*. His disciple, Aruḷnandi, is the author of *Śiva-jñāna-siddhi*, which, in the form of a commentary on his master's sūtras, gives a full statement of Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy. Aruḷnandi's disciple was Jñāna-sambandar, who, in his turn, became the guru of Umāpati, who, in the fourteenth century, wrote many books, eight of which form part of the Śaiva Siddhānta canon. These four teachers are known as the Sanātana Ācāryas of the system. It is believed by some scholars that the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta was influenced by Kashmir Śaivism of the last period. The tradition that Meykaṇḍar was taught directly by a sage from Kailāsa is said to point to this influence from the north.

According to Śaiva Siddhānta the supreme reality is Śiva. His infinite love reveals itself in the five divine acts of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe, and the obscuration and liberation of souls. Śiva acts through His Śakti. The universe which undergoes evolution for the benefit of souls is real and eternal. The world of matter and souls forms the body of the Lord. Souls are in their nature infinite, eternal and omniscient like God, but, being in bonds, they imagine themselves to be finite, temporary and ignorant. To obtain salvation we must get rid of the bonds—*viz.*, our past karma, our false notion of a finite self and our subjection to matter. This can be done through a prescribed sādhana and the help of a guru and, above all, by the grace of Śiva. Discipline and grace culminate in jñāna, which is the supreme means of release. Thus Śaiva-Siddhānta stands midway between Śaṁkara's Advaita and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Śaṁkara's Advaita and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, far from losing their prestige on account of the rise of the Dvaita and Śaivā-Siddhānta systems, were further

strengthened in this period by the works of two great scholars who flourished in the fifteenth century—Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya and Vedānta Deśika. Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya and his brother Sāyaṇa, the great commentator on the Veda, are two illustrious brothers, who were the advisers of the founders of the kingdom of Vijayanagar—Bukka I and Harihara II. Vidyāraṇya was also the head of the Śṛṅgeri Math from 1377 to 1386. His *Pañcadaśī* is a classic of later Advaita and his *Sarvadarśana Saṅgraha* is a brilliant account, from the Advaita standpoint, of all the philosophical systems of his day. The books of Vidyāraṇya are as indispensable to a student of the Vedānta, as the commentaries of his brother Sāyaṇa are indispensable to a student of the Veda.

Vedānta Deśika was a great scholar, poet, dramatist, philosopher and controversialist. He wrote more than a hundred books in Sanskrit and Tamil in defence of Viśiṣṭādvaita and controverting the positions of Advaita. In the history of Vaiṣṇavism in Southern India, Vedānta Deśika is next in importance only to Rāmānuja. Unfortunately, by his time, there had arisen a great schism among Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, and Vedānta Deśika became the recognized leader of the Northern School (Vaḍagalai) as opposed to the Southern School (Teṅgalai). The Northern School differed from the Southern in holding that Sanskrit Vedānta was more important than the Tamil Prabandha, that, for obtaining salvation, it was necessary that man should co-operate with God's grace and that karma was necessary in the exercise of prapatti or self-surrender. The Northern School was in every way more conservative than the Southern School and was therefore opposed to giving all the privileges of initiation to the lower castes.

While the philosophical systems were thus being developed and strengthened in the south, a great bhakti

movement began and swept over Northern India with the result that there was an outburst of devotional literature in the vernacular languages, which henceforth became the medium of literary expression. This literature is connected with the names of Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak, Mīrā Bāī, Vallabha, Caitanya, Tulsī Dās and Tukārām. It is interesting to note that, of the two parallel movements in bhakti in the south during the last period, *viz.*, that which centres round Viṣṇu and that which centres round Śiva, it is only the former that spreads to the north and that it splits itself into two streams—the worship of Rāma and the worship of Kṛṣṇa, the two most important incarnations of Viṣṇu.

Let us first take the bhakti centering round Rāma. The leader of this movement is Rāmānanda, of whom unfortunately little is known. It is believed that he lived in the first half of the fifteenth century. According to tradition, he belonged to the school of Rāmānuja, but he went north and settled in Benares and founded a new sect. He recognized no caste distinctions among his followers. He had twelve disciples at first including an outcaste and even a Mohammedan. The Mohammedan disciple is Kabīr, who became a great saint and mystic afterwards. Rāmānanda wrote no books, but some of his hymns are still popular, one of them being incorporated in the Granth Sāhib of the Sikhs. He seems to have derived his inspiration not only from the *Śrī Bhāṣya* of Rāmānuja, but also from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*—a Bhāgavata work of the thirteenth or fourteenth century. He therefore taught that Rāma was the supreme Lord, and that salvation could be obtained only by love and devotion to Him and by repeating His sacred name. Probably[1] Rāmā-

[1] See *An Outline of Religious Literature in India* by Farquhar, p. 324.

nanda belonged to a Rāmaite sect of Bhāgavatas in Southern India different from the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. His math in Benares became a centre of powerful influence which spread far and wide among all classes of men. One of the causes of his great popularity was that he gave up Sanskrit and used the language of the people in his hymns and thus laid the foundations of modern vernacular literature in Northern India. Thus he did in his day what the authors of the Buddhist Psalms and the authors of Nālāyiram and Tevāram did in their day. Religion was brought home to the hearts of common people through songs which they could all understand.

The influence of Rāmānanda spread in various directions. In the direct line of descent from him is the order of ascetics who were called Rāmānandīs after his name. To this order belongs Tulsī Dās, the author of the famous *Rām-carit-manas,* who belongs to the next period. But some of Rāmānanda's disciples formed sects of their own which may be divided into two classes—those which are purely Hindu in their teachings and observances and those which are largely Hindu, but slightly tinged in their negations by Islam. To the latter class belong the followers of Kabīr and the many sects which arose out of his influence.

Kabīr lived probably from 1440 to 1518. He was a Mohammedan weaver who lived in Benares and came under the influence of Rāmānanda and became his disciple. He was also influenced by the Sūfī mystics who were Muslims, but whose beliefs and practices were greatly coloured by Vedānta philosophy.

Hence his teaching is a form of Hinduism which shows the influence of Islam. He accepts the Hindu doctrines of karma and saṁsāra, the Hindu concepts of Brahman, māyā, līlā, mokṣa, vairāgya saṁnyāsa, and shares the Hindu faith in the efficacy of the Holy Name

and the grace of the guru and calls his God Rāma after his guru, Rāmānanda. But he rejects the doctrine of Avatārs, denounces idol worship and ritual, laughs at ascetic practices, refuses to acknowledge caste distinctions, and sets aside the authority of the Veda as well as of the Koran. He fearlessly proclaimed his beliefs in caustic vernacular verse, and so was looked upon as a dangerous heretic both by Hindus and by Muslims, but after his death was claimed as a saint by both. Kabīr was a real mystic to whom religion was a flaming, personal experience, and so his verses had extraordinary power over those who listened to him. But, as he cut himself off from all tradition and authority in religion, his reform was short-lived.

Nānak (1469-1538), the founder of the religion of the Sikhs, was a younger contemporary of Kabīr and was reared in the same religious atmosphere and was inspired by the same ideals. But he stands nearer to Hinduism than Kabīr. He was born in 1469, in a village in the district of Lahore, of Kṣatriya parents. He came under the influence of various teachers, both Hindu and Muslim, and was well versed in the hymns of the Hindu saints and the writings of the Ṣūfī teachers. He wandered all over Northern India singing hymns and gathering followers. The religion that he preached was of the same type as Kabīr's. There is but one God who is eternal, spiritual and personal. Nānak calls Him Hari, as Kabīr calls Him Rām. He can be worshipped by all without distinctions of caste or creed. He is to be worshipped in the heart and not through images. Purity of life is more important than rituals. Like Kabīr, Nānak also believes in karma and saṁsāra, accepts the concepts of māyā and mokṣa and insists on extreme reverence to the guru and the mystic value of the Holy Name. But, unlike Kabīr, he accepts the gods of the Hindu Pantheon and tolerates rituals as lower forms of religion. Neither Nānak

nor Kabīr was a systematic theologian. There may be incongruous elements in their teachings, but the fervour of their bhakti is unmistakable and it is this that appealed to the people who listened to them. The work of Nānak was more lasting than that of Kabīr, for his followers soon created a centre of authority by collecting the hymns of their Gurus and instituting the worship of the Granth Sāhib or the Noble Book. The story of the transformation of the Sikhs into a war-like community bitterly opposed to Muslims belongs to the next period.

When we turn to the bhakti that centres round Kṛṣṇa, we find that there are two types of it—the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī on the one hand, and the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā on the other. The saints of Mahārāṣṭra, *viz.*, Jñāneśvar, Nāmdev, Eknāth, and later, Tukārām represent the former, while the sects founded by Nimbārka, Viṣṇusvāmī, Vallabha and Caitanya in other parts of the country represent the latter. Naturally, the bhakti that takes as its symbol the love of the husband is pure and serene, while that which takes as its symbol the love of the lover is passionate and tempestuous. Our Bhakti-Śāstras call the former Kānta-bhāva and the latter Madhura-bhāva.

Jñāneśvar is the first of the Marāthā saints. His great work, called *Jñāneśvarī*, is an elaborate paraphrase in Marāthī verse of the Bhagavad-Gītā. He completed it in 1290 and passed away in 1300. This work shows what a great poet and mystic Jñāneśvar was. He teaches that the path of bhakti is the easiest and the best for men. He wrote also a series of short poems, called *Abhaṅgas*, in praise of Viṭhobā of Pandharpūr. Viṭhobā or Viṭhal is the name given to Kṛṣṇa worshipped in the temple at Pandharpūr along with Rukmiṇī. The bhakti of all the Mahārāṣṭra saints centres round this figure. Another work of Jñāneśvar is *Amṛtānubhav* in praise of Śiva. Though a great

bhakta, he inclines to Advaita in philosophy, showing thereby that he belongs to the school of the Bhāgavatas.

About a century later comes Nāmdev who wrote hymns not only in Marāthī but also in Hindī. Many of the latter are incorporated in the Granth Sāhib of the Sikhs. Though originally a tailor by profession, Nāmdev spent his life propagating the bhakti religion in Mahārāṣṭra and the Punjab. His *Abhaṅgas* are in praise of Viṭhobā of Pandharpūr, where the saint spent his last days.

The next in order among the saints of Mahārāṣṭra is Ekṇāth, who died in 1608. Though he was a Brāhman, he observed no caste distinctions. His verse paraphrases of the texts of the Bhāgavata are famous and are used in Saṅkīrtans in the temple at Pandharpūr. He wrote a number of Abhaṅgas called *Haripāṭh* in which he describes his religious experiences. He was a great admirer of Jñāneśvar and brought out for the first time a reliable edition of *Jñāneśvarī*. Next in order comes Tukārām, the greatest of the Mahāraṣṭra saints. But he belongs to the next period.

The other type of bhakti also centering round Kṛṣṇa is known as the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. We do not know when exactly it came into existence. Nor do we know its origin. For no Rādhā is mentioned in Harivaṁśa or the Viṣṇu Purāṇa or the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. All that the Bhāgavata states is that, among the Gopīs who lavished their affections on Kṛṣṇa, there was one favourite Gopī with whom Kṛṣṇa is said to have wandered in the forest and thus caused jealousy in the minds of the other Gopīs. Out of this shadowy figure arose Rādhā, who became in later literature the symbol of the most passionate love which the human heart is capable of. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult appears already as a rounded philosophical system in the teaching of Nimbārka, who is supposed to belong to the twelfth century. If this date is correct, Nimbārka is

prior to Madhva. He was a Bhāgavata of the Telugu country who went north and settled at Brindāban. He wrote a short commentary on the Brahma Sūtras and a set of ten verses called *Daśaślokī* to elucidate his system, which is known as Dvaita-advaita or dualistic monism, because he holds that the relation between God and the world is one of identity in difference (bheda-abheda). The world is different from God since its nature and qualities are different from those of God. At the same time it is not entirely different, since it cannot exist by itself and is absolutely dependent on God. Nimbārka's system was considerably influenced by that of Rāmānuja, but there are several points of difference between the two. Apart from the philosophical position, we have an entirely different form of theology in Nimbārka. Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā take the place of Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmī, and Rādhā is not merely a favourite Gopī, but Kṛṣṇa's wedded wife. And devotion is to be centred round Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā to the exclusion of all other gods. It is very probable that Nimbārka developed his system out of the legends of Kṛṣṇa prevailing in Brindāban.

If Nimbārka's system is the first philosophical expression of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult, Jayadeva's famous *Gītā Govinda* is its first poetical expression. Jayadeva lived in Bengal towards the end of the twelfth century, probably a generation after Nimbārka, but there is no evidence that his poem was influenced by Nimbārka's theology.

The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult is seen again in the teaching of Viṣṇusvāmī, who is said to have been the teacher of the Marāṭhā saint, Jñānesvar. If so, he must have lived in the thirteenth century. Very little is known about him, though his sect was at one time wide-spread and popular. His system is dualistic like Madhva's, but, unlike Madhva, he recognizes the worship of Rādhā. It is said that he wrote commentaries on the

Gītā, the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were a number of brilliant Vaiṣṇava poets who wrote exquisite songs about the loves of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Among them were Caṇḍīdās in Bengal, Vidyāpati in Bihar, Mīrā Bāī in Rajputana and Narsiṅgh Mehtā in Gujarāt. But their works belong to the history of literature rather than to the history of religion.

Finally, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century we have two great teachers with philosophical systems of their own based on the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. They are Vallabhācārya in Northern India and Caitanya Deva in Bengal. Vallabhācārya (1479-1531) calls his system Śuddhādvaita, "Pure Monism." He criticizes Śaṁkara's Advaita as being impure, because it teaches the doctrine of māyā and does not lay stress on bhakti, which is higher than jñāna. It is by God's grace (puṣṭi) alone that man can obtain release and reach Kṛṣṇa's heaven, which is far above the heavens of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. For Kṛṣṇa is the eternal Brahman, and Rādhā is His eternal spouse. They sport eternally in the celestial Bṛndāvan with their bhaktas. Vallabha wrote many books in Sanskrit explaining his system. Some of them are commentaries and others original works. His followers produced a mass of religious verse in Brāj, which is a local dialect of Hindī.

Caitanya (1485-1533) was a contemporary of Vallabha. He was born in Nuddea in Bengal. He was at first only a great scholar. Then he came under the influence of the followers of Madhva and their favourite scripture, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Subsequently he was influenced by the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa literature, not only of the followers of Nimbārka and Viṣṇusvāmī, but also of the famous song-writers of the fifteenth century, Caṇḍīdās and Vidyāpati. He then became a saṁnyāsin and undertook a long journey to

the south and north and finally settled at Purī near the temple of Jagannāth. He spent most of his time in dancing and singing and preaching to the people that ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa was the crown of all religion. Thousands of people joined his sect without distinctions of caste and thus brought about a great Vaiṣṇava revival in Bengal. Caitanya's success was due to the sincerity of the overpowering religious experience which he had whenever he gazed on Kṛṣṇa's image or dwelt on his love. His life was an expression of the eternal longing of the human soul for the Infinite. It was a powerful commentary on the entire Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult. Caitaṇya's flaming experience throws a light for us on that mysterious figure, Śrī Rādhā, who, arising out of a few casual words in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, took captive the hearts of innumerable men and women and became the heroine of thousands of songs, poems and dramas and, what is more astonishing, the live centre of more than one theology and the queen of more than one Paradise.

Caitanya was not himself a writer and left no books of his own. But six of his immediate followers became the exponents of his doctrine and produced a mass of literature—hymns, dramas, philosophic treatises and commentaries. They were called Gosvāmīs and became the authoritative leaders of the sect. Caitanya passed away in 1533 and his standard biography—*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*—was produced about fifty years later.

Thus it will be seen that this period of three centuries and a half is one of extensive religious activity. From Madhva and Meykaṇḍar at the beginning to Vallabha and Caitanya at the end, we have one vast movement of the religion of bhakti which covered practically every part of India. Thousands of hymns, songs and poems of the highest quality were written in the languages of the people and millions of unlettered

men and women were roused to lead a life of devotion. For a time, it would seem, the heavy burdens of ritual and caste were lightened and the subtle complexities of philosophy were set aside in an overflowing love of God.

Before proceeding to the next period, which, as far as religious development is concerned, is only a later phase of this Bhakti movement, we may enumerate some of the common features of the bhakti cults described above and arrange them as follows:—

1. Belief in one supreme God of Love and Grace,
2. Belief in the individuality of every soul, which is nevertheless part of the Divine Soul,
3. Belief in salvation through bhakti,
4. The exaltation of bhakti above jñāna and karma, and above the performance of rites and ceremonies,
5. Extreme reverence paid to the Guru,
6. The doctrine of the Holy Name,
7. Initiation through a mantra and a sacramental meal,
8. The institution of sectarian orders of sannyāsins,
9. The relaxing of the rules of caste, sometimes even ignoring all caste distinctions,
10. Religious teaching through the vernaculars.

IX.

1560 A.D.—1800 A.D.

This period extends from the rise of the Moghul empire under Akbar to the establishment of British rule in India. The Moghul empire founded by Bābur and consolidated by Akbar reached its zenith in Shāh Jahān's time and began to decline under Aurangzīb. And in the course of fifty years after the death of Aurangzīb in 1707 it disintegrated, and independent

kingdoms were established on its ruins. Thus by the middle of the eighteenth century there were only a few Muslim kingdoms in the north and the south, but the bulk of the country stretching across the peninsula from Gujarāt to Orissa was in the hands of the powerful Marāthā confederacy. We may say that, for all practical purposes, the Muslim influence had spent itself and the Hindus had asserted their position and become independent rulers of the country. The British had to contend for supremacy not with the Muslims, but with the Hindus. The rise of the Marāthā power was not due to the successful enterprise of an individual adventurer, as was the case with the Nawabs of Bengal, Oudh, Hyderabad and Karnatic. It was the upheaval of a whole people strongly bound together by common ties of race, language and literature, and carried forward by an extraordinary outburst of religious fervour.

"It was not a mere political movement that stirred Mahārāstra at the beginning of the seventeenth century," says Justice Rānade in his *Rise of the Marāthā Power*. "The political movement was preceded, and, in fact, to some extent caused by a religious and social upheaval which moved the entire population. The religious revival was not Brāhmanical in its orthodoxy. It was the work of the masses and not of the classes. At its head were saints and poets who sprang from the lower orders of society—tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shopkeepers, barbers and even outcastes—more often than Brāhmans. The political leaders acted in concert with the religious leaders. Śivājī's chief adviser was Rāmdās. Bājī Rao I, the Peshwā, derived his inspiration from the Swāmī of Dhavodṣi. Śivājī felt that he had direct inspiration from Bhavānī in the great crises of his life. The impulse of the time was felt in art, in religion, in the growth of vernacular literature, in the communal freedom of life and in increased self-reliance and toleration."

The Marāthās rose to power under Śivājī, whose marvellous success was due as much to his zeal for Hinduism as to his capacity for organization and skill in battle. Śivājī died in 1680 and soon the power passed into the hands of the Peshwās. Under the Peshwās

monarchy gave place to a confederacy. Great military camps were established at Indore, Gwalior, Nagpur and Baroda, and many smaller camps along the eastern and the southern borders of the empire. And as long as these centres of power were animated by a common purpose, their power was irresistible. No wonder that the Marāthā confederacy established by Bālājī Viśvanāth, the first Peshwā, exercised throughout the eighteenth century a firm control over political events in India. There had been no such experiment in federal government on a such a large scale in the country before. In fact, in 1760 it looked as if the Marāthā confederacy would become the sovereign power of India in place of the Moghuls. But after the third battle of Panipat in 1761, the Peshwās never recovered their prestige and the history of the Marāthās became a melancholy record of domestic quarrels. The fall of the Marāthā confederacy paved the way for the British conquest of India. The decline of the Moghul empire resulted not only in the rise of the Marāthās, but also in the transformation of the Sikhs into a military nation in the Punjab. The first four Gurus beginning with Nānak were merely religious leaders. The fourth Guru was encouraged by Akbar, who gave him the site of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, which became the headquarters of the Sikh religion. But the fifth Guru, Arjun, who compiled the famous Ādi Granth, the Sikh Bible, was tortured and executed by Jahāngīr in 1606, and the sixth Guru, Harigobind, was imprisoned for twelve years. It was during the time of Harigobind that the transformation of the Sikhs began. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahādur, refused to embrace Islam, and was consequently executed by Aurangzīb in 1675. The tenth and the last Guru, Govind Singh, was murdered by an Afghan in 1708. He had organized his followers into a military brotherhood to oppose the Muslim power. After his death the holy Granth

itself came to be regarded as his successor. The Sikhs thereafter slowly consolidated their power till, under Ranjit Singh, they established an independent kingdom in the Punjab in 1799.

The establishment of the Marāthā confederacy and the transformation of the Sikhs into a military nation represent the Hindu reaction to the tyranny and intolerance of the later Muslim rulers. Like the kingdom of Vijayanagar in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Marāthā empire in the eighteenth century was the great bulwark of Hindu civilization. But the restoration of Hindus to political power after the fall of the Moghul empire did not lead to any new or far-reaching developments in Hinduism. No new systems of thought came into existence, no new outlook on life was revealed and no new interpretation or expansion of the old teachings was attempted. The old bhakti movement, however, continued to advance among the masses in the various parts of the country, producing innumerable sects and enriching the devotional literature of the land in the languages of the common people. The Caitanya movement in particular had a great revival in the seventeenth century under the leadership of Śrīnivāsa, Narottama, Śyāmānanda and Śaṁkara Deva and spread to Orissa and Assam. And there was a revival of Śāktism in the eighteenth century, as a result of which we have two important Śākta works—the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* and *Tantrasāra*—and an outburst of Śākta poetry.

The famous *Rāmāyaṇa* of Tulsī Dās, the Abhaṅgas of Tukārām, the Ādi Granth of the Sikh Gurus, the *Bhaktiratnākara* of the Caitanya sect and the songs of Rāmprasād Sen in Bengal and of Tāyumānavar in Southern India are the outstanding works of bhakti in this period. By about the middle of the eighteenth century, the bhakti movement exhausts itself, and for about a century darkness falls upon the

land, and our spiritual history for a time becomes almost a blank till we come to the Modern Renaissance, which begins in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. We may divide the bhaktas of this period into six classes as follows:—

1. Those who worship Rāma as an incarnation of the Supreme are in the direct line of descent from Rāmānanda. To this class belong Tulsī Dās, the author of the well-known Hindī Rāmāyaṇā, Nābha Dās, the author of *Bhakta Mālā*, a book giving the lives of the saints, and Malūk Dās, the founder of a lay sect of Rāmānandīs. Tulsī Dās (1532-1623) was a Vairāgī belonging to the Rāmānanda sect. He renounced the world after the death of his son and wandered far and wide preaching the religion of devotion to Rāma. Between 1574 and 1584 he wrote his famous Rāmāyaṇa in a dialect of Eastern Hindī. This book has become the favourite scripture of millions of Hindus in Northern India. Farquhar writes, "Indeed it is one of the greatest books of Modern Hinduism and has probably influenced a far larger number of Hindus these last three centuries than any other book".[1] It is a typical Hindu scripture like the Gītā. While teaching a pure and noble type of theism and love of God, it is by no means exclusive or intolerant. It shows great reverence towards Śiva and admits there are other kinds of approach to God than what it teaches and accepts the whole Hindu religious tradition. Tulsī Dās knows that the Vedas declare that Brahman is unborn, changeless, nameless and formless. But as the impersonal Absolute laid no hold of his heart, he turned to the worship of the incarnate Rāma. Thus he exactly follows the advice given by Kṛṣṇa at the beginning of the twelfth chapter of the Gītā:—

"The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater, for the goal of the Unmanifested is hard for

[1] *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 329.

the embodied to reach. But those who consecrate all their actions to me and regard me as their dearest one, who meditate on me and worship me with single-hearted devotion—I save them full soon, O Arjuna, from death and the ocean of mortal life, their minds being ever set on me."

The Rāmāyaṇa of Tulsī Dās has only the outward form of the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. The story is the same, but the spirit is different. It is not an epic, but a long religious poem, and, like other religious poems of the bhakti school, it emphasizes, throughout, the doctrine of devotion to a personal God, the doctrine of the Holy Name and the doctrine of the sanctity of the Guru.

2. Those who worship Rāma as the Supreme without any belief in incarnation are in the line of descent from Kabīr. To this class belong various groups of devotees, *viz.*, the Kabīrpanthīs who are the direct followers of Kabīr; the Dādūpanthīs who are followers of Dādū; the Sikhs who are the followers of Nānak; the Lāl Dāsīs, the followers of Caran Dās; the Rām-snehīs, the followers of Rām Caran; and the Satnāmīs, a low-class sect which worships the Sat Nām or the True Name of the One God whose incarnations are Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.[1]

3. Those who worship Kṛṣṇa as the husband of Rukmiṇī are in the line of descent from the older saints of Mahārāṣṭra. The greatest of this group is, of course, Tukārām (1608-40). Tukārām studied the works of Jñāndev, Nāmdev and Eknāth and felt a call to complete the numbers of the Abhaṅgas which Nāmdev had left unfinished. He was passionately devoted to Viṭhobā of Pandharpūr. His hymns are full of his personal religious experience—his sense of his own unworthiness, his boundless trust in God, his passionate appeals to Him for help and guidance and his absolute self-surrender to Him. Therefore his Abhaṅgas are

[1] *See* Farquhar for details, pp. 334-346.

of a very high order and have had great influence on the Marāthā people. Tūkārām's life is also interesting, for the saint was tested in many ways. He had to face poverty, domestic troubles and the opposition of the orthodox ritualists. But he overcame all obstacles, meditated on God in holy places and reached the goal of religious life. Tukārām was invited by Śivājī to his court, but he did not go; he sent him only some of his hymns.

4. Those who worship Kṛṣṇa as the lover of Rādhā are in the line of descent from Vallabha and Caitanya. To this class belong (i) the eight Hindī poets known as Aṣṭa Chāp, who are the followers of Vallabha or his son and (ii) the revivalists as well as the hymn-writers of the Caitanya movement in Bengal. The Aṣṭa Chāp are so-called because the poems they wrote in Western Hindī are regarded as the standards or seals (Chāp) for that dialect.[1] The greatest of them is Sūr Dās. To this class also belong the Rādhā-Vallabhis, a new sect founded in Brindāban by one Hari Vaṁśa, who places Rādhā above Kṛṣṇa as an object of devotion.

5. Those who worship Śakti either as a beneficent goddess under the names of Umā and Pārvatī or as a terrible goddess under the names of Durgā and Kālī are in the line of descent from the writers of the Tantras and from the teachers of Śrī Vidyā like Lakṣmīdhara, who wrote, at the end of the thirteenth century, a commentary on *Saundaryalaharī* (a poem attributed to Śaṁkara). To this class belong the Śākta poets of Bengal and the writers of Āgāmanī and Vijayā songs, in which, as Thompson observes, "the sorrows of Umā have passed away from the region of religion into that of poetry."[2] The greatest of these poets are Mukundarāma, the author of the epic *Caṇḍī*, who belongs to the

[1] *Hindi Literature* by F. E. Keay, p. 56.
[2] *Bengali Religious Lyrics, Sakta* by E. J. Thompson, p. 27.

latter half of the sixteenth century, and Rāmprasād Sen, the famous song-writer of the eighteenth century. The former had the title of Kavikaṅkana or the ornament of poets, and the latter Kavirañjana or the entertainer of poets.

6. Those who worship Śiva are in the line of descent from the old Nāyaṉārs or Tamil saints of Southern India. The greatest of this group is the mystical poet, Tāyumāṉavar, who belongs to the eighteenth century.

X

1800 A.D.—1940 A.D.

We come at last to the Modern Period during which British supremacy was established over the whole of India after the subjugation of the Marāthās and Sikhs and the government was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown after the Mutiny. Peace was restored in 1858, and with it gradually came a uniform system of administration, law and coinage. India realized once more the political unity which she had lost for many centuries and was at the same time brought into the current of Modern European civilization and culture. Her own civilzation and culture had been at the lowest ebb for over a hundred years from about the middle of the eighteenth century. In that dark period nothing of first-rate importance was produced in any language, there was no new development in Hinduism and almost all indigenous arts languished and died owing to lack of patronage and even of appreciation and many old works of art disappeared owing to the ignorance and carelessness of the people and the rapacity of foreigners who carried them away. The inrush of a totally different civilization put an end to all creative work for a time and an uncritical admiration for all things Western took possession of the mind

of the educated classes coupled with contempt for things of native origin. This was the first time perhaps that the Indian mind was thrown off its balance. Even the devastating Muslim invasions and conquests had not produced a result of this kind. Hinduism had held its own and had, as we have seen, a continuous development from 1200 to 1750 when India was under Turkish and Moghul rulers.

But already there were new forces working silently towards a great Renaissance which came into full vigour in the early years of the present century. The most important of these forces is, of course, the spread of English education which broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into contact with Western science, literature and history. The result of this was a great mental expansion similar to that which the European nations experienced at the time of the Revival of Classical Learning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A new world of ideas revealed itself to the wondering gaze of our young students in schools and colleges. In place of the extravagant mythical geography, legendary history and pseudo-science with which they had been acquainted came sober and correct ideas about the configuration of the earth, the rise and fall of nations and the unalterable laws of Nature. In the light of this new knowledge many an evil custom in Hindu society hitherto regarded as a decree of God appeared in its true colours as the folly of man. Satī, infanticide, enforced widowhood, child marriages, untouchability, purdah, devadāsī, the caste system and prohibition of foreign travel began to lose their tyrannical hold on the minds of Hindus. And reformers arose who were determined to purge the society of these evils.

Along with the new knowledge came the fierce attacks of the early Christian missions on Hinduism and Hindu society. The zealous missionaries who

never failed to point their finger of scorn at our religious and social institutions were educators as well as crusaders. They opened schools and colleges where they not only imparted the new secular knowledge, but also taught Christianity as the only true religion. These two forces acting in combination produced in the minds of the educated classes for a time either a thoroughgoing scepticism or a partial leaning towards Christianity, but ultimately they served only to rouse Hinduism from its sleep. The innate vitality of that religion with its great and glorious past asserted itself. At first the revived faith was on its defence, rather cautious and timid in maintaining its position and inclined to compromise with the enemy. But, soon it took the offensive, marched forward, even entered the hostile camp and asserted in ringing tones its right to live as one of the civilizing influences of mankind. In this task it was considerably helped by the labours of orientalists like Sir William Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins, Colebrooke, Wilson, Muir, Monier Williams and Max Müller, who revealed the treasures of Indian wisdom to the educated classes in Europe and India through their translation of Sanskrit texts, and later by the work of archæologists, epigraphists and art-critics like James Fergusson, Dr. Buhler, Dr. Fleet, Havell and Dr. Ānanda Coomāraswāmy, who revealed the glory of our ancient monuments and made us take pride in our past.

As a result partly of these external forces but largely of the inherent vitality of our own long spiritual tradition, there arose in the period a number of reformers, teachers, saints and scholars who have purified Hinduism by denouncing some of its later accretions, separated its essentials from its non-essentials, confirmed its ancient truths by their own experience and have even carried its message to Europe and America. There is no doubt that Hinduism today is as fresh and

vigorous as it was in any of the periods we have considered in this chapter. We have no longer any fear that it might be overpowered by Christianity or Western civilization. It has outlived the Christian propaganda of modern times as it outlived the Muslim oppression of the middle ages and the Buddhist schism of ancient days. It is now able to meet any of these world religions on equal terms as their friend and ally in a common cause.

The present Renaissance is not confined to religion. The movement is a comprehensive one affecting almost all departments of national life. There have been new developments not only in religion, but also in literature, art, science,[1] education, politics and social arrangements and manners. And in all these spheres there have risen great men who would be an ornament to any progressive nation in the world. But our aim in the following chapters is to give a short account only of the religious developments by describing the life and work of the great leaders who have made this Renaissance one of the glorious movements in the history of Hinduism. We begin with Rām Mohun Roy, for he is the morning star of the new day which dawns with Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa and reaches its noon in Mahātmā Gāndhi.

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[1] "In the great forward movement of India in our day, which is so universally acclaimed, there is nothing more outstanding than the part her sons are taking in science and scientific research, and some of the most notable advances in physics, mathematics and the biological sciences have come from Indian workers. Among them the names of our Indian F R.S.'s—Rāman, Sahā, Sahni, Krishnan, Bhāba, Bhatnagar—are known over the whole world of science and have added lustre to India even outside the domain of science." Field-Marshall Smuts (in his message to the special meeting of the Royal Society held in New Delhi on January 3, 1944).

CHAPTER II.

RĀM MOHUN ROY AND THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

Rām Mohun Roy, the pioneer of Modern Indian Renaissance, in a remarkable letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, wrote in 1831:—

"It is now generally admitted that not religion only but unbiassed commonsense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research leads to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race."

He thus struck a note of universalism which is heard again and again in the teachings of the Hindu prophets of the new age. It is a note that we hear in Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, in Swamī Vivekānanda, in Justice Rānade, in Rabīndranāth Tagore, in Mahātmā Gāndhi, in Śrī Aurobindo and in Professor Rādhākrishnan. In fact, it is the most distinguishing note of the Hindu Renaissance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is the fulfilment and realization of the universalism of the Upanisads. It accounts for the fact that an international religious body like the Theosophical Society found its home in India. At the same time we should not forget that Rām Mohun Roy, like the other prophets who followed him, was a zealous Hindu, proud of India's past, proud of the achievements of his race and eager to conserve all that was good and great in his ancestral religion. He was, no doubt, a great reformer who fearlessly advocated the necessary changes which the circumstances of his age demanded. But he was also a great conservative

who remained faithful to the best traditions of his country. For instance, his opposition to the Christian missionaries attacking Hinduism was as great as his opposition to the Hindu orthodoxy which defended the evil and corrupt practices of that religion. And he was very well equipped for this double task which he set before himself. For he was a master of several languages—Sanskrit, Hindī, Bengālī, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek and English. He studied, in their originals, the Upaniṣads and the Tantras, the writings of the Sūfī mystics and the Old and the New Testaments, and he was in touch with the Orientalists of his day. In all his controversies with Hindu Pandits he tried to point out by a detailed examination of the Smṛtis how the evils in Hindu Society that he condemned were later accretions and did not affect the purity of the ancient faith to which he recalled his countrymen. He says in his Autobiographical Sketch,

"The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brāhmanism, but to a perversion of it"

II[1]

Rām Mohun Roy was born on May, 22, 1772, in the village of Rādhānagar, Burdwan District, Bengal. His father, Ram Kānta Roy, was a small Brāhman Zamindār and was specially noted for his great devotion to the religion of his ancestors; and his mother, Tāriṇī, was as remarkable for her piety as her husband. Rām Mohun Roy learned the elements of Bengālī, his mother-tongue, and of Persian, the language of the court, in his own native village. After a few years of preliminary training he was sent to Patna, then a famous seat of Muslim learning, to master Persian and Arabic and qualify himself for employ-

[1] This section is based on the information given in the Rām Mohun Roy Centenary Commemoration volume—*The Father of Modern India.*

ment, as Hindu lads are sent today to a University town to learn English. His favourite authors at Patna are said to be the Sūfī philosophers whose teachings were greatly influenced by the Vedānta philosophy. It was his Islamic studies at Patna that made Rām Mohun entertain early in life a violent prejudice against idol-worship. For we are told that, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, he returned home and began to write a pamphlet in Persian against idol-worship in Hinduism. When his father knew what he was about, a quarrel ensued and Rām Mohun was asked to leave the house. He went out and wandered from place to place for about four years. It is believed that, during these travels, he visited Tibet and obtained a first-hand knowledge of Buddhism from the Lāmas, but incurred their displeasure by his remarks on their idolatry and escaped from the place with some difficulty. After his return from his travels he seems to have lived in Benares for a number of years and learnt Sanskrit and studied the Hindu scriptures. But the events of the first thirty years of Rām Mohun's life are involved in great obscurity and many of the facts stated in his biographies seem to be mere guess work. It is certain, however, that he published in 1803 from Murshidābād his first book written in Persian, but with a preface in Arabic. The book bore the title *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin*, which meant "A Gift to Monotheists." It was a protest against idolatry and superstition in all religions and an attempt to found a universal religion based on the unity of the Godhead. During this year Rām Mohun also succeeded in securing an appointment under the East India Company in the Revenue Department. After serving in various places in various capacities he finally went to Rangpūr in 1809 and acted for a few months as Dewan to the Collector of the District. Afterwards he became the guardian of some minors' estates. When these minors attained the age of

majority in 1815, Rām Mohun retired from service and went to Calcutta and settled down there.

The period of six years (1809-15) of his residence at Rangpūr may be said to be the period of preparation for his future work. He then made a careful study not only of Vedānta texts but also of Tāntric works and Jain scriptures. He started informal discussions on religious subjects with various men who assembled at his house for the purpose. And he began to disseminate his advanced views by his talks and his publications. In the midst of all these activities Rām Mohun also found time to improve his English, which he had begun to learn in 1796 at the age of twenty-two. The European Collector, Mr. Digby, under whom he served, informs us that Rām Mohun diligently perused all his public correspondence and carefully read all the newspapers he got from England and thus not only improved his English, but also began to take a warm interest in European politics. It may be stated here that Rām Mohun was at first averse to the establishment of the British power in India, but his knowledge of English and his acquaintance with Englishmen made him change his mind and he became its friend and admirer because he believed that the lot of his countrymen would be speedily ameliorated by the new power in the land.

When Rām Mohun settled down in Calcutta, he was free to devote all his time to the objects dear to his heart *viz.*, the publication of the Vedānta texts with translations, the agitation for religious and social reform and the defence of Hinduism against the attacks of Christian missionaries. Accordingly during 1815-19 he published his *Abridgement of Vedānta* and his translations of Kena, Īśa, Muṇḍaka and Kaṭha Upaniṣads, and two papers on *Defence of Hindu Theism* and two so-called *Conferences* (or *Dialogues*) *on Satī*.

There is a tradition that in 1811, when he heard

at Rangpur that his brother Jugmohun died and that his wife, whom Rām Mohun held in high esteem, was burnt along with him, he was shocked and took a vow that he would never rest till this inhuman custom was abolished. Whether this is true or not, there is no doubt that, when he settled down in Calcutta, he began an agitation for the abolition of Satī along with his agitation for religious reform. He not only wrote tracts against Satī and sent up petitions, but also organized vigilance committees whose duty it was to be present whenever there was a case of Satī and see that no force was employed and that the Government regulations on the subject were strictly observed. It is recorded that in some cases he himself went to the Calcutta burning-grounds and tried to prevent the rite by his earnest persuasion. He kept up the agitation until the inhuman rite was abolished by law by Lord William Bentinck in 1829. Even after the passing of the law, when the orthodox section sent up a petition against the order, Rām Mohun arranged for a counter-petition supporting the action of the Governor-General, and also organized a congratulatory address to Lord Bentinck and, at the head of a deputation, presented it to him himself at the Government House, Calcutta, on the 16th January, 1830.

From 1820 to 1823 Rām Mohun Roy was engaged in a controversy with Christian Missionaries on the fundamentals of Christianity. This controversy started with the publication of his book—*The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to peace and happiness,* in which he tried to separate the moral teachings of Jesus from the historical and miraculous accounts given in the gospels. He says in the Introduction:—

"I feel persuaded that, by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament the moral precepts found in that book, these will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions

and degrees of understanding. For historical and some other passages are liable to the doubts and disputes of free-thinkers and anti-Christians, especially miraculous relations which are much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt, at best, to carry little weight with them."

This eminently reasonable and sane attitude was resented by the Baptist Missionaries of Serampore who called the compiler a heathen. In self-defence Rām Mohun Roy had to enter into a controversy with these worthies and issue his three 'Appeals to the Christian Public' in which he denied the divinity of Christ and rejected the doctrines of Christian Trinity and Atonement. The arguments that he advanced in these papers were so forcible and the knowledge that he showed of the Bible was so astonishing that one of the Trinitarian Missionaries renounced his creed and became a Unitarian Christian. How strongly Rām Mohun Roy felt the insolence of the Christian Missionaries of Serampore who attacked Hinduism at this time in their Bengālī organ called *Samāchār Darpan* is shown by the following quotation from one of his papers:—

"It seems almost natural that when one nation succeeds in conquering another, the former, though their religion may be quite ridiculous, laugh at and despise the religion and manners of those that are fallen into their power. For example, Mussalmans, upon their conquest of India, proved highly inimical to the religious exercises of Hindus. When the generals of Chungez-khan, who denied God and were like wild beasts in their manners, invaded the Western part of Hindoostan, they universally mocked at the profession of God and of futurity expressed to them by the natives of India. The savages of Arracan, on their invasion of the eastern part of Bengal, always attempted to degrade the religion of Hindoos. In ancient days the Greeks and the Romans, who were gross idolaters and immoral in their lives, used to laugh at the religion and conduct of their Jewish subjects, a sect who were devoted to the belief of one God. It is therefore not uncommon if the English Missionaries, who are of the conquerors of this country, revile and mock at the religion of its natives."[1]

[1] *The English Works of Rām Mohun Roy*, Vol. I, p. 205.

While he was thus engaged in fighting the battle of Hinduism against Christian propagandists, he was not unmindful of the other interests of his country. He took great interest in the problems of education and showed marvellous insight when he threw himself whole-heartedly and enthusiastically on the side of scientific and English education for his countrymen in preference to religious and Sanskrit education, though he was himself a Sanskrit scholar and is reported to have established a Vedānta College at his own expense.

In 1816, in consultation with his friend, David Hare, he suggested to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Sir Hyde East, the desirability of establishing an institution for the education of Hindu children on modern lines as in Europe. The suggestion was communicated to the Governor-General, who approved of the idea of the Chief Justice holding a meeting of the Hindu leaders for sounding their opinion. The meeting was accordingly held at the residence of the Chief Justice and was attended by more than fifty Hindu gentlemen of rank and wealth, and a sum of nearly half a lakh of rupees was subscribed. But the amusing part of it is that, when these gentlemen afterwards came to know that Rām Mohun Roy was at the back of the movement, they earnestly urged that his name should be removed from the list of the members of the Committee and that no subscription from him should be accepted. So great was his unpopularity. For he was not only a religious and social reformer fighting against idol-worship and Satī, but also unfortunately a man whose habits and tastes in private life were those of a Mohammedan. "They would rather be reformed by anybody else than by him," says the Chief Justice in one of his letters. When Rām Mohun Roy heard of the objections of the orthodox Hindus, he at once wrote to the Chief Justice resigning his connection with the Committee. The obstacle was thus removed and the scheme resulted in 1817 in the

founding of the Hindu College, which later became the Presidency College.

About the same time Rām Mohun established an English School of his own in another part of Calcutta for the free instruction of Hindu boys. This school was called "The Anglo-Hindu School" and its entire expenses were borne by him. Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore, the second leader of the Brāhmo Samāj, had his early education here.

In 1823 Rām Mohun Roy wrote his famous letter to Lord Amherst, the Governor-General, setting forth in forcible language his views on the educational needs of his country. This letter is considered a great landmark in the educational history of modern India. The occasion for his writing the letter was this. In 1823 the Council of Education decided to open a college for teaching Sanskrit in Calcutta and to utilize the grant of one lakh of rupees which had been set apart for the encouragement of learning among the natives of India. Rām Mohun Roy thought that it was scientific learning on Western lines that India needed most at the time and not oriental learning of which she had had enough. So he pleaded strongly for the encouragement of a scientific system of education in his letter to the Governor-General. But little attention was paid at the time by the Government to this famous document.

Rām Mohun was so anxious that Indian youths should receive Western education that, when the Rev. Alexander Duff was sent over by the Church of Scotland in 1830 to open a school and give religious as well as secular education, he welcomed him, put his old Brāhmo Samāj building at his disposal and brought students to him. The school was opened on 13th July, 1830. Rām Mohun Roy was present on the occasion and tried in his speech to remove the prejudice which the Hindu students might have against reading the Bible. He said:—

"Christians like Dr. H. H. Wilson have studied the Hindu Śāstras and you know that he has not become a Hindu. I myself read all the Koran again and again, and has that made me a Mussalman? Nay, I have studied the whole Bible, and you know I am not a Christian. Why then do you fear to read it? Read it and judge for yourselves. Not compulsion but enlightened persuasion, which you may resist if you choose, constitutes you yourselves judges of the contents of the book".

This is, no doubt, sound advice and even characteristically Hindu sentiment from the point of view of a grown-up man. But it was rather unsafe counsel to be given to young students who unfortunately had not been taught their own religion before they were exposed to the 'enlightened persuasion' of Christian Missionaries.

Rām Mohun Roy was as great a champion of the freedom of the Press as he was of Western education. He had himself started two journals—*The Samvād Kaumudi*, a Beṅgālī weekly in 1821 and *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, a Persian weekly in 1822. And he was also associated for some time with the *Bengal Herald*, started in 1829 and published in four languages (English, Beṅgālī, Persian and Nāgrī). In 1823 when Lord Hastings, the Governor-General, left India, Mr. John Adam, a member of the Civil Service, was made to act for him temporarily. During this period the editor of the *Calcutta Journal*, Mr. James Silk Buckingham, gave offence to the Government by criticizing an appointment they had made and so was ordered on 12th February to leave India within two months of the date of the receipt of the order. His *Journal* was suppressed and his assistant was arrested, and, to crown all, a regorous Press Ordinance was passed on the 14th March, under which proprietors and editors of newspapers were required to take out licenses. The Ordinance was passed without notice and, as every legislative measure in those days had to be registered by the Supreme Court before it could be put on the Statute Book, it was entered in the Court the next day. Rām Mohun Roy now got up a memorial for the repeal of the

Ordinance and engaged two lawyers to argue the case before the Supreme Court. This memorial has been described by Miss Colett, his English biographer, as the Areopagitica of Indian History. It is as great a landmark in the history of the freedom of the Press in India as his Letter to Lord Amherst is a landmark in the history of education in India. The memorial was, however, dismissed by the Supreme Court, the judge announcing publicly that he had pledged himself to the Government to give the Ordinance his sanction even before it was entered in the Court. Rām Mohun Roy thereupon got up an equally important petition to the King of England on the subject. This petition, too, was rejected by the Privy Council in 1825.

But the greatest object of Rām Mohun's life was to wean his countrymen from the evils of Purāṇic Hinduism and draw their attention to the original purity of the teaching of Vedānta. It is for achieving this object that he founded the Brāhmo Samāj in 1828. He had already made some experiments in this direction. Soon after he retired from service and settled down in Calcutta, he established a society called the Ātmīya Sabhā which held weekly meetings at which sacred texts from the Upaniṣads were expounded and hymns composed by himself and his friends were sung. But the meetings of this Sabhā were discontinued after 1819. Two years later, *i.e.*, in 1821 Rām Mohun formed another Association called the Calcutta Unitarian Society with both Indians and Europeans as members. But this did not prove a success. So he thought of establishing a purely indigenous institution for the worship of the one true God and called a meeting of his friends who agreed that they should have a theistic organisation of their own. Accordingly on the 20th August 1828 the Brāhmo Samāj was inaugurated. One of the chief supporters who helped him in establishing the Samāj was Prince Dwārakānāth Tagore, the father of Maharṣi Debendranāth

Tagore and the grandfather of the poet Rabīndranāth Tagore. The Samāj held weekly meetings like the earlier Ātmīya Sabhā, and the programme consisted of the chanting of the Upaniṣads followed by explanations of Vedāntic passages and a sermon in Bengālī and the singing of a few hymns. The institution soon became popular and within two years Rām Mohun was able to collect sufficient money to erect a building for it. This building was formally opened in January 1830.

A few days before the formal opening of this building, the opponents of Rām Mohun Roy among the orthodox called a meeting of the leading men of Calcutta and organized a rival association called Dharma Sabhā with an organ of its own called *Samāchār Chandrikā*. The principal promoter of the Dharma Sabhā was Rādhā Kānto Deb and he was ably assisted by one, Bhawānī Charan Banerjee, who had helped Rām Mohun Roy in editing his Bengālī weekly, *Sambād Kaumudī*, but left him when he commenced agitation against Satī. There was now a good deal of controversy between the Brahma Sabhā, as the Brāhmo Samāj was popularly called, and the Dharma Sabhā in the pages of their respective organs—*Sambād Kaumudī* and *Samāchār Chandrikā*.

The very year (1830) in which the building which he provided for the Brāhmo Samāj was opened, Rām Mohun Roy left for England—never to return. The immediate object of his visit to England was to represent to the King of Great Britain the grievances of the titular Emperor of Delhi, Abu-nasar Muin-ud-din Akbar. In 1828 the Calcutta agent of the latter approached Rām Mohun Roy and asked him to draft an appeal to the King. This Rām Mohun did, and the appeal was sent up through the Governor-General. To support this appeal he was asked to go to England and lay the case before the Court of Directors. For this purpose he was invested with the title of Rājā and given a seal of office by the ex-emperor. Though the Governor-General refused to

recognize officially either his appointment as Envoy or the title conferred upon him, Rām Mohun Roy made up his mind to go to England in his private capacity to plead for the 'emperor' before the Court of Directors. But besides this immediate aim, he had two other objects in view in going to England—*viz.*, to be present at the time of the renewal of the East India Company's charter, upon which depended the future of his country, and also to counteract the agitation of the orthodox leaders of the Hindu community and see that Lord Bentinck's decree about the abolition of Satī was not repealed.

Rām Mohun sailed from Calcutta on the 15th November, 1830 on board a ship which was bound for Liverpool. On his way when his ship touched the Cape of Good Hope he saw a French vessel flying the tricolour flag of liberty. Rām Mohun's love of liberty was so great that, though at the time he was rendered lame by an accident, he insisted upon being carried to the French vessel so that he might pay his homage to it. He arrived in England on the 8th April 1831 and met many of the celebrities of the time,—William Roscoe, the historian, Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher, Lord Brougham, the Duke of Devonshire and the King's brothers, the Duke of Cumberland and the Duke of Sussex. The Directors of the East India Company entertained him at a public dinner, though they refused to recognize him as the Envoy of the Emperor of Delhi. He was introduced to the King, and at the latter's Coronation a seat was assigned to him among the ambassadors.

As a result of his exertions on behalf of the 'Emperor of Delhi' the latter was given an additional annual allowance of three lakhs of rupees under certain conditions, thus raising his total allowance to fifteen lakhs. He had to be satisfied with this small concession. Rām Mohun was more successful with regard to the other two objects of his visit. He had the satisfaction of being present in the Council chamber when the appeal

against the abolition of Satī was rejected by the Privy Council. He was given a seat near their Lordships when they disposed of the petition. And when the question of the renewal of the Company's charter came up before the House of Commons, a Select Committee was appointed to consider the renewal, and Rām Mohun Roy was invited to appear before it and give evidence on the conditions in India. The Committee sent up its report to Parliament in August 1832. The report was adopted and a Bill was drafted and passed in 1833.[1]

When Rām Mohun Roy reached England the country was in great agitation over the Reform Bill. It will be remembered that the first Reform Bill was introduced by Lord John Russell on the 1st March 1831. After two readings it was defeated in Committee, and as a result the House was dissolved. The second Bill was passed by the new House of Commons, but was rejected by the Lords, and the popular resentment expressed itself strongly throughout England against the bishops and peers who had voted against it. A third measure was introduced before the end of the year and was passed by the Commons in March 1832 and sent up to the Lords. The peers now accepted the inevitable and finally passed the Reform Bill in June. As Rām Mohun Roy arrived in England in April 1831, he was a witness to the

[1] An amusing incident is related in connection with this renewal of the charter. At the time when various schemes for the future of India were being discussed a humorous writer published a play in England called *Plans for the Government of India—A Drama* In this play one of the characters, a candidate for a seat in Parliament, says —

"I propose, therefore, in the first place, that Rājā Rām Mohun Roy be appointed Governor-General of India, that all the judicial posts be filled by Mahomedans, all the revenue offices be filled by Hindus, and the police be executed by East Indians or Indo-Britons. The beauty of this plan, ladies and gentlemen, consists in this. The Rājā is neither a Hindu, a Mahomedan, nor a Christian, so that he can have no bias towards any part of the population in India; and the rest being antagonistical, that is, opposed to each other, they will keep by their very opposition the whole machine of Government in steady operation, just as an arch is retained firmly together by contrary pressure on all sides of it."

whole struggle and took a very lively interest in it and was overjoyed when the Bill was finally passed, for, as he put it in one of his letters, "The struggles are not merely between Reformers and anti-Reformers, but between liberty and oppression throughout the world."

We have already seen Rām Mohun's enthusiasm for the French flag at the Cape. Now that he was in England he wanted to visit France, the land, as he put it, "blessed by the possession of a free constitution". But when he made preparations for his visit in 1831, he was informed that he should first get a passport from the French Ambassador in London, who had to be satisfied about the character of the applicant. Rām Mohun was annoyed at this and, before applying to the French Ambassador, wrote a famous letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, a quotation from which is given at the beginning of this chapter and which we shall have occasion to refer to again later on. After all difficulties were removed he went to Paris in 1832, was received with the highest honours and was introduced to the King with whom he had the honour of dining more than once. He returned to England early in 1833 and had the satisfaction of being present at the first sitting of the Reformed Parliament. But in September, unfortunately, he fell ill and went to Bristol for a change and rest accompanied by Miss Hare, the sister of his friend, David Hare of Calcutta. There he was the guest of Miss Castle at her beautiful mansion, Stapleton Grove, where, in spite of the best medical help and the loving and tender care of Miss Hare, he passed away on the 27th September 1833. One of the last words he was heard to mutter was the sacred syllable "Aum"—so dear to the heart of a Hindu. Thus passed away in a foreign land this extraordinary man, who has been rightly called the Father of Modern India.

III

From this brief sketch of his career we see that Rām Mohun Roy's activities were many-sided. Politics, public administration and education claimed his attention as well as social and religious reform. It is in the field of politics and public administration rather than in that of social reform and religion that he shows the remarkable powers of his mind—his comprehensive grasp, his wide sympathies, his passion for freedom, his robust common sense and his scrupulous fairness to all parties. Unfortunately, in the circumstances of his time, there was not much scope for the exercise of his powers in these fields. One wonders what Rām Mohun would be if he were living now. He was certainly one of the wisest statesmen that our country has produced. His evidence upon the working of the judicial and revenue systems of India embraces some of the most important questions relating to the administration of India, such as the jury system, the jurisdiction of the courts over Europeans, the codification of laws, the separation of the judicial and executive offices, the necessity of consulting the people in enacting laws, the larger employment of Indians in public service, the training of civil servants, the amelioration of the condition of the peasantry, the protection of people's rights and the permanent revenue settlement. On all these subjects Rām Mohun makes wise observations which have not lost their point even now.

Again, Rām Mohun Roy's petitions against the Press regulations—his *Memorial to the Supreme Court* and his *Appeal to the King in Council*—are masterpieces of their kind. We have already said that, in their passionate plea for the freedom of the Press, they are said to be comparable to Milton's *Areopāgitica*. In the first memorial Rām Mohun observes:—

"Every good ruler who is convinced of the imperfections of human nature and reverences the eternal Governor of the World,

must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference."

And in his *Appeal to the King in Council,* after observing that a Government conscious of rectitude of intention cannot be afraid of public scrutiny by means of the Press, and that a free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world, he proceeds to point out that the natives of India under their former Muslim rulers had enjoyed every political privilege in common with Muslims, being eligible to the highest offices in the State and being entrusted with the command of armies and the government of provinces without any disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue as well as the highest salaries allowed under the Government. And men of learning were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument. Under the British Government they lost all these privileges and yet they consoled themselves because they thought they were in more secure enjoyment of those civil and religious rights which had been so often violated by the rapacity and intolerance of the Muslims. But now if, by means of the Press regulations, the most valuable of these rights are placed at the mercy of one or two individuals, "the basis on which they founded their hopes of comfort and happiness under the British rule would be destroyed."

But neither the *Memorial* nor the *Appeal* proved an immediate success. The Ordinance which took away the liberty of the Press in 1823 remained in force till it was repealed by Sir Charles Metcalfe in 1836, that is, three years after the death of Rām Mohun Roy, whose agitation had, however, paved the way for the reversal of the policy of the Government.

We have already seen that Rām Mohun was at first averse to the establishment of British power in India. But closer contact with Englishmen and their literature made him believe that it was nothing short of a divine dispensation that India had at last come under the rule of "a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects among those nations to which their influence extends." Rām Mohun in his day was far in advance of his countrymen in his passion for civil and religious liberty. And he wanted this liberty for all countries. His love of liberty was indeed based on his humanity. It made him cosmopolitan in his political sympathies. For instance, when the news reached India that the Austrian forces crushed the liberties of the people of Naples, who had extorted a constitution from their despotic monarch, Rām Mohun wrote in a letter:—

"From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European Colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy. Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful."

Again, in 1832, congratulating William Rathbone and his friends at Liverpool on the complete success of the Reform Bill in the English Parliament, he writes:—

"As I publicly avowed that, in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, I would renounce my connection with this country, I refrained from writing to you or any other friend in Liverpool until I knew the result. Thank heaven, I now feel proud of being one of your fellow subjects and heartily rejoice that I have had the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay, of the whole world."

He similarly rejoiced when he heard the news of the successful rising of the Spanish Colonies in South

America against the authority of Spain and gave a public dinner in the Town Hall to celebrate the event. We have already referred to his enthusiasm for France and the French flag of liberty. But what is most astonishing in Rām Mohun Roy's political ideology is his vision of a League of Nations for Europe, as indicated in his letter to the French Minister, to which references have already been made in this chapter. He writes in this famous letter:—

"But on general grounds I beg to observe that it appears to me the ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the Parliament of each; the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by both nations and the chairman to be chosen by each nation alternately, for one year, and the place of meeting to be one year within the limits of one country and next within those of the other: such as Dover and Calais for England and France

"By such a Congress all matters of difference, whether political or commercial, affecting the natives of any two civilized countries with constitutional governments might be settled amicably and justly to the satisfaction of both and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation."

This short letter of two or three pages is enough to convince any man of the greatness of Rām Mohun Roy.

His political wisdom is further seen in the fact that, while he was thus rejoicing in the freedom and liberty enjoyed by the European countries, he demanded no such measure of freedom for his own country. For he knew that India was not yet ripe for such freedom as they enjoyed. Accordingly he wanted the British rule to continue here and hoped that his countrymen would progress in knowledge and character and love of freedom as a result of their close association with the British people. And yet what prophetic insight he displays in the following passage which occurs in one of his letters written in 1828!

"Suppose that 100 years hence the native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and political knowledge as well as modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove, from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province; an ally of the British empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy."

It will thus be seen that the prospect of an educated India growing from strength to strength and ultimately claiming equal partnership in the British Commonwealth or, if the British are unwise, absolute independence, revealed itself to the prophetic gaze of Rām Mohun Roy more than a hundred years ago.

IV

In the sphere of education we have already said that Rām Mohun played an important part by his letter to Lord Amherst in which he powerfully pleads for scientific education on Western lines as against scholastic education on ancient lines. In this letter he compares Oriental learning to the learning of Schoolmen in Europe before the days of Bacon and points out how inadequate it is for the needs of Modern India. He urges that the money which the Government wanted to spend on education should be laid out "in employing European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts

of the world." He suggests that, if the Government wanted to encourage Sanskrit learning, they might more effectively do it by giving grants to the indigenous agencies already existing than by opening a new Sanskrit College. Therefore he pleads strongly for the opening of a College which would teach Western sciences and for furnishing it " with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus." Rām Mohun Roy did not live to see the adoption of the policy urged by him. For the Government resolution on the subject favouring English education was passed by the Governor-General at the instance of Lord Macaulay only in 1835—more than a year and a half after his death.

V

In the history of social reform in India, Rām Mohun Roy's name will ever be gratefully remembered in connection with the abolition of Satī. He began his agitation against this cruel custom, as we have seen, in 1818 by writing pamphlets and rousing public opinion. In doing so, he examined all the Smṛti texts on the subject from Manu downwards and pointed out that all authorities did not agree in prescribing the rite and that even those later jurists who recommended it laid down that it should be free and voluntary. Thus it was on the strength of the Hindu law that he gave his verdict against Satī, as it was on the strength of the highest Hindu Scriptures that he gave his verdict against idol-worship and sacrifices. His labours bore fruit, and Satī was declared illegal in 1829 by Lord William Bentinck.

Again, with regard to polygamy, which was extensively prevalent in his days, Rām Mohun showed, on the authority of Hindu Law-givers like Yājñavalkya, that it was contrary to Hindu law, as it was only under certain specified circumstances like barrenness or in-

curable sickness that a Hindu was permitted to take a second wife while the first was living. Similarly, Rām Mohun's two papers—"On Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females" in 1822 and "On the Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property" in 1838—are based entirely on the ancient Smṛtis. They show with what care he had read the Smṛtis along with their commentaries. He quotes from Manu, Yājñavalkya, Kātyāyana, Nārada, Viṣṇu, Bṛhaspati and Vyāsa and from the commentaries of Vijñāneśvara, Jīmūtavāhana, Raghunandana, Tarkālaṅkāra and Jagannātha. Though in the social and legal reforms that he advocated Rām Mohun was primarily moved by considerations of humanity, he took pains to show that he was not going against the best traditions of the country, but only brushing away some of the impurities that had gathered round them in its days of decadence.

That is his position even in the sphere of religious reform. He repeatedly declared that he had no intention of breaking away from the religion of his ancestors. He only wished to restore it to its original purity. Accordingly he took his stand on the Upanisads and the Brahma-Sūtras as authoritative sources of Hinduism. He founded the Brāhmo Samāj on what he considered to be the theism of these scriptures. He no doubt condemned idol-worship in strong terms. But his argument is that, according to Hindu Scriptures, the best means of securing bliss is the pure spiritual contemplation and worship of the Supreme and that sacrificial rites and idol-worship are intended only for persons of limited capacity. He correctly defines the Hindu attitude to idol-worship when he says:—

"It will also appear evident that the Vedas, although they tolerate idolatry as the last provision for those who are totally incapable of raising their minds to the contemplation of the invisible God of Nature, yet repeatedly urge the relinquishment of the rites of idol-wordship and the adoption of a purer system

of religion on the express grounds that the observance of idolatrous rites can never be productive of eternal beatitude. These are left to be practised by such persons only as, notwithstanding the constant teaching of spiritual guides, cannot be brought to see perspicuously the majesty of God through the works of Nature."

Accordingly he lays down in the famous Trust-deed of the Brāhmo Samāj that "no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said building," which sounds rather Islamic in its extreme Puritanism. But he goes on to say in the same document like a true Hindu "that no object, animate or inanimate that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognised as an object of worship by any man or set of men, shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to".

And with regard to social and domestic duties Rām Mohun insisted on their due performance according to the Śāstras and Smṛtis. Thus he never contemplated any radical change in Hindu religion or any radical reconstruction of Hindu society. He only wanted to purge these of certain manifest evils. Nor is the system of sādhana that he introduced into the Brāhmo Samāj in any way radical, for it is modelled on that of the Vedānta. It consisted first in meditating on God with the help of the Gāyatrī Mantra and some texts from the Upanisads and a few explanatory verses. This meditation was followed by a *stotra* taken from the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra. Nor, again, did Rām Mohun Roy introduce any innovation when he established a Theistic Association. Theism is no new thing in Hindu spiritual thought. On the contrary, it is a continuous stream flowing from the Ṛg Veda downwards through the Upaniṣads, through the Bhagavad-Gītā and through the teachings of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Tulsīdās, Caitanya and a host of other saints and singers.

Rām Mohun Roy was, of course, not a great theologian or philosopher. He was a practical statesman who wanted to reform some of the crying abuses of the Hindu society and religion of his day. And it is only as a practical man that he dealt with the Upaniṣads. He selected and translated portions of them with brief introductions. But he did not know what he was doing when he wrote the following words in his introduction to one of them:—

"I have often lamented that in our general researches into theological truth we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other; and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is alone to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles, on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best method perhaps is neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other; but endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties, relying on the goodness of the Almighty Power, which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for."[1]

This is, of course, sound common sense, but, we are afraid, not sound theology. For it is the thin end of the wedge of rationalism which his successors, as we shall see, drove hard. And in doing so they almost succeeded in separating the Samāj he founded from its parent Hindu community—a result at which he would have shuddered. For the impression that one gets from Rām Mohun's writings is that he was more anxious about the social and political aspects of religion than about its purely spiritual aspect. He is, of course, a religious reformer, but that does not necessarily mean that he is an essentially religious soul like, say, his successor, Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore. He is a far greater man than Debendranāth Tagore or Keshub

[1] *Introduction to the Kena Upaniṣad.*

Chander Sen, but not an essentially religious soul. He is a great statesman, a great patriot, a champion of freedom and a lover of humanity, and it is as such that he pleaded for social and religious reform. Take, for instance, his observations on the caste system contained in one of his letters:—

"I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. . . It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort."[1]

Therefore if the reforms he advocated resulted only in adding one more sect to the innumerable sects already prevailing in India, he would be the last to rejoice over such a result.

VI

The death of Rām Mohun Roy brings to a close the first period in the history of the Brāhmo Samāj. The second period begins with the entry of Maharsi Debendranāth Tagore into the Samāj as its leader. The history of the Samāj during the ascendancy of this great saint shows most clearly how even individual saintliness cannot save a religious organization which cuts itself adrift from its moorings of spiritual tradition and authority. The Maharsi was no doubt a truly religious spirit, and his *Autobiography* is a valuable religious document. But he was primarily responsible for that spirit of rationalism which grew apace among his followers and widened the gulf between Hinduism and Brāhmoism and almost drove his

[1] Quoted by Ramānand Chatterji in his *Rām Mohun Roy and Modern India*

successor Keshub Chander Sen into the arms of Christianity.

Debendranāth was the eldest son of Prince Dwārakanāth Tagore, who was a great friend of Rām Mohun Roy. In his *Autobiography* he tells us how he passed through a spiritual crisis at the age of eighteen on the occasion of his grandmother's death. This made him a changed man for the rest of his life, for a strange sense of the unreality of things suddenly gripped his heart and a strong aversion to wealth arose within him. Along with this spirit of renunciation there came to him a sense of joy unfelt before. A few years later, this religious mood was confirmed in him by another experience. By accident he came across the first verse in the Īśopaniṣad which, when it was explained to him by a Pandit, proved a great eye-opener. The ancient text runs thus:

"All this, whatsoever moves on earth, is pervaded by the Lord. When thou hast surrendered all this, then thou mayst enjoy Do not covet the wealth of any man."

This confirmed the very thoughts that were passing through his own mind at the time. He says in his *Autobiography*:—

"When I learnt the explanation of *Īśā vāsyamidam sarvam* from Vidyāvāgīsh, nectar from Paradise streamed down upon me. I had been eager to receive a sympathetic response from men, now a divine voice had descended from heaven to respond in my heart of hearts and my longing was satisfied. . . . I got just what I wanted. I have never heard my most intimate thoughts expressed like this anywhere else"[1]

This made him study the principal Upaniṣads and form along with a few friends and relatives an association called Tattvabodhinī Sabhā for religious discussions and prayers. This Sabhā was ultimately merged in the Brāhmo Samāj when Debendranāth and his friends joined the latter in 1842. Debendranāth soon became the leader of the Brāhmo Samāj on ac-

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 58.

count of his social position and character and he began to put new life into it. He started a monthly Beṅgālī journal called the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* for spreading the principles of the Samāj. He opened a school called the Tattvabodhinī Pāṭhaśālā for training Brāhmo teachers and missionaries. He drew up what is known as the Brāhmo covenant consisting of a list of vows to be taken by every one who wished to join the Samāj. He promulgated a form of worship known as Brāhmopāsanā consisting of texts from the Upaniṣads and an altered form of the *stotra* from the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra for use in the services of the Samāj. And, finally, he sent four students to Benares for studying the Vedas so that they might come back and give the proper interpretation of the Upaniṣads upon which the Brāhmo faith had rested till then. This last step had far-reaching consequences. For, when these students returned in a few years and gave out the results of their study of the sacred books, there was much discussion in the Samāj on the infallible authority of the Veda and finally the doctrine was given up. It was agreed "that the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and other ancient writings were not to be accepted as infallible guides, that reason and conscience were to be supreme authority, and the teachings of the scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonized with the light within us." It is noteworthy that the teachings of the Upaniṣads which were particularly unacceptable to Debendranāth were the ultimate identity of the individual self and the universal self and the merging of the former in the latter. It is from the very "Mahāvākyas" like *Tattvamsi* that he turned away. He thought at first that the monistic doctrine was found only in Śaṁkara and that he could give up Śaṁkara's philosophy and retain his faith in the Upaniṣads.* "But when in the Upanisads I came across 'I am He', (*Sohamasmi*), 'Thou art That', (*Tattvamasi*), then I became disappointed

in them also. These Upaniṣads could not meet all our needs, could not fill our hearts."[1]

With due respect to the Maharṣi it must be said that these words betray a lamentable lack of humility. However, they soon became part of the creed of the Brāhmo Samāj.[2] Debendranāth and his followers thus laid the axe at the root of the tree on which they had been sitting. But fearing a fall when the authority of the Veda on which the Samāj had rested till then was removed, he proceeded to propound a theory of intuition as a substitute. He says:—

"I came to see that the pure heart filled with the light of intuitive knowledge—this was its basis. Brahman reigned in the pure heart alone. The pure unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brāhmoism. We could accept those texts only of the Upaniṣads which accorded with that heart Those sayings which disagreed with the heart we could not accept."[3]

The procedure indicated here is not very different from that of the Friends' Society mentioned by Debendranāth himself in his *Autobiography*:—

"Then again Akṣhaya Kumāra Datta started a Friends' Society in which the nature of God was decided upon by a show of hands. For instance, somebody said, 'Is God the personification of bliss or not?' Those who believed in his truthfulness held up their hands. Thus the truth or otherwise of God's attributes was decided by a majority of votes."[4]

Though the Vedic authority was thus rejected and

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 161.

[2] In his *Autobiography* published recently in 1943, Pandit Sītānāth Tattvabhūṣan, the author of *The Philosophy of Brāhmaism* says —

". . . . . .I concluded that the discarding of Vedantism by the Brāhma Samāj under the Maharṣi was a great mistake—one which had done and was doing a good deal of harm to the Brāhma Samāj. It had led to a neglect, on the part of the Brāhmas, of our ancient scriptures and was thus discouraging scholarship and causing spiritual sterility. It had also created an unnecessary gulf between the old and the new society, leading many Brāhmas to call themselves non-Hindus and cease from taking a just pride in the glorious literary and spiritual achievements of the Hindu race".

[3] *Autobiography*, P. 161.

[4] *Autobiography*, P. 203.

a purely subjective authority known as intuition was set up in its place, Debendranāth was anxious to press as many of the ancient Hindu texts as possible into the service of the Brāhmo Samāj. For about this time he compiled a series of extracts known as 'Brāhmo Dharma' from the Upaniṣads, the Smṛtis, the Mahābhārata and other books and altered some of the passages according to his own pre-conceived notions. This compilation became very popular with the members of the Samāj, and we are told that the compiler believed that he was under divine inspiration when he compiled it.

Soon after there was another crisis in the spiritual life of the Maharṣi. He went on a journey and spent a year and a half among the Himālayas in the vicinity of Simla in peaceful contemplation. He returned home rather abruptly, for he heard the solemn command of the Guide within him to go and make known to the world the truth he had gained and the devotion and trustfulness he had learnt on the hills. He came back a regenerated soul and delivered a number of stirring sermons which seemed like the inspired utterances of one who had had communion with God.

Among the many young men who flocked to the meetings of the Brāhmo Samāj at this time and whose souls were stirred by Debendranāth was Keshub Chander Sen who was destined to be the next leader of the Samāj. He had joined the Brāhmo Samāj in 1857, when he was only nineteen. Debendranāth noticed his earnestness and ability and accepted him as a friend and co-worker. In fact, he became so much attached to him that, for a few years, the old leader was carried much farther on the path of reform than he intended to go by the iconoclastic zeal of the young disciple. The question of Hindu sacraments was soon raised by Keshub and his friends, and they came to the conclusion that, as the ceremonies were mostly idolatrous in cha-

racter, no member of the Brāhmo Samāj could conscientiously take part in them. Debendranāth agreed and drew up a set of modified rites and ceremonies for the use of the members of the Samāj in a handbook called *Anuṣṭhāna Paddhati*. Then the question of caste was raised and Keshub's party suggested that all members of the Samāj who belonged to the first three castes might cast off their sacred thread in token of their having renounced caste. Debendranāth agreed again and cast off his own sacred thread. But the party of reformers were not satisfied with that. They insisted that no minister of the Brāhmo Samāj should be allowed to wear his sacred thread. Debendranāth yielded again and dismissed the old thread-wearing ministers, and appointed two men who had cast off their sacred thread. This was, however, the last straw which broke the camel's back. In opposition to the younger men led by Keshub, there was a conservative party of elders in the Samāj, who now bestirred themselves and asked Debendranāth to reconsider his position and cancel the new arrangements. Debendranāth had to yield to their pressure. He himself was afraid that Keshub in his passion for social reform was taking him too far. He did not like compulsion in reform. He did not like that the members of the Samāj should be compelled to renounce caste. He did not like the inter-caste marriages that had already been promoted by Keshub. And, above all, he did not like the Christian proclivities of his young friend. In spite of all his rationalism, Debendranāth was a conservative Hindu, whose spiritual life was nourished by the Upaniṣads and who was for introducing reforms into Hindu society slowly and cautiously, whereas Keshub was an ardent admirer of Christ and an advocate of root-and-branch reform of Hindu society. So a rupture between these two men was bound to come. It was only delayed by the affection which the old man had for the young man.

It came at last in 1864 — the year of the great cyclone in Bengal.

The Samāj building was so damaged by the cyclone that services had temporarily to be held in Debendranāth's own house. Debendranāth now seized this opportunity to reinstate the ministers wearing the sacred thread whom he had dismissed before. When Keshub and his friends protested, he said that, as the service was being held in his own house, he was at liberty to make what arrangements he liked. Thereupon Keshub's party withdrew and seceded from the parent Samāj and founded in 1866 a separate Samāj known as the Brāhmo Samāj of India. After this schism Debendranāth lived for about forty years, but more or less in retirement leaving the affairs of his Samāj, henceforth known as the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj, in the hands of his relatives and friends. Though he did not assume the sacred thread himself, he reintroduced it into the Upanayana rite of his Samāj. Also he retained many Hindu customs and usages in his Samāj and left matters of social reform to the individual inclinations of its members. And in 1872 he and his Samāj opposed the passing of the Brāhmo Marriage Bill introduced by Keshub, on the ground that it would alienate Brāhmos from the parent Hindu society. Debendranāth died at the ripe old age of eighty-eight. In spite of differences, his lofty character and his great spirituality commanded the respect of all sections of the Brāhmo Samāj. He was universally respected and acclaimed as a Maharṣi.

VII

After seceding from the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj in 1864, Keshub and his followers became more Christian in their belief and outlook and enthusiastically studied the Bible and other Christian literature. Many thought that Keshub would embrace Christianity. But fortunately or

unfortunately he did not do so. Instead he delivered two lectures—one on *Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia* and another on *Great Men*—before he actually established his Brāhmo Samāj of India in 1866. In these he hails Jesus Christ as the Prince of Prophets and holds up the Cross on which Jesus died as a holy symbol for stimulating his followers to a life of self-denial. But he does not regard Christ as an incarnation of God. On the contrary, he condemns the blind zeal of men who exalt a prophet to divinity and identify him with the Godhead. He exclaims:—

"Man, mortal man, with all his frailties and shortcomings, is deified and worshipped; and to him is rendered that supreme adoration which belongs to God alone! This idolatrous bending of the knee before man is an insult to Heaven, and an audacious violation of that entire loyalty and allegiance to God which is demanded of every true believer. Like every other form of idolatry, it is a treason against God which pollutes the heart and degrades the soul."

These lectures, while naturally not satisfying the Christian Missionaries, served to widen the gulf between Keshub and the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj. No reconciliation was henceforth possible between them. And so at last, after nearly two years of negotiations and recriminations, Keshub had to establish a Samāj of his own called the Brāhmo Samāj of India. He called himself the Secretary of the new Samāj. But there was no constitution of any kind, no rules and no official head. Keshub declared that his Samāj required no human head, as God alone was its head. And soon the cosmopolitan character of the new church was made manifest in the collection of texts, known as *Śloka Saṅgraha,* prepared for use in its services. It included passages from the scriptures of all religions—Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Chinese. His biographer, P. C. Mozoomdār, says:—

"Eclecticism had been the philosophy and faith of the Brāhmo Samāj ever since the giving up of the Hindu Scriptures

as infallible about the year 1850. Keshub inherited that position when he entered the institution years later and did all he could to confirm it by his studies, lectures; labours and reforms. But, in spite of all these eclectic professions, the Brāhmo Samāj, under Debendranāth Tagore, practically retained its Hindu character. When Keshub started on his independent career in 1866 he not only determined that the universality of Modern Hindu Theism in the Brāhmo movement should be a reality, but that it should form the groundwork of all spiritual culture in that Church "[1]

Keshub wanted not only to broaden but also to deepen the religious life of his Church. He accordingly introduced Vaiṣṇava forms of bhakti so widely prevalent among the followers of Caitanya in Bengal. He himself belonged to a Vaiṣṇavite family and he had in his church at the time one Bijaya Krishna Gosvāmī, a descendant of one of the immediate disciples of Caitanya. With his help he introduced into the services of his Samāj the musical instruments used by the followers of Caitanya in their bhajanas. He and his friends even resorted to street-singing and created occasions for loud outbursts of religious emotion. All this was, of course, in strange contrast to the sedate and restrained services of the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj. One inevitable consequence of this new emotional religion was that Keshub became the centre of it, and divine honours began to be paid to him by his admirers as to Caitanya of old. This was particularly noticeable at the great religious revival which took place at Monghyr when Keshub visited that town in 1868 on his way back from a tour in the United Provinces and Bombay. And the excitement was kept up by the eloquent and high-strung sermons that Keshub delivered from his pulpit in the new building, Brahma Mandir, which was erected for his Samāj and opened in 1869. But the enthusiasm of his followers had to come to a stop temporarily when

[1] *Keshub Chander Sen*, p. 220.

Keshub rather suddenly resolved to pay a visit to England.

He went to England in 1870 and was welcomed by many Christian organizations who arranged meetings for him. He stayed there for about six months and returned home with probably more practical ideas of religion. For during the next seven years, till the crash came, he was engaged in very useful social work. He established in 1870 a society called the Indian Reform Association with several departments of activity. One section was devoted to the issue of cheap literature. Another section ran a Normal School for girls. A third section organized lectures and meetings in favour of temperance reform. A fourth section organized relief to the poor. Besides these he established an Industrial School for boys, a Working Men's Institution for the poorer classes, a joint home, called the Bhārat Āśram, for Brāhmo families and a Boarding Institution called Brāhma Niketan for young men. Again, he founded an association called the Albert Institute for the promotion of literary and social intercourse among all classes of the community and built a public hall called the Albert Hall where newspapers could be read, lectures delivered and meetings held. The crowning act of this period of Keshub's career was the passing of the Civil Marriage Act of 1872, according to which the minimum age for the bridegroom is eighteen and for the bride fourteen. The Act was originally intended to be a Brāhmo Marriage Act, but, as the Bill presented by Keshub was opposed both by orthodox Hindus and by the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj, it had to be amended and passed as a purely Civil Marriage Act.

Towards the end of this period, however, the religious side of Keshub's Samāj was very much influenced by his contact with that great saint and mystic of Bengal—Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa, whom he met in the year 1875. As a result probably of this influence

Keshub began to lay greater stress on asceticism, renunciation, meditation and yoga. About this time he bought a small garden about twelve miles from Calcutta. He called it Sādhan Kānan or garden for spiritual culture. He and his disciples often retired to this place to practise meditation and yoga. They used to live here in thatched huts, shave their heads, cook their own food and sit below trees on tiger skins in yogic poses of long meditation. And Keshub divided his disciples into four classes according to Hindu tradition—Yogīs, Bhaktas, Jñānīs and Sevakas, with the rapt saint at the top and the social worker at the base. Another result of the influence of Śrī Rāmakrishna was Keshub's new emphasis on the Motherhood of God, as in Śāktism.

But all the time discontent was growing in a section of his followers, as there was no constitution for the Saṃāj, and as Keshub encouraged the more ardent of his admirers to look upon him as a divinely commissioned leader. From time to time he declared that he received an *ādeśa* or message from God and that he was bound to carry it out. And very soon this doctrine of *ādeśa* was put to the test in the well-known matter of the Cooch Bihar Marriage with disastrous consequences.

The story of this unfortunate incident is briefly as follows. In 1878 the Government of Bengal wanted to arrange for the marriage of the Prince of the Indian State of Cooch Bihar before he should leave for England and proposed that he should marry Keshub's daughter. But there were two main difficulties in the way. Both the bridegroom and the bride were under age from the point of view of the Marriage Act which Keshub himself was instrumental in getting passed for the benefit of the Brāhmos. Moreover the Prince of Cooch Bihar was a Hindu and technically the marriage would be a Hindu marriage with the customary worship of the gods and traditional rituals against which Keshub and the Brāhmo Samāj had been fighting as idolatrous practices. There-

fore there were negotiations, and slight concessions were made on both sides. But no concession could alter the fact that it would be a marriage opposed to all the cherished principles of the Brāhmo Samāj of which Keshub was the inspired leader. So Keshub who had made up his mind about the marriage had to fall back on his inspiration and declare that it was the *ādeśa* of God that the marriage should take place. And the marriage did take place, and, in spite of Keshub, it took place according to Hindu rites. Naturally, when the facts became known, there was a tremendous storm among his followers. Many attempted to depose him at once and take possession of the new building of the Samāj. But, as there was no trust-deed and no constitution, the building belonged legally to Keshub and he kept possession of it through the help of the police. So the opposing party seceded in a body and established a third Brāhmo Samāj known as the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj.

This secession was a great blow to Keshub and he fell seriously ill. He recovered, however, and lived for six more years. His biographer tells us that, while Keshub was still in bed, they had a talk one evening about the future of Indian Theism as affected by the dissensions in the Brāhmo Samāj. Keshub suddenly got up and said that "there must be a great and unprecedented revival, if the Brāhmo Samāj is to tide over the present crisis."[1] Accordingly, when he recovered his strength, he worked in the spirit and manner of a revivalist. He wanted to make his church popular and comprehensive in all possible ways. For this purpose, he wished to bring all religions in the world under his banner, make himself the prophet of a new universal religion and introduce a rich and complex ritualism which would satisfy the mass mind. And he wished to select apostles whose duty would be to go out into the world and propagate the

[1] *Keshub Chunder Sen* by P. C. Mozoomdar, p. 216.

new faith. His Church should be no longer called the Brāhmo Samāj of India, but the Church of New Dispensation (Nava Vidhān), and it should be a consummation of all the religions of the world, something superior to Hinduism or Christianity or Islam. He, therefore, announced to the world that his church was the Church of New Dispensation and that he was the divinely appointed leader of it. He said:—

"The old Testament has sung Jehovah's glory, the New Testament has sung the praise of Jesus, the son of God. Where is the Scripture that sings the name of the Holy Spirit? Seek it, my friends, in the Church of the New Dispensation, which is in India. Judaism has taught us the Father; Christianity has taught us the Son, the New Church will teach us the Holy Ghost. The Old Testament was the First Dispensation, the New Testament the Second; unto us in these days has been vouchsafed the Third Dispensation. Unite and amalgamate these three, and you have the Trinity Church of the World."[1]

This is one type of synthesis. But Keshub put forward also another type of synthesis when he declared that, in the Third Dispensation, all the religions of the world were harmonized. Accordingly on the anniversary day of his Samāj in 1881, he is reported to have appeared on the platform surrounded by his disciples, with a red banner bearing the Christian Cross, the Islamic Crescent and the Hindu Trident and on the table were laid the scriptures of all these religions. This is, of course, a rather theatrical rendering of the idea of the harmony of all religions. In further realization of this idea Keshub now adopted a number of rites and ceremonies from both Christianity and Hinduism—Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Pilgrimages to the Saints from the former, and homa, ārati and adaptations of various vratas from the latter. In adopting the Christian rites Keshub seems to have come perilously near making the ritualistic part of his religion look like a ridiculous travesty of Christianity. Take, for instance, the following

[1] *Lectures in India*, Vol. II, p. 43.

account, given by himself and quoted by his biographer, of the new baptismal ceremony:—

"The devotees formed a procession and solemnly moved on singing a hymn with the accompaniment of *mridanga*, the conch-shell and cymbals till they reached the bathing-ghat of the *Kamal-Sarobar* (lotus pond), the tank attached to the house of the minister. The place had been decorated with flowers and evergreens, and the flag of the New Dispensation was waving in the breeze. The devotees took their seats upon the steps of the *ghat*; the minister sat upon a piece of tiger's skin stretched upon a wooden *vedi* erected for the occasion. Deep silence prevailed. It was near midday, the torrid sun was burning overhead, when the minister addressed his people as follows.—

'Beloved brethren, we have come into the land of the Jews, and we are seated on the bank of the Jordan. Let them that have eyes see. Verily, verily, here was the Lord Jesus baptised eighteen hundred years ago. Behold the holy waters wherein the Son of God was immersed. See ye here the blessed Jesus, and by his side John the Baptist, administering the rite of Baptism, nay, behold in the sky above the descent of the Holy Ghost. All three are here present, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, spiritually united. Pilgrim brothers, mark their union today on this hallowed spot, and see how the water shineth in celestial radiance.'"[1]

This is evidently a piece of play-acting. When a ritual does not grow naturally out of a religion, but is simply borrowed from another religion, it is bound to be theatrical. All eclectic religions are bound to be artificial and theatrical.

Keshub's adoption of the Hindu rites, on the other hand, made him come perilously near justifying idol-worship, which was abhorrent to the Brāhmo Samāj. He wrote at one time in the *Sunday Mirror* thus:—

"Hindu idolatry is not altogether to be rejected or overlooked. As we explained some time ago, it represents millions of broken fragments of God. Collect them together, and you get the indivisible Divinity. When Hindus lost sight of their great God they contented themselves with retaining particular aspects of Him and representing them in human shapes or images. Their idolatry is nothing but the worship of a divine attribute materialised. If the material shape is given up, what remains is a beautiful allegory

[1] *Keshub Chander Sen*, p. 255.

or picture of Heaven's dispensation. The Theist rejects the image, but he cannot dispense with the spirit of which that image is the form. The revival of the spirit, the destruction of the form, is the work of the New Dispensation."

It is significant indeed that in this period he called his church "The Church of New Dispensation" in perference to the old name of Brāhmo Samāj of India, for he deliberately aimed at establishing a new universal church.

But the most objectionable development, from the Hindu point of view, in the activities of Keshub during this period is a series of Christian rhapsodies which he delivered on the future of India and Hinduism. Christ is now not merely the Prince of Prophets, but the Second Person of the Trinity, the incarnate Son of God and—strangest of all—the fulfilment of Hinduism. One or two quotations from these utterances will, we think, be enough:—

"The Father cannot be an example of sonship. Only the son can show what the son ought to be. In vain do I go to the Vedas or to Judaism to learn sonship. That I learn at the feet of my sweet Christ, my Father's beloved son."[1]

"Behold Christ cometh to us as an Asiatic in race, as a Hindu in faith, as a kinsman and a brother, and he demands your hearts' affection. Will you not give him your affection? He comes to fulfil and perfect that religion of communion for which India has been panting as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks. Yes, after long centuries shall this communion be perfected through Christ."[2]

We are told by Farquhar that this was the faith not only of Keshub but also of his friend and biographer, Pratāp Chandra Mozoomdār and several of the leaders of the New Dispensation. They wanted, it seems, to work from inside and gradually bring India to accept Christ and be converted to Christianity. They were to be the bridesmaids at the wedding contemplated by their leader in the following appeal to his country:—

[1] *Lectures in India*, Vol. II, p. 25.
[2] *Lectures in India*, Vol. I, p. 389.

"Oh! the Bridegroom is coming; there is no knowing when he cometh. Let India, beloved India, be decked in all her jewellery, those 'sparkling orient gems' for which this land is famous, so that at the time of the wedding we may find her a really happy and glorious bride. The bridegroom is coming. Let India be ready in due season."[1]

From the account given above of Keshub's life we see the untoward results of the doctrine of intuition formulated first by Debendranāth and developed later by Keshub himself. The doctrine made Keshub practically a law unto himself. It enabled him to play as he pleased with the doctrines of Christianity as well as of Hinduism. Closely allied to this doctrine of intuition are the doctrines of inspiration, of great men and of special dispensation. The doctrine of inspiration laid down that, though God generally reveals truth to us through intuition and reason, He reveals His will to us on special occasions in a special manner, as He did to Keshub on various occasions. The doctrine of great men laid down that the lives of such men as Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and Caitanya are special revelations from God and therefore their teachings should be specially studied and practised. And the doctrine of special dispensation maintained that the chief systems of historical religions are revelations of God through chosen bodies of men and are therefore entitled to our reverence. Keshub seems to have been latterly as much influenced in his philosophy by Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa as formerly by Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore. His religion, therefore, was a sort of conglomerate of Brāhmo rationalism, Vaiṣṇava emotionalism, Christian supernaturalism and Vedantic mysticism. He had not the genius to fuse them all into a consistent whole. No wonder, therefore, that, as soon as he died, his church broke up into fragments. According to the historian of the Brāhmo Samāj, there were in 1912 four different bodies among

[1] *Lectures in India*, Vol. I, p. 392.

the followers of the New Dispensation—(1) The Lily Cottage party, (2) the Durbar party, (3) the Young Men's pary, and (4) the Keshub Academy party. An effort had been made in 1906 to bring all the parties together and reorganize the Brāhmo Samāj of India, but it did not succeed.

VIII

In the fourth period in the history of the Brāhmo Samāj beginning from 1878, we have not one Samāj, but three Samājas independent of one another—the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj, the Brāhmo Samāj of India or the New Dispensation and the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj, as the seceders from Keshub's Church called themselves. Even before the Cooch Bihar marriage there was, as we saw, growing opposition to Keshub in his own Samāj. The points of difference between him and the opposition were:—(1) the absence of any constitution for the Samāj resulting in the concentration of all power in Keshub's hands, (2) the doctrines of inspiration and *ādeśa* which made Keshub an autocrat, (3) the question of emanicipation of women, on which Keshub held very conservative views, and (4) the growing intimacy between Keshub and Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa which made the former adopt asceticism and the methods of Yoga and, what was more objectionable, induced him to compromise on questions of polytheism and idol-worship.

Matters came to a head with the Cooch Bihar marriage, and prominent among those who seceded from Keshub were Ānanda Mohun Bose, Śibichandra Deb, Umesh Chandra Datta and Śivanāth Śāstrī. Ānanda Mohun Bose was a Cambridge wrangler and a barrister. After returning to India, he had taken a leading part in the movements for the elevation of women and the moral improvement of students. Along with Surendranāth Banerjee he had started the Indian

Association in 1876 and was its first Secretary. He afterwards became famous by his moving speech in Madras as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1898 and by his death-bed speech, so to say, on the occasion of the Partition of Bengal. He died in 1906. It was to this man that all those who seceded from Keshub turned their eyes in 1878 for leadership. And it was largely due to him that the foundation of the new Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj was laid on a satisfactory constitutional basis. He and his friends obtained the consent and the co-operation of a number of moffussil Samājas and framed rules embodying its constitution. There was to be a General Committee of Management elected from both the central and the provincial Samājas and an Executive Committee with a President, a Secretary, three Assistant Secretaries and a Treasurer, all elected by the General Committee from among its own members. Thus one of the crying defects of the Brāhmo Samāj of India was removed, *viz.*, the absence of a democratic constitution. Ānanda Mohun Bose became the first President of the Samāj, Śibichandra Deb the Secretary, Umesh Chandra Datta the Assistant Secretary, and Guru Charaṇ Mahalanābis, the Treasurer. And Pandit Śivanāth Śāstrī became one of the first four ordained Missionaries of the Samāj.

In the very first statement issued by the leaders, they clearly enunciated the religious principles of the new Samāj in opposition to those of Keshub. For instance, they say that they look upon the enjoyment of uncontrolled authority by a single individual in any religious community as a calamity, that they regard the belief in an individual calling himself a link between God and man as a belief unworthy of a Theist, that they consider it a blasphemy and an insult to the majesty of heaven to claim divine inspiration for any act opposed to the dictates of reason, truth and morality and that they consider love of God and doing the will of God as equally impera-

tive in the routine of a Brāhmo's life. But they retain the cosmopolitanism of Keshub and practically cut themselves off from all historical religions when they say: "Whatever book contains truths calculated to ennoble the soul or elevate the character is a Brāhmo's scripture, and whoever teaches such truths is a teacher and a guide." So the Samāj is to be not a flowering tree with its roots struck deep in the soil, but a garland of cut flowers taken from various trees. It is entirely a wrong application of the principle of the harmony of all religions. Harmony is not attained when all religions surrender their historic individualities and hold a round-table conference of skeletons. Of course, when flesh and skin are removed from our bodies, we are all one. But what we want is not unity in death, but unity in life. The greatest prophets of our age—Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa and Mahātmā Gāndhi—do not mean by harmony of religions any such bloodless cosmopolitanism as is indicated by the creed of the Sadhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj. They mean, on the other hand, firm adherence to one's own religion as well as toleration and respect for other religions. In fact, these two principles taken together have ever been the motto of Hinduism. The Bhagavad-Gītā, for instance, says not only, "Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them," but also, "Better death in one's own Dharma, the Dharma of another is fraught with fear." The one is the complement of the other. The former saves us from narrowness and bigotry, the latter from diffuseness and superficiality.

In spite of this central defect in its creed, the Sadhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj, under the able guidance of Ānanda Mohun Bose as President and Pandit Śivanāth Śāstrī as Missionary, made good progress and maintained its integrity. In January, 1879, it opened the City School, which, directed ably by Ānanda Mohun Bose, soon developed into the City College of

Calcutta. This was soon followed by the establishment of the Students' Weekly Service, which arranged lectures for the student population of the City, a Society for Progressive Ladies, a library and a printing press and two journals, the organs of the Samāj—*The Brāhmo Public Opinion* in English and *Tattva-Kaumudī* in Bengālī. In 1881 a new mandir for the Samāj was completed and consecrated. In 1884 a Social Service Centre was organized, in 1886 the Brāhmo Bandhu Sabhā was inaugurated for the discussion of topics relating to the faith and practice of the Samāj, in 1888 a Mission Centre was opened in the Khasi Hills, Assam, and in 1892 the Sādhanāśram or Brāhmo Workers' Shelter was established. In this and in several other ways, the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj became the most flourishing section of the Brāhmo Samāj.

On the philosophical side too it made notable contribution to the teachings of the Samāj through the discourses of Pandit Sītānāth Tattvabhūṣaṇ and Nāgendranāth Chatterjī. Pandit Sītānāth Tattvabhūṣaṇ, the author of *The Philosophy of Brāhmaism,* tells us that the Brāhmo philosophy of his day moved away more definitely than Keshub's teaching from the intuitional dualistic theism of Debendranāth to the rational, monistic mysticism of the Upanisads by admitting the essential unity of the universal Self and the individual self. But, to maintain the cosmopolitan character of his Samāj, he takes care to add that it is as much allied to Hegelian idealism as to the Vedānta philosophy.

IX

From this brief account of the fortunes of the Brāhmo Samāj from Rām Mohun Roy to Sītānāth Tattvabhūṣaṇ it will be seen that the new Theism it has established differs from the older Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta Theisms that flourished in India in the following respects:—

(1) It has no faith in any scripture as an authority,
(2) It has no faith in Avatārs,
(3) It denounces polytheism and idol-worship as sinful,
(4) It denounces caste distinctions,
(5) It makes faith in the doctrines of Karma and Rebirth optional.

In fact, the new Theism of the Brāhmo Samāj differs from the older Theisms of India not in what it asserts, but in what it denies. All that the new Theism says about the personality of God, the need of Divine Grace and the superiority of spiritual worship is found in the old. Pandit Sītānāth Tattvabhūṣaṇ says:—

"Brāhmaism, we confess, is outlandish, it is Mussalman or Christian in respect of the highly practical, spiritual, iconoclastic turn it has given to the old Theism of India. Our old monotheistic religion was good enough as an affirmation, a thesis; but it sadly needed a negative and antithetical turn. This the Brāhmo Samāj has given it; and in this consists its main contribution to the religious development of India."[1]

The old Theism is a kindlier faith giving shelter to the children as well as the adults in spirit. It may not be so neat as the new Theism, but, being based on experience as well as thought, it is kindly, considerate and tolerant. The new Theism, on the other hand, being based more on thought than on experience, and moved more by considerations of national self-respect than of spiritual accommodation and having in view only the small educated section of the community and not the populace, imitates rather slavishly the fierce tirades of the Semitic religions against idolatry and borrows many of their forms of worship and thus betrays an inferiority complex. Pandit Śivanāth Śāstrī himself admits that there is some truth in the observation of outsiders that the members of the Brāhmo Samāj are more enamoured

[1] *The Philosophy of Brāhmaism*, p. 271.

of Western ideals and Western methods than of Eastern ideals and Eastern methods. He says:—

"Western ideals appeal more to sympathising hearts amongst us than the truths treasured up in our own books and in our own usages and customs. We are more concerned with the Western modes of spiritual exercise, such as vocal prayer, readings and spiritual intercourse than the Hindu methods of meditation and communion to which Maharṣi Debendranāth showed the way. It is time that the attention of our members should be directed to the spiritual resources of our own country and of our own people."[1]

This is the legacy of Keshub Chander Sen, which even the members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj, who had seceded from him, could not set aside. Even today the mode of worship in the Brāhmo Samāj resembles that in a Christian Church to such an extent that it has given rise to the popular saying that Brāhmoism is Christianity *minus* Christ.

At the same time, the Brāhmo Samāj is organically weak where the Semitic religions, Christianity and Islam, are strong. For these have a religious canon which they accept as their source and authority, whereas the Brāhmo Samāj has no religious canon which it accepts as authority. Its authority is purely subjective, either reason or intuition, and it uses portions of Hindu and other scriptures as only secondary helps. No wonder, therefore, that, in spite of all the invaluable work it has done by way of social reform and in spite of the many distinguished men which it had in its fold, it has remained a mere speck on the waters of Indian religions. It has remained rather a high-brow religion whose pieties are often somewhat dropsical. Its sermons are eloquent and flamboyant, but they frequently jump into vacuity. Its history shows us clearly the danger of having purely subjective standards in religion and the wisdom of our great Ācāryas, who, however original in their thought and however rich in their religious experience, tried to found their systems on the accepted canon of Hindu scriptures.

[1] *History of the Brāhmo Samāj*", Vol. II, p. 278.

But, though the Brāhmo Samāj is almost a spent force now, it has rendered useful service to Hinduism in three ways. It popularized social reform, it prevented conversions to Christianity by creating a half-way house and it roused the orthodox Hindus to organize themselves and work for a revival of their religion, rather crudely at first, but with greater discrimination and knowledge afterwards.

CHAPTER III

JUSTICE RĀNAḌE AND THE PRĀRTHANĀ SAMĀJ

I

An off-shoot of the Brāhmo Samāj is the Prārthanā Samāj of Bombay. As early as 1849, an association called Paramahaṁsa Sabhā was formed in Bombay, whose main object was the breaking of caste. It was a secret association, and, at its meetings, all the members partook of the food prepared by persons of the lowest caste. Some people, it was said, joined the association more with the object of eating the forbidden food secretly than with any desire for reform. The secret was, however, exposed in 1860, and the society broke up. But when Keshub Chander Sen visited Bombay in 1864 and roused the people by his impassioned lectures, some of the more earnest members of the extinct Paramahaṁsa Sabhā met together in the house of Dr. Ātmārām Pāṇḍuraṅg and decided to form a new association with the four declared objects of (1) the disapproval of caste, (2) the introduction of widow-marriage, (3) the encouragement of women's education, and (4) the abolition of child-marriage. After some more meetings, it was further decided to make religious reform the basis of their programme of social reform and to organize the pure worship of the one true God. Accordingly a weekly prayer meeting was started. The first meeting took place on the 31st March 1867, in the house of Dr. Ātmārām Pāṇḍuraṅg. Four months later, the articles of the new Society were drawn up, its rules were framed and its managing committee was appointed. This was the genesis of the Prārthanā Samāj.

A fresh impetus was given to the Samāj by the second visit of Keshub Chander Sen in 1868 after he seceded from the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj and established his own Brāhmo Samāj of India. The influence of the Brāhmo Samāj was further strengthened by the visits of Navīn Chandra Rāi, the founder of the Punjab Brāhmo Samāj, in 1871, of P. C. Mozoomdār, the disciple of Keshub, in 1872 and of Bābu Mahendranāth Bose, one of the missionaries of the Brāhmo Samāj of India, in 1874. Mozoomdār's sermons and discourses especially kindled great enthusiasm, and, as a result of these, a night school for workers was opened, and a paper called *Subodh Patrikā* was started. Subscriptions were also collected for the erection of a building for the Samāj. The foundation stone was laid by Mozoomdār and the Mandir was duly consecrated on 24th April, 1874. In 1875, S. P. Kelkar joined the Samāj with his whole family and gave himself up entirely to the cause of reform. He subsequently became a missionary of the Samāj and worked indefatigably for it, giving lectures, conducting services and contributing articles to *Subodh Patrikā*. Another distinguished person who brought strength to the Samāj at this time was Shaṅkar Pāṇḍuraṅg Pandit. Towards the end of 1877, Mozoomdār came again to Bombay, this time with his wife, and stayed for nearly three months. He opened a class in his house for the education of the ladies belonging to the families of the members of the Samāj. This work was much appreciated and continued even after he left Bombay. But when, under his leadership, an attempt was made to change the name of the Prārthanā Samāj into Brāhmo Samāj, there was opposition to it on the part of some prominent members like Professor R. G. Bhandārkar, Rānaḍe, Wagle and Paramānand, who did not like to identify their Samāj with the Brāhmo Samāj of Calcutta and all its unseemly dissensions and sects. But some of the younger members

of the Samāj were disappointed with this decision, and, led by W. B. Nowraṅgay, they started another kind of organization, which they called the Brāhmo Samāj of Bombay in another part of the city. This organization was naturally looked upon as a branch of the New Dispensation Church, but it ceased to exist after a few years. In 1882 there was a fresh accession of strength to the Prārthanā Samāj, when N. G. Chandāvarkar (who afterwards became well known as Sir Nārāyaṇ Ganesh Chandāvarkar) joined it and began to take an active part in it by giving lectures and sermons. In the same year a women's society called the Ārya Mahilā Samāj was established by Paṇḍitā Ramā Bāī, who roused the interest of the women of the Samāj by her discourses and Purāṇ readings. Another important development of the Samāj during that year was its taking over the orphanage at Pandharpur, which had been started by one of its members. Among those who laboured for the Samāj in subsequent years mention may be made of Śivarām Nārāyan Gokhale, V. R. Shinde, V. A. Sukhtānkar, D. G. Vaidya and K. Natarājan. The Samāj has now branches in both Bombay and Madras Presidencies. Some of these retain the original name of Prārthanā Samāj, but others call themselves Brāhmo Samājas.

The greatest of those who joined the Samāj and worked ardently for social reform was Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe, who rose afterwards to be one of the judges of the Bombay High Court. Rānaḍe was not only an eminent judge but also a historian, an economist, an educationist, an ardent social reformer and one of the founders of the Indian National Congress. He was a man of massive intellect, saintly character and deep piety. With his many-sided activities, his lofty patriotism, his zeal for reform and his vision of India's destiny, he reminds one of Rām Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brāhmo Samāj. His great disciple, Gopāl

Krishna Gokhale, once said of him, "I think that, for about thirty years, he represented our highest thought and our highest aspirations." Undoubtedly Rānade is one of the greatest leaders of the Modern Indian Renaissance.

II

Mahādev Govind Rānade was born on the 18th January 1842 at Niphad in Nāsik District, where his father was a clerk in Government service. The Rānades belonged to the caste of Chitpāwan Brāhmans to which the great Peshwās belonged. To this community also belonged Tilak and Gokhale. Of the influence of Chitpāwan Brāhmans in modern times Sir Valentine Chirol writes in his book, *Indian Unrest*:—

"They sit on the Bench, they dominate the Bar, they teach in the schools, they control the Vernacular Press, they have furnished almost all the conspicuous names in the modern literature and drama of Western India as well as in politics."

Rānade had his early education in Kolhāpūr, and after 1856 went to Elphinstone High School, Bombay. He spent three years at this school and passed his Matriculation examination in 1859. He belonged to the first batch of students who sat for that examination held by the Bombay University. He got a scholarship and continued his studies and passed his B. A. degree examination in the first class and took his degree at the first convocation of the University in 1862. He then took his M. A. degree in 1864 and was made a fellow of the University in 1865. He had also been attending the law classes and passed his LL.B. examination with first class honours in 1866.

In addition to all this preparation for the various examinations, Rānade at the same time did a lot of teaching and examining work. For he had been on the junior staff of the Elphinstone College from the year 1861 and been teaching under-graduate students a

number of subjects. It was in connection with this teaching work that he made a special study of economics, which enabled him later to distinguish himself as an economist and lay the foundations of an Indian School of Economics. In 1862 he was appointed Examiner in Marāthī for the Matriculation examination and had to equip himself for the task by reading considerable portions of Marāthī literature. During the same year he was also for some time the editor of *Hindu Prakāsh,* an English-Marāthī weekly journal. In these early years Rānaḍe was a prodigious reader, and the extraordinary amount of reading he did told seriously on his eye-sight. He had acute eye-trouble in 1863-64, and it was feared that he would become totally blind. But, fortunately, he grew better and was able to use his eyes, though his vision remained defective throughout his life.

III

Rānaḍe's career as a Government servant began in 1866 when he was appointed Oriental Translator to the Government of Bombay. His duty was to report to the Government on all the Marāthī books that were being published. In addition to this routine duty Rānaḍe used to prepare an annual review of the progress made in Marāthī literature and suggest desirable lines of advance to the authors in that language. He retained this post for two years even after he was appointed principal administrative officer in Akalkoṭ, one of the Marāthā States in the Deccan, in 1867 and was transferred a few months afterwards to the state of Kolhāpūr as Judge. In 1868, however, he returned to Bombay and joined the Elphinstone College again—this time as Professor of English and History. He continued as Professor till 1871 with intervals, during which he acted as Judge of the Small Causes Court, Assistant Registrar of the High Court, etc. In 1871 he

was finally appointed a subordinate judge in Poona, and so had to leave Bombay for Poona to take up his new duties.

Professor Karve in his book on Rānaḍe[1] says that "for twenty-two years from 1871 the history of Poona became the history of Rānaḍe's doings". Rānaḍe went to Poona in November 1871 and found that, in the preceding year, a society called the Sārvajanik Sabhā had been founded with the object of making representations to the Government about the needs of the people. He at once became a member and in a short time became the very soul of the Sabhā. It was through the Sabhā that he slowly educated public opinion on political, social, economic and educational matters and brought about an awakening in Mahārāṣṭra. And it was through this Sabhā that he ultimately became recognized as "the uncrowned King of Poona".

When a Parliamentary Committee was appointed in 1871 to inquire into Indian Finance, the Sārvajanik Sabhā followed suit by arranging for a similar investigation for Mahārāṣṭra and published its own report in 1873 and later summarized the voluminous report of the Parliamentary Committee and published it for the benefit of the people. When the great Delhi Durbar was held in 1877, the Sārvajanik Sabhā sent up to the Queen's Government a loyal address praying for the gift of responsible self-government on the auspicious occasion. When the terrible famine of 1877 visited the Deccan and the Government adopted measures to alleviate distress, the Sārvajanik Sabhā sent representatives to the spot, collected information, published reports of actual conditions and reviewed the work of the Government officials. In 1878 the Quarterly Journal of the Sabhā was started and the education of the public

[1] *Rānaḍe—The Prophet of Liberated India*

went on more regularly. The Journal tackled the land problem, pointed out the wretched state of Indian agriculture, inquired into the causes of the agriculturist's conditions, criticized the Government's land policy and suggested measures for improvement, some of which were afterwards embodied in the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Bill of 1879. When the Government of India instructed the Provincial Governments in 1881 to make the local bodies more active and useful by handing over to them certain departments and the necessary funds for running them, the *Sārvajanik Sabhā Journal* wrote a number of articles on local self-governing institutions and their duties and their proper representation in the legislature. And, whenever an Indian Prince was about to assume the rights and privileges of sovereignty, the Sabhā Journal presented him with an address of congratulations in which constructive suggestions were given for the best form of administration. In 1880 the Journal published an elaborate and thoughtful paper on *A Constitution for Native States* for the instruction of the Princes. In this manner there were instructive articles in the Journal on all kinds of subjects, social reform, religious reform, education, politics and economics. All this was the work of Rānade, [redacted] it was solid work. Every one of the articles from his pen reads like a state document, with facts and figures, with weighty arguments, cautions inferences and constructive suggestions. The public was educated in this manner for fifteen years. During this period two-thirds of the articles in the *Sārvajanik Sabhā Journal* were written by Rānaḍe. But his work was not confined to the Sabhā or its Journal. There were twenty other institutions which Rānaḍe either founded or strengthened in Poona during the twenty-two years of his connection with that city.[1]

[1] The following list of institutions connected with the name of Rānaḍe is taken from Kellock's *Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe*, P. 80.—"The

There was, however, a break in his official connection with Poona. For all this public work which Rānaḍe did to awaken the soul of Mahārāṣṭra could not be done without rousing the suspicions of the British Government. Accordingly in 1878 the regulation that no subordinate judge should stay in one place for more than five years was applied to him, and he was transferred to Nāsik. But at Nāsik, as at Poona, Rānaḍe again threw himself into various activities. He founded a society for the encouragement of the publication of Marāṭhī books, established a Public Library and drew up plans for building a Town Hall and for opening a branch of the Prārthanā Samāj. In 1879 the Government grew more suspicious of his activities and wrongly thought that he was at the bottom of certain lawless activities at Poona, which resulted in the burning down of two big Government buildings. So they transferred him from Nāsik to Dhulia, a remote and unimportant place. But it was at last discovered, through the confessions of the criminal who had actually set fire to the buildings, that the suspicions against the patriotic and public-spirited sub-judge were unfounded. Curiously enough, the name of the criminal was also Rānaḍe. Probably the whole confusion was due to this accidental coincidence. In any case, by the end of 1880 the misunderstanding was cleared, and in January 1881 Rānaḍe was appointed Presidency Magistrate, Bombay. But his stay in Bombay as magistrate was short, for, at the end of three months, he was again trans-

Sārvajanik Sabhā, the Quarterly Journal of the Sabhā, the Town Hall at Hirabag, the Poona Native General Library, the Industrial Conferences, the Industrial Exhibitions, the Industrial Association, the Reay Museum, the Cotton and Silk Spinning and Weaving Company, the Metal Manufacturing Factory, the Fergusson College, the Female High School, the Vernacular Translation Society, the *Lawād* or Arbitration Court, the Sub-Judges' Conference, the Poona Mercantile Bank, the Prārthanā Samāj Mandir, the Oratory Encouragement Society, the Mārathā Literature Encouragement Society, the Poona Spring Lectures, the Poona Dyeing Company, the Reay Paper Mill."

ferred to his beloved Poona as subordinate judge. Then began the second part of his Poona period after a break of about three years.

IV

Two incidents which belong to the first part of his stay in Poona deserve mention here, as they show the strength of Hindu orthodoxy against which Rānaḍe had to fight all his life a rather losing battle. The first is his own second marriage. Rānaḍe's first marriage, in accordance with the custom of the time, took place very early, when he was only a boy of twelve and his bride Sakhūbāī only a child of nine. After Rānaḍe went to Poona in 1871, Sakhūbāī's health began to cause him anxiety. It was found that she was suffering from consumption. Though, all through her illness, Rānaḍe showed the most tender care, the disease became incurable and she died in October 1873. Within a month after her death the bereaved husband was forced to marry again, marry a girl of eleven, while he himself was thirty-one. As Rānaḍe was a social reformer agitating for the introduction of ṛemarriage for child-widows and the abolition of infant marriages, this incident created a great stir both in the camp of social reformers and in the camp of their opponents. It gave a handle to his enemies, as the famous Cooch-Bihar marriage did in the case of Keshub Chander Sen. But if we go into the details of the case sympathetically and see how Rānaḍe was stampeded into this marriage by his father and with what sorrow and sense of humiliation he consented to it, we shall be disposed to pity rather than blame him. His father, being an orthodox Brāhman, had a horror of widow-marriage and feared that his son might be induced by his social reform friends to marry a widow. He wanted to prevent such a catastrophe by every means in his power before it was too late. So he arranged this match secretly

and took the final step of having the girl brought to Poona. And then he put it to his son that it was too late to go back and that, if he did not consent, the girl's future would be ruined. Rānaḍe begged and argued and promised that he would never marry again and that, even if he did, he would not marry a widow. He pleaded that he was no longer a child, but a man past thirty and should not be coerced, and finally entreated that he should at least be given six months' time. But his father was unmoved. Then Rānaḍe met his prospective father-in-law and pointed out to him the disadvantages of such a match. But he found him equally obdurate. So the alternatives before Rānaḍe were either giving consent to the marriage or disobeying his father and thereby breaking his heart and bringing great unhappiness on two ancient families. The tender-hearted Rānaḍe recoiled from the latter and chose the former. He would rather subject himself to suffering and humiliation than make his aged father and other members of the family suffer. And no one who knows the sanctities of an orthodox Hindu home will blame him. Fortunately, the marriage which took place in such gloomy circumstances in December 1873 proved one of the most blessed unions on record. Śrīmatī Ramābāī Rānaḍe, who was after the marriage carefully educated by her husband, grew up to be his worthy partner in life, became a pioneer of the women's movement in Mahārāṣṭra and worked earnestly in the cause of social reform. She was of the greatest comfort and solace to Rānaḍe. She outlived her husband by twenty-three years and published in 1910 a charming book of recollections about him. Thus, as often happens, out of evil came good.

The other incident is the visit in 1875 of Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī, the founder of the Ārya Samāj. As the Swāmī was a great religious and social reformer opposed to idol-worship, child-marriages and caste distinctions, Rānaḍe was glad to co-operate with him and

afford him facilities for work in Poona. Swāmī Dayānand delivered a number of lectures propounding his faith and Rānaḍe attended them. In the end a farewell meeting was arranged for the Swāmī, but the orthodox party, which was opposed to reform, created a great disturbance and flung mud and stones at the speakers, and it was only with the help of the police that the Swāmī could go out of the place of meeting. Rānaḍe was also present at the meeting and suffered considerably from the violence of the hooligans. He knew the persons who were at the back of the whole affair, but refrained from exposing them when they appealed to him for mercy.

V

Soon after Rānaḍe was re-transferred to Poona in 1881, he was made Assistant Special Judge to inquire into the cases which arose in connection with the application of the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act. His work in this capacity was so thorough and efficient that, when his superior officer went on leave, he was made to act for him and was eventually confirmed as Chief Special Judge in 1887. Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, now appreciated Rānaḍe's worth and nominated him to the Bombay Legislative Council in 1885, and secured for him the appointment to the Finance Committee set up by the Government of India in 1886 for the purpose of retrenching expenditure, and, finally, in 1893, when a vacancy arose on the Bench of the Bombay High Court by the death of Justice Telang, saw that he was promoted to the place.

During these years (1881-93), which may be called the second part of his Poona period, Rānaḍe's activities extended to a wider sphere of work and assumed an all-India character. In 1885 he was one of the seventy-two intellectuals from various provinces who met at Bombay with W. C. Bonnerjee in the chair and

founded the Indian National Congress. In 1887, it was mainly under his influence that the Indian Social Conference was held in Madras as an adjunct to the Congress. Rānaḍe was the soul of this institution as long as he lived and attended every one of its sessions, except the one which was held in 1900, a few weeks before his death. In 1890 it was again Rānaḍe that took the lead in organizing the Industrial Conference of Western India which met at Poona. And in 1892 he delivered, at the Deccan College, Poona, his epoch-making address on Indian Political Economy in which he boldly attacked the economic dogmas of English economists like John Stuart Mill and pointed out their paralysing influence on India. In subsequent papers he developed the ideas contained in this address and brought about a revolution in Indian economic thought. He attacked the *laissez faire* theory and urged that it should not stand in the way of Government's adopting a bold industrial policy. According to Rānaḍe, India should industrialize, or she would perish. Her chronic poverty could be removed only by industrialization. And in this matter Government should take the lead and start new industries, and, when they were well developed, hand them over to private effort. They should do for industries what they were doing for railways. The conception that the State should only maintain law and order and allow a free play of economic forces was an antiquated one, and the sooner the Government of India gave it up the better. India should not be reduced to the position of a purely agricultural country supplying raw materials to Western countries. Her agriculture had no doubt to be made more scientific and up-to-date, and the economic position of the peasant had to be improved by suitable devices like agricultural banks and the co-operative credit system. But that was not enough. The whole population of the country could not depend upon agriculture. Well-

developed industries, turning most of the country's raw materials into manufactured goods, which were now being imported from foreign countries, should redress the balance of national economy. The problem of the appalling poverty of the Indian masses was the central problem of Indian Economics, and no Government was worth the name which, without discovering a solution to it, buried its head ostrich-like in the sands of the outmoded *laissez faire* theories of economics.

VI

In spite of all these activities, opposition to the Rānaḍe school of social and religious reform gathered strength in Poona, especially when Tilak came into power and began to guide public opinion. Born on 23rd July, 1856 Bāl Gaṅgādhar Tilak was fourteen years junior to Rānaḍe. He was also a Chitpāwan Brāhman. At twenty years of age, he took his B. A. degree, and three years later, in 1879, took the LL. B. degree of the Bombay University. And in 1880 he, along with four others—Agarkar, Chiplunkar, Nāmjoshī and Āpte—began to run a private High School. At the same time they also started two newspapers—the *Mahratta* and the *Kesari*. Both the ventures, educational and journalistic, proved an extraordinary success. The school became the best of its kind in Poona, and the two journals became the leading ones in the Deccan. In July 1882, Tilak and Agarkar were charged with defamation in what was known as the Kolhāpūr case and sentenced to simple imprisonment for four months. This incident only enhanced the reputation of the patriotic band of young men, and in 1884 they formed the Deccan Education Society of Poona and established next year the Fergusson College under its auspices. Chiplunkar died when the Kolhāpūr trial was going on, and the remaining four became life-members of the Deccan Education Society and agreed to serve in the

Fergusson College for twenty years. About 1888, differences arose between Agarkar and Tilak on social and religious questions. Agarkar was an agnostic in religion and an extremist in social reform, whereas Tilak was a staunch Hindu and an ardent nationalist rather than a reformer. Agarkar therefore resigned the editorship of the *Kesari* and started a paper of his own called the *Sudhārak,* and Tilak eventually became the sole proprietor and editor of the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta.* Also, owing to some differences, Tilak severed his connection with the Deccan Education Society in 1890 and resigned from the Fergusson Collge, where he had been Professor of Mathematics. He now threw himself entirely into his journalistic work and became the leader of the orthodox party in opposition to the Rānaḍe school of social reform. The opposition began in right earnest with the introduction of the Age of Consent Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in January, 1891.

But the fight over the Bill was preceded in Poona by a sort of storm in the tea-cup which made both Rānaḍe and Tilak fall prostrate before Hindu Orthodoxy. It came about in this way. In 1890 some fifty prominent Brāhman gentlemen of Poona including Rānaḍe and Tilak were invited to a Missionary meeting. During the meeting they were rather surprised when biscuits and tea were served on the table. Some took the tea, some like Rānaḍe only touched the cups formally and set them aside, and others did not do even that. Afterwards, when the names of those who attended the meeting and the tea-party were published, there was an outcry on the part of the orthodox Brāhmans of Poona, who condemned the action of the 'rebels' and threatened them with excommunication. This was fifty years ago, and now we may smile at the orthodoxy of those days. But it is an indication of the limitations under which social reformers had to carry on their work in the nineteenth century. The sacrilege was reported to Śrī Saṁ-

karācārya, and there were arguments and counter-arguments with quotations from Dharma-śāstras. The storm raged for some months. At the end both Rānaḍe and Tilak had to bow before it and perform the necessary purificatory ceremonies and have the social boycott lifted. The purification was particularly humiliating to Rānaḍe, as he was the leader of the reform party. But Rānaḍe's object in consenting to undergo the purification was to prevent people from thinking that social reform necessarily meant eating and drinking with men of other religions and acting in defiance of all religious authority and public opinion. So it was for the sake of social reform itself that he thus submitted to the popular will, though his conscience was clear. He advised his followers also to do likewise.

It was while the storm over this Missionary tea party was still raging at Poona that the Age of Consent Bill raising the minimum age for consent to twelve was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council in January, 1891. The introduction was the signal for the beginning of a heated controversy between the orthodox section and the reformers in all important towns. Tilak led the opposition in Poona. For several months his paper, the *Kesari,* devoted its columns to the condemnation of the Bill as an interference with the religious customs of the people. A public meeting was held in Bombay to protest against the Bill and to collect signatures for a monster petition. Tilak attended the meeting and congratulated the people of Bombay on behalf of the people of Poona. A week afterwards, a similar meeting was held in Poona on the 15th February. Thereupon the social reformers of the place wanted to hold a counter-meeting of their own in favour of the Bill. The followers of Tilak, who formed, of course, an overwhelming majority, demanded admission to the meeting, as it had been advertised to be a public meeting. When they were not allowed, they forced themselves in

by smashing the doors. The crowd now became unmanageable and the reformers had to fly for their lives and seek shelter in a neighbouring house. During these exciting days Rānaḍe was fortunately absent from Poona, as he was on tour in his judicial capacity in Nagar and Sholāpūr Districts. But in the places he visited he publicly gave his opinion in favour of the Bill. By the time he returned to Poona the Bill had been passed and the opposition of the orthodox fizzled out.

VII

During this time there was also a controversy between the reformers and the orthodox party about the Śāradā Sadan institution. This institution, which was a resident school for Indian girls, especially young widows, had been started in Bombay by Paṇḍitā Ramābāī in 1889 with help derived from an American Missionary organization and was transferred to Poona in 1890.

Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was a gifted Indian lady with an extraordinary and romantic career. Born of Chitpāwan Brāhman parents, she became a good Sanskrit scholar like her father, who was a Paurāṇika by profession and who wandered from place to place expounding Purāṇas to the people and accepting their voluntary gifts. Ramābāī wandered all over India in her early life with her parents, going from one pilgrim centre to another and enduring indescribable privations and hardships. In these wanderings she naturally saw only the worst side of popular Hinduism, which later aroused in her nothing but feelings of contempt and disgust towards her religious heritage. What was particularly galling to her was the ignorance of women in Hindu society and the tyranny to which they were subjected by men. Herself a scholar who could lecture and compose verses in Sanskrit and could repeat the whole of the Bhāgavata, she rebelled in her mind against this state of things. She lost her father, mother and brother in the course of the wander-

ings of the family and reached a temporary abode of peace in Bengal, when she married, out of her caste, a Beṅgālī lawyer who was practising in Silchar, a town in Assam. After a little more than a year and a half of married life, adversity again overtook her. Her husband died suddenly of cholera, and she was again left destitute in the world with a baby girl to bring up. She came to Poona in 1882 with the object of learning English and working in the cause of women's education. Her fame had preceded her, but she little knew what a storm she was going to raise by her doings in the rival camps of the Chitpāwan Brāhmans of her race. She was warmly welcomed by the reform party, especially by Rānaḍe and his wife, who attended all her lectures and Purāṇa discourses. But the orthodox party naturally looked upon her with suspicion, as she was an educated woman who had married after the customary age and married out of her caste and who was making war on men for keeping down and tyrannizing over their women, though, of course, they could not withhold their admiration for her scholarship, wit and eloquence. The very year she came to Poona she started the Ārya Mahilā Samāj for improving the lot of women in Hindu society. She wanted to make this Samāj the centre of a network of Samājas in all the important towns in the Bombay Presidency. With this object in view she went to various places and tried to rouse the people. But, though individuals like Rānaḍe and Bhandārkar sympathized with her aims, she received little encouragement from the general public. The time was not yet ripe for a movement of that kind to succeed. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī was sorely disappointed and in the evidence she gave before the Education Committee, presided over by Sir W. W. Hunter, she condemned in strong language the attitude of men towards their women in Hindu society. By her zeal and her advanced views, she had by this time won many friends not only among reformers but also,

to the ultimate detriment of her cause, among Christian Missionaries. With the help and encouragement of the latter she went to England, lived among her Missionary friends and finally became a convert to Christianity. She never regretted this step. On the other hand, from her subsequent career and the record she has left of her life as a Christian, we are led to conclude that Paṇḍitā Ramābāī, like Mrs. Besant, was one of those rare souls who, born in one religion and driven by their past karma into another, feel instinctively at home there and find in it perfect satisfaction for all their spiritual needs as well as full scope for the play of their ambitious personalities.

From England she went to America in 1886, and, being a Christian, probably felt justified in laying before her fellow-Christians the case of Hindu women. She wrote a book with the title *High Caste Hindu Woman*, which is described by MacNicol[1] as a "passionate indictment of her countrymen, but it is an indictment framed against the past on behalf of the future." It was not in this way that, seven years later, Swāmī Vivekānanda, as we shall see, spoke to the American public about India and her needs. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī remained in America two years, during which an Association was formed, called the Ramābāī Association, which promised to give 5,000 dollars a year for ten years for an educational institution for girls in India. Thus equipped with knowledge and money, Paṇḍitā Ramābāī returned to India across the Pacific paying a brief visit to Japan on her way. She started the Śāradā Sadan institution on the first March, 1889, but transferred it, as we saw, to Poona in November 1890, as Poona was a less expensive and less crowded place than Bombay.

We are now in a position to understand the controversy in Poona over Śāradā Sadan: The orthodox people looked upon Ramābāī and her institution with even

[1] *Pandita Ramabai* by N. MacNicol (Builders of Modern India).

greater suspicion than before. She was now not only a rebel but a traitor who had gone over to the enemy's camp. She was hardly the proper person to whose care Hindu girls of tender years could be entrusted. But the social reformers headed by Rānaḍe thought there was nothing wrong in Hindus taking advantage of the educational facilities afforded by an institution managed by a Christian lady. Tilak now began to write in his *Kesari* a number of articles against the institution and gather evidence to show that its aim was not so much the education of women as the spread of Christianity among Hindu girls. He condemned in severe terms the social reformers who gave their support to Śāradā Sadan as traitors to Hinduism. Explanations followed on the part of Paṅḍitā Ramābāī and her friends of the reform party. The former in her reply severely castigated the Hindus for their dog-in-the-manger policy and said that it was because she could not get any help from them for her work that she had to go to Christians. After her spirited reply there was a lull for some time. But some facts about the internal working of the institution again leaked out, and the *Kesari* returned to the charge. It showed with incontestable evidence how secret influences were at work in the institution to lead Hindu girls by slow degrees into the fold of Christianity. At last in 1893, even Rānaḍe and Bhandārkar were convinced and severed their connection with Śāradā Sadan by sending in the following letter of resignation, which throws light on the Missionary methods in India:—

"We have strong reasons to believe that many of the girls are induced to attend her (Ramābāī's) private prayers regularly and read the Bible and that Christian doctrines are taught to them. Paṇḍitā Ramābāī has always shown her active Missionary tendencies by asking the parents and guardians of girls to allow them to attend her prayers and, in one case at least, to become Christians themselves; and we are assured that two of the girls have declared to their elders that they have accepted Christ. Such a departure from the original understanding cannot fail, in

our opinion, to shake the stability of the Institution and alienate public sympathy from this work. We are sorry our individual remonstrances with the Paṇḍitā Bāī have proved of no avail. If the Sadan is to be conducted as an avowed proselytizing institution we must disavow all connection with it."

Shortly after this, the Śāradā Sadan institution became openly Christian. In 1895 twelve of the girls of the institution were baptized, and in 1898 the institution itself was removed from Poona to Kedagon and made part of a wider Christian organization called *Mukti Sadan* or Home of Salvation.

VIII

Rānaḍe was transferred to Bombay in 1893 as Judge of the High Court in the place of Justice Telang who had died. He occupied this position for seven years till his death in January, 1901. During this time he conducted himself ably on the Bench with his impartiality, his scrupulous care and his liberal interpretation of the Hindu Law. As Judge of the High Court he could not take part in politics even to the extent he had done before. But he carried on his activities in connection with social reform and the Prārthanā Samāj as vigorously as ever. He used to attend everyone of the annual meetings of the National Social Conference, summarize the activities of the various Social Reform Associations in the country during the year, and give illuminating addresses on the principles of reform in all their aspects. He used to attend regularly the meetings of the Prārthanā Samāj in Bombay, and conduct the services. The sermons which he delivered to the Samāj during these years have been published with an introduction by Mrs. Rānaḍe, who describes the elevating effect they had on his listeners.

He was also associated with the University of Bombay, being a member of the Senate and the Syndicate and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. The signal service he rendered to the University lay in the vigorous

plea he put forward for the introduction of Marāṭhī in the curriculum of the degree course. His proposal was turned down by the Senate in 1894. But he introduced it again in 1898, having prepared the ground by writing a series of articles to the newspapers on the advance made by Marāṭhī literature. This time he succeeded. The decision to introduce the vernacular was taken by the University shortly after his death.

It was again during his seven years of life in Bombay that Rānaḍe distinguished himself as a historian. In 1899 he wrote an essay on the 'Mints and Coins of the Marāthā Period', and in 1900 two papers forming the "Introduction to the Satāra Rājā's and the Peshwa's Diaries" and, finally, in the same year, his most important work, the first volume of *The Rise of Marāṭhā Power*. He did not live to complete his history. But he was able in his first volume to establish a new point of view from which the rise of the Marāthas under Śivājī and the Peshwas had to be judged. We have already quoted[1] the passage in which he points out that, in the rise of the Marāthā power, we have the beginnings of the process of nation-making and not merely the achievement of individual adventurers. It was the upheaval of a whole population strongly bound together by a common language, race, religion and literature and seeking further solidarity through common political independence.

IX

During these years the opposition between the followers of Rānaḍe and the followers of Tilak continued and reached its climax in 1895, when there was a fierce controversy in Poona on the question whether the Social Conference should be allowed to be held in the same pandal as the Congress as in previous years. This controversy may appear trivial to us now, but we can under-

[1] See Chapter I, P. 61.

stand the violent passions aroused over it, if we get an idea of the background of feeling that animated the public of Poona at that time. The prejudice created against the small group of reformers by the Missionary Tea-party, the Age of Consent Bill and the *Śāradā Sadan* controversy was intensified during the Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay and Poona in 1893-94 and reached a more acute stage during the great Gaṇapati and Śivājī national festivals organized immediately afterwards by Tilak. At a time when the Hindu national feeling was being roused to the highest pitch by these eventful happenings, the reformers made themselves unpopular by their timidity, coldness and indifference, if not by actual opposition. Kelkar in his *Life and Times of Tilak* says:—

"The social reformers were as vociferous in their attacks on the Gaṇesh festival as they were dumb on the haughtiness and the irreconcilable attitude of the Mohammedans."

While Tilak was risking his own life in writing trenchant articles in his *Kesari* against the aggressiveness and the unreasonable demands of the Muslim minority and the encouragement given to them by the partiality of the Government, the reform party, though they admitted the injustice done to the Hindu community, did nothing to strengthen his hands. On the contrary, they opposed him and put obstacles in his way when he tried to find a common platform for all classes of Hindus. So the bitterness of feeling against the reformers increased. It showed itself in the elections to the Municipality and the Legislative Council. Two of Tilak's candidates defeated their rivals of the reform party and got into the Municipal Council, and Tilak himself was elected to the Legislative Council. And in July 1895, Tilak's party got the upper hand in the management of the Sārvajanik Sabhā, which had till then been under the guidance of Rānaḍe. Now Tilak's party wanted to humiliate the reformers further by not allowing them to hold

their Social Conference in the Congress pandal at Poona in December 1895. The strife between the two parties became so intense that outsiders had to interfere in the interests of the Congress. Tilak was at first the Secretary of the Congress Reception Committee. But the Bombay leaders of the Congress decided that, to avoid all difficulties, there should be a board of seven Secretaries—two from Tilak's party, two from the opposite party and three outsiders from Bombay. But, as this arrangement did not work well, Tilak resigned his Secretaryship. He, however, requested the people through his *Kesari* to give every possible help to the Congress. Meetings were now held in various places in Mahārāṣṭra for electing delegates to the Congress, and at these meetings resolutions were passed that the Social Conference should not be held in the Congress pandal. But the Congress Committee decided to give the necessary permission. However, after all this opposition, Rānade did not want to have the Conference in the pandal and arranged to hold it in the compound of the Fergusson College. And in the opening speech which he delivered at the Conference, he gave an elaborate explanation why, in Poona alone of all places, there was such an excitement over the Congress and the Conference being held in the same pandal, though the two movements were entirely separate from each other in objects, methods of work and organizations. The explanation in brief was that, in the Bombay Presidency, the reformers did not confine themselves to a single line of work, but employed various methods for achieving their objects. They utilized caste organizations, they sought the help of religious heads, they appealed to men's conscience and sense of justice and they invoked the aid of the legislature in extreme cases. But they never rebelled against society and never seceded from it or formed a separate sect as the Brāhmo Samāj did in Bengal. All this may be an excellent exposition of Rānaḍe's policy of social reform, but hardly

an explanation of the noisy squabbles that preceded the holding of the sessions of the National Congress and the National Social Conference at Poona. If his policy had been followed by all the members of the reform party, there would have been no squabbles at all. Kelkar's remark on this speech of Rānaḍe is significant. He says:—

"Those people had not been far wrong who took this utterance of his to be symptomatic of a change of heart in Justice Rānade, in all probability due to the triumphant activities of Tilak."[1]

In spite of the oil which Rānaḍe tried to pour on the troubled waters by this conciliatory speech, the agitation in the public life of Poona did not come to an end. As the Sārvajanik Sabhā was now completely dominated by the Tilak party, Rānaḍe's disciple, Gokhale, who was still the Secretary, resigned from the Sabhā in 1896. The Rānaḍe party, thus routed from the Sārvajanik Sabhā, wanted to have a political organization of their own. They consulted their leader when he came to Poona and he reluctantly gave his consent to the formation of a new body called the Deccan Sabhā. It must have been a great wrench for Rānaḍe to dissociate his party from the Sārvajanik Sabhā, of which he had been the soul for so many years. But there was no help for it. The difference between the two parties in the political sphere was fundamental. The party of Rānaḍe and Gokhale was one of 'Moderates' or Liberals, the party of Tilak and Kelkar was one of 'Extremists' or Nationalists. "Moderation implies", Rānaḍe stated at this time in a notice issued by him, "the condition of never vainly aspiring after the impossible or after too remote ideals, but striving each day to take the next step in order of natural growth, by doing the work that lies nearest to the hand in a spirit of compromise and fairness." Such a policy might satisfy the people of a

[1] *Life and Times of Tilak*, p. 309.

country who have already got political freedom, but not those who have yet to win their freedom. It is really a policy which is suitable for social reform and not for gaining political freedom. For the obstacle that lies in the path of reform is only ignorance and it can be removed by education, whereas the obstacle that lies in the path of freedom is the self-interest of those who are in power and that cannot be removed by reasoning. It is ultimately to the interest of the people to listen to the reformer and change their ways of life, but it is against the interests of foreign rulers to listen to the politician and yield to his demands. Therefore the methods of the reformer must needs be different from those of the politician in the peculiar circumstances of India. The reformer has to spread knowledge among his people, the politician has to generate power in his people. The former has to resort to persuasion, the latter to some sort of coercion. Tilak understood the problem correctly and thought that his opponents confused the issues and tried to use coercion in social reform and persuasion in politics. The people of India have now come to see that the followers of Rāṇaḍe and Gokhale are indeed excellent people for running Swarāj, when once it is won by other people, but that they can never win it by their own methods. Hence their party has almost faded away from the political life of the country.

When Tilak heard that a moderate body called the Deccan Sabhā was going to be started in Poona by the followers of Rānaḍe, his rage knew no bounds. When he himself had been driven out of the Deccan Educational Society he did not set about starting a rival society. Also he thought that, by proclaiming themselves moderates, they implied that he and his followers were extremists, whose opinons and activities should not be tolerated by the Government. He therefore poured vials of wrath on his opponents and used

such offensive language as even Kelkar is unable to defend. And to the credit of Rānaḍe and Gokhale it must be said that they never in turn permitted themselves to use a harsh word against Tilak.

X

Tilak was indeed a contrast to Rānaḍe and Gokhale in many respects. He has been called the Father of Indian Unrest by Sir Valentine Chirol in his book, *Indian Unrest,* published in 1910. But his own countrymen regard him as the Father of Indian Nationalism. He was a great Sanskrit scholar, an ardent patriot and a born fighter. He is the author of *The Orion* and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* in English, and of *Gītā Rahasya* in Marāthī. In his *Gītā Rahasya,* which is a monument of learning, he maintains, contrary to the accepted interpretation, that the Gītā is primarily a gospel of Karma Yoga and that Jñāna Yoga and Bhakti Yoga are only subservient to Karma Yoga. He tried, as we have seen, to find a common national platform for all classes of Hindus by his Gaṇapati and Śivājī festivals. He was the fearless editor of the two leading newspapers of the *Deccan*—the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta.* He suffered imprisonment thrice—simple imprisonment for four months in 1882, rigorous imprisonment for twelve months in 1897 and deportation to Mandalay and imprisonment for six years in 1908. He brought about the famous Sūrat split in the Indian National Congress in 1907. And he was the first organizer of the Indian Home Rule Movement, which afterwards flourished under the leadership of Mrs. Besant, till it gave place to Gāndhijī's Non-co-operation Movement. He was a champion of the people, not an intellectual who feared the contact of the masses. He was a man who was prepared not only to serve, but also to suffer for his country. His life was one long self-sacrifice. He was the first to see

the futility of passing long resolutions with no sanctions behind them. He was passionately attached to Indian traditions and culture and would not allow anyone to lay rude hands on them. It is a mistake to regard him as an opponent of social reform. He was a conservative reformer who opposed the irreverent methods of the reform party in general. He carried out in his own household certain reforms which other reformers talked about but never carried out in their own homes. Kelkar says:—

"Mr. Tilak has often been accused of hypocrisy and inconsistency in matters of social reform. He is a practical reformer in his own way. He has educated his daughters, postponed their marriages till the utmost limit sanctioned by the Śāstras, advocated relaxation of caste restrictions and generally sympathized with the social reform movement, and yet he attacked the social reform party. . . . . He desired social reform, but did not believe in the men or the methods that were then employed in carrying it out."[1]

It is the fashion with certain writers, especially Englishmen, to decry Tilak as a crude unscrupulous agitator who wanted to get back for his community the power that it had lost under the British rule. Nothing could be farther from the truth. He was an embodiment of the newly awakened national spirit which had not yet learnt its bearings. He was the generator of a nationalism which had yet to seek and find its proper basis in Truth and Non-violence. Doubtless, it is Tilak's mantle that has fallen on Mahātmā Gāndhi and not that of Gokhale, though the Mahātmā regards Gokhale as his political *guru*. For one thing, long before Gāndhijī preached his gospel of Non-co-operation, Tilak in one of his speeches had set before the nation the whole programme of Non-co-operation. Speaking, for instance, at Calcutta on the 2nd January 1907, he is reported to have said[2]:—

[1] *Landmarks in Lokamānya's Life*, p. 11.
[2] *Tilak's Speeches and Writings* by Ganesh & Co., Madras, p 50.

"What the New Party wants you to do is to realize the fact that your future rests entirely in your own hands. If you mean to be free, you can be free; if you do not mean to be free, you will fall and be for ever fallen. So many of you need not take arms; but if you have not the power of active resistance, have you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist this foreign Government to rule over you? This is boycott and this is what is meant when we say, boycott is a political weapon. We shall not give them assistance to collect revenue and keep peace. We shall not assist them in fighting beyond the frontiers or outside India with Indian blood and money. We shall not assist them in carrying on the administration of justice. We shall have our own courts and, when time comes, we shall not pay taxes Can you do that by your united efforts? If you can, you are free from to-morrow"

This was thirteen years before Gāndhijī's Non-co-operation movement and eight years before the Mahātmā returned to India from South Africa. Speeches and writings like this were, of course, anathema to the school of Rānaḍe and Gokhale. The differences between the two schools were fundamental. The opposition between them was continued after Rānaḍe's death by his disciple Gokhale. Tilak, though older than Gokhale by ten years, outlived him by five. And, by a strange coincidence, he died on the very day, first of August 1920, on which Gāndhijī's Non-co-operation movement was inaugurated, and power thus passed from the one to the other, as it once did from Paraśurāma to Rāma. The contrast between Tilak and Gokhale has been well expressed by Mr. Paṭṭābhi Sītārāmayya in his *History of the Congress*:—

"Gokhale's prime concern was with the administration and its improvement: Tilak's supreme consideration was the nation and its up-building. Gokhale's ideal was love and service. Tilak's was service and suffering. Gokhale's methods sought to win the foreigner, Tilak's to replace him. Gokhale depended upon others' help, Tilak upon self-help. Gokhale looked to the classes and the intelligentsia, Tilak to the masses and the millions. Gokhale's arena was the council chamber: Tilak's forum was the village *maṇḍap*. Gokhale's medium of expression was English, Tilak's was Marāthī. Gokhale's objective was self-government

for which people had to fit themselves by answering the tests prescribed by the English; Tilak's objective was Swarāj which is the birth-right of every Indian and which he shall have without let or hindrance from the foreigner. Gokhale was on a level with his age; Tilak was in advance of his time."

Two of Tilak's utterances have justly become famous and are cherished by the nation. One is, "Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it." And the other is his reply to the judge who convicted and transported him for six years in 1908:—

"In spite of the verdict of the jury, I maintain I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destinies of things, and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent should prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."

XI

But let us return to Rānaḍe and the Prārthanā Samāj. Under Rānaḍe's able guidance, the Prārthanā Samāj of Bombay avoided some of the errors of the Brāhmo Samāj of Bengal. It did not cut itself off from the parent Hindu community and form a separate sect. It announced no New Dispensations, it did not play with Christianity. On the other hand, it tried to affiliate its Theism to the older Theisms of the Bhāgavatas and the saints of Mahārāṣṭra. While it concentrated its attention on social reform, it kept its religious beliefs rather undefined. Though its theological position is the same as that of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj, it refused to identify itself with any of the Brāhmo Samāj branches in Bengal. Hence there were no schisms, no unseemly quarrels in the Prārthanā Samāj like those in the Brāhmo Samāj. The members of the former, in spite of their heterodox opinions on religious and social reform, continued to belong to their respective communities. Neither the abandonment of idol-worship nor the giving up of traditional rites and ceremonies nor the breaking away from caste was insisted on as a condition

of membership of the Samāj. Rānaḍe with his historical insight knew that the reformers should build upon the past, that they should work from within the community and should not arouse unnecessary opposition and, above all, should not secede and form a separate sect. He puts his opinion very strongly in his speech at Lahore at the seventh Social Conference in 1893. He says:—

"There are those who think . . . . that our highest duty is to separate ourselves from the decaying mass and to look to our own safety. I have battled with this idea for the last thirty years and I shall protest against it till life is spared and my voice permits me to speak. The Hindu community is not a festering mass of decay and corruption. It is no doubt conservative to a degree, but that conservatism is its strength. No nation has any destined place in history which changes its creed and morals, its customs and its social polity with the facility of fashions. At the same time, our conservatism does not prevent the slow absorption of new ideas and the gradual assimilation of new practices."

Accordingly Rānaḍe was anxious to point out that the theism of the Brāhmo Samāj and the Prārthanā Samāj was nothing new and that it was organically related to the older Theisms in the bosom of Hinduism. He held that the members of the Brāhmo Samāj could claim a long ancestry as old as any of the sects flourishing in India. In his lecture on Rām Mohun Roy in 1896 he says:—

"The Brāhmo Movement was not first brought into existence in 1828; we are representatives of an old race, as old as the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa; much older still; as old as Nārada, Prahlāda and Vāsudeva and the nine sages who visited Janaka. From that time there is a continuity of sādhus and saints down to the present day. Rājā Rām Mohun Roy, as I said, was thus *one* of the fathers of the Brāhmo Church, but he was neither the first nor the last."

Rānaḍe was particularly anxious to convince the people of the Bombay Presidency that the Prārthanā Samāj was only continuing the religious tradition of the prophets and saints of Mahārāṣṭra, the tradition of Cāṅgdev and Jñānadev, of Eknāth and Nāmdev, of

Tukārām and Rāmdās and of Janārdanapant and Malopant, whose devotional hymns and other writings were so justly popular. According to him, these saints represented the Protestant movement in India corresponding to the movement headed by Luther and Calvin, Latimer and Knox in Europe. Like these European Protestants, the saints of Mahārāṣṭra used the vernacular, not the learned language, Sanskrit, in their teachings. They protested against lifeless rites and ceremonies, they modified the rigours of caste, having themselves come from the lowest as well as the highest castes, they raised the status of women, they dispensed with the intervention of priests and they called the nation to a purer worship and a more satisfying religion of the heart. Theirs was a mass movement unlike the Brāhmo Samāj or the Prārthanā Samāj, which was confined to a very small number of even the educated class. For Rānaḍe was not oblivious of the fact that the Samāj movement of the nineteenth century was not a popular movement like the Bhakti movements of the earlier periods. He says in his Address on *Hindu Protestantism* in 1895:—

"There is always good reason for despondency and despair so long as any movement is not so general in its character. This has been the weakness of the Samāj movement—both of our own and of the Ārya and Brāhmo Samāj—that they have failed as yet to stir the heart of the nation, and their influence is only operative over a few souls brought up in a particular atmosphere."

Almost half a century has passed since Rānaḍe said these words and they are as true to-day as on the day when he uttered them. It is curious that the nation has gradually accepted almost all the items of the social reform programme that the Samājas stood for, but not their religious doctrines. The country is still faithful to the older religion with its lofty metaphysics, its ideal of renunciation, its wide toleration and the richness and variety of its popular worship. It prefers a spacious mansion of many rooms, though somewhat dusty and out

of repair, to a neat, white-washed shed with up-to-date electric fittings.

Rānaḍe notes two important points of difference between the Protestant reformers of Europe and the prophets and saints of Mahārāṣṭra. Firstly, Luther and his followers raised their voice against the excesses of image-worship and saint-worship in the Roman Catholic Church, while in India, though the same protest was raised, it did not assume the iconoclastic forms adopted by the stricter Protestant sects in Europe. Each of the Mahārāṣṭra saints had his own favourite form of God, but the worship of that form did not exactly exclude other forms, rather it superimposed itself on them. Rāmdās worshipped God as Rāma, Eknāth as Kṛṣṇa, Tukārām as Viṭhobā, Nāgnāth as Śiva, Janārdan Swāmī as Dattātreya and Gaṇeṣnāth as Gaṇapatī, and we are told that, when they visited other shrines, the image manifested itself to their eyes not in its own form, but in the form they loved and worshipped. Rānaḍe rightly comments on these facts thus:—

"The supremacy of one God, One without a second, was the first article of the creed with every one of these saints, which they would not allow anybody to question or challenge. At the same time, as observed above, the iconoclastic spirit was never characteristic of this country, and all the various forms in which God was worshipped were believed to merge finally into one Supreme Providence or *Brahmā*. This tendency of the national mind was a very old tendency. Even in the Vedic times, Indra and Varuna, Marut and Rudra, while they were specially invoked at the sacrifices offered for their acceptance, were all regarded as interchangeable forms of the One and supreme Lord of Creation."

He points out, therefore, the absurdity of saying that these gifted saints were idolaters, or worshippers of stocks and stones. Idol-worship was denounced by them "when the image did not represent the supreme God." It was utilized by them only as an aid to devotion.

Secondly, from the Vedic times downwards the

Āryan gods had been gods of love and brightness, of sweetness and light. Side by side with the metaphysical Absolute of the Upaniṣads, there had been in the popular religion more or less concrete forms of that Absolute in the shape of gods or goddesses, who came into the hearts of the worshippers with parental love and kindness and cheered them with their bright presence. In India God had always been regarded "more as a father or a mother, a brother or a friend than as a judge or a chastiser or a ruler." There was no impassable gulf between the worshipper and the worshipped in Āryan religions as in Semitic religions, which too often dwelt on the idea of a "distant God whose glory could not be seen save through a cloud, a severe chastiser of human frailties and a judge who punished more frequently than He rewarded, and, even when He rewarded, kept the worshipper always in awe and trembling". Christianity to a certain extent bridged this gulf between the Semitic God and His worshippers by introducing the ideas of the fatherhood of God and of an incarnate Christ, who is both God and man and who has atoned for the sins of mankind by his suffering. We may say that Christianity has thus somewhat Āryanized the Semitic conception of God. But still in practice the idea of the transcendence of God is more prominent than that of immanence in Christianity, whereas in Hindu religious experience, especially in the experience of the saints of the Mahārāṣṭra, God is not a distant and awe-striking personality, but a familiar friend whom the saints claim to have seen with their eyes, heard with their ears and touched with their hands. Even in our philosophical religion God is not regarded as a distant principle, but as our own deeper self behind all the limitations of our individual minds and common to all of us.

In pointing out these two characteristic differences between the saints of Mahārāṣṭra and the Protestant leaders in Europe, Rānaḍe is, perhaps unconsciously, ac-

counting for the failure of the Samāj movement of the nineteenth century to catch the imagination of the people of India. For, unlike the Bhakti movements of the earlier periods of our history, the Brāhmo Samāj adopted and emphasized the Semitic elements in Christianity. It was intolerant and iconoclastic in its rigid monotheism and it over-emphasized divine transcendence. By insisting on a formless God and rejecting the doctrine of Avatārs, it did away with the principle of mediation between the finite and the infinite. It broke the bridge between man and God and reopened the yawning gulf between earth and heaven.

Another weakness of the Brāhmo Samāj movement is expressly pointed out by Rānaḍe in one of his early papers—*A Theist's Confession of Faith.* He complains that, even after fifty years of working history, the leaders of the movement are satisfied with two simple articles of faith, *viz.,* the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, and make no attempt at grasping all the great religious difficulties which have puzzled people in all ages and driven them to seek shelter in revelation. They seem to think that religion is entirely a matter of emotion and not at all of intellect, and therefore they have not taken the trouble to build up a body of doctrine embodying their solutions to the various religious problems that vex the souls of men.

To remove this reproach Rānaḍe somewhat boldly sets out and formulates what he calls the doctrines of "Pure Theism" in the form of thirty-nine articles. But these articles are so beset with honest doubts, so hedged round with conditions and so amply provided with checks, balances and reservations that one wonders whether any living church could ever grow out of them. It is not in this way that the great living faiths of the world have been established. Even "Pure Theism" cannot grow *in vacuo,* holding allegiance to no authority, possessing no religious canon of its own and suspending

judgment on the most vital problems of existence here below.

For Rānaḍe declares that the origin of the world, the origin of man and the relation between God and creation and between spirit and matter are insoluble problems. He declares that the origin of evil, the imperfect liberty of man, the state of the soul after its separation from the body and of its pre-existence are again problems the solutions of which can never be free from perplexing doubts. He says:—

"Whether the soul before tenanting this body has passed through previous stages of existence and must pass through successive transmigrations hereafter, the quality of which is determined by its conduct in this life, or whether the soul lies in a state of dormancy till the resurrection day, when it shall rise up with its human body for judgment, or whether it lies in a state of purgatory undergoing purification as also what kind of organism our spiritual being is clothed with and what the pleasures and pains with which it is surrounded in its after existence are, these are problems over which hangs a dark veil which we are forbidden to remove."[1]

He seems, on the other hand, to be quite sure that the soul is not identical with God, that God never incarnates, that there is no eternal punishment for any soul, that miracles are impossible, that salvation cannot be purchased through the superior merits of any Redeemer, that authority has no more potent claim in matters of religion than in kindred social and political sciences and that no book can ever be regarded as a revelation. Article XXXV about pilgrimages is typical of this commonsense theology, which is a parallel to what has been called moderatism in politics:—

"The Theist believes that the notion of local sanctity which induces men to go on pilgrimages has a foundation in reason, in that strange places, by their natural scenery or their historical associations, are oftentimes more fitted to move the religious passion or devotion in the soul than those with which men have grown familiar and this help to religion should not be neglected.

[1] Article XIV of *A Theist's Confession of Faith.*

At the same time this feeling of local sanctity is in great danger of dragging the soul into the bonds of fetishism and therefore must be kept under proper control."

And so is the Article XXXVI about gurus:—

"The Theist believes in the great influence for good which contact with superior or sanctified souls exerts in developing the religious temperament in us. At the same time the absolute necessity of a Guru or teacher, a mediator or a priest has been asserted in such extravagant terms in some systems of faith that one cannot protest too emphatically against the assumption that no man can save himself by his own single efforts"

No creed based on the principle of being "willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike, just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike," can ever satisfy the spiritual needs of men. Rānaḍe, no doubt, admits that the doctrines of Pure Theism have never in the past constituted the professed religion of any large section of men, but he thinks that that fact does not dispose of its claim in the future. Just as the rites of idolatry, propitiation of the gods by visible sacrifices and the duty of religious persecutions and many other religious beliefs have now, in spite of their long prescription, been banished from the advanced faiths of the world, so also, he believes, many of the faiths themselves as represented by separate churches may be banished, and in their place a universal Kingdom of God embodying the articles of Pure Theism may be established on earth below. "Nay more," he says, "there are manifest signs that, in a truer sense than at any time past, the Kingdom of God is near at hand." These words remind us of Keshub Chander Sen's prophecy, "Oh! The Bridegroom is coming." But probably it is not fair to judge Rānaḍe by this rather immature production of 1871 when he was hardly thirty. His more mature religious thought is contained in his papers on "The Philosophy of Indian Theism" and "Rām Mohun Roy" written twenty-five years later. In these his philosophical belief approximates to that of Rāmānuja,

zation. According to Rānaḍe "both are wanting in the love of municipal freedom, in the exercise of virtues necessary for civic life, and in the aptitude of mechanical skill, in the love of science and research, in the love of daring and adventurous discovery, the resolution to master difficulties and in chivalrous respect for womankind."

So the nation was now again going to school under the British to acquire these virtues which are so characteristic of Western civilization. Rānaḍe hopes that, when all this discipline is over, the chosen race will reach the promised land. And he describes the promised land thus:—

"With a liberated manhood, with buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly to all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and, lastly, with a love that overleaps all bounds, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny. This is the goal to be reached—this is the promised land"[1]

This line of thought was later taken up and developed by Rabīndranāth Tagore in his *Greater India.*

[1] Speech at the Social Conference, Calcutta, 1896.

CHAPTER IV

SWĀMĪ DAYĀNANDA AND THE ĀRYA SAMĀJ

In the *Satyartha Prakāśa* of Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī we have an interesting criticism of the Brāhmo Samāj which partly accounts for the founding of the Ārya Samāj on more nationalistic and indigenous lines. The Swāmī admits that the Brāhmos have saved a small number of people from embracing Christianity, that they have helped to abolish idolatry to some extent and that they have freed people in some measure from the shackles of false scriptures. But he complains that they are very much wanting in patriotism, that they have imitated Christians in many things and adopted some of their doctrines like the forgiveness of sins and, above all, that, instead of being proud of their country and the greatness of their forefathers, they run them down to their hearts' content and laud the Europeans to the skies in their lectures. The Swāmī says:—

"Though these men are born in Āryāvarta, have lived on its products and are still doing the same, yet they have renounced the religion of their forefathers and are, instead, inclined too much towards the foreign religions, call themselves scholars, while they are quite destitute of the indigenous Sanskrit learning, and, pluming themselves on their knowledge of English, have been precipitate in founding a new religion."[1]

We know, of course, that these strictures do not apply to Rām Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brāhmo Samāj, nor to a leader like Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore, but to Keshub Chander Sen and his immediate

[1] *The Light of Truth* (Madras Edition), p. 432.

followers who were the leading exponents of Brāhmoism when Swāmī Dayānanda started his public life. Lālā Lājpat Rāi gives the following picture of the religious state of the country at that time:—

"By the time Swāmī Dayānanda started his public life, Christianity had made great progress in India. The country was simply studded with Christian schools and colleges and covered with a network of Christian agencies. The voice of the Brāhmo Samāj was a mere wail in the wilderness. The Brāhmo leaders' chief weapon was rationalism, which could appeal but to a few. Even in the case of the few, the Brāhmo Samāj at that time was considered to be a kind of reformed or refined Christianity resembling more the Unitarian Church than the monotheism of the Vedas or the Vedicism of Rām Mohun Roy. Whatever little of Hinduism it contained in its original form gradually dropped off, as the leadership passed into hands which had grown strong on English food and English thought. This phase of Brāhmo teaching reached its zenith in the Christian rhapsodies of Bābū Keshub Chander Sen, whose teachings on Christ and Christianity left only a thin partition between orthodox Christianity and Brāhmoism".[1]

In this respect, therefore, the Ārya Samāj founded by Swāmī Dayānanda was a perfect contrast to the Brāhmo Samāj. First of all, like many great religious leaders in India, Swāmī Dayānanda was a saṁnyāsin and a great Sanskrit scholar. He took his stand on the infallible authority of the Veda. He believed in the doctrines of karma and rebirth. He stressed the old ideals of brahmacarya and saṁnyāsa. He insisted on the old rites of Upanayana and Homa. And, far from borrowing any forms of worship from alien religions, he was as fierce against Islam and Christianity as he was against what he considered the corruption of the pure Āryan faith in his own country. And, lastly, as he knew no English, his inspiration was derived entirely from indigenous sources. Moreover his appeal was addressed not to the educated few like that of the Brāhmo Samāj, but to the people at large.

[1] *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 240.

II

Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī's career (1824-1883) easily falls into four periods:—

(*i*) Early life (1824-45); (*ii*) Period of Wanderings (1845-60); (*iii*) Period of Lectures and Discussions with various groups (1860-75); (*iv*) The founding of the Ārya Samāj and the organizing of its work in various places (1875-1883).

(*i*) Swāmī Dayānanda, before he became a saṁnyāsin, bore the name of Mūla Śaṁkar. He was born in 1824 in the native state of Morvi in Kathiawar, Gujarat. His father, Ambā Śaṁkar, was an orthodox Brāhman and a devout worshipper of Śiva. Mūla Śaṁkar's Sanskrit education began at five and he was invested with the sacred thread in his eighth year. By the time he was fourteen he had committed to memory several parts of the Veda and made considerable progress in Sanskrit grammar. In his fourteenth year occurred the first crisis in his life. The incident is well known, as it is vividly described in his autobiography. On the Śivarātri day of that year he was commanded by his father to participate in the night's long vigil in the temple of Śiva. His father and the servants of the temple soon fell asleep, and the young lad was left to watch alone. He now and then bathed his eyes with cold water and heroically withstood the temptation to go to sleep. Then came a hideous doubt in his mind whether the stone image of Śiva before him bestriding a bull and holding a trident in its hand and beating a drum, and allowing live rats to crawl over its body—whether this idol could be the Lord of Kailās, the Great Deity, the Supreme Being. He roused his father from his sleep and asked him to clear his doubts and enlighten him. His father in the usual way explained that Śiva could not be perceived directly in this Kali Yuga, and hence people had to resort to the idol representing the God and conse-

crated by Vedic mantras for purposes of worship. The boy was not satisfied with the explanation and begged to be allowed to go home. His father consented. The boy went home and ate the sweetmeats given by his mother and fell into a profound sleep. Thus, against the injunctions of his father, he deliberately broke his fast and put an end to his vigil, as he had made up his mind to break away once and for all from idol-worship. The results of this incident, says Farquhar, are visible in the crusade of the Ārya Samāj against idolatry to this day. And the Ārya Samājists all over the country, says Lājpat Rāi, celebrate the night of Śivarātri as the anniversary of Dayānanda's enlightenment. And even the non-Āryas join in the celebrations with pride and pleasure. Yes, even those Hindus who still use idols for worship have no quarrel with those who break away from them, for Hinduism teaches that all idols have finally to be transcended—even that subtle idol we call Īśvara whom we make with our minds as we make the stone image with our hands and whom we, being persons ourselves, inevitably endow with a personality. That Swāmī Dayānanda at the age of fourteen should feel a revulsion from the cruder form of worship is perhaps natural; but that he should make his juvenile experience the starting point of a wholesale attack on idol-worship in his later life, regardless of the experiences and feelings of millions of Hindus, shows both the strength and the weakness of the Samāj he founded.

The other two incidents of his early life that left a mark on his mind are two deaths—the death of his sister and the death of his uncle whom he had loved most passionately. These painful experiences made him resolve to attain mukti through the practice of yoga and thus triumph over death. Meanwhile he went on with his studies with redoubled energy. We are told that by fourteen he knew the whole Yajur-Veda Samhitā by heart and also portions of the other three Vedas. He

acquired a good knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, logic and literature. His parents came to know his mind and were determined to get him married so that he might not renounce the world and practise yoga. When his protests were of no avail and a day was fixed for his wedding he fled from his home and became a sādhu and changed his name. Thus the first period of his life came to a close.

(*ii*) The second period extending over fifteen years consists of wanderings in search of truth and knowledge. It was during this time that he practised yoga and learnt Vedānta philosophy. In search of teachers who could teach him these he wandered from place to place, penetrated to the innermost recesses of the Himālayas and the Vindhyas, crossed and recrossed the river valleys of the Ganges and the Narmadā and ascended the highest accessible peaks of the hills he came across. "For days," says Lājpat Rāi, "he ate nothing but wild fruits, for months he lived on milk only and sometimes for years he spoke no language but Sanskrit". He now became a full-blown saṁnyāsin of the Saraswatī order and throughout his life he was true to the stern ideals of saṁnyāsa. Not even his worst enemies who hated his teachings could say a word against the purity of his life. At this time he had an insatiable thirst for true knowledge. He lost faith in Vedānta philosophy and came to believe in the reality of the world, the personality of God and the distinctness of the soul. We are told that he also lost faith in yogic practices. For he once cut open a corpse that came floating down a river and found that the descriptions of the nervous system given in books on yoga were false. But, as we shall see, his philosophic standpoint was still that of Sāṁkhya-Yoga.

After fifteen years of restless wanderings from place to place and from teacher to teacher, Dayānanda reached Muttra and found a Guru after his own heart.

This was a blind saṁnyāsin called Virajānanda, a great authority on Sanskrit grammar and a man of heroic mould. Lājpat Rāi gives the following description of this man:—

"Virajānanda had outgrown his education. His hatred of image worship and of the traditional system of teaching was a consuming fire. He had the intolerance of the true iconoclast. His soul was full of the purity and greatness of the past. By incessant labour and constant concentration of mind he had acquired a mastery of Sanskrit language and literature, and of all the intellectual treasure therein, such as had no equal, no rival, in that part of India in his time. . . . His denunciation of the popular gods, of the popular modes of worship and of the popular methods of teaching was trenchant and merciless. He spared no one and in consequence was in his turn intensely hated and denounced by the teachers of popular Hinduism and their patrons. Yet such was the prestige of his character, his reputation and his learning that, in spite of his blindness, students flocked to him for teachings, though few could stay long enough to receive the full benefit thereof, since his temper was rather sharp".[1]

This man's influence on Dayānanda was permanent. It was certainly he who made clear to the young man his mission in life. The meeting of these two kindred souls in 1860 brings the second period of Dayānanda's life to a close.

(*iii*) Dayānanda stayed with his Guru for two and a half years at Muttra. He was taught to believe implicitly in the authority of the ancient Sanskrit books and despise all modern religious books as worthless. In fact, before he was accepted as a disciple he was asked to throw all modern books into the Jumna. And he had also to undergo corporal punishment at the hands of his blind, irritable master. But Dayānanda bore all this, served his Guru faithfully and finished his course. On the day of leave-taking the fee demanded by Virajānanda was a solemn pledge on the part of his pupil to devote his life to the dissemination of truth and to

[1] *The Ārya Samāj*, p. 29.

wage incessant war on the falsehoods of Purāṇic Hinduism and restore the true teaching of the Vedas. His words were:—

"The Vedas have long ceased to be taught in Bhāratavarsa; go and teach them, teach the true Śāstras and dispel by their light the darkness which the false creeds have given birth to."

Thus, it is said, Dayānanda passed from the Purāṇic Hinduism of his boyhood to the Vedāntic Hinduism of his youth and thence to the Vedic Hinduism of his manhood.

The next twelve years of Dayānanda's life were years of preparation for the tremendous task set before him. He left his master in 1863 and visited Āgra, Gwalior, Jeypore, Pushker, Ajmere and Hardwar—holding discussions with pandits and fearlessly criticizing orthodox opinions and denouncing idolatry. Dayānanda was himself a pandit, his strong points being his knowledge of the Vedas and Sanskrit grammar. By his novel exposition of the Vedas he created a commotion in the pandit world. With his striking features, his powerfully built body, his remarkable voice and his fluent Sanskrit, he attracted thousands of people to his meetings. His tour in the North-West Provinces of his day reminds one of the tour of Śaṁkara, the great saṁnyāsin and Sanskrit scholar of the ninth century, who went about challenging pandits to come and discuss religious questions with him and either to accept his views or to convert him to their own. Matters came to a head in Benares, which Dayānanda reached in 1869. The Mahārājāh of Benares called upon the orthodox pandits to meet the pandit reformer and refute him. The disputation took place on the 17th November, 1869 in the place where Dayānanda had taken his abode. It lasted four hours. The Rājāh himself presided over the meeting. All the most reputed pandits were present and a large concourse of people had gathered and a detachment of policemen guarded the

entrance to the garden against a dense crowd outside which strove to get in. But everything went off well. There was no violence of any kind, except that at the end Dayānanda was loudly jeered by the orthodox party, who secured a rather doubtful victory. The discussion centred round two points—the extent of the Hindu canon and the truth of idol-worship. Dayānanda contended that the only authoritative writings which should be acknowledged as Śāstras are the Vedas and Vedāṅgas. He rejected as false the six Darśanas and the eighteen Purāṇas. He pleaded that image-worship had no Vedic sanction. It had only Purāṇic sanction and had therefore to be rejected. The discussion at last narrowed down to the question whether the Purāṇas were authoritative or not. One of the pandits assembled quoted a text from a Brāhmaṇa of the Sāma Veda, which laid down that, on the completion of a Yajña on the tenth day, the reading of the Purāṇas should be heard, and asked whether Purānas were not authoritative, as they happened to be mentioned in the Veda itself. The reformer was non-plussed for a moment. His opponents waited for two minutes for an answer and, finding none, rose and jeered and went away, saying that Dayānanda was defeated. A European Christian Missionary, who was an eye-witness to the whole scene, says that this victory, whether gotten ill or well, had certainly the result the orthodox party desired. The multitudes who had flocked to see and hear Dayānanda dwindled down afterwards to a few persons, and the reformer was practically ex-communicated. Dayānanda, no doubt, sent a written defence to his opponents, but no notice was taken of him. And after a month he printed an account of his doctrines and issued a public challenge to his opponents to come and answer him, but again no notice was taken. Dayānanda remained about a month more in Benares and then left it for Allāhābād.

After visiting Allāhābād, Mirzāpūr, Pātna, Mon-

ghyr, Bhāgalpore and other towns, he reached Calcutta in December, 1872. Here he was cordially received by the leaders of the Brāhmo Samāj—Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen. They were greatly impressed by Dayānanda's command over Sanskrit and his enlightened views about idol-worship and the caste system. But they could not agree with him on the two cardinal points of his faith—the infallibility of the Vedas and the rebirth of souls. So he parted company with them and proceeded to Bombay. The Brāhmo leaders had, however, exerted a permanent influence on him in one particular. It was on the advice of Keshub Chander Sen that Dayānanda gave up delivering his lectures in Sanskrit and began to use Hindī, the language of the people. This step brought him at once into direct contact with the common people and made his teaching more wide-spread. Dayānanda reached Bombay in October, 1874. A few months before, he had given the manuscript of his *magnum opus,* the *Satyārtha Prakāśa,* for publication, At Bombay his mission took a definite shape and the Ārya Samāj was established on the 10th day of April, 1875.

(*iv*) With the establishment of the Ārya Samāj the third period in Dayānanda's life comes to a close. The rest of his life was spent in organizing its branches in various places and in translating the Vedas into Hindī and writing his Hindī commentary on the Ṛg Veda. In Bombay Dayānanda came into contact with the members of the Prārthanā Samāj. But, as this Samāj was only a replica of the Brāhmo Samāj, he could not work with them. From Bombay he again proceeded to Benares and, after touring in the United Provinces for some time, he arrived in Delhi in 1877 to meet all the notable personages who had assembled there for the imperial Durbar, where Queen Victoria was to be proclaimed the Empress of India. Here he tried in vain to organize an all-India movement for the religious

and social regeneration of the country. After the Durbar he went to Chandpore, where a conference was held of the three great religions—Hinduism, Christianity and Islam—with the avowed object of finding out the truth. But, after two days' sittings, the conference dispersed without achieving anything. From there Dayānanda proceeded to the Punjab, accepting the invitation of the Hindus of the place, who had met him at Delhi. He reached Lahore in 1877. Here his success was so great that he was able in two months to establish a branch of the Ārya Samāj. This branch became in a short time the Head Quarters of the Samāj and has since remained so. And the revised creed adopted in Lahore became the creed of all the branches throughout India. Other cities in the Punjab soon followed the example of Lahore and branches were established in Amritsar, Ferozpore, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujranwāla, Multān and other places. But all this work was not done without opposition. Throughout his career Dayānanda had to bear abuse, calumny, violence and even attempts on his life. But his courage, the purity of his character and his single-minded devotion to his purpose bore down all opposition. About this time he came into contact with the leaders of the Theosophical Society. During 1878 letters passed between him and Colonel Olcott, who was then in America. It was proposed by Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky that the Theosophical Society should be united with the Ārya Samāj and that the Theosophists, who now turned to the East for enlightenment and who would place themselves under Dayānanda's instructions, should be allowed to help him in the accomplishment of the holy work in which he was engaged. The Swāmī consented. The founders of the Theosophical Society came to India and met the founder of the Ārya Samāj for the first time at Saharanpore in May, 1877. The meeting was cordial and they all proceeded to Meerut, where the Ārya Samājists gave a feast in

honour of the American visitors. But in a year or two differences arose between the Samāj and the Society, and in 1881 there was a complete rupture. All the same, both Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott have left us the most glowing accounts of Dayānanda's character and personality. Madame Blavatsky wrote:—

"Truly, a marble stone could not be less moved by the raging wrath of the crowd. We saw him once at work. He sent away all his faithful followers and forbade them either to watch over him or defend him and stood alone before the infuriated crowd facing calmly the monster, ready to spring upon him and tear him to pieces.

"It is perfectly certain that India never saw a more learned Sanskrit scholar, a deeper metaphysician, a more wonderful orator and a more fearless denunciator of any evil than Dayānanda since the time of Śamkarācārya."[1]

The tribute paid to the Swāmī after his death by *The Theosophist,* the official organ of the Theosophical Society, is too long to be quoted here. But a few sentences might be given to show the impression he created in the minds of the Theosophists.

"All differences have been burnt with his body. . . . We remember only the grand virtues and noble qualities of our former colleague and teacher and late antagonist. We bear in mind but his life-long devotion to the cause of the Āryan regeneration, his ardent love for the philosophy of his forefathers, his relentless, untiring zeal in the work of the projected social and religious reforms. . . He threw, as it were, a bombshell in the midst of the stagnant masses of degenerated Hinduism and fired, with love for the teachings of Ṛsis and Vedic learning, the hearts of all who were drawn within the influence of his eloquent oratory. Certainly there was no better or grander orator in Hindī and Sanskrit throughout the length and breadth of this land".

In the last years of his life Dayānanda was busy touring through the states of Rājputāna and delivering his message. Though he had paid flying visits to some of the states before, he began systematic work there only in 1881. He visited Masuda, Nabira, Chittore and

[1] *The Caves and Jungles of Hindustan*

Indore in the first trip; and Udaipur, Shahpore and Jodhpur in the second. At Jodhpur he fell ill. He was then removed to Mount Ābu and afterwards to Ajmere, where he passed away on the 30th October, 1883, at the age of fifty-nine. It is believed that he was poisoned by a concubine of the Mahārājah of Jodhpur, whose immorality he had fearlessly denounced.

III

Swāmi Dayānanda gives a brief summary of his beliefs at the end of his great work, the *Satyārtha Prakāśa*. The summary consists of fifty-one articles of faith. We may analyse these under the following five heads:—

(1) His authorities; (2) His philosophy; (3) His ethics; (4) His sādhanas; and (5) His rituals.

(1) Dayānanda believes that the four Vedas are the word of God. They are absolutely free from error and are an authority unto themselves. They do not stand in need of any other book to uphold their authority. They comprise what is known as the Saṁhitā or the Mantra portion only. The Brāhmaṇas, the six Vedāṅgas, the six Upāṅgas, the four Upavedas and the eleven hundred and twenty-seven Śākhas are all expositions of the Vedic texts. Therefore he looks upon them as works of a dependent character. They are held to be authoritative only in so far as they conform to the teachings of the Vedas. He would entirely reject whatever passages in these works are opposed to Vedic injunctions. According to him, the words Purāṇas, Itihāsas, Kalpas, Gāthās mean only Brāhmaṇas written by great Ṛṣis. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa and other Purāṇas are not real Purāṇas.

(2) He who is called Brahman or the Most High or Paramātman, the Supreme Spirit who permeates the whole universe, who is a personification of Sat, Cit, Ānanda, who is omniscient, formleṣs, all-pervading, unborn, infinite, almighty, just and merciful, who creates,

sustains and dissolves the universe and who awards all souls the fruit of their deeds in accordance with the requirements of absolute justice—He is the Great God.

The immortal, eternal entity which is endowed with attraction and repulsion, with consciousness and feelings of pleasure and pain and whose capacity for knowledge is limited is called the soul.

God and the soul are two distinct entities by virtue of their being different in nature and of their being possessed of dissimilar attributes and characteristics. They are, however, inseparable from each other, being related to each other as the pervader and the pervaded. God and the soul are to each other as the space and an object in space. Prakṛti is the material cause of the universe. God, the soul and prakṛti—these three are beginningless, as in the Yoga system of philosophy. They and their attributes, characteristics and nature are eternal. The world is created by God out of Prakṛti. The purpose of creation is the essential and natural exercise of the creative energy of the Deity. The soul is in bondage in this world on account of ignorance, which is the source of sin. It is ignorance that leads man to worship objects other than God, obscures his intellectual faculties and produces pain and suffering as results. Salvation consists in the emancipation of the soul from pain and suffering and a career of freedom in the All-prevading God and His immense creation for a fixed period of time and the resumption of earthly life after the expiration of the period. The soul is a free agent to do deeds, but is subservient to God in reaping the fruits thereof. Svarga is the enjoyment of extreme happiness and the attainment of the means thereof; and Naraka is the undergoing of extreme suffering and the possession of the means thereof.

(3) Dharma is the practice of equitable justice together with that of truthfulness in word, deed and

thought and the like virtues—in a word, that which is in conformity with the will of God as embodied in the Vedas. Righteously acquired wealth alone constitutes *artha,* while that which is acquired by foul means is *anartha.* The enjoyment of legitimate desires with the help of honestly acquired wealth constitutes *kāma.* The class and order, *i.e.,* the varṇa and āśrama of an individual should be determined by his merits. Those who are wise and learned are *devas,* and therefore devapūja is honour shown to the wise and the learned—to one's father and mother, to the teacher, to a just ruler, to those who lead righteous lives, to women who are faithful to their husbands and to men who are faithful to their wives. Those who are foolish and ignorant are *asuras,* those who are wicked and sinful are *rākṣasas* and those who are filthy in their habits are *piśācas.* Marriage is the union of a man and a woman through mutual consent in accordance with the laws laid down by the Vedas and Śāstras. And *niyoga,* in accordance with ancient practice, is a temporary union for the raising of issue—to be resorted to only in extreme cases.

(4) The means of salvation are the worship of God, the performance of righteous deeds, the acquisition of true knowledge by the practice of brahmacarya, the society of the wise and the learned, purity of thought, a life of activity, etc.

In the worship of God three stages are recognized—*stuti, prārthanā* and *upāsana.* Stuti or glorification consists in praising the attributes and powers of God with a view to fixing them in our minds and cultivating love towards God. Prārthanā is praying to God for the gift of the highest knowledge and other blessings. Upāsana or communion consists in conforming to the Divine Spirit in purity and holiness and in feeling the presence of the Deity in our heart through the practice of Yoga, which enables us to have direct cognition of God. Each of these three is divided into the Saguṇa and the Nirguṇa

variety. Saguṇa Upāsana consists in resigning oneself to God and His will, realizing Him as possessed of attributes that are in harmony with His Nature, while Nirguṇa Upāsana consists in resigning oneself to God and His will, realizing Him as devoid of attributes that are foreign to his nature.

(5) Saṁskāras are those rites which contribute to the physical, mental and spiritual improvement of man. From conception to cremation, there are sixteen saṁskāras altogether. Their due and proper observance is obligatory on all. But nothing should be done for the departed after cremation.

Agnihotra (fire-offering) is commendable because it contributes to the purification of air and vegetables and directly promotes the well-being of all sentient creatures. The performance of Yajña (sacrifice) and the resort to Tīrthas (sacred places) are, however, lifted from the realm of rituals to that of morals. For Yajña consists in showing due respect to the wise and the learned, in the proper application of the principles of chemistry and the physical and mechanical sciences to the affairs of life and in the dissemination of knowledge and culture. And Tīrthas are not the so-called sacred places on land or water to which pilgrims go. They are literally the means by which the ocean of misery is crossed. They consist in the practice of truthfulness in speech, in the acquisition of true knowledge, in cultivating the society of the wise, in the practice of the so-called *yamas,* in the diffusion of knowledge and in the performance of similar good works.

It is in accordance with these articles of faith that the creed of the Ārya Samāj has been drawn up. The creed consisted of twenty-eight principles when the Samāj was founded at Bombay in 1875. But it was revised at Lahore in 1877 and reduced to *ten* principles. To these every Samājist is required to subscribe when he applies for membership. Of these ten prin-

ciples eight are general moral maxims to which no one can have any objection. Of the remaining two one asserts the monotheistic faith of the Samāj that to God alone worship is due, and the other asserts that the Vedas are the books of true knowledge and that it is the paramount duty of every Ārya to read them and teach them to others. So the infallibility of the Veda is the only dogma in the creed of the Samāj. But within ten years of the Founder's death a great controversy arose as to how far the opinions expressed by him were binding on the Ārya Samāj as a body. The conservatives maintained that the opinions of Dayānanda were as binding as the official creed of the Samāj, some even maintaining that he was as infallible as the Veda, while the progressive party maintained that the teachings of Dayānanda were not binding on the members of the Samāj and that the Samāj had no right to question the individual's right of private judgment in matters not covered by the ten principles in the creed. This difference of opinion arose in the course of discussion about two practical matters:—(1) whether the education imparted in the Dayānanda Anglo-Vedic College founded in 1886 should be on modern lines or on ancient Hindu lines and (2) whether the members of the Ārya Samāj should be strictly vegetarian or not. The first president of the Samāj, Mulrāj, who had been in the confidence of the Founder up to the latter's death, was on the side of the progressive party and declared that the Founder had no intention of imposing any of his beliefs on the members of the Samāj beyond what was contained in the ten principles of the official creed. But, as it was impossible to carry on propaganda for the Samāj with a creed too catholic and vague, the beliefs of Dayānanda, as expressed in his books, have been tacitly accepted as the doctrines of the Ārya Samāj. Hence the Samāj insists not only on the infallibility of the Veda, but also on Karma and Rebirth, the sanctity of the cow, the

efficacy of Homa and the importance of Saṁskāras, and condemns in unequivocal terms idolatry, animal sacrifices, ancestor-worship, pilgrimages, priest-craft, offerings in temples, the caste system, untouchability and child marriages, as these have no Vedic sanction. It aims at a universal church without distinctions of caste or race—a church based on the authority of the Veda. Naturally, therefore, everything depends on Dayānanda's interpretation of the Veda.

IV

Lājpat Rāi says that neither the Ārya Samāj nor its Founder ever claimed that the latter's interpretation of the Vedas was infallible. Indeed many European and Indian scholars have condemned it as an extreme case of text-torturing. It is said that Swāmī Dayānanda had made up his mind independently about certain religious doctrines and social ideals and tried to get support for them in the Vedic mantras and that he went ridiculously too far in trying to read even modern scientific discoveries into the ancient hymns. For he taught that the Veda was the fountain-head not only of all the religions of the world, but also of all modern sciences. He found a correspondence between the Book of Nature and the Veda, the Book of God. But we must remember that Max Müller, writing in 1891, held the view that the interpretation of the Veda would continue to occupy scholars "*for centuries to come*". And Dr. Ānanda Coomāraswāmy, writing in 1933 in his "A New Approach to the Vedas", says, "Existing translations of Vedic texts, however etymologically 'accurate', are too often unintelligible or unconvincing, sometimes admittedly unintelligible to the translator himself". And so there is wide scope for differences in interpretation. The traditional helps that we have for interpreting the Veda are the pre-Pāṇinian Yāska's *Nirukta,* which is only a glossary, and

the fourteenth century commentary of Sāyaṇa and two or three fragmentary commentaries by the predecessors of Sāyaṇa. But all these attempt only at a literal meaning of the mantras. So interpreted, the Vedas reduce themselves to books of primitive ritual and mythology. In fact, all European scholars look upon them as nothing more than that. If really the Vedas are nothing more than books of primitive ritual and mythology, how can we understand the elaborate Hindu theory about the eternity, the impersonality and the infallibility of the Veda? There is every reason to believe that there is a deep mysticism behind the complex symbolism of the Vedic hymns. Just as the study of comparative philology and comparative mythology is likely to throw light on some of the ancient Sanskrit words and names used in the mantras, so also a study of comparative mysticism and symbolism is likely, as Dr. Ānanda Coomāraswāmy believes, to throw light on the spiritual experiences of the Vedic poets. It is this mystical side that was afterwards developed in the Upaniṣads, as the ritualistic side was developed in the Brāhmanas. Therefore the instinct of Swāmī Dayānanda as well as that of the orthodox Hindu religious tradition may be quite correct in seizing upon the Veda as the Book of Life, as the Rock of Ages. We have ample evidence for believing that the Vedic hymns are chanted to the one Deity under many names and that they deal with the laws that underlie the relationship between man and God as well as the relationship between Nature and God. At any rate, Śrī Aurobindo is of opinion that, far from over-estimating the importance of the Vedas, Dayānanda has rather under-estimated it. And our regret is rather that Dayānanda has not sufficiently emphasized the importance of the Upaniṣads, which explain and amplify what is really valuable in the Saṁhitā, and that he has not recognized the authoritativeness of a scripture like the Gītā, which is the essence of all the

Upaniṣads, because he was apparently repelled by the Purāṇic pictures of Kṛṣṇa given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata. He could have strengthend his hands a thousandfold if he had included the Gītā in his canon and rightly interpreted its dynamic gospel of action so congenial to his own temper and outlook. As it is, Dayānanda arbitrarily limited the extent of the Hindu religious canon and thus to a certain extent stultified himself, as the leaders of the Brāhmo Samāj stultified themselves by their blatant rationalism and the right of private individual judgment at every step in going through the Hindu scriptures.* But probably the very limitation of his canon added to the powerfulness of his message and served his immediate purpose of purifying Hinduism and bringing all Hindus under one banner and enabling them to ward off the attacks of alien religions in India. For there is no doubt that the Ārya Samāj which Dayānanda founded is the church militant in the bosom of Hinduism. And it would ill become any patriotic Hindu to belittle the importance of the work done by him. Apart from laying its axe at the root of the most crying evils in the Hindu fold and providing all classes in it with a rallying cry, the Ārya Samāj to-day connotes three far-reaching movements—Śuddhi, Saṅghatan and a system of education.

Śuddhi is the name given to the purification ceremony by which non-Hindus are converted to Hinduism and taken into the Hindu fold. By this means the Samāj not only invests the depressed classes and untouchables with the sacred thread and gives them equal status with other Hindus, but also reclaims many Hindus who were formerly converted to Islam and Christianity. History shows that Hinduism in its days of strength took into its fold unhesitatingly thousands of men of alien tribes and nations and accorded to some of them even high social status. In the present era of expansion the Ārya Samāj in its programme of

Śuddhi is only following in the footsteps of the great Hindu leaders and statesmen of ancient times.

The word Saṅghaṭan means union. Therefore, it implies in the programme of the Ārya Samāj the organization of Hindus for self-defence. No Hindu should take lying down the insults hurled against his religion by the preachers of other religions. Nay, more. The Hindus should cultivate a militant spirit and go and meet the enemy and attack him in his stronghold. Swāmī Dayānanda in his *Satyārtha Prakāśa* is as unsparing in his criticism of Islam and Christianity as he is of Purāṇic Hinduism. Some people may regret the tone of this criticism. But Dayānanda believed in paying the aggressor in his own coin. Following his example, the Ārya Samāj carries on a vigorous propaganda against Islam and Christianity, tries to reconvert all those Hindus who have been converted to these faiths and is ready even to sacrifice the lives of its members in defence of Hindu society and religion. This militant spirit of the Samāj has introduced into Hindu society a tone of manliness and a sense of self-respect which it had lost during centuries of Muslim rule.

Lastly, a system of national education was emphasized by Swāmī Dayānanda throughout his stormy career. In every place he visited he pleaded for the establishment of Sanskrit schools and the teaching of the Veda. In the official creed of the Ārya Samāj consisting of ten principles, the eighth principle lays down that ignorance must be dispelled and knowledge diffused. Accordingly, the Samāj has been engaged in educational as well as religious propaganda. Two great monuments of their educational activity are the well-known Dayānanda Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore and the Gurukula at Kangri. The avowed aims of the former are (1) to encourage, improve and enforce the study of Hindu Literature, (2) to encourage and enforce the study of classical Sanskrit and of the Vedas,

(3) to encourage and enforce the study of English Literature and sciences, both theoretical and applied, and (4) to give technical education in so far as it is not inconsistent with the above objects. And the principles on which the College is conducted are (1) that no non-Hindus are to be associated with its management, (2) that the teaching is to be done exclusively by Indians, (3) that no monetary assistance is to be sought from the Government, (4) that the fees are to be as low as possible, and (5) that the spirit of self-sacrifice and patriotism should animate the members of the staff. The institution has been a splendid success. It is a great practical demonstration of purely indigenous enterprise. However, some of those who took part in the founding of this institution in 1886 found within a few years that the system of education obtaining here was not exactly after their heart. Their idea was to establish a system of education propounded by Dayānanda in his books. We have already seen that on the question of education as well as on the question of vegetarianism there was a split in the Ārya Samāj. It is the vegetarian party that was dissatisfied with the type of education imparted in the D.A.V. College and established the Gurukula in 1902 at Kangri with the avowed aim of reviving the ancient institution of brahmacarya. This institution will ever be associated with the name of Mahātmā Munshi Rām, later known as Swāmī Śraddhānanda, as the other institution will ever be associated with that of Lālā Hansrāj. It is located in a large tract of land, about 900 acres, three miles below Hardwār. Here boys are admitted when they are only seven or eight, and on entering they have to take a vow of poverty and chastity and obedience for sixteen years, during which they are not allowed to visit their homes, except under urgent and exceptional circumstances. The medium of instruction is Hindī. English is compulsory in the higher classes, but the greatest attention is paid to Sanskrit and to moral and religious instruction. It is

said that boys in the tenth year of the course are as well acquainted with Sanskrit as most M.A.'s are with English. The D.A.V. College and the Gurukula are boys' institutions. For girls there is a college called Kanyā Vidyāmahālaya at Jullundher, which is associated with the name Lālā Deva Rāj. Besides these colleges, there are a large number of primary and secondary schools, both for boys and for girls.

V[1]

We have seen how there was a split in the Ārya Samāj in 1893. Though at times the sectional feelings between the two parties—known as non-vegetarian and vegetarian, or as College and Gurukul, or as Cultured and Mahātmite parties—flared up into wordy warfare and there were mutual recriminations, normally each party pursued its own ideal and tried to carry out its own programme. And they often united in the face of external danger to the Samāj as a whole. For instance, in 1897 when Pandit Lekh Rām was murdered by a Muslim, in 1903 when Christian Missionaries tried to use famine relief operations as agencies for making converts, in 1923 when the Samāj work among the depressed classes was threatened by the murder of Lālā Rām Chandra in Kashmir, and, above all, during the reconversion of more than 30,000 Malkāna Rajputs from Islam to Hinduism in 1923, the two sections of the Ārya Samāj co-operated and achieved remarkable results.

The reclamation of the Malkāna Rajputs forms a brilliant chapter in the history of Hinduism in modern times. The Malkānas were the descendants of Rajput converts to Islam made during the Muslim rule in India. But they were Muslims only in name. They retained their Hindu customs and manners. They still con-

[1] Most of the information given in this section is derived from *Mahātmā Hansrāj* by Śrī Rām Sharmā.

sidered themselves Rajputs and maintained their old caste organizations. Nevertheless they were regarded as Muslim by other Rajputs and excluded from the Rajput community. Towards the end of 1922, however, their readmission into the Hindu fold became a live question owing to the following circumstances.

In 1921 there was a Moplah rebellion in Malabar, Madras Presidency. The Moplahs were the descendants of Arab merchants who had settled on the West Coast centuries ago and married Hindu women whom they had converted to Islam. The unfortunate Khīlafāt agitation in 1920 roused the religious fanaticism of these people. They thought that a Muslim kingdom was going to be established in place of the British Government and declared a 'holy war' against all infidels. They murdered the Hindu police, looted Hindu houses, desecrated Hindu temples and converted, at the point of the sword, a large number of Hindus—more than three thousand according to some accounts. As soon as the facts were made public, relief measures were organized by the Servants of India Society and the local Congress Committees. But the question arose whether those who had been forcibly converted would lose caste and become non-Hindus or whether they could go back into the Hindu fold. Some political leaders feared that their reconversion might strike a blow at Hindu-Muslim unity and check the political progress of the country. But Lālā Hansrāj, the President of the Ārya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabhā, would not tolerate that kind of sloppy thinking. Though it was a far cry from the Punjab to Malabar, he stepped into the breach and issued an appeal for funds and sent Pandit Rishi Rām and other Ārya Samāj workers to organize relief and to make arrangements for the reconversion of the unfortunate Hindus, who had been forcibly converted to Islam. Several local Hindu leaders and religious heads also co-operated with the Ārya Samāj workers, and the con-

verted people were taken back into their respective castes in the Hindu fold.[1] It is these stirring events in Malabar in 1921 that made the reconversion of the Malkāna Rajputs a live question in 1922.

Here again it was the great Lālā Hansrāj that directed the movement. He was the head of the College section of the Ārya Samājists. But his efforts were ably seconded by Swāmī Śraddhānanda, the head of the Gurukul section of the Samāj. In fact, Swāmī Śraddhānanda was the President and Lālā Hansrāj was the Vice-President of the Bhāratīya Hindu Śuddhi Sabhā which was founded for this purpose at Āgra. The work that the Ārya Samājists had to do in this connection was enormous. The Malkānas lay scattered in more than four hundred villages in Rajputana and the United Provinces. All these villages had to be visited, the spirit of the Malkānas had to be roused and the orthodox Hindus living there had to be persuaded to take back the reconverted Malkānas into their respective subcastes on an equal footing. For it is to be remembered that the Malkāna Rajputs had to become Hindus with their caste status restored, and not Ārya Samājists with no caste distinctions. All the greater glory to Lālā Hansrāj, Swāmī Śraddhānanda and the other Ārya Samājists who worked hard not for the advancement of their own Samāj, but for the good of the parent Hindu community as a whole. They had to face the opposition of Muslim missionaries, who now awoke to what they called danger to Islam and tried to make the Malkānas conforming Muslims, so that they might be retained in the Muslim fold, and, when these attempts failed, tried to induce the orthodox Hindus, by appealing to their bigotry, to keep out the Malkānas, who had been regarded as outcastes for generations. And they had also to endure patiently the advice of some of our political leaders who

[1] "Two thousand and five hundred families who became Muslims were reconverted" *Origin, Scope and Mission of Ārya Samāj*, p. 117.

were afraid of the repercussions of the Śuddhi movement on Hindu-Muslim unity—advice which is given only to Hindus, when they try to reconvert their own brethren who have been forced to embrace Islam, and not to the Muslim or Christian Missionaries who freely go about converting Hindus to their own religions, often employing unfair means. But the task of persuading the conservative Rajput clans to take back the Malkānas into their fold proved the most difficult task of all. For there was no single organization for all Rajputs, with which negotiations could be carried on. Each sub-caste had its own organization and it had to be tackled separately. And sometimes the same sub-caste was spread over different localities, all of which had to be visited. But ignoring all difficulties and hardships, Lālā Hansrāj and his men threw themselves into the work and succeeded in securing their objects. And, at last, to set the seal of orthodoxy on what they had accomplished they called a general conference of all Rajputs. An unprecedented meeting of the Rajputs of all sub-castes and ranks, from the ruling princes to the village headmen, was held at Brindāban on the 30th and 31st of May 1923 and was presided over by Rājāh Sir Nahar Singh of Shahpura, the descendant of the renowned Mahārāna Pratāp. The Working Committee of the conference, consisting of a hundred Rajput leaders, had already met on the 29th and decided that the reconverted Malkānas should be admitted into the Rajput brotherhood and permitted to dine and smoke with all the other Rajputs. The full conference at its session on the 31st decided to endorse the resolution of the Working Committee and to implement it by a Sahabhoj or common dinner the next day, and it acknowledged with gratitude the work done by the Śuddhi Sabhā. Accordingly all the Rajputs assembled on the occasion, including the President, dined the next day with the converted Malkānas, who were thus led back into the Hindu fold by the self-denying labours

of Swāmī Śraddhānanda and Lālā Hansrāj. Three years later, Swāmī Śraddhānanda fell a martyr to the cause, when a Muslim fanatic sought for an interview and shot him dead in his sick bed at Delhi.

The murder of Swāmī Śraddhānanda in 1926 was not an isolated event. It was only the culmination of a series of attacks on the Ārya Samāj workers and of obstructions placed in the way of the religious activities of the Samāj. In fact, the twenties of the present century were a period of trial and tribulation for the Ārya Samāj. Its very success in Śuddhi work in Malabar, Rājputāna and the United Provinces roused the wrath of fanatical Muslims. And those who hoped to promote Hindu-Muslim unity, always by unilateral concessions, found fault with the Ārya Samāj for its propagandist activities, while the Government, in the interests of peace, often interfered even with its normal religious activities. And it was in the United Provinces that this interference was very noticeable. So much so that many enthusiasts in the Samāj felt that something should be done immediately to ventilate their grievances and establish their rights. In these circumstances, the International Āryan League decided to convene an all-India Āryan Congress at Delhi to consider the situation. The Congress met on November 4, 1927 and subsequent days. It was presided over by Lālā Hansrāj. Representatives from the various parts of the country including prominent Ārya Samājists like Lālā Lājpat Rāi and Lālā Dewān Chand attended it. Also many prominent Hindu leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Mālavīya were on the platform. The most important resolution before the Congress was about the remedies to be sought against the denial of religious liberty to the Ārya Samājists in various parts of the country. Many of the delegates assembled were for the immediate starting of Satyāgraha—Mahātmā Gāndhi's new spiritual method of redressing wrongs. But Lālā

Hansrāj, who, as the Principal of the D. A. V. College, Lahore, had stoutly opposed the application of non-co-operation to his institution in 1921, was against the adoption of any extreme measures. Therefore, after a good deal of discussion both in the subjects committee and in the open Congress, a compromise resolution was passed, empowering a newly appointed committee of sixteen members to decide the time and the occasion for starting Satyāgraha in any locality, and in the meanwhile calling upon the Ārya Samājists of India to enrol 10,000 volunteers and collect Rs. 50,000 for the purpose. It is noteworthy that even Lālā Lājpat Rāi, who had presided over the special session of the Indian National Congress, which sanctioned the policy of non-co-operation in 1920, now said that, in devising remedies for their wrongs, they should do nothing in haste which they might have to repent at leisure.

The Āryan Congress of 1927 was a great success as a demonstration of the feelings of the Ārya Samājists about the obstacles placed in their way, but its scheme of Satyāgraha came to nothing. Not that the Ārya Samājists were afraid of offering Satyāgraha and undergoing suffering, but that, in the opinion of their leaders, the situation in 1927 did not call for any extreme measures. The opportunity came twelve years later in 1939, and the Ārya Samājists acquitted themselves creditably. For, during that year, when they were forced to offer Satyāgraha[1] in the State of Hyderabad, which had put a ban on their preachers and congregations, no less than 12,000 Satyāgrahis courted arrest and about two dozen of them died in jails, till at last the Nizam's Government yielded to their demands, and the Satyāgraha movement was withdrawn on the 8th August, after eight months of fierce struggle, in which many orthodox Hindus had co-operated.

[1] See *"The Origin, Scope and Mission of the Ārya Samāj"* by Gangā Prasād Upādhyāya, p. 158.

The two sections of the Ārya Samāj mentioned above have drawn closer in recent years and their doctrinal differences, if any, have been obliterated. For, at a special conference, held at Delhi on the 27th March, 1934, of the Ārya Samājists of both sections from all over India, it was resolved "that in order to enter the Ārya Samāj and to remain there, it is essential, in addition to the ten principles, to believe also in and act according to those tenets which Swāmī Dayānanda has inculcated in his works on the basis of the Vedas."

VI

The Āryā Samāj, as we have said, is the church militant in the Hindu fold. It is a true expression of the militant personality of its founder. It has withstood persecution, as Dayānanda withstood persecution during his lifetime. Its philosophy may be inadequate, its cry of "Back to the Vedas" may do scant justice to the continuity of the Hindu spiritual tradition and its interpretation of the Veda may be arbitrary, but there is no denying the fact that it has played and is playing a glorious part in the regeneration of Hinduism in modern times. For it is much more vitally connected with Hinduism than the Brāhmo Samāj. Some of the members of the Brāhmo Samāj go to the extent of saying that they are not Hindus. But let us hear what Lālā Lājpat Rāi says of the Ārya Samāj and its connection with Hinduism. He says:—

"It is a champion of Hinduism in more senses than one. Its members are proud of Hinduism. They have no hesitation, and will never have any, in staking everything they possess in defence of the Hindu community. But the strength of the advocate lies in maintaining his independence, in spite of his identifying himself with the cause of his client."[1]

He goes on:—

[1] The *Ārya Samāj*, p. 277.

"Hinduism created the Ārya Samāj. Hinduism has vitality enough to save itself by other means, if the Ārya Samaj should fail it: but the death of the Ārya Samāj would be an everlasting shame to those on whom the mantle of Dayānanda has fallen".[1]

[1] The *Ārya Samāj*, p. 280.

CHAPTER V

ANNIE BESANT AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

One of the agencies which helped the revival of Hinduism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is that international association which is called the Theosophical Society with its headquarters at Adyar, near Madras. The unit of this organization is called a Theosophical Lodge consisting of not less than seven members. A group of such lodges, not less than seven in number, may constitute themselves into a national section or society. All such national societies and lodges constitute the General Society. The central ruling body of the whole organization is called the General Council. It consists of a President, a Vice-President, a Treasurer, a Recording Secretary, the Secretaries of the National Societies and five additional members elected by these secretaries.[1]

The history of the Theosophical Movement in modern times begins with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian lady, who was reputed to possess extraordinary occult powers. She states again and again in her writings—and her statement is repeated later by her disciple, Mrs. Besant—that she started the movement only at the bidding of a great Hierarchy of Adepts or Masters, living unseen somewhere in Tibet. It seems that, according to the orders of one of these Masters, Madame Blavatsky went first to Cairo in 1870, then to

[1] In 1942 there were 45 National Societies, 840 Lodges and about 28,000 members of the Theosophical Society throughout the world.

Paris and then to the United States of America in 1874 in order to create interest in the truths of Ancient Wisdom. At this time there was a great revival of interest in spiritualistic phenomena in the United States and there were investigations and discussions in newspapers as to whether the things revealed by mediums were genuine or false. Colonel Olcott was one of the investigators, and his record of investigations was afterwards published in the form of a book—*People from the other world.* Madame Blavatsky met Colonel Olcott for the first time on 17th October, 1874. Though the Colonel was interested in spiritualism, before he met Madame Blavatsky, he had no idea of the philosophy of occultism in which she had a firm faith. We have an indication of this faith in a note which she wrote at that time. Here she says:—

"The world is not prepared yet to understand the philosophy of occult sciences—let them assure themselves, first of all, that there are beings in an invisible world, whether spirits of the dead or elementals, and that there are hidden powers in man, which are capable of making a god of him on earth."[1]

While Madame Blavatsky was living in New York, Colonel Olcott and many others, who were interested in spiritualism and occult phenomena, used to meet her in her rooms. At one of these meetings on the 7th September 1875, Olcott suggested that a society might be formed for the purpose which they all had in view. The suggestion was approved by Madame Blavatsky, and then and there all the people present agreed to form a society. Subsequently it was resolved that the society should be called the Theosophical Society and that Colonel Olcott should be the first President and Madame Blavatsky the Corresponding Secretary. At first the objects of the Society were stated briefly as follows:—

"The objects of the Society are to collect and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the

[1] *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society,* p. 8.

universe."[1] But later this statement was considerably expanded as follows:—

"The objects of the Society are various. It influences its fellows to acquire an intimate knowledge of the natural law, especially its occult manifestations. . . . The Society teaches and expects its fellows to personally exemplify the highest morality and religious aspiration, to oppose the materialism of science and every form of dogmatic theology . . . to make known among Western Nations the long suppressed facts about Oriental religious philosophies, their ethics, chronology, esoterism, symbolism; to counteract as far as possible the efforts of Missionaries to delude the so-called "Heathen" and "Pagans" as to the real origin and dogmas of Christianity. . . . .; to disseminate a knowledge of the sublime teachings of that pure esoteric system of the archaic period which are mirrored in the oldest Vedas, and in the philosophy of Gautama Buddha, Zoroaster and Confucius; finally and chiefly, to aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity, wherein all good and pure men, of every race, shall recognize each other as the equal effects (upon this planet) of one Uncreate, Universal, Infinite and Everlasting Cause."[2]

During the first three years of the history of the Society there was not much activity. The informal gatherings, in Madame Blavatsky's rooms, of people interested in occultism continued, and Madame Blavatsky published her first great work—*Isis Unveiled*. Also correspondence was opened with Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī, the founder of the Ārya Samāj in India, and, as we have seen, a pact was formed between the Theosophical Society and the Ārya Samāj to work together for the revival of the ancient wisdom of the Vedas. Towards the close of 1878 the founders of the Theosophical Society, we are told, received orders from their Masters in Tibet to go to India for their work. Accordingly they arrived in Bombay on 16th February 1879, and were welcomed by the members of the Ārya Samāj. On arriving in India, Colonel Olcott quickly saw how he could help this country and reorganize Indian life on national lines

[1] *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society*, p. 23.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

and check the activities of Christian Missionaries. In the very first Convention held in Bombay that year, he spoke about the reform of education and the revival of Sanskrit learning and arranged for an exhibition of Indian arts and crafts. Next year he went to Ceylon on the invitation of the Buddhist High Priest, Sumaṅgala, the Principal of the Vidyodaya College for Buddhist priests in Colombo. Here both Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky took the Pañcaśīla, declared themselves Buddhists and threw themselves whole-heartedly into the movement for the revival of Buddhism. The Colonel then wrote his famous *Buddhist Catechism,* which became a textbook in all Buddhist schools that were organized by him throughout the island. He travelled from village to village in Ceylon, gave lectures and roused the people to the glories of their own religion. Thus he did for Buddhism in Ceylon what Mrs. Besant did later for Hinduism in India.

During 1882, the founders of the Theosophical Society made Adyar their headquarters and gathered many enthusiastic workers around them. Colonel Olcott always paid attention to the side of organization, while Madame Blavatsky paid attention to the side of occultism. She was said to be in communication with the Hierarchy of Masters, whose devoted servant she declared she was. Through her occult powers she could herself produce some occult phenomena, and also her Masters, it is said, gave her permission to use some of their own miraculous powers, so that she might carry conviction to the minds of people that this material visible world was not all. Some of these phenomena consisted in 'precipitating' letters, in producing material objects out of nothing and in getting messages out of ether. At this time several members of the Society are alleged to have received letters and messages from the Masters. While Theosophists believed that these phenomena and these letters were genuine, others began to

entertain suspicions about their origin, and so the Society for Psychical Research, London, deputed one Richard Hodgson to investigate the facts and send a report. He arrived in India, collected evidence, examined witnesses and reported that the letters had all been forged by Madame Blavatsky, that she was a charlatan and a trickster, and that Olcott and others were simply duped. At this juncture Madame Blavatsky fell ill and had to leave India suddenly. After some stay on the continent, she settled down in London in 1887 and wrote and published in two volumes her second great work—*The Secret Doctrine*. It was the task of reviewing this book for the "Review of Reviews", then edited by W. T. Stead, that proved a turning point in the stormy career of Mrs. Besant.

II

Mrs. Besant had separated from her husband and had been a leader in freethought, along with Charles Bradlaugh, and a socialist agitator and member of the Fabian Society, along with the Webbs and George Bernard Shaw. In her *Autobiography*[1] she vividly describes the effects of the reading of *The Secret Doctrine* on her mind and the results that followed:—

"A fortnight passed, and then Mr. Stead gave into my hands two large volumes. 'Can you review these? My young men all fight shy of them, but you are quite mad enough on these subjects to make something of them?' I took the books, they were the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* written by H. P. Blavatsky.

"Home I carried my burden, and sat me down to read. As I turned over page after page, the interest became absorbing; but how familiar it seemed; how my mind leapt forward to presage the conclusions, how natural it was, how coherent, how subtle and yet how

[1] *Autobiography*, Adyar Edition, 1939, pp. 440-445.

intelligble! I was dazzled, blinded by the light in which disjoined facts were seen as parts of a mighty whole and all my puzzles, problems, seemed to disappear . . . and in that flash of illumination I knew that the weary search was over and the very truth was found."

She wrote her review of the book and asked for an introduction to the author and went and saw Madame Blavatsky. At the second meeting she asked her about the Theosophical Society and said she wished to join it. Madame Blavatsky looked at her piercingly and said, "Have you read the report about me of the Society for Psychical Research?" Mrs. Besant replied, "No, I never heard of it, so far as I know." "Go and read it and if, after reading it, you come back—well". And nothing more did she say on the subject. Mrs. Besant borrowed a copy of the report and read and re-read it. She was unconvinced. She thought that the conclusions which Hodgson drew were preposterous. "Was the writer of *The Secret Doctrine* this miserable impostor, this accomplice of tricksters, this foul and loathsome deceiver, this conjuror with trap-doors and sliding panels? I laughed aloud at the absurdity and flung the Report aside . . . . . " The next day Mrs. Besant went to the Theosophical Publishing Company's office and signed an application[1] to be admitted as a Fellow of the Theosophical Society. She writes: "On receiving my diploma I betook myself to Lansdowne Road, where I found H. P. B. alone. I went over to her, bent down and kissed her, but said no word.

'You have joined the Society?'

'Yes.'

'You have read the Report?'

'Yes.'

'Well?'

"I knelt down before her and clasped her hand in mine looking straight into her eyes.

[1] Mrs. Besant joined the Theosophical Society on May 10, 1889.

'My answer is, will you accept me as your pupil, and give me the honour of proclaiming you my teacher in the face of the world?'

"Her stern, set face softened, the unwonted gleam of tears sprang to her eyes: then with a dignity more than regal, she placed her hand on my head—

'You are a noble woman. May Master bless you!'"

III

Madame Blavatsky had gathered round her in her rooms in London a band of disciples to whom she gave secret occult teachings with a view to bringing them into contact with the Hierarchy of Masters, and now Mrs. Besant joined this group. This is the beginning of the so-called E. S. These two initials first indicated the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society. But a year later the name was changed to the Eastern School of Theosophy.

In the Preliminary Memorandum issued in 1888 by Madame Blavatsky opening this section she says that the general purpose of the Esoteric Section is to prepare and fit students "for the study of practical occultism or Rāj Yoga." The real Head of the Section was a Master, of whom Madame Blavatsky was said to be the mouthpiece. Through her each member of the section would be brought more closely than hitherto under His influence and care, if found worthy of it. It was only by this select group of brave souls hungry for genuine spiritual development that the Theosophical Society could be brought back to its original lines.

Calling for applications to join this group, Madame Blavatsky gives us some interesting historical information in the following passage:—

"Let every member know, moreover, that the time for such priceless acquisition is limited. The writer of the present is old (she was then fifty-seven); her life is well-nigh worn out and she may be summoned "home" any day—almost any hour. And if her place is even filled up, perchance by another worthier and

more learned than herself, *still there remain but twelve years* (Italics are her own) to the last hour of the term—namely, till December the 31st, 1899. Those who will not have profited by the opportunity given to the world in every last quarter of a century, those who will not have reached a certain point of psychic and spiritual development or that point from which begins the cycle of adeptship, by that day—those will advance no further than the knowledge already acquired. No Master of Wisdom from the East will himself appear or send any one to Europe or America after that period, and the sluggards will have to renounce every chance of advancement in their present incarnation—until the year 1975. Such is the Law, for we are in *Kali Yuga*,—the Black Age—and the restrictions in this cycle, the first 5000 years of which will expire in 1897, are great and almost insuperable."

Colonel Olcott was at first opposed to this new venture of Madame Blavatsky, for he did not want to have a repetition of the events that led to Hodgson's Report. But we are told he had to give up his opposition, when a letter from the Master Himself was mysteriously 'precipitated' into his cabin while he was sailing for England from the Adyar Headquarters to meet Madame Blavatsky and discuss the question with her. The letter commanded him to confine himself to the administrative details of the Theosophical Society and to allow full freedom to Madame Blavatsky to develop the occult side.

"H.P.B. has next to no concern with administrative details and should be kept clear of them, so far as her strong nature can be controlled. But this *you must tell to all* with occult matters she has everything to do. We have *not* abandoned her. She is *not given* over to chelas. *She is our direct agent*"

So writes the Master in his own handwriting and in English. The letter has been published as Letter No. XIX in *Letters from the Masters of Wisdom, First Series*. The 'original' is now preserved at Adyar,

So the E. S. was continued. And when Madame Blavatsky died in 1891, Mrs. Besant, her apt pupil in these occult matters, became the head of it. She proved the greatest acquisition to the Theosophical Society. And

later on, when Colonel Olcott died in 1907, she became its President and remained its President till the day of her death in 1933.

IV

It is a strange fact that one of the most outstanding figures in the history of the Hindu Revival of the nineteenth century is this lady—Mrs. Annie Besant, the pupil of Madame Blavatsky. Though an Englishwoman technically by birth and a free thinker in her opinions before she joined the Theosophical Society, she passionately claimed in later life that she was a Hindu in her former birth and that she remained a Hindu at heart. There is a sublime pathos as well as passion in all her references to her love of India, which she looked upon as her own motherland, to her love of the Indian people, whom she looked upon as her own people, and to her love of Hinduism and Hindu scriptures, which she looked upon as a sacred heritage and, above all, in her devotion to that most baffling Beloved of the Hindus—the Avatār of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

Mrs. Besant was invited to come to India to attend the Theosophical Conference in 1892 and from her reply[1] we see that already the love of India had taken possession of her heart. She wrote:—

"Ere long I hope to stand face to face with you—I to whom India and the Indian people seem nearer than the nations to which by birth I belong. Born last time under Western skies for work that needs to be done, I do not forget my true motherland (India).....When Karma opens the door I will walk through it."

The door opened next year and Mrs. Besant landed in India on the 16th November, 1893.[2] She was then

[1] Quoted in the Adyar Pamphlet No. 182, p 10.

[2] Exactly fifty years from this date, on the 16th November, 1943, Dr. Annie Besant's statue was unveiled on the Madras Marina by Sir C. P. Rāmaswāmi Iyer, Dewan of Travancore.

forty-six years of age. She has placed on record her feelings at the time:—

"When I landed here for the first time, I knew what love of country meant. For then the whole life came out into flower and taught me the fragrance of the land that is your own, the love of a crowd merely because they are fellow countrymen and the feeling that at last you have come to the place you have loved and tried even blindly to serve before yet you have trodden on its soil."

She thereafter made India her home, wore Hindu costume,[1] adopted Hindu ways of life and worked for the revival of Hinduism and the uplift of the Indian nation for forty years till she died at Adyar in 1933, aged eighty-six. One may very well believe that Mrs. Besant possessed a Hindu heart beneath her European skin. For who, without possessing a Hindu heart, could write in the following way, comparing the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* with the Bhagavān of the *Gītā*?

"In the ideal figure of Śrī Rāmachandra we have the perfect Man, the Man who in every relation of life—son, husband, brother, king—set an example of nobility and purity great as human imagination can depict. We have in Him the highest perfection to which human qualities can be carried, and it is this perfected humanity tried to the uttermost, yet never found wanting, that acts as so inspiring an ideal through the length and breadth of India. . . .

"In Rāmachandra there is a perfect humanity, adapting itself to every changing circumstance of life, but in Śrī Krishna

[1] Mr. Jinarājadāsa in his *A Short Biography of Dr Annie Besant* says —"From the first year of her coming to India she not only lived with Indians, but she lived as one of them She wore the *sāri*, the Indian woman's robe, she sat cross-legged on the ground or on a chowki (a kind of divan) at work, she ate seated on the ground in Hindu fashion and not at a table, using the right hand and not spoon or fork. Of course, in Europe she reverted to European ways, but in her own mind the Indian ways were her *natural* ways. She has herself explained one reason for this instinctive feeling, that she has had of late several Indian incarnations, and that her last one, before the birth as Annie Wood, was in India, and that, from the close of that Indian life and the beginning of the present one, there was only a gap of three years. She recollected incidents of that life and particularly how she was then the grand-daughter of the Adept, who is now her Guru."

there is something more, some subtle gleam of divinity, of half-heard melody, of elusive fleeting grace, scarce seen but sensed. Truly we see in Him human greatness as politician, as statesman, as a guide of nations, as the stern rebuker of Duryodhana, the tender friend of Arjuna and Yudhishthira, as the speaker of the Bhagavad Gītā But there is another side to this heroic figure, more difficult for the modern mind to grasp, it is the spiritual aspect, the form of the Divine Child, the Lord of Love and Life, the Universal Self revealing Himself to the individual self as the Spouse and Lover of each."[1]

And who without possessing a Hindu heart could go on a pilgrimage, as Mrs. Besant did in 1901, to the cave temple of ice at Amarnāth 16,000 feet above the sea in the Himālayas, walking barefoot on the snow and bathing in the ice-cold stream beside the cave before entering the temple? Again, like all pious Hindus, Mrs. Besant loved to reside in the sacred city of Benares, where, only five years after she arrived in India, she was able to found the Central Hindu College, which later became the nucleus of the Hindu University. "At Benares" says Dr. Arundale, "Dr. Besant was Indian more than in any other place. She was happy in Benares, I think, as nowhere else, not even at Adyar, the Southern Indian home she loved so dearly." There is no doubt that her best work on behalf of Hinduism was done when she was in Benares. For it was here that she delivered her fervent lectures on Hindu ideals and produced her popular translation of the Gītā, her admirable summaries of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata and her helpful text-books on Hindu religion and ethics.

V

Mrs. Besant had marvellous energy and powers of oratory and organization, and she used them all in the service of her "beloved motherland"—India. For over a generation she travelled up and down this vast coun-

[1] *Hindu Ideals*, p. 152-153.

try, besides making voyages to Europe, America and Australia, delivering innumerable lectures, rousing Indians to a sense of the greatness of their religion and organizing every form of activity which would make India once again as great as she had been in ancient times. She began with religion and very soon added education to it and finally plunged into politics, journalism and social reform, and in every one of these fields she displayed tremendous energy and driving power. For instance, we are told by Bābū Bhagavān Dās, her co-worker in the Central Hindu College, that in 1903 travelling in Bombay, Kāthiāwār, Gujarāt, Rājputāna, Mālwā and the Puñjāb, she visited twenty-three towns in fifty-two days, giving two lectures in each place, besides holding conversaziones and question-and-answer meetings, and that in December 1928, when she was eighty-one, she attended a whole day's session of the All Parties' Convention at Calcutta and sat up in the succeeding night at the Congress session from 8 o'clock in the night to 3 o'clock in the morning, cross-legged in Indian fashion on the hard floor of the wooden dais, almost without changing posture, and that, in the summer of the very next year 1929, she visited by aeroplane twenty-two towns in Middle and Eastern Europe and gave more than fifty lectures on Theosophy in twenty-three days.[1] Surely the Hindu heart had an European lining. Thousands of men and women who listened to her lectures on the greatness of India or the glories of Hinduism in the early years of the present century were either moved to tears or swept off their feet and implicitly endorsed the title once given to her on the spur of the moment by a great Sanskrit scholar at Benares, who, quoting from Daṇḍin, hailed her as *Sarva Śuklā Sarasvatī*, the All-White Goddess of Wisdom. One can very well imagine, even if one has not actually experienced, the effect of perorations like the following, which we find at the end of her

[1] *Annie Besant and The Changing World*, p. 16.

lectures on "Hindu Ideals" given to the students of the Cenral Hindu College, Benares:—

"And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? India alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one. No one in a Western body can do what you can do. No love of mine for India, no fulness of service, no completeness of devotion, can do in this alien body what you, India's sons, can do. A Hindu is born, he is not made. No amount of service to Hinduism, no practice of Hindu teachings, no training in Hindu wisdom, can make a non-Hindu into a Hindu. Hence, even those of us who have Hindu hearts, and have past Hindu lives behind us, can only help you; the main work you must do for yourselves.

"Make no mistake. Without Hinduism India has no future Hinduism is the soil into which India's roots are struck, and torn out of that she will inevitably wither, as a tree torn out from its place. Many are the religions and many the races which are flourishing in India, but none of them stretches back into the far dawn of her past, nor is necessary for her endurance as a nation. Every one might pass away as they came, and India would still remain. But let Hinduism vanish, and what is she? A "geographical expression" of the past, a dim memory of a perished glory. Her history, her literature, her art, her monuments, all have Hinduism written across them. Zoroastrianism came for refuge and her sons have found asylum and welcome in India; but Zoroastrianism might pass, and India would remain. Buddhism was founded here, but Buddhism has disappeared and India remains. Islam came a wave of conquest, and the Musulmans form a part of the Indian people, and will share in the making of the future; yet Islam might pass, and India would remain. Christianity has come, and Christians rule the land and influence its steps, yet Christianity might pass and India would remain. India lived before their coming; India could live after their passing. But let Hinduism go, Hinduism that was India's cradle, and in that passing would be India's grave. Then would India with India's religion be but a memory, as are Egypt and Egypt's religion now. India would remain then as a subject for the antiquarian, the archaeologist, a corpse for dissection, but no longer an object of patriotism, no longer a Nation . . . ."

Mrs. Besant's generosity was as great as her eloquence or energy. The proceeds of her lectures outside India and the bequests that were made to her as

well as the funds that were placed in her hands were all utilized in the service of the Motherland. Śrī Prakāśa tells us that once his father, Bābū Bhagavān Dās, when he was the Secretary of the Central Hindu College, received a cheque from her for £ 1500, which was the proceeds of a single lecture of hers in America. In the letter that accompanied the cheque she wrote, "If only every lecture of mine gave as much, the dear C. H. C. would not be in want." Bhagavān Dās tells us that once a Spanish gentleman dying in Cuba left a legacy of two and a half lakhs of rupees to Mrs. Besant and Colonel Olcott in equal halves without any conditions and that Mrs. Besant gave her share away at once to the Central Hindu College and the Colonel gave his share to the Theosophical Society. No wonder that people had boundless confidence in her and put lakhs of rupees in her hands to be disposed of as she thought fit. Mr. Jinarājadāsa tells us that he saw a man on a railway station platform, as the train was leaving, put into her hands without saying what was in it an envelope with notes for ten thousand rupees.[1] And it is well known how, when Pandit Madan Mohan Mālavīya came forward with his Hindu University scheme, Mrs. Besant made a gift of her Central Hindu College, which she had built up with such great love and enthusiasm, so that it might form the nucleus of the University.

VI

The proposal to establish a Hindu University at Benares was originally put forward in 1904 at a meeting held at the Mint House in that city with H. H. the Mahārājah of Benares in the chair. Then in October, 1905 a prospectus of the University was published and circulated, and in December of the same year, it was discussed at a meeting held in the Town Hall, Benares, at which representatives of the Hindu community from

[1] *A Short Biography of Dr. Annie Besant*, p. 69.

various provinces and a number of distinguished educationists were present. Next year (1906) the scheme was approved by the Sanātana-Dharma Mahāsabhā at Allāhābād. And it also met with the approval of the press and the public. But, owing to various circumstances, the proposal had to be put off year after year till 1911, when a revised prospectus was published, the sympathy of the Government of India was obtained for the scheme, and deputations were organized for raising the necessary funds, In a few months, promises of donations of nearly thirty lakhs of rupees were received from the public. The Ruling Princes of India were then approached and their patronage was secured in the sacred cause. The soul of this whole movement was Pandit Madan Mohan Mālavīya, the great Hindu leader of Allāhābād, who is rightly known as Dharmātmā and whose long life is one continuous service to the Motherland. He is verily the Father of the Benares Hindu University. He was its Vice-Chancellor for twenty years from 1919 to 1939.

The Bill for establishing the University was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council by the then Education Member, Sir Harcourt Butler, in March, 1915 and was passed in October. The Act came into force in 1916, and Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, laid the foundation stone of the University on the 4th February. Today the Benares Hindu University is the biggest residential University in India with a campus of over 1300 acres of land and with nearly four thousand students on its rolls. The following extract from the brochure published on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the University in 1942 shows the progress made by the institution during the first twenty-five years of its existence:—

"The University is a new town in itself. It has laid out twenty-five miles of road, seventeen miles of which have been metalled. Over two hundred buildings and colleges, all in the

Hindu style of architecture surmounted with towers reminiscent of temples and faced with ornamentation of well-known Hindu symbols, adorn the University grounds. . . . There are twelve colleges and a splendid library. There are seven spacious hostels which provide accommodation for over two thousand students who live on the grounds of the University. There are extensive playgrounds for cricket, hockey, football and tennis, *akhāras* for wrestling, and a big gymnasium, the Shivājī Hall, for physical culture. There is a dairy for the supply of milk to the residents of the University. Being outside the municipal limits of Benares, the University provides its own supply of water and electric light and has its own conservancy service. There are over seven miles of electric line and over five miles of pipe line and over six thousand and five hundred electric points installed throughout the various colleges, hostels, laboratories, workshops and residences. Altogether the University presents the appearance not only of a model town, but reminds us also of the glories of Nalanda and Taxila and of other ancient seats of learning where Hindu sages taught and fed ten thousand students at a time."

But, while rejoicing in all this progress, we should not forget that it was the Central Hindu College of Mrs. Besant that furnished the solid foundations on which this noble structure of the Benares Hindu University has been raised. It was with the Central Hindu College and the schools connected with it that the University began its work in 1917. India owes a great debt of gratitude to Mrs. Besant for many things, not the least of which is her generous gift of the Central Hindu College—not merely its grounds and buildings, but the spirit in which it was run, which made the starting of the Benares Hindu University possible.

Another aspect of Mrs. Besant's generosity is her unflinching self-sacrifice for all her friends and co-workers as well as for the causes she advocated throughout her long life—from the days when she befriended Charles Bradlaugh in England to the time when she fought for Home Rule in India. Dr. Arundale, in his lecture on *Dr. Besant: Warrior,* says:—

"Warrior, indeed, she was. Persistent, fearless, quixotic-

ally generous to her foes. Sometimes we who fought with her rather wished that she had a little more of the world's method of fighting than of that very essence of almost reckless chivalry which was hers. We sometimes felt, just a trifle, aghast at the generous nature of her treatment of those to whom she was opposed, and who injured her."[1]

VII

To estimate the services of Mrs. Besant to Hinduism we have to take into consideration the state of religion in this country when the Theosophical Society began its work here. Mrs. Besant herself, in a lecture delivered in 1909, describes the condition of India when the founders of the Theosophical Society set foot on Indian soil in 1879. She says:—

"Scepticism and materialism had eaten out the life of the nation. The crowds of the so-called English-educated classes were followers of Huxley, Mill and Spencer, and they had entirely forgotten their own literature, were contemptuous of the past and hence hopeless for the future; they were copying English ways, English manners, filling their houses with English furniture to the destruction of Indian arts and crafts. They had lost all national spirit. Despiritualization had brought about national degeneracy. There was no activity of national life, no pulsing of the national heart. Read the papers of the day and judge for yourselves."[2]

And in her book, *India, a Nation,* she quotes the following comment of one of the papers of the day, the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika,* on the first lecture of Colonel Olcott in India in 1879. The paper wrote:—

"What can the doctor do when the patient is already stiff and cold? India is dead to all sense of honour and glory . . . . . Talk of regenerating India to the Indians! You might as well talk to the sands of the sea."

Indeed, even when Mrs. Besant came to India in 1893, fourteen years after the founders of the Theosophical Society, Indians told her that India was dead and

[1] *Dr. Besant Warrior,* p. 14.
[2] *The Work of the T. S. in India,* p. 7.

smiled sadly at her statement that India was not dead but sleeping.[1]

While all this may be quite true of the general state of India at the time, we should not forget that already there had emerged other points of light than the Theosophical movement out of the darkness. We must not forget that in 1879 Dayānanda Saraswatī, Śrī Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa, Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen were alive and sponsoring the movements that are connected with their names. Dayānanda Saraswatī founded the Ārya Samāj in 1875. He was, as we have seen, in correspondence with the Founders of the Theosophical Society, before they came to India and both the Samāj and the Society worked together for three years—1879-1881. Śrī Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa had by 1879 completed his sādhana and begun to gather round him a band of disciples to whom, for the next seven years, he was to pour forth the treasures of his heart in the form of talks which constitute the Gospel of Śrī Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa. Keshub Chander Sen had seceded from the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj and its leader, Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore, in 1866 and formed a new Society called the Brāhmo Samāj of India. And when, after the storm created by his daughter's marriage, many of his own followers seceded from him and established the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj in 1878, he came out with his Navavidhān or New Dispensation in 1881, in which he tried to harmonize Brāhmoism and Christianity. But the Reformist movements like the Brāhmo Samāj, the Prārthana Samāj and the Ārya Samāj rejected a good deal of what most Hindus cherish as sacred, and hence their scope was rather limited. The Rāmakrishṇa Movement which covers the entire field of Hinduism was fully organized only some years later. For it was only after 1897, when

[1] *The work of the T. S. in India*, p. 8.

Swāmī Vivekānanda returned home from his great triumph at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, that he made a tour through India and roused Indians from their sleep and organized the Rāmakrishṇa Mission for the splendid work it is doing. In the meantime the Theosophical Society continued its good work. It was not at first concerned with reform of any kind. It was concerned with making the world recognize the spiritual greatness of India and the value of the hidden treasures of the Eastern religions—Hinduism and Buddhism. It was concerned with making Europeans and Americans look upon Asiatics as their brothers from whom they could learn much in spiritual matters. Even Farquhar, the Christian Missionary writer, who has given an extremely unfavourable account of the Theosophical Society in his *Modern Religious Movements in India,* admits the service rendered by the Society to Hinduism and Buddhism. He says[1] that " for several decades Hindu and Buddhist thought and civilization were most unjustly depreciated and unmercifully condemned by Missionaries, by Europeans in general and even by some Hindus", and so there was good reason for such a crusade in defence of them as was undertaken by the Theosophists. The Society has moreover popularized in Europe and America a number of the best oriental scriptures like the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-Gītā, taught the Western nations to sympathize with the orientals and to treat them as brothers and restored the self-respect of the Hindus and Buddhists in India. This is certainly great service.

But it is claimed that the Theosophical Society has done more for India. In the lecture referred to above Mrs. Besant claims that, not only in the revival of religion but also in the organization of Industrial Exhibitions, the founding of the Indian National Congress, the

[1] *Modern Religious Movements in India,* p. 288.

preaching of Swadeshi, the elevation of the Depressed Classes, the launching of temperance propaganda, the prohibition of child marriage, the education of girls and the introduction of moral and religious instruction in Hindu Schools, the Theosophical Society took the lead at a time when either such measures were unpopular or the people were indifferent. This is rather an overstatement of facts, because the leaders of the Brāhmo Samāj in Bengal had been working hard at many of these reforms for some years before the Theosophical Society came to India. However, let us not quarrel about it, let us confine ourselves, on the other hand, to the religious revival which was at first the main plank in the Theosophical platform.

It may be said at once that it is not any truncated type of Hinduism that Mrs. Besant preached under the auspices of the Theosophical Society. It was not the Upaniṣads and the Gītā alone that she drew upon, but also the Epics and the Purāṇas, the Smṛtis and the Dharma-śāstras, the legends and the tales of our religious tradition. She stood at first for entire Hinduism—its philosophy, its ethics, its modes of worship, its Yoga practices, its rites and ceremonies and its Varṇāśrama dharma. Her exposition of the Hindu doctrines regarding Karma and Reincarnation, Yoga and Dharma, and Devas and Avatārs was indeed an eye-opener to many Hindus. And so also was her defence of Hindu rituals, customs and practices at a time when most Hindus were taught to look down upon them as mere superstitions. For instance, in a lecture delivered in November, 1914, in the Madras Presidency College, Mrs. Besant said, "And so I come back to the point with which I started: that, after a study, of some forty years and more, of the great religions of the world, I find none so perfect, none so scientific, none so philosophical, and none so spiritual as the great religion known by the name of Hinduism. The more you know it, the more

you will love it; the more you try to understand it, the more deeply will you value it."

Her fervour, her eloquence, her energy, her personality and her prestige as a lady belonging to the ruling race as well as her whole-hearted support of the entire edifice of Hinduism and her denunciation of the scientific materialism of the West took the country by storm for several years and led to a wide-spread religious awakening among Hindus. Rightly does Sir Valentine Chirol, speaking of the Hindu Revival in his *Indian Unrest*, say that certainly no Hindu has done so much to organize and consolidate the movement as Mrs. Besant. He asks, "Is it surprising that Hindus should turn their backs upon our civilization when a European of highly-trained intellectual power and with an extraordinary gift of eloquence comes and tells them that it is they who possessed the key to supreme wisdom, that their gods, their philosophy, their morality are on a higher plane of thought than the West has ever reached?"[1]

No half-hearted measures could have achieved this result. No correct and critical appreciation of Hindu civilization, no just apportioning of praise and blame could have satisfied the needs of the hour. Some strong antidote to the sting in the hostile attacks of the Christian Missionaries on Hinduism was required, and Mrs. Besant supplied it in full measure. Now that Hinduism is once more alive and strong and is able to hold its own against the other religions of the world, people may say that Mrs. Besant was extravagant in her accounts of Hinduism and that her defence of it was often uncritical.[2] Śrī Prakāśa, in his book on Mrs. Besant,

[1] *Indian Unrest*, p 29.

[2] To give an extreme instance of her uncritical statements, in her lecture on Avatārs she says that "the Shrī Shankarāchārya, on whom was the power of Mahādeva, was born but a few years after the passing of the Buddha, as the records of the Dwārakā Math show plainly. . . ." *Avatārs*, p. 102.

gives the proper explanation of the part played by her in the revival of Hinduism. He tells us that he often listened to her eloquent exposition of the scientific significance of Hindu rites and ceremonies, like the offering of water to the souls of the dead, and thought that it was all 'nonsense'. But he proceeds:—

"The only explanation that I can find to Mrs. Besant's preaching of that time was her intense desire to stem the wave of utter scepticism that was then sweeping over educated Hindu India, resulting in their seeing nothing but evil in everything that belonged to themselves and nothing but good in everything that belonged to others. All praise must go to Mrs. Besant that she aroused an apathetic and sleeping people from their slumbers, revived in their hearts their fast-dying sense of self-respect and pride in themselves, their traditions and their past and forced them to find their feet and seek their place among the great nations of the world. She was probably sure that the proper equilibrium will at last be found between the two extremes and that all will be well in the end."[1]

It ill becomes a man who has been rescued from a cruel and unjust prosecution to turn round on his counsel for defence and accuse him of having overstated his case. Mrs. Besant came to us as an advocate, not as a judge. She won her case. And she claimed no fees because she believed the cause was her own. In fact, she gave her whole life to it.

Moreover it must be admitted that, though at times Mrs. Besant's zeal for Hinduism outran her discretion, she often brought to bear upon her interpretation of Hindu ideals the sobriety, the humanity and the sweet reasonableness of her Western culture. There is a very good example of this in her lectures on *Introduction to Yoga,* which she delivered at Benares in December, 1907. Speaking about the practice of Vairāgya or dispassion she warns her hearers against three errors. Firstly, the abhyāsa or practice does not mean only meditation, it means the deliberate, unbroken

[1] *Annie Besant: As Woman and As Leader,* p. 112.

carrying out of dispassion in the very midst of the objects that attract. Secondly, it is an error to wait for some big opportunity to practise Vairāgya. In waiting for the big thing, which does not usually come, people lose the daily practice of dispassion towards the little things that are around them. Thirdly, and this is the most important point, the practice of dispassion does not mean killing out all love in the heart. What Mrs. Besant says on this point is worth quoting. She says:—

"There is a rough-and-ready way of quickly bringing about dispassion. Some say to you: 'Kill out all love and affection; harden your hearts; become cold to all around you; desert your wife and children, your father and mother, and fly to the desert or the jungle, put a wall between yourself and all objects of desire; then dispassion will be yours.' It is true that it is comparatively easy to acquire dispassion in that way. But by that you kill more than desire. You put round the Self, who is Love, a barrier through which he is unable to pierce. You kill love and not only desire, forgetting that love clings to the Self and seeks the Self, while desire clings to the sheaths of the Self, the bodies in which the Self is clothed. Love is the desire of the separated Self for union with all other, separated Selves. Dispassion is the non-attraction to matter—a very different thing. You must guard Love—for it is the very Self of the Self. In your anxiety to acquire dispassion do not kill out Love. Love is the life in everyone of us, separated selves. It draws every separated self to the other self. Each one of us is a part of one mighty whole. Efface desire as regards the vehicles that clothe the Self, but do not efface Love as regards the Self, that never-dying force which draws Self to Self. Many people in trying to kill out Love, only throw themselves back, becoming less human, not superhuman, by their mistaken attempts. It is by and through human ties of love and sympathy that the Self unfolds. Always mistrust the teacher who tells you to kill out Love, to be indifferent to human affections."[1]

Passages like this are very rare in our literature on Yoga.

[1] *Introduction to Yoga (Fifth Edition,* 1940), p. 136. The passage has been abridged.

VIII

It must be confessed, however, that Mrs. Besant's popularity as a religious teacher began to decline after 1910. She became the President of the Theosophical Society in 1907 after the death of Colonel Olcott. Then, we are told, a new era began in the history of the Theosophical Society. Mr. Jinarājadāsa, who was the Vice-President of the Society during 1921-28, explains why Mrs. Besant's regime was different from Olcott's.

"A new era began, because Mrs. Besant was different from the President-Founder in having a conscious link with her Master. She had promised H.P.B. never to hesitate to state openly that she was a disciple of the Master who was the Guru of H.P.B. 'Keep the link unbroken' was H.P.B.'s charge to her. She utilized the opportunities which this inner link gave her to develop the work of the movement. While she was scrupulously careful in no way to infringe any article of the constitution, yet since the constitution in no way limited the individuality of any official of the Society, Mrs. Besant spoke openly of her occult relation to her Master, and how at all costs she would carry out whatever orders He gave. Naturally such a strong personality as that of the new President roused opposition in some, and this happened not only when she became President but has continued throughout all the years that she has held office. On the other hand the vast majority of members were profoundly grateful to her for the lead which she had given them in making Theosophy practical."[1]

Under her leadership the Eastern School of Theosophy, which had been established by Madame Blavatsky for the practice of occultism, became more active than ever. Mrs. Besant and her co-adjutor, Mr. Leadbeater, began to explore, by clairvoyant methods, the past and the future lives of some of the members of the Theosophical Society. They came to such interesting conclusions as that Colonel Olcott was the emperor Aśoka in his former birth and that Mrs. Besant was Hypatia in the fourth century and Bruno in the six-

[1] *The Golden book of the T. S.*, pp. 161-162.

teenth, and they seriously published them to the world in a book—*Man: Whence, How and Whither*—probably because they sincerely believed in them. One such conclusion, which has almost ruined the Theosophical Society, was that a great World-Teacher—a Christ or a Bodhisattva—was going to appear[1] in the person of Mr. J. Krishṇamūrti, who was then a boy[2] entrusted by his father to the charge of Mrs. Besant. Divine honours were accordingly bestowed upon the boy by many Theosophists. But this development upset the minds of many people both inside and outside the Theosophical Society. And a suit was launched by the father of the boy against Mrs. Besant in 1912. This sensational case was conducted in the Madras High Court, and Mrs. Besant, nothing daunted, chose to be her own counsel. When the decision went against her in Madras, she appealed to the Privy Council and finally won her case. She was allowed to retain the two wards, Mr. Krishṇamūrti and his brother Nityānanda, under her own guardianship. But, though she won the case, the exposures that were incidentally made in the Madras High Court about Mr. Leadbeater and some of his teachings resulted in a great loss of prestige for the Theosophical Society.[3] Many people who had hitherto

[1] This thought of the coming of a great World Teacher had been mentioned in esoteric circles long before. But it was at the conclusion of a lecture in Madras on 31st December, 1908, that Mrs. Besant, first publicly announced His advent. See *The Golden Book of the T. S.*, p. 164.

[2] He was only thirteen when the first public announcement about his probable Messiahship was made.

[3] The feeling of the general public on this occasion may be indicated as follows, in the words of a paper read by the Reverend E. W. Thompson before the Madras Missionary Conference and published in 1913.—

"The value of the Madras law-suits is that they have provided a rough and ready test of the genuineness of Theosophical occultism. They have exhibited some of the chief occultists in the common relations of life and tested their credibility as witnesses in matters of fact. If they are not found satisfactory here, how shall credence be reposed in them in regions where we are unable to follow them?"

been carried away by Mrs. Besant's championship of Hinduism and known very little about the origin and the early history of the Theosophical Society now came to know something of the life of Madame Blavatsky and the Hodgson Report, with its supplement—*A Modern Priestess of Isis* by Solovyoff, Madame Blavatsky's own countryman. They came to know also something of Mahātmā K. H. and Mahātmā M. and of their White Lodge in Tibet, something of Ākāśic records and Alcyonē's lives and other Theosophical mysteries. And there was a great revulsion of feeling. We are not concerned here with the truth or the falsity of these things. Dr. Bhagavān Dās, the devoted follower of Mrs. Besant, rightly deplores her weakness in playing with beliefs and assertions about super-physical matters.[1] In fact, Mrs. Besant is a strange mixture of strength and weakness. She herself admits it in a remarkable passage of self-portraiture in her *Autobiography*. In the chapter on her unhappy marriage she says:—"I have been the queerest mixture of weakness and strength and have paid heavily for the weakness.....Combative on the platform in the defence of any cause I care for, I shrink from quarrel or disapproval in the home, and am a coward at heart in private, while a good fighter in public."[2]

In the present instance her weakness seems, in the opinion of some Theosophists at any rate, to have been this—that she allowed herself to be led into a wilderness of extravagant fancies by Mr. Leadbeater. How far the clairvoyant investigations of Mr. Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant were correct is shown by the fact that Mr.

[1] "Alas, that it should be so, but greatness has its weaknesses also Yudhiṣṭhira's weakness was craving (despite Nārada's warnings) for imperial suzerainty of the world through the performance of the Rājasūya sacrificial ceremony, and playing with dice too freely. Our beloved Mother's was playing with beliefs and assertions about superphysical matters similarly". *Annie Besant and The Changing World*, p. 61.

[2] *Autobiography* (Adyar Edition, 1930), p. 179.

J. Krishṇamūrti, who was believed and declared by them to become the vehicle of a second Christ, has since repudiated the extravagant claims made on his behalf and has left the Theosophical Society.[1]

IX

Hardly had this sensational case been disposed of in Madras when Mrs. Besant plunged into politics and social reform. During October and November, 1913, she delivered a series of lectures in Madras on foreign travel, child-marriage, the depressed classes, women's education, mass education and the caste system. These lectures have been since published under the title of *"Wake up, India."*[2] The most noticeable change in her views, as set forth in these lectures, is that regarding the caste system. She said in her lecture on this subject that, in the first eleven years of her work in India, she had attempted to revive the idea of dharma or function in relation to the four great castes, but that by 1905 she had come to the conclusion that it was hopeless and that, from that time, she had been working solely to form an opinion in favour of change. And now in 1913, she found herself compelled to go a step further:—

[1] It is surprising how many men and women, who were once very enthusiastic members of the Theosophical Society and rendered meritorious service to it, afterwards either withdrew or resigned or seceded from it. The list is a long one beginning with Miss Bates and Mr. Wimbridge, who accompanied the Founders when they came to India, and includes such prominent workers as T. Subba Rao, Countess Wachtmeister, Mabel Collins, W.Q. Judge, Dr. Franz Hartmann, Dr. Rudolf Steiner, Mrs A. C. Cleather, Mr. Sinnet, Mr. G. R. S. Mead, Mr. Martyn and Mr. B. P. Wadia.

[2] Mrs. Besant, in her lecture on "Theosophy, Past and Future" in 1929, says that it was the Ṛṣi Agastya that asked her to deliver these lectures on Social Reform in 1913. She says —

"As some of you know, He lives in Southern India, His dwelling-place is known to a limited circle. T. Subba Rao and my brother, Leadbeater, for instance, were permitted to visit Him, and meet Him in the physical world in the human body He is now wearing It is quite clear that He takes an active interest in the elevation of the Indian Nation, and also that He lays particular stress on the subject of Social Reform."

"I regret it, but am bound to say that I do not believe the caste system can continue in India in the changing life of the nation and with the heavy responsibilities, which more and more will fall upon her sons."[1]

This was a revolutionary change in the eyes of many who, rightly or wrongly, were under the impression that Mrs. Besant was a great champion of Hindu orthodoxy and that Indian Theosophists were ultra-orthodox people. For instance, on this very question of the caste system, Mrs. Besant had eloquently said ten years before:

"It is not wise to cut down a great tree which shelters a whole village and has sheltered it for many generations, because a few poisonous creepers have twined themselves round its branches. Better exercise a little patience and give a little time and lop off the poisonous creepers, leaving the tree unharmed. It is not well to destroy the stately edifice, built by the Ṛsis, which has weathered many a storm and given safe shelter to a myriad generations. Chaldea, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome have perished, mighty as once they were, far-reaching in empire, splendid in achievement; India, which was their contemporary, has outlived them all, and is now lifting her proud head once more to greet the rising sun of a new dawn. And this marvellous endurance, while primarily due to her profound spirituality, is partly due also to the stability given her by her caste-system, a social stability of form answering to the inner stability of spirit."[2]

And, strangely enough, many of her followers in the Theosophical Society, who had been till now strictly orthodox, changed their front rather suddenly and became radicals in their views and even in their practices, going in not only for inter-caste marriages, but also for inter-religious and inter-racial marriages. Hence there was an unfavourable reaction on the part of the public, and so all attempts of Mrs. Besant to reform Hindu social life proved fruitless.

[1] *Wake up India*, p. 287.
[2] *Hindu Ideals*, p. 156.

X

She succeeded better in politics. She started in January, 1914, a weekly journal called *The Commonweal* and, a few months later, a daily newspaper called *New India*. Her vigorous articles in these two journals and her fearlessness, courage and determination in advocating Home Rule for India made her immensely popular, so much so that the Madras Government became disturbed and foolishly interned her in 1917. There was then a tremendous popular agitation for her release, and when the Government released her, the public recognized her services by making her the President of the Indian National Congress. Thus the highest honour which political India could bestow on any person was bestowed on Mrs. Besant, and with great forethought she started the precedent that the President of the Congress should be the President not only for the three days of the Congress session, but for the whole of the year till the next President was elected.

But her success was rather short-lived. For in 1919, when the Non-co-operation movement was started by Mahātmā Gāndhi and the Congress came under his influence, Mrs. Besant refused to sympathize with the movement, and she lost her popularity as well as leadership. From that time, we may say, she gradually faded away from public life, and became only the ghost of her former self to the general public, whatever she may have been to the Theosophists. It was an inevitable development. For the entry of Mahātmā Gāndhi into the public life of India was like the admission of sunlight into a theatre. It is really a great pity, however, that Mrs. Besant never reconciled herself to Gāndhijī's influence in the country and assumed a hostile attitude towards his teachings. But it must be said, as Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has said, "If Annie Besant had not been, Gāndhijī could not be." And Gāndhijī himself, in his

usual manner, has paid the following generous tribute to Mrs. Besant's work:—

"As long as India lives, the memory of the magnificent services rendered by her will also live. She endeared herself to India by making it her country of adoption and dedicating her all to it."

XI

The closing years of Mrs. Besant's life were far from happy. She had become old and infirm. She had lost her popularity. She found she had no place in the public life of the land she loved so well. The younger generation treated her with scant courtesy when she appeared on any platform. But the greatest blow came to her from an unexpected development in her own immediate surroundings. For Mr. Krishnamūrti, whom for eighteen years she had proclaimed as the vehicle of the coming World-Teacher and whom she had made the head of the "Order of the Star in the East," stoutly refused to play the part assigned to him. With great courage he burst his bonds and spoke his mind freely. On the 3rd August, 1929, at a big "Star Camp" held in his honour in Holland, he dissolved the Order of the Star and said:—

"You can form other organizations and expect someone else. With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages, new decorations for these cages. My only concern is to set men absolutely, unconditionally free."

This speech was a veritable bomb-shell. So people rushed to Mrs. Besant for an explanation. She could only say she could not understand it. But the ultimate effect of this development on her is best described in Theodore Besterman's words:—

"But now the end had come. Undefeated by continuous and bitter opposition, by scandal, by all the manifold difficulties of her life, and by old age itself, the defection of Mr.

Krishnamūrti was a blow from which she could not recover. She did her best to show a cheerful face to the world and began a process of explaining away. . . . Yet the blow was more than she could bear. She fell ill, recovered, fell seriously ill, partly recovered, lay for many months barely conscious of her surroundings, seen by only a few close friends, and died on 20th September, 1933."[1]

XII

We are not concerned here with the teachings of Theosophy as such. But, as most of them were originally derived from those of Hinduism and Buddhism and still resemble them to a considerable extent, it may be necessary to give a bare outline of them, if only to account for the part played by the Theosophical Society in the present Renaissance.

In her book, *The Ancient Wisdom,* Mrs. Besant says:—

"No man in becoming a Theosophist need cease to be a Christian, a Buddhist, a Hindu; he will but acquire a deeper insight into his own faith, a firmer hold on its spiritual truths, a broader understanding of its sacred teachings As Theosophy of old gave birth to religion, so in modern times does it justify and defend them. It is the rock whence all of them were hewn, the hole of the pit whence all were digged. It justifies at the bar of intellectual criticism the deepest longings of the human heart; it verifies our hopes for man; it gives back ennobled our faith in God."[2]

This may appear rather a tall claim on behalf of Theosophy. But we should consider the sense in which the word Theosophy is used here. By Theosophy Mrs. Besant means the Divine Wisdom, what we call Brahma-Vidyā in Sanskrit. It is the direct knowledge of God which is possessed by mystics all over the world, whether they belong to any particular religion or not, and which forms the core of every religion, behind all its rites and ceremonies and its dogmas and doctrines. The Brahma-

[1] *Mrs Annie Besant, a Modern Prophet,* p. 264.
[2] *Ancient Wisdom,* p. 4.

vādins or Knowers of God in Hinduism, the Gnostics who powerfully influenced the Christian church during the first three centuries after Christ and the *Shaikh* in Islāmic Sūfīsm are, according to Mrs. Besant, typical theosophists. But it should be noted that, while the Brahmavādins in Hinduism represent the core of Hindu orthodoxy, the Gnostics in Christianity and the Sūfīs in Islām are considered heretics. However, Mrs. Besant believes that the many religious, philosophical and ethical ideas common to all the great religions of the world are due to the fact that they are all derived from a common mystical tradition in the custody of a brotherhood of great spiritual teachers who, being the outcome of the past cycles of evolution, have acted as guides and instructors to infant humanity on this earth. According to her, the Founders of the great religions of the world are members of that Brotherhood and were aided in their mission by many other members lower in degree than themselves. These guided the infant nations, gave them their religion and polity, enacted their laws and have left their traces in literature, art and philosophy. And their Wisdom-Tradition is handed down among all civilized nations, ancient and modern, through a long succession of prophets and teachers.

"It may be traced in the *Upaniṣads, Purāṇas* and epics of the Hindus, in the six systems (darśanas) of Hindu philosophy, it underlies many of the Chinese systems, especially Taoism, and is seen in such books as *The Classic of Purity* and in the writings of Lao-tse; it is found in Egypt, as *The Book of the Dead* and the papyri from which its religion has been reconstructed; it appears in the fragmentary records of Assyria and Chaldaea; in the *Gāthās* and other scriptures of the Pārsīs; in the Hebrew Scriptures as expounded by the Kabbālā and the Talmud; in the Christian, as treated by the Early Fathers of the Church, and by such Gnostic writers as Valentinus, Basilides and a host of others; in Pythagoras and Plato, with the Pythagorean, Platonic, and Neo-Platonic Schools, with Plotinus, Iamblichus, and the theurgists; it is taken up from these by the doctors of Islam and the Sūfī mystics; appears in the Rosicrucian students of alchemy and

astrology, in Rosenkreutz, Paracelsus, Bruno, Eckhartshausen, Boehme, Eckhart, Vaughan, Bacon, More, Fludd—all these and scores of others have assimilated and handed on the Wisdom-Tradition. . . . ."[1]

But it is one thing to say that the mystic traditions behind many a religion and system of philosophy in the East and the West have a common source, and quite another to assert that there is somewhere in Tibet, unknown to ordinary explorers, a Brotherhood of the White Lodge, "the Hierarchy of Adepts who watch over and guide the evolution of humanity and who have preserved these truths unimpaired,"[2] and who appeared from time to time to the leaders of the Theosophical Society and gave them oral or written instructions. Naturally this assertion could not be taken seriously by many outside the Theosophical Society. And it is only fair to add that, even in the Society, it is not a compulsory article of faith. In fact, the Theosophical Society is not committed to any set of doctrines.[3] It has only three objects, *viz.*, universal brotherhood, study of comparative religion and investigation of occult forces. But, apart from these objects of the Theosophical Society, we have the teachings of Theosophy very ably summarized by Mrs. Besant in her article in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*

These teachings may be classified under four heads:—

(1) religious, (2) philosophical, (3) scientific, and (4) ethical.

The religious teachings are (*a*) the unity of Godhead corresponding to the Vedāntic conception of the

[1] From the article on "The Theosophical Society" by Mrs. Besant in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*

[2] *Ancient Wisdom,* p. 37.

[3] But this is not true, it seems, of the E. S. in the Society. For Theodore Besterman, who was once a member of the E.S., says that "this pledge and the teachings of the E.S. are of such a kind as to make Mrs. Besant's insistence on freedom of thought an utter mockery." See *Mrs. Annie Besant, a Modern Prophet,* p 164.

Absolute, (*b*) the trinity of the manifested Logos, corresponding to Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāt in Hindu philosophy, and (*c*) the hierarchy of spiritual intelligences ranging from the highest gods who rule the solar systems to the lowest gnomes and fairies who rule the elements on the earth—which corresponds to the Hindu Pantheon.

The philosophical teachings are:—(*a*) the immortality of the soul, (*b*) the reincarnation of man, and (*c*) the subordination of matter to mind.

The scientific teachings are:—(*a*) the structure of the universe consisting of seven planes of matter corresponding to the Hindu conception of the seven *lokas*; (*b*) the constitution of man consisting of seven sheaths corresponding to the Hindu conception of *kośas*; (*c*) the Law of Karma, which is similar to the doctrine taught by Hinduism and Buddhism; (*d*) the spiritual evolution of the world; and (*e*) the evolution of the various races[1] of man on earth and of individuals in each race through well-marked stages.

And, lastly, the ethical teachings are: (*a*) the realization of universal brotherhood; (*b*) obedience to the law of evolution; and (*c*) the development of the spiritual powers of man through meditation, thought-control, love and service.

It will be seen at once that most of these teachings

[1] According to Theosophy, the evolution of humanity on earth has so far resulted in five main races, each with its own sub-races. The main races are (1) the First Root-Race consisting of jelly-like amorphous creatures, (2) the Second Root-Race with forms of more definite consistency, (3) the Third Root-Race called the Lemurian, whose surviving remnants are the Negroes and other Negroid peoples, (4) the Fourth Root-Race called the Atlantean consisting of the Toltec, Akkadian, Turanian and Mongolian peoples, and (5) the Fifth Root-race called the Aryan, which has now five sub-races, *viz*, (*i*) the Aryans of India, (*ii*) the Mediterranean Aryans (Arabs and Egyptians), (*iii*) the Iranians, (*iv*) Celts and (*v*) Teutons. We are told that the Aryan Root-Race has yet to develop two more sub-races. And also it seems that two more Root-Races have yet to come. Mrs Besant believed that she was going to be the Manu of the sixth Root-Race.

are taken from Hinduism and Buddhism and modified in the light (or twilight) of occult knowledge derived from various sources.[1] This explains why Theosophy became more popular in India than in other countries. Whether we approve of all the teachings of Theosophy or not—and most Hindus would have nothing to do with them now[2]—we should ever feel grateful to the Theosophical Society, and especially to Mrs. Besant. For some of the fundamental principles of our faith, *viz.*, Karma, reincarnation, Yoga and spiritual evolution, have been broadcast by this great and wide-spread International Association. The Society has moreover a library of rare books and manuscripts at Adyar and regularly publishes useful editions and translations of Hindu scriptures. It is a centre of culture and art. And, above all, to its lasting credit it must be said that, at a time when colour prejudice ran high, it deliberately set its face against it and did its best to bring together men from the East and the West on terms of equality and brotherhood—and this, not as a matter of policy but on religious principle, not in mere theory but in actual practice. This alone would entitle it to a high place in the Kingdom of Spirit.

[1] "Theosophical doctrine at a later date became a blend of Buddhism, Hinduism and various forms of occultism; but when first launched, it was merely an addition of the magic and mysticism of Egypt and of mediaeval Judaism to spiritualism." Farquhar.

[2] It is significant that Pandit Madan Mohan Mālavīya gave an assurance to the public, at the time of the founding of the Benares Hindu University, that the University would have nothing to do with Theosophy.

CHAPTER VI

THE RĀMAKRISHṆA MOVEMENT: ŚRĪ RĀMAKRISHṆA PARAMAHAṀSA

I

Of all the religious movements that have sprung up in India in recent times, there is none so faithful to our past and so full of possibilities for the future, so rooted in our national consciousness and yet so universal in its outlook, and therefore none so thoroughly representative of the religious spirit of India as the movement connected with the names of Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa and his disciple, Swāmī Vivekānanda. In a way, the true starting point of the present Hindu Renaissance may be said to be Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa. For his life represents the entire orbit of Hinduism, and not simply a segment of it, such as Theism or Vedism. He was a jñānī as well as a bhakta. To him God was both personal and impersonal. He laid equal emphasis on both the householder's life of good works and the saṁnyāsin's life of renunciation and yoga. Like a true Hindu, he gave free scope to the individual variations in the Kingdom of Spirit. And, again, like a true Hindu, he held that all religions were branches of the same tree. This was not to him a mere intellectual proposition or an inherited doctrine. He demonstrated the truth of it in his own life by going through the sādhanas of Islam and Christianity as well as of Hinduism. In fact, Śrī Rāmakrishna is a unique figure in the history of Hinduism, because, without any education or scholarship, he traversed the entire region of religious experience by his own *tapas* and confirmed by his own personal testimony the truth of Hindu scriptures. Yogābhyāsa, Parā-bhakti, Īśvara-śakti, Nirvikalpa-samādhi,

Brahma-sākṣātkāra and Sat-cit-ānanda were no mere words to him, but phases of experience which he knew at first hand. Hence the simplicity and profundity of the teaching of this modern saint. The sayings of Rāmakrishna can be read with profit by a philosopher as well as by a child. And one can get a fair idea of the scope of Hinduism by reading his parables and talks. Again, the life of Rāmakrishna is a clear illustration of the liberating power of true religion. It demonstrates the truth that, in India at any rate, it is not by mere social reform—though that is necessary—that social evils can be uprooted or social prejudices overcome. It is only by releasing a flood of religious feeling that society can be cleansed and men and women made to grow to their spiritual heights. We shall see that this was emphasized again and again by Swāmī Vivekānanda, the disciple of Śrī Rāmakrishna, in all his schemes for the regeneration of India.

II

The world that is revealed to us by the biography of Śrī Rāmakrishna is most interesting. It is a typically Hindu world, having for its nucleus a famous temple, a sacred river and a bathing ghat, with all the holiness and dirt that these usually involve. It is the haunt of beggars, holy and profane, and of pious worshippers and soulless priests. Here come sādhus from distant places with matted hair and long-grown nails and in all degrees of nakedness and of illumination. Some pretend to have discovered the philosopher's stone and cheat the ignorant village folk of a few annas. Some go about stark naked, but can boast of psychic powers gained after years of grisly toil and meditation. Some carry their sense of equality so far as to eat the leavings of beggars' meals along with dogs, while others laugh and roll themselves the whole day in dust out of religious frenzy and intoxication. There are, again,

some sādhus whose intoxication is less spiritual, as it proceeds out of *bhang* or other narcotics. And, finally, there are among them some saṁnyāsins, true and pure like Totāpurī, the guru of Śrī Rāmakrishna. Thus the background of the picture presented to us in the biography of the saint is the life in a Hindu temple as it has remained unchanged probably for the last one thousand years. Against such a sombre background of sublimities and horrors, of weird disciplines and rare realizations associated with a Hindu temple, stands the simple, child-like figure of Śrī Rāmakrishna. In those visionary eyes of his which were trained to look upon eternity with a steady gaze we see, as it were, the experience of all the Hindu Ṛṣis from the time of the Ṛg Veda. It was inevitable, of course, that, before his enlightenment, Śrī Rāmakrishna should be subject to the limitations and prejudices of his environment. But after his enlightenment he transcended them all and, with the quietness and assurance of a man who has seen God and realized Him, he gave a message which modern India sorely needs. Like many a sādhu of his time he went through various kinds of uncanny disciplines attended by supernatural visions and experiences, but he finally condemned the hankering after occult powers. Like many an orthodox Brāhman, he began his life with a strict observance of caste rules in the matter of food, choosing to cook his own meals on the bank of the Ganges rather than eat of the prasādam of the temple, but he ended by making his disciples cosmopolitan and permitting them to receive food from all, irrespective of caste and creed. Like many a Śākta devotee, he worshipped Kāḷī, the Mother, to the end, but he incessantly taught that every religion is only a partial representation of the ineffable Absolute. And, above all, he began his career as a temple-priest, performing such routine duties as waving lights and making offerings,

and ended it not only by himself realizing God, but also by making others realize Him.

III

Śrī Rāmakrishna was born in 1836 in Kamarpukur, an out-of-the-way village in the Hoogly District of Bengal. His father, Khudirām Chatterjee, was a poor Brāhman priest. The early years of the saint were spent mostly in his own village. He learned very little at school, but a good deal from Purāṇic recitals, folk songs and village theatricals. But everyone who was acquainted with him knew that he was an extraordinary boy of a peculiarly sensitive religious temperament. He was often subject to trances, the first of the kind occurring as early as his seventh year.

When he was sixteen years old, Rāmakrishna was obliged to go to Calcutta to help his elder brother, Rām Kumār, in discharging his duties as a *purohit* among some of the respectable families of that city. He and his brother worked as family priests in Calcutta for three years, and when Rāni Rasmaṇi, a wealthy Bengali lady, built the temple of Kālī at Dakṣinesvar, four miles north of Calcutta, they became temple-priests there in 1855.

Then began the period of storm and stress in Śrī Rāmakrishna's life. The duties he was called upon to discharge in the temple brought to a focus the vague yearnings and half-satisfied longings of the preceding years of boyhood. From this time onward he spent twelve years in search of God with an astonishing tenacity of purpose. The experiences of Śrī Rāmakrishna during these years are most harrowing to read. He would meditate for hours at midnight under an *āmalaka* tree in the Pañcavatī garden. Sometimes he would weep like a child and rub his face against the ground in misery. According to an oft-quoted passage, when the peal of the evening bells in the temple announced the close

of a day he would become sadder still and cry, "Another day is gone in vain, Mother, and I have not seen Thee. Another day of this short life has passed, and I have not known the truth." Sometimes doubts would harass his soul and he would exclaim, "Art thou true, Mother? Or is it all a fiction of the mind? Is religion a phantasy or a mere castle in the air?" After some months of this intense state of feeling came the first flash of illumination of which he has left us a vivid record in two passages which are of great interest to students of mysticism:—

"I was then suffering from excruciating pain because I had not been blessed with a vision of the Mother. I felt as if my heart were being squeezed like a wet towel. I was overpowered by a great restlessness and a fear that it might not be my lot to realize Her in this life. I could not bear the separation any longer: life did not seem worth living. Suddenly my eyes fell on the sword that was kept in the Mother's temple. Determined to put an end to my life, I jumped up like a mad man and seized it, when, suddenly, the blessed Mother revealed Herself to me and I fell unconscious on the floor. What happened after that externally or how that day or the next passed, I do not know, but within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss altogether new, and I felt the presence of the Divine Mother"

"The buildings with their different parts, the temple and all vanished from my sight, leaving no trace whatsoever, and in their stead was a limitless, infinite, effulgent ocean of consciousness or spirit. As far as the eye could reach, its shining billows were madly rushing towards me from all sides with a terrific noise, to swallow me up! In the twinkling of an eye they were on me and engulfed me completely. I was panting for breath. I was caught in the billows and fell down senseless."[1]

We have to put these two passages together to get a connected idea of Rāmakrishna's experience on this occasion. In mystic literature this experience is called the awakening. The emergence of mystic consciousness, sharply marked off from the long-drawn, dim struggles that preceded it, is usually attended by violent bodily

[1] *The Life of Śrī Rāmakṛishna* (4th Edition), p. 71.

changes. After the shock of the first vision described above, Śrī Rāmakriṣhna was unable to exert any control over his body. Also his conduct became queer. People thoúght he was going mad. But he did not care for the world. His main concern now was to keep his vision continuóus. But, as he was not able to do this at first, he was thrown into depths of deśpair. He could not endure this play of 'hide and seek', as it were, of the Divine Mother. So he redoubled his efforts at prayer and meditation to such an extent that the strain told on his health. He became subject to various ailments, and as medicines were of no avail, his suffering was great.

Shortly after his vision of Kālī described above, we are told he directed his attention to the incarnation of Rāma as his object of devotion. He put himself in the place of Hanumān, the devotee of Rāma, and began to imitate him in all his actions, "living on nuts and fruits and climbing trees and jumping from branch to branch." And, as a result of this kind of sādhana, he had now a vision of Sītā, as he had before a vision of Kāḷī. He describes this vision thus:—

"One day I was seated in the place now known as Pañcavatī in quite a normal state of mind—not at all entranced—when, all of a sudden, a luminous female figure of exquisite grace appeared before me. The place was illumined with her lustre. I perceived not her alone, but also the trees, the Ganges and everything. I observed that it was a human figure, being without such divine characteristics as three eyes and so on. But such a sublime countenance, expressive of love, sorrow, compassion and fortitude, is not commonly met with even in goddesses. Slowly she advanced from the north towards me, looking graciously on me all the while. I was amazed and was wondering who she might be, when a monkey with a cry suddenly jumped and sat by her. Then the idea flashed within me that this must be Sītā whose whole life had been centred in Rāma and who had misery only as her lot! In an excess of emotion I was about to fall at her feet crying, "Mother", when she entered into my body with the significant remark that the smile on her lips she

bequeathed to me! I fell unconscious on the ground, overpowered with emotion."[1]

Experiences such as these abound in mystical literature all over the world. Every mystic begins to interpret his flaming experience in the theological terms of the sect to which he belongs. He uses the language of the religion in which he is brought up. The saints of Southern India call it Śiva. The singers of Mahārāṣṭra call it Kṛṣṇa. St. Paul calls it Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ calls it his Father. Rāmakrishna calls it his mother—Kāḷī or Sītā. After the transcendental experience is thus crystallized into a definite theological concept, the mystic begins to adjust his life and character to the new light given to him. He voluntarily imposes on himself terrible disciplines to make himself fit for the new life. He cuts new channels in his mind and violently closes up the old. Anything which is likely to draw away his energies from the new plane of consciousness is relentlessly removed. Those earthly connections that bind him fast to selfhood are violently rent asunder. Even the formalities of religion are laid aside. Writers on mysticism call this the purificatory stage. We in this country call it the period of *tapas*. It is a period punctuated by visions and voices, temptations and lapses which are generally personified into angels and evil spirits. Śrī Rāmakrishna had many of these experiences in this period of his career. He saw spirits and heard voices and frequently fell into trances. The momentous struggle that was going on in his soul between the old and the new was often objectified and the whole drama enacted before his very eyes. One day, as he sat down to meditate, he found a saṁnyāsin emerging out of his body with a trident in his hand. The figure directed him to concentrate his mind on God and threatened that, otherwise, he would plunge the weapon into his body. Presently another man—the *pāpa-puruṣa*

[1] *The Life of Śrī Rāmakrishna* (4th Edition), p. 82.

—came out of his body and was killed on the spot by the shining saṁnyāsin who, after this exploit, re-entered his body. In fact, this part of the saint's biography is a supernatural romance in which his mind is described as moving in a world of abstractions and spirit-voices, while his body sometimes remained so dead and motionless that birds would perch on it and serpents would crawl over it.

At the same time Śrī Rāmakrishna also began to discipline himself in a most drastic way. He practised haṭha-yoga. He would go to the cremation ground and sit naked for hours together in meditation. He would clean closets like a scavenger. Though a Brāhman, he would accept food cooked by the lowest classes. He would eat even the leavings of dogs. And he would make no difference between sandal perfume and unspeakable filth. No wonder therefore that everyone thought he was mad. He himself feared that his mind was going to pieces. In the agony of his heart he cried, "Mother, is this the result of praying and wholly surrendering myself to thee?" But in the very next moment he would say, "Let it be as thou wishest. Let this body go to pieces, but leave me not. Reveal thyself to me, be kind to thy helpless son, O Mother. I have taken shelter at thy lotus feet. Thou art my only refuge."[1]

At last his prayer was heard. For one morning, when he was plucking flowers in the garden of Dakṣiṇeśvar, he saw a woman with a small bundle in her hand step out of a boat at the bathing-ghat of the temple. Beautiful, though middle-aged, and with long dishevelled hair, she seemed from the colour of her robes to be a saṁnyāsinī. As soon as she met Rāmakrishna, she said, "My son, you are here! Knowing that you were somewhere on the banks of the Ganges I have been searching for you so long, and now I have found you".

[1] *The Life of Śrī Rāmakrishna* (4th Edition), p. 107.

This stranger was a Vaiṣṇavite devotee as well as a Yoginī. By her yogic powers she knew she had to deliver a message to Rāmakrishna. And so she came in search of him. Rāmakrishna accepted her as his spiritual guide and narrated to her all his experiences and told her that many people took him to be a mad man. She immediately set all doubts at rest by showing, on the authority of books on Yoga, that Rāmakrishna was not insane, but was well advanced on the path of illumination. Thenceforward she undertook to guide him on the path. Under her direction Rāmakrishna passed through the Tāntric sādhana. He used to say later, referring to this period of his life, "The Brāhmaṇī put me through all the exercise mentioned in the sixty-four principal Tantra books. Most of these were extremely difficult sādhanas, some of them so dangerous that they cause the devotee to lose his footing and sink into moral degradation. But the infinite grace of the Mother carried me through them unscathed."

The most remarkable feature of the sādhana period of Rāmakrishna's spiritual career is that he was not satisfied with any one system of discipline. He was an unwearied experimenter in religion. Therefore, scarcely had he finished his Tāntric sādhana when he began to experiment with the various types of Vaiṣṇava sādhana. Already, as we saw, he had identified himself with Hanuman and had visions of Sītā. Now, for some time, he practised Vātsalya sādhana and had visions of the child Rāma, and again, for some time, he practised Sakhya sādhana and had visions of Kṛṣṇa as a friend, and, finally, he came to the highest kind of Vaiṣṇava sādhana in which the worshipper identifies himself with Rādhā and loses himself in an ecstasy of passionate love for Kṛṣṇa, the eternal Lover. In his attempts to efface his personality, Rāmakrishna, we are told, even dressed himself as Rādhā for some days and lived in the company

of women as one among them. This complete identification was soon rewarded and he had a vision of the exquisite beauty of Kṛṣṇa as described in our literature. We read in his biography, "Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His exquisitely graceful form revealed Himself to him and fulfilled the hankerings of his soul. Then He merged Himself in the person of Śrī Rāmakrishna. The Master remained for two or three months in a state of divine felicity. Forgetting his own identity, he looked upon himself as Kṛṣṇa and he saw Kṛṣṇa manifested in all creatures, sentient and insentient."

But even with this consummation Rāmakrishna was not satisfied. One day there came to the garden of Dakṣiṇeśvar an itinerant monk called Totāpuri, who was an adept not only in the philosophy of Advaita but also in its practical realization. By a single glance he discovered the degree of spirituality attained by Rāmakrishna. He said to him, "You seem to be an advanced seeker after truth. Would you like to learn Vedānta?" Rāmakrishna replied, "I don't know. It all depends upon my Mother. I can agree to your proposal only if she approves of it." "All right," said Totāpuri, "go and ask your Mother. I shall not be here long." Rāmakrishna went into the temple and consulted the goddess, and it seems he heard her command, "Yes, my boy, go and learn of him. It is for this purpose that he has come here." Rāmakrishna returned to the monk with a beaming countenance and communicated to him his Mother's permission. Accordingly Totāpuri initiated him with appropriate ceremonies and taught him Advaita Vedānta. We are told that, on the very first day on which Rāmakrishna practised Advaita sādhana, he got into Nirvikalpa Samādhi and remained in that state, dead to the world, for three days. The Guru stood by wondering and exclaimed, "Is it really true? Is it possible that this man has attained

in the course of a single day that which it took me forty years of strenuous practice to achieve? Great God, it is nothing short of a miracle!" He then took steps to bring down Rāmakrishna to the ordinary plane of human consciousness and afterwards gladly accepted his pupil's grateful prostrations and warmly embraced him. Though an itinerant monk constantly on the move, he chose to remain with this exceptional pupil for eleven months and taught him the philosophy of Advaita in detail. Rāmakrishna henceforth became a jñānī as well as a bhakta. That is, Reality now became as much a state of his own soul as a beloved person outside it. In one of his own subsequent sayings he clearly brings out the relation between jñāna and bhakti. He compares the former to a terrace and the latter to a staircase. Both are made of the same materials. The terrace is the Absolute realized in *samādhi,* in which the self and the world are blotted out. The staircase is the world of names and forms—the manifestation of the Absolute to the human sense. We go up and down, sometimes resting on the terrace and sometimes on the steps of the staircase.

After Totāpuri left him, Rāmakrishna who had reached the highest state of spiritual realization had once again the experience of samādhi, this time for an unbroken period of six months. Referring to this period he says, "For six months at a stretch I remained in that state whence ordinary men can never return, the body falling off after three weeks like a sere leaf. I was not conscious of day or night." His body too would have perished, like that of others, but for the kind ministrations of a monk, who was at Dakṣineśvar at the time and who would press some food down Rāmakrishna's throat whenever he saw any signs of returning consciousness. Six months passed in this way. And at last Rāmakṛishna received the Mother's com-

mand, "Remain on the threshold of relative consciousness for the sake of humanity." He tells us that, after this, he became a normal man again. But under the stress of these terrible sādhanas, his health broke down and he had an attack of dysentery from which he suffered for many months. He gradually recovered and learnt to adjust himself at will to both the levels of consciousness—the relative and the transcendental.

But his zest for spiritual adventures led him once again into the open. This time he went even beyond the bounds of Hinduism. His Advaita realization with its sense of the formless Absolute had greatly broadened his mind and made him realize the oneness of all religions. So he was now attracted by the Islāmic sādhana of a Sūfī devotee, and wanted to see how the Lord would meet the worshippers who approached him by this path. He now began to live like a Mohammedan, say his namāz regularly and turn away from all Hindu forms and places of worship. And he tells us that, after three days, he realized the goal of that form of devotion and had a vision of the Prophet. But, as he was still weak after his long illness, he stopped his experiments and went to his native village for a change. His sādhana was now practically complete, except for a short acquaintance later with the Bible and Christianity, which resulted, as usual with him, in a vision of Jesus Christ and the realization that He was an incarnation of God.

After the end of the period of sādhana, we find Rāmakrishna returning to the ways of normal men and meeting other religious aspirants and checking his experience with theirs. When he went on a pilgrimage to Benares and Brindāban and when he made the acquaintance of men like Debendranāth Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen of the Brāhmo Samāj, his mind became broadened and his mission became slowly clear to him. He was to be the starting point of a great Hindu Renais-

sance. He was to be the prophet through whose mouth the Motherland rising after a long sleep would reaffirm her faith in her own ideals of Vairāgya or renunciation of worldly things, Viveka or discrimination between what is fleeting and what is eternal, Yoga or fellowship with God through Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna, and Samādhi or the attainment of Divine Consciousness. But what struck Rāmakrishna at the time in his contact with the educated classes was their rank materialism on the one hand and their playing with religion without any religious experience on the other. No man had greater contempt than he for those who begin to preach religion from mere book knowledge without any realization of God. He used to say, one may as well begin to describe Benares having never been there, but having seen only a map of it. His was the pain of a specialist who sees a charlatan haranguing to a crowd on the subject in which he himself had specialized. It is torture to a true mystic to listen to the facile eloquence of a mere pandit. Rāmakrishna therefore began to feel that his duty thenceforth was to rouse the religious feeling of the worldly-minded and reaffirm the ancient truths of Hinduism by an appeal to his own experience. Childlike and humble as he was, he perceived that the Divine Spirit was to speak through him to his generation, as it once spoke in his own province through Caitanya. Years afterwards, when he lay dying in Cossipore garden, he said, "Had this body been allowed to last a little longer, many more people would have become spiritually awakened." So he had come to see that to awaken people from their spiritual slumber and tell them of the wonders of the kingdom of God, which he had seen with his own eyes and to which all the scriptures of the world bore witness, was to be his mission. He could carry out that mission only by gathering round him a faithful band of followers. When once this idea

dawned on his mind, he grasped it with his usual intensity. He says in his Reminiscences:—

"There was no limit to the yearning I had then. During the daytime I managed somehow to control it. . . . But when the day came to a close, I could not curb my feelings. The thought that another day had gone and they had not come oppressed me! When, during the evening service, the temple rang with the sound of bells and conch-shells, I would climb to the roof of the building in the garden and, writhing in anguish of heart, cry at the top of my voice, "Come, my boys! Oh, where are you? I cannot bear to live without you."[1]

It was in 1879 that the first disciples came to him. And from that date to the date of his death in 1886—that is, for seven years—Rāmakrishna talked incessantly, poured out the treasures of his heart and thus trained a devoted band of followers, who afterwards renounced the world to carry out his work. All that we now know of the gospel of Śrī Rāmakrishna is from these wonderful informal talks to his disciples. He never gave any set discourses or sermons. Nor did he write any book. He was too unlearned for that. It is also remarkable that Rāmakrishna did not lay upon his disciples any such terrible sādhanas as he had laid upon himself. In fact, when one of them in the fervour of his devotion wanted to become a saṁnyāsin at once, the saint said with a charming humanity, "What will you gain by renouncing the world? Family life is like a fort. It is easier to fight the enemy from within the fort than from without. You will be in a position to renounce the world when you can bestow three-fourths of your mind on God, but not before." To another he said, "What is the necessity of giving up the world altogether? It is enough to give up the attachment to it." It is also astonishing with what tenderness and love he treated his disciples. A loving mother could not be more tender to her children. And again what

[1] *The Life of Śrī Rāmakrishna* (4th Edition), p. 296.

marvellous insight he had into the future possibilities of the young men—many of them college students—that gathered round him! His favourite disciple was, of course, Narendranāth, who afterwards became famous as Swāmī Vivekānanda.

It was in November, 1880, when he was preparing for his First Examination in Arts that Narendranāth, who was then seventeen years of age, first met Śrī Rāmakrishna in the house of a certain gentleman in Calcutta. He sang a few songs and attracted the attention of the saint, who, thereupon, invited the youth to Dakṣineśvar. On his first visit to the place, Narendra found Rāmakrishna's conduct towards him so queer that he thought that the holy man was partly insane. But the second visit revealed to him the spiritual powers of Rāmakrishna. Narendra has recorded for us what exactly happened on this occasion. "Muttering something to himself, with his eyes fixed on me, he slowly drew near me. I thought he might do something queer as on the preceding occasion. But in the twinkling of an eye he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open I saw that the walls, and everything in the room whirled rapidly and vanished into nought, and the whole universe together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-compassing mysterious void! I was terribly frightened and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself, I cried out, 'What is this you are doing to me? I have my parents at home!' He laughed aloud at this and, striking my chest, said, 'All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time.' The wonder of it was that no sooner had he said this than that strange experience of mine vanished. I was myself again and found everything within and without the room as it

had been before. All this happened in less time than it takes me to narrate it, but it revolutionized my mind."

This was, in fact, the mystic touch which ultimately changed Narendranāth, a gay youth in his college classes, into Swāmī Vivekānanda, the world-famous monk, who roused the slumbering fire of religion in millions of hearts in the East and the West before he died an early death in his fortieth year. From the first moment of their meeting, Śrī Rāmakrishna looked upon Narendranāth as his spiritual son and heir and trained him specially for his great mission in life. And three days before his death in August, 1886, he called his favourite disciple to him and, as it were, formally handed over all his spiritual wealth to him and said, "Oh Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force of the power transmitted by me great things will be done by you; only after that will you go to whence you came."

It is often said by Western critics that oriental mystics press on the upward way only to lose themselves on the heights, that they do not come back with glad tidings for humanity and that therefore their lives are as good as lost to us. This statement may be true of the lesser mystics, but not of the great mystics of the East. It is not true, for instance, of Buddha or Śaṁkara or Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa. Buddha, after his enlightenment, went to Benares and set the wheel of law in motion. All the Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism, after their illumination, are said to have become the saviours of their race. Similarly, the Jīvanmuktas of Hinduism are said to live in the world voluntarily after their liberation, so that they may work for the liberation of others. Even Śaṁkara, who is supposed to have taught a philosophy of quietism, led a very active life travelling all over the country, at a time when tra-

vel was an adventure, and stamping out heresy. Why, the whole history of India before the Muslim conquest may be described as an attempt on the part of her spiritual leaders to construct a grand social edifice on the basic teachings of the Vedic seers. Therefore we may say that no true Indian mystic ever failed to lead a creative life after his illumination. And Śrī Rāmakrishna was no exception to the rule. After his illumination he gathered round him, as we have seen, a band of faithful disciples, whose spiritual individuality he fostered, so that each of them might go into the world and work in his own way for the regeneration of his fellow-men

One of the most distinctive features of Hinduism is that it does not coerce all minds into the pigeon-hole of a single creed. It gives free scope to individual variations in the kingdom of spirit. It always works like the warm sunshine which plays around all the trees in a grove making each of them grow in its own place according to the law of its own being and put forth its own blossom and fruit. This spirit of Hinduism fostering individual growth is represented on a miniature scale in the way in which the saint of Dakṣiṇeśvar influenced his disciples. This is very well pointed out by Romain Rolland in his book on Śrī Rāmakrishna. He writes:—

"And so in a thousand ways he used all his influence to direct these young souls in the true religious sense, so that they might develop their own true and highest individuality. He never dreamt of annexing them. He gave himself to them. He never said to them and never thought, "You ought to give yourselves to me." Herein lies one of the main differences between his guidance and that of Christ"

IV

In the teachings of Śrī Rāmakrishna during the creative period of his life, we may say there is nothing new. For he came neither to destroy nor to fulfil. He came only to bear personal testimony to the eternal truths of Hinduism: "It was no new truths," says

Swāmī Vivekānanda in one of his letters, " that Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa came to preach, though his advent brought old truths to light. In other words, he was the embodiment of all the past religious thought of India." He is a branch of the true vine. He does not speak as one of the scribes, but with authority. Therefore the formulas of the older mystics of our country glow on his lips with light and life. They are made concrete for us by his apt illustrations, his homely figures and his simple stories and parables. It is marvellous how the theological discussions of generations are often summed up by him in a single parable or image, which looks like the final word on the subject. Take, for instance, the problem of evil. Is evil real or unreal? What is its relation to God? Why is it not subdued by the Omnipotent? Does not its independent existence imply a dualism in the governance of the world? We have endless discussions on these questions. Śrī Rāmakrishna says in simple language, " Evil exists in God as poison in a serpent." What is poison to us is no poison to the serpent, but a natural secretion. The serpent does not die of its own poison. On the other hand, the secretion is a sign of its health. So evil is evil only from the point of view of man. What he regards as evil is nothing of the kind from the point of view of God. In other words, from the absolute standpoint there is no evil. But, from the relative standpoint, evil is a terrible reality and has a vital function in the spiritual economy of the world. Take, again, the question of ritualism in religion. Are not rites and ceremonies unnecessary appendages? Are they not the mere husk of religion? "Yes", says Śrī Rāmakrishna, "but without the husk the paddy will not grow in the field. You eat rice, but you sow paddy." So rites and ceremonies are indispensable to every religion that lives and grows. Or, again, take the controversy about the use of scriptures. Are

the Vedas ever indispensable? Do they not belong to the sphere of relativity? Are they valid in the sphere of the Absolute? And, if you say they are not eternally valid, do you not undermine their authority? Let us hear Śrī Rāmakrishna on the question. He says, "When a thorn gets into the flesh, you take it out with the help of another thorn and then throw away both." So relative knowledge alone can remove relative ignorance. But the man who attains the Absolute does away with both knowledge and ignorance. Hence both are Avidyā. Śrī Rāmakrishna was once asked "When shall I be free"? His pithy answer was, "When 'I' shall cease to be". There in a nut-shell we have the teachings not only of Vedānta, but also of all the great mystics of the world, who speak of 'self-naughting' as the only means to salvation.

Though there is nothing original, except the manner, in all these and countless similar sayings, there are certain ideas in Śrī Rāmakrishna's teaching which he often stressed and in elucidating which he used a number of illustrations. These may be said to constitute his special message to his generation. The distinguishing feature of all of them is that they are derived from his own experience and hence they possess first-rate validity.

Firstly, he is never weary of pointing out that realization is the essence of religion. All religious works, discussions, discourses and sermons will automatically stop when realization begins. All sound and fury, noise and fuss are then replaced by silence. This is enforced by a number of illustrations. The bee buzzes round a flower before it begins to drink the honey. When once it begins to drink, it is perfectly silent. When a pitcher is being filled with water, there is a great noise; when once it is full, there is no noise. When butter is placed on the fire, it makes a crackling noise

till all the water is absorbed. When once there is pure ghee, there is no noise whatever. When water flows from a tank into a field, we have great noise, but when once the water in the field reaches the level of the tank, there is silence. When the fruit appears, flowers fall away. When the cool breeze begins to blow from the sea, we need not fan ourselves. There are many more illustrations of this kind.

It is only after realization that a man is entitled to teach religion. Most teachers of religion have only book knowledge. They do not have even high character, much less realization. They therefore speak of things which they have not seen or experienced. They are like a man who lectures about Benares, having seen only a map of the city. Or they may be like birds of prey, which soar high into the heavens but have their eyes on the carrion below.

When once a man has realization, he will automatically attract people to him. He need not go out of his way to invite them. So Śrī Rāmakrishna's advice to many a would-be teacher of religion is, "Make yourself jaggery and the ants will come to you of their own accord. Make yourself a magnet, the iron filings will fly and cling to you. Make yourself a light in darkness and the moths will rush and fall at your feet."

Secondly, to a man who has realized, all religions are paths that lead to the same goal. It is only those who have no religious experience that quarrel about the forms. We have seen how Śrī Rāmakrishna experimented with various forms and had the same kind of realization in each. He says,

"I had to practise all the religions once, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and I have walked the paths of the different denominations of Hinduism again—of Śākta, Vaisnava and Vedānta and other sects. And I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are travelling, only they are coming through diverse ways."

Again, on another occasion he says, " I find all men quarrelling in the name of religion. Hindus, Mussalmāns, Brāhmos, Śāktas, Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas—all are quarrelling with one another. They never think that He who is called Kṛṣṇa is also called Śiva, that He Himself is named Ādyaśakti—the Primal Energy—Jesus or Allah!—'One Rāma having a thousand names!' The substance is one, only it has got different names. And everyone is seeking the same substance, there is only the variance of clime, temperament and name. The same tank has got many ghats. From one ghat the Hindus are taking water in jars—they say it is *jal;* the Mussalmāns take water in leathern bags from another ghat, they call it *pāni;* the Christians take water from a third ghat, they name it *water.* Now, if some one were to argue that this substance is not *jal* but *pāni,* or not *pāni* but *water* or that it is no *water* but *jal,* it would be ridiculous indeed." Though the doctrine taught here is as old as the Ṛg Veda, which says *Ekam Sat, Viprā bahudhā vadanti* (Truth is one, teachers speak of it in various ways), Śrī Rāmakrishna's way of putting it and his demonstration of it in his own life carried conviction to his contemporaries.

Thirdly, though both jñāna and bhakti lead to the same goal, the latter is to be preferred, especially in this iron age. The former, namely, the path of knowledge, is difficult because one has to acquire a high degree of purity and self-control before one can tread that path, whereas the latter, namely, the path of devotion, is easy, because purity and self-control will come of their own accord when once a man begins to love God. Put yourself in the hands of the Divine Mother, says Rāmakrishna, and she will do everything for you. She will give you viveka (discrimination), vairāgya (renunciation) and jñāna (knowledge). You have only to cry for her sincerely and passionately, and

she is bound to come. As usual, he employs a homely figure to illustrate this. As long as a child is busy playing with his toys, his mother will be attending to her duties of cooking and washing inside the house. But when the child is wearied with the play and throws away his toys and cries loudly for his mother, she leaves all her duties and rushes to her child and takes him in her arms. Śrī Rāmakrishna taught this simple but vital truth in religion, both by precept and by example. Throughout his life, even after his Advaita realization, he was like a child in the hands of his divine Mother. God was to him no mere abstraction or hypothesis, but a living and loving Mother—a much greater Reality than a mother in flesh and blood. He would be constantly talking to her, consulting her and even playing with her. At the same time, he had no superstitions about her. He had clear and correct ideas about the impersonal and the personal God. The relation between the two he compared to the relation between fire and its heat, between the snake and its tortuous movement. To the repeated question of the Brāhmo Samājists—"Is God with form or without form?"—he would give the repeated reply, "Both with form and without form. As Brahman, the Absolute, He is formless. But the Absolute expressed in terms of the relative is my Divine Mother. And she has form."

But he deprecated all these metaphysical subtleties and philosophical discussions. The one thing needful according to him was the intensity of yearning for God. You may not believe in the existence of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but you must have the love of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa. You may not believe in the existence of Hanumān and Rāma, but you must have the feelings of Hanumān for Rāma. And always love of God is more important than the knowledge of God. When you go into a mango grove, you should eat the sweet fruit and not go about

counting the leaves of all the trees. When a jug of water from a tank is able to quench your thirst, why do you worry yourself about the exact quantity of water in the tank? When you want to purify yourself by touching the Ganges, surely you won't attempt to touch all the Ganges from Hardwār to the sea?

Fourthly, love of God should take precedence not only of knowledge, but also of good works. Social service is, no doubt, necessary and good, but it should be a part of divine service. Nothing roused the wrath of Śrī Rāmakrishna so much as the modern cant of social service in preference to religion and renunciation. The conversation between him and Krīstodās Pāl, the editor of the *Hindu Patriot* and one of the pioneers of the national movement, is worth quoting in this connection. On the subject of renunciation Mr. Pāl observed,

"Sir, this cant of renunciation has almost ruined the country. For this reason the Indians are a subject-nation today. Doing good to others, bringing education to the door of the ignorant and, above all, improving the material condition of the country—these should be our duty now. The cry of religion and renunciation would, on the contrary, only weaken us. You should advise the young men of Bengal to resort to such acts only as will uplift the country." "You appear to be a man of poor understanding," replied Rāmakrishna in an animated voice. "You dare to slight in these terms a thing which all our scriptures describe as the greatest of all virtues! By reading two pages of English you think that you know the world. You seem to think you are omniscient. . . . How do you dare talk of helping the world? The Lord will look to it. You haven't got the power in you to do it . . . Can you explain to me how you can work for others? I know what you mean by helping them. To feed a number of persons, to treat them when they are sick, to construct a road or excavate a well,—isn't that all? These are good deeds, no doubt, but how trifling in comparison with the vastness of the universe! How far can a man advance in this line? How many people can you save from famine? . . . . God alone can look after the world. Let a man first realize Him. Let him get the authority and be endowed with His power; then and then alone, he can think of doing good to others. A man should first

be purged of all egoism. Then alone will the blissful Mother ask him to work for the world."[1]

Śrī Rāmakrishna is never weary of saying that every man should first get rid of his lust and greed—the love of woman and gold, as he puts it concretely—before he thinks of helping others. And then the spirit of renunciation should be cultivated. The renunciation should be only internal in the case of a householder, and both internal and external in the case of a saṁnyāsin. But love of God will bring in its train renunciation, good works, knowledge and realization—in fact, everything that is necessary for one's spiritual development. It will keep one safe from all worldly attractions. For the attraction of a big magnet will neutralize the attractions of all the small magnets in the vicinity.

Fifthly, Rāmakrishna warns us against some of the immature teachings of those who have not yet found God. He disapproved of those who say that this world is a dark, miserable place, or that it is a dense forest. He said that, on the contrary, to those who cling to God in weal and woe, it was a mansion of joy. He deprecated the Christian and the Brāhmo preachers' constant harping on the idea that we are weak, miserable sinners. He said that, if you always thought you were a sinner, you would really become a sinner. We shall see how Swāmī Vivekānanda expanded this idea of his Master and made it one of the main points of his teaching. Rāmakrishna found fault also with the Brāhmo habit of elaborately dwelling on the glories of God's creation in their prayers and sermons. After listening to one of Keshub Chander Sen's flowery sermons, he said to him, "Why do you say all this—' O God, what beautiful flowers Thou hast made! Thou hast created the sky, the stars and the sea!' Those who are themselves fond of splendour, only they like to speak of God's glories". After all,

[1] *Ibid*, p. 314.

what we consider His glories may be mere trifles to Him. And, as usual, Rāmakrishna employs a figure to show the futility of such eulogies. He says a man seeks the *person* whom he loves. What is the use of knowing his whereabouts or the number of his houses, his gardens and his servants? So a sincere seeker of God will go straight to Him and not linger on the glories of His creation. Invariably we find Śrī Rāmakrishna putting his finger on what is theatrical, flamboyant or insincere in men's devotions. At one of his meetings with Keshub Chander Sen, he said to him, "Keshub, once when I went to your temple, I heard you say, 'Plunging into the river of devotion we shall be carried straight to the ocean of saccidānanda'. Then I looked up (at the gallery where Keshub's wife and other ladies were sitting) and thought, 'What will become then of these ladies?' You are householders, how can you reach the ocean of Saccidānanda all at once?..... You may dive into the river of devotion, but you must come up again,—dive and come up again. How can you dive once for all?"

Śrī Rāmakrishna had great admiration for Keshub Chander Sen and the other leaders of the Brāhmo Samāj. At the same time he was not blind to their shortcomings. With charming frankness he criticized their religion and gave an account of his own and allowed them to accept or reject any of his experiences. His biographers say that "with undiminished love he told the Brāhmos all about his realizations and gave out the essence of his teachings, such as the necessity of renunciation, the sincere pursuit of one's own course of discipline, faith in God, the performance of one's own duties in the world without thought of results, and discrimination between right and wrong. Knowing their minds, he allowed them freedom to take as much or as little of his teaching as they liked."

The Brāhmos, in their turn, had the greatest vene-

ration for Śrī Rāmakrishna, though they could not see eye to eye with him on many things in religion. Bābū Aświnī Kumār Dutt of Barisal once asked him what difference there was between the Hindus and the Brāhmos. "Not much," replied Rāmakrishna. "When they play on hautboys here, one man holds the same note right along, while another plays different melodies. The Brāhmos are harping on the same note—the formless aspect of God, but the Hindus enjoy His various aspects." Many of the Brāhmos could not understand the great distinguishing feature of Rāmakrishna's religious life, his frequently going into samādhi or transcendental consciousness in the midst of conversation or on seeing anything grand or beautiful in his surroundings. Pandit Śivanāth Śāstrī, one of the leaders of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Samāj, for instance, thought that his samādhis were fits of nervous disorder. Ramākrishna therefore reproved him saying, "Well, Śivanāth, I hear that you call my samādhi a disease, and say that I become unconscious at the time, You think, day and night, of all sorts of material things and yet consider yourself to be of sound brain, while I, who meditate on the eternal Fountain-Head of consciousness, appear to you as deranged. A fine piece of reasoning."[1] On another occasion, when he was asked how he felt in samādhi, he replied, "Do you know what I experience? It is, as if a live fish had been released from a pot of water into the Ganges."

Śrī Rāmakrishna was a standing refutation of all the eloquent diatribes of the Brāhmo Samāj against what they called Hindu idolatry. It is through his intense devotion in the early stages to the image of the Divine Mother in the temple at Dakṣiṇeśvar that he attained his realization. In the words of his disciple, Swāmī Vivekānaṇda, to say that image-worship is sin-

[1] *Ibid*, p. 281.

ful is like saying that childhood is sinful. And if men like Śaṁkara, Caitanya and Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa found image-worship helpful in their religious lives, there may be millions of their countrymen who will find them equally helpful. It may be that some teachers, as great as these, saw no good in image-worship and found it more a hindrance than a help. There is room for both classes of men in Hinduism. For Hinduism neither insists on image-worship nor condemns it. If a man finds it helpful at any stage of his religious life, it is his duty to resort to it. If, on the other hand, he finds it unhelpful, it is equally his duty to drop it. Image-worship is only a means to an end, and not an end in itself. The end is realization and anything that enables a man to realize God should be welcomed. Any kind of sādhana, whether it is Vaiṣṇava or Śākta, whether it is Hindu or Christian or Muslim, should be welcomed, provided it helps us to the realization of God. That is the central teaching of Śrī Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa.

Of this great saint and mystic, Professor Rādhākrishṇan rightly says, "He is one of those rare beings in whom the flame of spiritual life burns so brightly that all who come near are able to share the illumination and see the world new-born as on the first day. He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition which runs right through the religious history of this country from the days of the Vedic ṛṣis. This tradition may sometimes have been overcome by a ceremonial piety or by a rationalistic dogma. Yet it always reappears faithful to its original pattern. Its characteristic tendencies are those set forth in the Upaniṣads."[1]

[1] *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, p. xvii

CHAPTER VII

THE RĀMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT: SWĀMĪ VIVEKĀNANDA

From the account of Śrī Rāmakrishna given in the preceding chapter it will be seen that his religion was a most practical one. It did not concern itself with theories and discussions or with interpretations of scriptural passages. In that way, it was a much-needed corrective to the religiosity of the average educated Hindu, who has a tendency to lose himself in philosophic or ritualistic futilities. This practical religion was, after his death, made into a gigantic lever by his great disciple, Swāmī Vivekānanda, for lifting India out of the morass in which she was sunk. Swāmī Vivekānanda did for the gospel of Śrī Rāmakrishna something similar to what St. Paul did for the gospel of Christ. He took the good seed from the premises of the Dakṣiṇeśvar temple and scattered it far and wide over three continents. In America, Europe and India, he broadcasted the truths of Vedānta, as realized in the experience of Śrī Rāmakrishna. At a time when the sacred books of the East were being translated and published in the West, his activity in America and England showed that the Indian spiritual tradition, which had produced this literature, was still alive and vigorous and that a saint as great as any that ever lived in India had flourished only a few years before in the present generation. And in his own country Swāmī Vivekānanda showed, both by precept and by example, that, if only the ancient Vedānta were re-interpreted in the light of Śrī Rāmakrishna's unique spiritual experience and applied to modern life, it would enable India to solve all the pro-

blems with which she was confronted and to rise once again to deliver a message to mankind. Therefore, while he lectured on the truths of Vedānta in America and Europe, he passionately urged his countrymen to put those truths into practice. He taught theoretical Vedānta in the West and practical Vedānta in India. And, according to him, the most practical form which Vedānta should take here immediately was the uplift of the masses. We may say that Swāmī Vivekānanda's life, from the death of his Master to his own death, is one prolonged cry for the uplift of the toiling, starving millions of his beloved country. This sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden in India is the central note of his career. It is a note that is heard in all its fulness and intensity in his marvellous letters. In this respect Swāmī Vivekānanda was a true forerunner of Mahātmā Gāndhi. Though he disclaimed that he was a politician, his aim in India was to make the masses strong and self-reliant, realizing their own importance and power. He pleaded as passionately for social freedom in India as he pleaded for religious freedom in the West. According to him, the ideal society was that which combined the spiritual culture of India with the secular culture of America and England. It is with the object of combining these two cultures that he founded the Rāmakrishna Mission and organized Vedānta centres in the West and sent his Eastern disciples to teach there and invited his Western disciples to come and work in India. He taught that Vedānta should throw open its gates to all, without any distinctions of colour or caste, and that it should become practical everywhere, liberalizing religion in the West and levelling up society in the East. That is why the Rāmakrishna Mission has for its object not only the preaching of religion, but also doing social service, giving medical relief and spreading education. The progress of the Rāmakrishna Move-

ment is best indicated by the following passage taken from *The Cultural Heritage of India*—a marvellous symposium of learned articles published in three volumes on the occasion of the Śrī Rāmakrishna centenary in 1936:—

"In the course of a little more than three decades after the passing away of Swāmī Vivekānanda, the Rāmakrishna Order has been able to count its monastic members by hundreds and spread almost a network of branch monasteries (mathas and āśramas) all over India; while the Rāmakrishna Mission has within this period carried on relief works on numerous occasions in different parts of this country and established its permanent humanitarian institutions at various places in India, Burma, Ceylon and the Federated Malay States; and quite a number of preaching centres have been opened in North America, South America and Europe."

According to the latest report available, there are on the whole about one hundred and ten centres of the Mission all over the world.[1]

II

Swāmī Vivekānanda was born in Calcutta in 1863. His name, before he became a monk, was Narendra Nāth Datta and he belonged to the Kṣatriya caste. We have already seen how, when he was only seventeen years of age and a student in college classes, he came under the influence of Śrī Rāmakrishna. While he was at college, Narendra Nāth was a gay youth, fond of fun and frolic, but very eager for all kinds of knowledge He was also an adept in boxing and wrestling and in swimming and riding. He was, at the same time, an earnest student of philosophy and poetry. He studied all the systems of Western Philosophy and was well acquainted with the contemporary philosophy of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill And his favourite Eng-

[1] There is a good account, by Swāmī Vireśwarānanda, of the activities of the Rāmakrishna Mission in India in the *Annual Pūjā Number* (1943) of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*

lish poets were Wordsworth and Shelley. His latent powers were already recognized by his teachers. Mr. Hastie, the Principal of his college, once remarked,

"Narendra Nāth is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide, but I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German Universities amongst philosophical students. He is bound to make his mark in life."

It is interesting to note that it was from this Englishman, Mr. Hastie, that Narendra Nāth first heard of Śrī Rāmakrishna. Explaining to his class Wordsworth's experience described in his "Excursion", Mr. Hastie once said, "Such an experience is the result of purity of mind and concentration on some particular object, and it is rare indeed, particularly in these days. I have seen only one person who has experienced that blessed state of mind, and he is Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa of Dakṣiṇeśvar. You can understand, if you go there and see for yourself." Fateful words these! For Narendra Nāth took his advice. He went and saw and was conquered. It was a momentous meeting with far-reaching consequences. For it not only changed the whole course of Narendra's life, but also opened a new chapter in the history of Hinduism. Before Narendra met Śrī Rāmakrishna, he was a member of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmo Sāmaj. For a time he was satisfied with the devotional atmosphere of this organization and shared its zeal for reform and its antagonism to caste, polytheism and image-worship. But the primary need of his heart was the experience of God. He therefore soon found that the Brāhmo Samāj could not give him this experience. He went to Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore, who was then living in retirement on the banks of the Ganges and startled the old man by asking him, "Sir, have you seen God?". The Maharsi evaded the question and only complimented the lad saying, "My boy, you have the Yogī's eyes". Narendra Nāth came away disappointed and repeated his question before the leaders

of other religious sects. Not one of them could say he had seen God. It was then that he remembered Śrī Rāmakrishna and went to him. In the very first interview at Dakṣiṇeśvar, he put to the saint the question which he had so often put to others—"Have you seen God, Sir?" "Yes", replied the Master, "I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense". And he went on, "God can be realized. One can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself." This impressed Narendra Nāth at once. In later years he used to say referring to this incident, "For the first time, I found a man who dared to say that he had seen God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. As I heard these things from his lips, I could not but believe that he was saying them not like an ordinary preacher, but from the depths of his own realizations." From the moment when his great question was answered satisfactorily for him, Narendra Nāth's illumination began. We have already seen[1] what happened when, during the second interview, he was touched by Śrī Rāmakrishna. During his five or six years of discipleship, he met his Master once or twice a week and often stayed with him for some days. And from week to week his illumination grew till it culminated in his Master and himself becoming practically one soul in two bodies. In the early stages, Narendra ridiculed many of the ideas of the Master, because they were so different from the teachings of the Brāhmo Samāj, of which he was a member. But there was no getting away from the fact that Rāmakrishna was a man of realization and that he could, as

[1] *Supra*, p. 242.

we have seen, even transmit his spirituality to others by a touch, whereas the leaders of the Brāhmo Samāj, in spite of their correct doctrine and spiritual aspirations, had no spiritual magnetism of any kind. The difficulty of Narendra Nāth, however, was that, after he came under the influence of Rāmakrishna, he had to shift himself from the intellectual plane, to which he was accustomed as a University student, to the spiritual plane in which his Master lived and moved. Narendra Nāth's knowledge of Western Philosophy was, no doubt, of great use to him in later years in expounding Vedānta. But, first, he had to acquire the spiritual experience, of which Vedānta is only an intellectual exposition. Without this experience transmitted to him by his Guru, Narendra might have become an impressive Professor of Philosophy, but not the monk Swāmī Vivekānanda.

While Śrī Rāmakrishna was training Narendra in one way, adversity trained him in another, so that the experience gained by him during these eventful years became well-balanced. For, soon after he sat for his B.A. degree examination and before the results were out, Narendra lost his father, and he and his brothers were left destitute. Though he passed his examination and joined the Law class, he was very poor and had often to go without food. This was the darkest period of his life and he has given us very pathetic accounts of it. He says:—

"Even before the period of mourning was over, I had to knock about in search of a job. Starving and barefooted, I wandered from office to office under the scorching noon-day sun with an application in hand, one or two intimate friends who sympathized with me in my misfortunes accompanying me sometimes But everywhere the door was slammed in my face. This first contact with the reality of life convinced me that unselfish sympathy was a rarity in the world—there was no place in it for the weak, the poor and the destitute."

As he could get no permanent job anywhere and as

his mother and brothers were starving at home, Narendra went to his Master and as a last resort urged him to pray to his Divine Mother to give him relief. But the Master advised him to go into the presence of the goddess himself and pray for what he wanted. Narendra did so. The description he gives of his experience on this occasion is worth quoting in full, because, as his biographers remark, this incident was a land-mark in his life.

"Reaching the temple, as I cast my eyes on the image, I actually found that the Divine Mother was living and conscious, the Perennial Fountain of Divine Love and Beauty. I was caught in a surging wave of devotion and love. In an ecstasy of joy I prostrated myself again and again before the Mother and prayed, 'Mother, give me discrimination! Give me renunciation! Give unto me knowledge and devotion! Grant that I may have an uninterrupted vision of Thee!' A serene peace reigned in my soul. The world was forgotten. Only the Divine Mother shone in my heart. As soon as I returned, Śrī Rāmakrishna asked me if I had prayed to the Mother for the removal of my worldly wants. I was startled at this question and said, 'No, sir, I forgot all about it. But is there any remedy now?' 'Go again,' said he, 'and tell Her about your wants.'"

He again set out for the temple and again forgot his mission and prayed only for love and devotion. He returned to Rāmakrishna, told him what had happened and was asked to go to the temple a third time. He went a third time and the same thing happened again. So he returned and said to his Master, "Sir, it is you who have cast a charm over my mind and made me forgetful. Now please grant me the boon that my people at home may no longer suffer the pinch of poverty." But Śrī Rāmakrishna replied, "Such a prayer never comes from my lips. I asked you to pray for yourself. But you couldn't do it. It appears that you are not destined to enjoy worldly happiness. Well, I can't help it." However, as Narendra became very importunate, he said at last, "All right, your people at home will never be in want of plain food and clothing." Till now, we are

told, Narendra under the influence of the Brāhmo Samāj had had unfeigned contempt for image-worship. But after this incident, he realized the significance of the worship of the Divine Mother through her image in the temple, and his Master was delighted at the transformation, saying, "Isn't it wonderful that Narendra has accepted Mother?"

But the greatest moment in the period of Narendra's discipleship is perhaps that during which he attained to the state of Nirvikalpa Samādhi like his Master. Ever since he had been initiated, he was longing for this great experience. But it came suddenly and unexpectedly one evening, a few days before the death of Śrī Rāmakrishna. He was meditating, as usual, according to the instructions of his Master, when suddenly he felt a light at the back of his head. The light grew larger and larger and seemed to burst, and his mind became merged in it. One of his brother disciples observed his rigid body and ran to the Master for help. But the Master, who seemed to know what was happening in Narendra's room, which was adjacent to his, replied, "Let him stay in that state for a while. He has teased me long enough for it." After some hours, Narendra returned to normal consciousness and was full of ecstasy, because he had reached the goal of his sādhana and all his doubts had vanished. When he went to his Master, the latter said to him, "Now then, the Mother has shown you everything. Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realization you have just had be locked up, and the key shall remain with me. You have work to do. When you will have finished my work, the treasure box will be unlocked again; and you will know everything then, just as you do now."

After the death of Śrī Rāmakrishna, the immediate task of Narendra was to keep the band of his disciples together and explain to them the significance of his life

and teachings, so that each might go out into the world to spread his message. Fired by his enthusiasm, these young men renounced the world and became saṁnyāsins —the nucleus of the famous Rāmakrishṇa Order—and had their humble monastery at Bāranagore, midway between Dakṣiṇeśvar and Calcutta. And, to mark the new life that they embraced, they changed their old names. Narendra also, during the itinerant life that followed, changed his name several times to avoid recognition. It was only on the eve of his sailing for America that he took the now well-known name of Vivekānanda.

III

It was in 1888, two years after Śrī Rāmakrishna's passing away, that the young Swāmī began his life of wanderings. He left Calcutta and, passing through Benares, Ayodhyā, Lucknow, Āgra and Brindāban, reached the Himālayas. On his way he made one Śarat Chandra Gupta, the station master at Hathras, his first disciple. Śarat became a saṁnyāsin, took the name of Swāmī Sadānanda and accompanied his guru in his Himālayan wanderings. Both the saṁnyāsins spent sometime at Hṛṣikeś. But they had to give up their plan of going up to Kedārnāth and Badarīnārāyaṇ, as the disciple fell seriously ill. After they returned to Hathras, the guru also fell ill, and so had to return to the monastery at Bāranagore. A year afterwards, he went out again and visited Vaidyanāth, Allāhābād and Ghāzīpūr. At Ghāzīpūr he met the famous saint of the place, Pavhari Bābā; and was sorely tempted to remain with him and devote himself entirely to Yoga and turn away from the world. But a vision of Śrī Rāmakrishna brought him self-reproach, and he gave up the idea and returned to the monastery at Bāranagore. After two months' stay at the monastery, he set out again in July, 1898, with the determination never to return. This

time his companion was Swāmī Akhaṇḍānanda, who had just returned from his Tibetan travels and had therefore considerable experience of life in the Himālayas. The two Swāmīs visited Bhāgalpūr, Benares, Ayodhyā, Nainital, Almora, Śrīnagar, Hardwār and many other places and finally reached Meerut. They rested here for some months, as five other saṁnyāsins of the Order also happened to be there.

At Meerut one day, the Swāmī announced to his brother disciples his decision that he was going to leave all of them, in order that he might lead the life of a solitary monk and go on his travels by himself. So he set out in January, 1891, and wandered mostly on foot for two years, through Central, Western and Southern India, first through the states of Rājputāna, then through Kāthiāwār and the Bombay Presidency, and then through the States of Southern India—Mysore, Cochin and Travancore—till he reached Kanyākumārī (Cape Comorin), the southernmost point of India. During these wanderings, he had often to face starvation, he had to walk alone through deserts and forests, and sometimes he stood in imminent peril of his life. But, undaunted by hardships and dangers, he led the life of a true saṁnyāsin throughout, one day begging for his food from door to door in obscure villages and another day being the honoured guest of a Mahārājah or a Dewān, one day observing the squalid poverty of the millions in their miserable huts and another day noting the luxury of the princes in their palaces. He now saw and understood the unity of India amidst all her diversity of races and sects, and customs and manners. He studied the weaknesses as well as the strength of his countrymen and gathered a fund of experience, which he used to great advantage, when later he burst upon the world as a great teacher and organizer.

His visit to Cape Comorin, where the sacred temple

of Kanyākumārī is situated, is an important landmark in the Parivrājaka life of Swāmī Vivekānanda. After falling prostrate before the image of the Divine Mother in the temple, he crossed to a sea-girt rock, which is separated from the mainland, and sitting on this last vestige of India, he fell into a profound meditation about the past, the present and the future of his motherland and made up his mind definitely about what he had to do for raising her once more to the position of glory, which she had once occupied. In a letter which he wrote later from America, he says:—

"At Cape Comorin sitting in Mother Kumārī's temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock, I hit upon a plan. We are so many saṁnyāsins wandering about and teaching the people metaphysics—it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva use to say, 'An empty stomach is no good for religion'? That these poor people are leading the life of brutes is simply due to ignorance. Suppose some disinterested saṁnyāsins, bent on doing good to others, go from village to village disseminating education and seeking in various ways to better the condition of all down to the chandāla, through oral teaching and by means of maps, cameras, globes and such other accessories—can't that bring forth good in time? . . . . We, as a nation, have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses. . . . ."[1]

Thus it was at Kanyākumārī that the Swāmī consecrated himself to the service of India, particularly to the service of her starving, oppressed, outcaste millions. It was at Kanyākumārī that, as a result of all his wanderings, he was transformed into a patriot monk, in whose religion the uplift of the Indian masses formed as integral a part as meditation or practice of Yoga or the study of the Vedas. In a word, it was at Kanyākumārī that he realized what his Master had already foreseen—that he had a great mission in life.

From Kanyākumārī the Swāmī went to Madras,

[1] *Letters of Swāmī Vivekānanda*, p. 92.

where many enthusiastic young men became his followers and collected subscriptions for his voyage to America, where he wished to go and attend the Parliament of Religions to be held at Chicago. The idea of going to the Parliament of Religions to represent Hinduism had come into his mind when he was at Khandwa in the Bombay Presidency. He brooded over the idea for a long time and was encouraged by men in high places, whom he met. He now made up his mind to go. But when he saw the money collected by his followers at Madras, the Swāmī grew nervous, for he feared that he was being carried away by his own egotism, instead of being guided in such an important matter by the will of the Divine Mother. So he persuaded his disciples to distribute among the poor the money they had collected. He wanted to know the Mother's will. He said, "She must prove it is her intention that I should go, for it is a step in the dark. If it be Her will, then money will come again of itself." And he began to pray intensely to the Mother and also to his Master for guidance. The guidance came in the form of a symbolic dream. He saw the figure of his Master walking on the sea-shore and beckoning to him to follow him into the waters of the ocean. He awoke and took it as a definite command. So, with the aid of fresh subscriptions raised in Madras and the help and encouragement of his friend and disciple—the Rājāh of Khetri—he set sail from Bombay on the 31st May, 1893.

IV

He went by way of Colombo, Penang, Singapore, Hongkong and Canton and reached the Japanese port of Nagasaki. From there he went by land to Yokahama visiting Tokyo and other towns on the way. From Yokahama he sailed on to Vancouver on the American

coast, and from there went by train to Chicago. The difficulties that he encountered in America, before he appeared on the platform of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, were such as would have daunted the heart of any other man. But Swāmī Vivekānanda, apart from his absolute trust in God, was one of the most lion-hearted of men, and he had to muster all his courage in the first few weeks of his experiences in America. This was his first visit to the West, where everything was different from what he had been accustomed to in India. He had hitherto been a wandering saṁnyāsin in a very poor but charitable land with abundant sunshine and countless dharmaśālās. He had walked from place to place, barefooted, with very scanty clothing and with a long staff in his hand. He had rarely handled money, having had few occasions for doing so after he became a saṁnyāsin. Now in America, in this strange land, alone and unfriended, he had to move about in his strange dress, burdened with luggage and profoundly ignorant of where he had to go for a lodging and what he had to pay and how he could obtain the information he wanted. It was with a shock that he came to know that he had arrived much too early, about six weeks before the opening of the Parliament, and that no one would be admitted as a delegate without proper references. He should have gone as the representative of some recognized organization. From India there had gone representatives of the Theosophical Society, of the Brāhmo Samāj, of the Buddhists of Ceylon and of the Jains of Gujarāt. But whom did this homeless saṁnyāsin represent? He represented, of course, Mother India herself. But nobody knew that as yet. To his dismay the Swāmī learned that even the time for being admitted as a representative had expired. And, to complete his misery, he had not money enough to make a stay of six weeks in such an expensive country as the

United States. As Sister Niveditā says, "Nothing could have been more typical of the unorganizedness of Hinduism itself than this going forth of its representative, unannounced and without formal credentials, to enter the strongly-guarded doors of the world's wealth and power."

However, the courage and endurance of the Swāmī, helped, of course, by good luck, triumphed over all obstacles. On his way from Chicago to Boston, he created a favourable impression by his personality and conversation on the mind of a rich lady, who invited him to her house and introduced him to J. H. Wright, Professor of Greek in Harvard University. The Professor had a long conversation with him and, recognizing his genius, wrote to his friend, Dr. Barrows, the Chairman of the Committee for the selection of delegates, saying, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together." And he gave him a ticket to Chicago and letters of introduction to the Committee which was in charge of the arrangements for the oriental delegates. But, as bad luck would have it, when the Swāmī arrived in Chicago, he found he had lost the address of the Committee. He tried to make enquiries, but, as it was the German quarter of the city, nobody could understand him. Moreover, he was a despised oriental, and nobody would give him any information about the whereabouts of even a hotel. He was lost. He did not know where to go. The night came on and it was very chilly. So he went to a corner of the railway station and, finding there a big empty box, got into it and slept the night there. The next day he was to shake America with his address at the Parliament of Religions and become a world-celebrity. But the morning of that day began with his rising hungry and tired from the box and begging his food from door to door like a true Indian saṁnyāsin. But Chicago is not

India, the Paradise of beggars. The Swāmī was greeted with insults by the servants of the houses where he begged, and doors were slammed in his face. At last he sat on the roadside exhausted. Now Providence came to his rescue. The door of the opposite house opened and a lady came out and, seeing his oriental figure and dress, asked him whether he was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. On his representing his difficulties, she invited him to her house, attended to his wants, and took him to the office of the Parliament. Thus providentially delivered from all his difficulties, the Swāmī presented his credentials and was accepted as a delegate and lodged with the other oriental delegates.

The first session of the World's Parliament of Religions began in Chicago on September 11, 1893 in the great Hall of Columbus, with a prayer from Cardinal Gibbons, the highest prelate of the Roman Catholic Church on the Western Continent. The cardinal was seated on a chair of state on the platform, and, to the right and left of him, were seated the oriental delegates in their brilliant costumes. In numerical order Swāmī Vivekānanda's seat was number thirty-one. The hall below and the gallery above were packed with six to seven thousand men and women, and on the platform were some of the most learned men of all the nations of the earth, and many of them trained speakers. Swāmī Vivekānanda had never seen such an august assemblage before and he had never spoken in public to any big audience.

As the delegates were introduced one by one, they stepped up and made a brief speech to announce themselves. Of course, most of them had ready-made speeches and were duly applauded. Vivekānanda had none and he was so nervous that he did not venture to speak in the morning session. But in the afternoon, when the chairman insisted on his speaking, he bowed

inwardly to Sarasvatī, the Hindu Goddess of speech, and stepped up and addressed the audience with the words, "Sisters and Brothers of America." Scarcely had he uttered these words when the whole audience was caught up in a great wave of enthusiasm, and hundreds rose to their feet with deafening shouts of applause. The speaker was bewildered. For full two minutes he attempted to speak, but the wild enthusiasm of the audience created by this significant form of address prevented him. The Swāmī had unconsciously rejected the official formalism of the Parliament and spoken the language of the heart, which found a ready and spontaneous response from the audience. After silence was restored, he said:—

"It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects."

It was only a short speech lasting not more than three or four minutes. But it struck the keynote of the Parliament of Religions, namely, the note of universal toleration based on the Hindu belief that all religions are pathways to the self-same God. "We believe not only in universal toleration," said Swāmī Vivekānanda, "but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth." After illustrating this statement from our history, he quoted two passages from our scriptures in further support of it. One is the famous verse from the Bhagavad-Gītā, and the other is from our daily prayers:—

"As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their waters in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight—all lead to Thee."

And he ended by saying, "I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this conven-

tion may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal." It is a speech which only a Hindu could make in that august assembly—a Hindu whose faith in universal toleration and the oneness of all religions had been confirmed by the recent experience of Śrī Rāmakrishṇa at Dakṣiṇeśvar.

A week after this preliminary speech, the Swāmī read a paper on Hinduism before the Parliament, in which, once again taking the cue from the life of his Master, he said, "The whole religion of the Hindus is centred in realization. Man is to become divine by *realizing the Divine; idols or temples or churches or* books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood." He spoke on several occasions in the Parliament. Once he said that the crying evil in the East is not want of religion, but want of bread. "They ask us for bread," said he, "but we give them stones. It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion; it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics." He asked the Christians of America, who were so fond of sending out missionaries to save the souls of the heathen, "Why do you not try to save their bodies from starvation?" This, as we have said, is the ever-recurring note in Swāmī Vivekānanda's plans for the regeneration of India. On another occasion he remarked that the separation of Buddhism from Brāhmanism was the cause of the down-fall of India. By this separation both were losers. Buddhism was deprived of faith in God to which every human being clings fondly, and Brāhmanism was deprived of the reforming zeal, the wonderful sympathy and the charity for everybody which Buddhism brought to the masses. "Let us then join the wonderful intellect of the Brāhmaṇa", said the Swāmī, "with the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful

humanizing power of the great Master." And in the address at the final session on the 27th September, he once again rose to the occasion and declared clearly that the unity of religions, of which so much had been said in the Parliament, was not to be attained by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of others. "Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid . . . The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each religion must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve its individuality and grow according to its own law of growth."

The American papers gave the Swāmī's addresses in full, and life-size pictures of "the Monk Vivekānanda" were displayed in the streets of Chicago. And at the Parliament the organizers used to put his name at the end of the programme for the day to make the audience stay till the end of the session. The *New York Herald* wrote, "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation." Thus it was a great triumph not only for "the Monk Vivekānanda" but also for India and Hinduism. And we shall do well to note, in passing, that the 'Monk Vivekānanda' in the hour of his triumph at Chicago was just thirty years old.

We have already seen how the day of his triumph began for him in the empty box at the railway station. It is worth noting how the day ended for the saṁnyāsin. We are told that "on the very day of his triumph he was invited by a man of great wealth and distinction to his home in one of the most fashionable parts of the city of Chicago." Here he was entertained royally and a room, fitted with luxuries far beyond any-

thing he could conceive, was assigned to him. As he retired and lay upon the bed, he was oppressed by the terrible contrast between the wealth of America and the poverty of his own dear country. He could not sleep, for he was moved to tears. He therefore rose from the bed of down, as from a bed of thorns, and went to the window and gazed into the darkness. He was choked with emotion at the thought of his starving countrymen and sank to the floor crying, "O Mother, what do I care for name and fame, when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty! To what a sad pass have we poor Indians come, when millions of us die for want of a handful of rice, and here they spend millions of rppees upon their personal comfort! Who will raise the masses of India? Who will give them bread? Show me, O Mother, how I can help them."

Henceforth his object was not only to disseminate correct ideas of Hinduism in America and Europe, but also to get funds from these wealthy countries for the various philanthropic activities which he wanted to start in India. Accordingly, he stayed in the West for about three years and worked himself almost to death by his incessant tours, talks, lectures and addresses. At first, he accepted the offer of a Lecture Bureau for a lecturing tour of the United States and visited all the larger cities of the Eastern and Mid-Western States. But after some weeks, when he found that the Bureau was exploiting and defrauding him, he severed his relations with it and began to work independently. It is a pity that there is no record of all the innumerable lectures he delivered in this whirl-wind campaign. We get only glimpses of them here and there in the American papers of the day. He was listened to with profound respect by many to whom his exposition of Vedānta was an eye-opener. But some fanatics tackled him with insolent questions, and on them his answers came like flashes of

lightning. For instance, a certain lady in Minneapolis asked him if Hindu mothers threw their children to the crocodiles in the rivers, and he replied, "Yes, madam. They threw me in, but like your fabled Jonah I got out again." Once some University men who had temporarily become cow-boys wanted to test whether he possessed that equanimity of mind of which he had been speaking so much, and, while he was lecturing to them in the village square, fired a number of shots which went whizzing past his ears. But he continued his lecture calmly to the end. The Swāmī showed his courage in other ways also. He told the Americans what exactly he felt about their civilization and what their Christian missions did in India. "If you want to live," he told his audience in Detroit, "go back to Christ. You are not Christians. No, as a nation you are not. Go back to Christ. Go back to Him who had nowhere to lay his head ..... Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. What an irony of fate! Reverse this, if you want to live; reverse this. It is all hypocrisy that I have heard in this country. If this nation is going to live, let it go back to Him. You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time." And he neatly summed up in one sentence the vulgar attacks on Hinduism by the Missionaries in India, who were among his bitterest opponents. "If all India stands up and takes all the mud that is at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the Western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of that which you are doing to us." When a lady, one of his admirers, pointed out to him in a letter that such outbursts would hinder his work and that he should be nice and sweet to all, especially in a foreign country, he wrote back to say in one of his most remarkable letters, "I have a message to give, I have no time to be sweet to the world, and every attempt at sweetness makes me a hypocrite. I will die a thousand

deaths rather than lead a jelly-fish existence and yield to every requirement of this foolish world—no matter whether it be my own country or a foreign country."

After he had shaken himself free from the Lecture Bureau, he accepted the invitation of the Brooklyn Ethical Association to give a series of lectures on Hinduism. These lectures were so successful that there was a demand for regular classes and for instruction in the practice of meditation. The Swāmī was, of course, fully qualified for undertaking this task, having practised various types of meditation under the guidance of his Master. It was at this time that he dictated the contents of his book on Rāja Yoga and the translation of Patanjali's Yoga-sūtras to his disciple, Miss Waldo of Brooklyn, who afterwards became Sister Haridāsī. During the year 1895, the Swāmī worked very hard, holding classes, lecturing both in public and in private and rushing from place to place. And he was satisfied that his message was being kindly received everywhere and that he had thousands of admirers and followers, and that some distinguished men and women were prepared to be initiated into saṁnyāsa and carry on his work. But he was tired and wanted to have some rest away from the busy haunts of men. So he accepted the invitation of one of his disciples, Miss Ducher, to spend some time in her cottage at the Thousand Island Park, the largest island in the St. Lawrence river. In this beautiful place he spent seven happy weeks with a devoted band of twelve disciples. In the biography of the Swāmī, the account of his life at the Thousand Island Park reads like a spiritual idyll. A Hindu reader is reminded of the forest scenes and the inspired talks of the sages in the Upaniṣads. We are indebted to Miss Waldo for a charming description of the place and the life that was led there during those seven weeks and for a summary of the Swāmī's *Inspired Talks*. She writes:—

"Of these talks it was not possible to take notes. They are preserved only in the hearts of the hearers. None of us can ever forget the sense of uplift, the intense spiritual life of those hallowed hours. The Swāmī poured out all his heart at those times, his own struggles were enacted again before us, the very spirit of his Master seemed to speak through his lips, to satisfy all doubts, to answer all questioning, to soothe every fear. Many times the Swāmī seemed hardly conscious of our presence, and then we almost held our breath for fear of disturbing him and checking the flow of his thoughts. He would rise from his seat and pace up and down the narrow limits of the Piazza, pouring forth a perfect torrent of eloquence."

It was in this island retreat that the Swāmī composed his famous "Song of the Saṁnyāsin," in which like a true Advaitin he sings:—

"The self is all in all, none else exists,
And Thou art That, Samnyāsin bold! Say—
Om Tat Sat, Om!"

And it was also in this island retreat that once again he had the experience of samādhi, similar to what he had experienced in the Cossipore garden during the last week of Śrī Rāmakrishna's life. Undoubtedly, the seven weeks he spent at the Thousand Island Park form one of the best and the most creative periods of his life. For, before he left this place, two of his twelve disciples became saṁnyāsins and five became brahmacārins.

Soon after he returned to New York from his island retreat, the Swāmī sailed for England, for he wanted to know how England would receive his message. Visiting Paris on the way, he reached London in September, 1895. He was warmly received by friends, and, after a few days' rest, he commenced his work. At first, it was in the form of private talks, but, when his fame spread, he was invited to give public lectures. These were a tremendous success, and prominent newspapers published interviews with the "Indian Yogī in London". Though his stay was only for three months, he made a great impression on the thoughtful people who came

into contact with him. Among these was Miss Margaret Noble, who afterwards became one of his most devoted disciples under the name of Sister Niveditā, and wrote the well-known book *The Master as I saw him.* She was the headmistress of an educational institution and was deeply interested in religion and philosophy as well as education. She was one of those who sat at the Swāmī's feet like the ladies referred to in the following description of the correspondent of a daily paper in London:—

"It is indeed a rare sight to see some of the most fashionable ladies in London seated on the floor cross-legged, of course, for want of chairs, listening with all the Bhakti of an Indian *Chela* towards his *Guru*"

The Swāmī was satisfied with his work in England. For in a letter, dated 18th November, 1895, he wrote:—

"In England my work is really splendid I am astonished myself at it. The English people do not talk much in the newspapers, but they work silently. I am sure of more work in England than in America."

However, he returned to America in December after an absence of three months and again threw himself into his work there. He worked incessantly, and at one time gave "as many as seventeen class lectures a week, besides carrying on a voluminous correspondence and granting numerous private audiences." Fortunately his disciples this time thought of engaging a stenographer for reporting these lectures. And, by a strange chance, they were able to secure the services of one J. J. Goodwin, an Englishman, who became afterwards an ardent disciple of the Swāmī and not only faithfully reported his lectures, but also attended to his personal needs and accompanied his Master to India and died there. It is to the labours of the "faithful Goodwin," whom the Swāmī called his right hand, that we owe the lectures, *Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga* and *Jñāna Yoga,* with which every student of Vivekānanda literature is familiar.

One of the most remarkable incidents during this period of his stay in America is his lecture on the "Philosophy of the Vedānta" before the students and professors of the Philosophy Department of Harvard University. After the lecture, various questions were put to him in a critical spirit, and he answered them all in his usual way. Asked about the contrast between self-hypnotism and Rāja-yoga, he said that man was already hypnotized and that Yoga was an effort at de-hypnotization of the self. Asked about the Vedāntic idea of civilization, he replied that true civilization was the manifestation of the divinity within and that that land was most civilized where the highest ideals were made practical. The impression created by the Swāmī on the authorities of the University on this occasion may be gauged from the fact that they offered him a chair of Eastern Philosophy at Harvard, which, of course, as a saṁnyāsin he could not accept.

He now wanted to consolidate his work in America. So he discontinued his lectures in February, 1896 and organized the Vedānta Society of New York—a non-sectarian body with the aim of preaching Vedānta and applying its principles to all religions. His lectures on Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga and Jñāna-Yoga were now published in book form like his *Rāja-Yoga* and came in handy for the work of the society. And he also trained his American disciples who had become saṁnyāsins—Swāmīs Kṛpānanda, Abhayānanda and Yogānanda and Sister Haridāsī—for carrying on his work during his absence. Furthermore, he conceived the idea of bringing some of his brother disciples from India to teach in America and taking some of his Western disciples with him to teach in India. The Indian disciples would teach religion in America, and the American disciples would teach science and organization in India. Thus there would be an interchange of ideas between the East

and the West to the advantage of both. Accordingly, the Swāmī wrote to Swāmī Śāradānanda in India to start at once and meet him in London, and he himself sailed for England from New York on 15th April, 1897.

In London he worked again indefatigably holding private classes and delivering public lectures and giving talks in many clubs, societies and drawing-rooms. But the most memorable event of this period perhaps is his meeting the great orientalist—the aged Professor Max Müller—by special invitation at his residence. The Professor took him round and showed him the several colleges in Oxford and the Bodleian Library and even accompanied him to the railway station, saying, "It is not every day one meets with a disciple of Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa." He was anxious to know more about Śrī Rāmakrishna and said he would gladly write a fuller account of his life and teachings than the article he had already written about him for the *Nineteenth Century Magazine,* if details were supplied to him. Therefore, the Swāmī at once commissioned Swāmī Śāradānanda, who had arrived in London, to get the necessary information for the Professor from India. With the help of this, Max Müller subsequently wrote and published a book with the title, *The Life and Sayings of Śrī Rāmakrishna.*

The second visit to London is also memorable for the additions that were made to the devoted band of the Swāmī's Western disciples. To the group already consisting of Miss Noble, Miss Muller and Mr. Sturdy were now added Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. This couple attended his religious classes and said to themselves, "This is the man and this is the philosophy that we have been seeking in vain all through our life." Henceforth they looked upon him as their *guru* and gave up their fortunes and themselves entirely to him and later accompanied him to India to help him in his work and

founded the Advaita Āśrama in the Himālayas. Seeing now that the Swāmī was exhausting himself with strenuous work in London, they planned a holiday for him on the continent. He readily assented, and the party visited Geneva and then Chamounix, from which they could gaze on the Alps and Mt. Blanc. The Swāmī was reminded of his beloved Himālayas, and it was at the foot of the Alps that he conceived the idea of establishing a monastery in the Himālayas, where his Western and Eastern disciples could live and work together. The Seviers jumped at the idea and steadily worked for it, till their hearts' desire was fulfilled a few years later by the founding of the Advaita Āśrama at Almora. While the travellers were in Switzerland, the Swāmī received an invitation to Kiel from the famous German savant and Vedānta scholar—Paul Deussen. So they shortened their stay in Switzerland and, visiting Heidelberg, Coblentz, Cologne and Berlin, reached Kiel. After meeting Deussen and finishing his tour, the Swāmī returned to London. Here he delivered a new course of lectures on the Hindu theory of Māyā and on Practical Vedānta, besides his usual talks in drawing-rooms and clubs. After two months of hard work, he found that the strain was telling on his health. So he thought of returning as soon as possible to India, where all the great work of regeneration that he had planned while he was in America was awaiting him. But someone had to carry on the work he had begun in England. Swāmī Śāradānanda had been sent to America to carry on the work there, and so another of his brother disciples, Swāmī Abhedānanda, was sent for from India for work in England. The Swāmī carefully trained Abhedānanda for his new work, and it was only after satisfying himself that he was leaving behind him a good substitute in London that he departed for India—"India which he had loved before he came away, India whose very dust was now holy to him."

V

It is impossible to read without emotion the accounts of the reception that was given to Swāmī Vivekānanda when he returned to India in triumph after four years of glorious work for the Motherland and her ancient religion. His biographers open their chapter on his triumphal march with these words:—"The homecoming of Swāmī Vivekānanda may be regarded as a great event in the history of Modern India, for a united India rose to do him honour." The event was great not only because a fitting reception was given by India's millions to a saṁnyāsin, who was after their own heart and who had made them all feel an inch taller, but also because the stir created by his triumphal tour made the present Hindu Renaissance self-conscious and adolescent. The Swāmī himself was confirmed in his belief that religion represented the heart of Indian national life and that politics, economics, industries, trade and commerce were all only subsidiary to it. Hindus may have much to learn from the West in matters relating to science and social and political organization, but in philosophy and religion they were still supreme. Their ṛṣis and sages had scaled heights in the realm of spirit which none in the West dared to climb. Hence their political subjection need not at all imply religious subjection. The conquest of India had never been a cultural conquest. Modern India could withstand the propaganda of the Christian Missionaries, as mediaeval India withstood the attacks of Muslim zealots. If only Hindus could put their house in order and apply their spiritual legacy to practical life and courageously do away with all the excrescences that disfigured their society, they could once again become as great as their ancestors of ancient India. They should take from the Western nations all that was good in their civilization. Swāmī Vivekānanda was impressed with four things in

particular in Western civilization and pressed them on the attention of his countrymen in the speeches he made after his return to India. Firstly, he was impressed by the Western nations' great concern for their masses. He saw the painful contrast between the condition of the masses in India and the condition of the masses in the West. His letters bear eloquent testimony to his feelings on this subject. Secondly, he was impressed with the high culture of the women of America, the freedom that they enjoyed and the great respect that was accorded to them in society. Therefore he emphasized, after his return, that Hindus should improve the condition of their women, that they should have hospitals and nursing homes for them, that they should have schools and colleges for girls and that they should treat their women with greater respect in society. Thirdly, he was impressed with the power of organization he saw in the West. So he advised his countrymen to organize themselves. Unless they organized themselves, unless they had leagues and Samitis and bands of workers, they could never overtake their brethren of the West in social progress. And, fourthly, he was astonished at the material prosperity of America and Europe and came to the conclusion that, unless his countrymen also gave a strong physical basis to their civilization, it would tumble down in the present state of the world. But he urged that all national activities in India should be organized round the spiritual ideal, for religion formed the centre of the national life here. Politics, social reform and education would be successful in India only if these pointed to a higher spiritual life. So the first thing to be done is to broadcast the great religious truths found in the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas, so that the masses might realize their own strength and overcome their ignorance and poverty. It is a religion of strength based on the inherent divinity of the human soul, and not

a religion of weakness teaching that man is a born sinner, that the nation wants. All weakness should be rejected as poison. Vedānta teaches strength, and it is the gospel of strength that we must teach to the poor and the down-trodden of our land.

This was the gist of the numerous speeches that the Swāmī delivered to crowded audiences, as he travelled from Ceylon to the Himālayas. He was everywhere hailed as the Prophet of Modern India. Rājās and Mahārājās, associations and corporations vied with one another in doing him honour. They prostrated themselves before him, they carried him in procession and they dragged his carriage along the streets of their cities. After his lecturing tour was over the Swāmī devoted himself to the task of training his Eastern and Western disciples, so that they might carry out his plans for the regeneration of India. He exhorted his Western disciples, who came to serve India, to identify themselves thoroughly with the people, adopt their dress and food and manners as far as they could, and make an impartial and sympathetic study of the problems set to them. His advice to Sister Niveditā is typical of the methods he recommended to them. He said to her, "You have to set yourself to Hinduize your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Brāhmana Brahmacārinī's ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory" His advice to his Eastern disciples was naturally different. The Indian monk had to come out of his narrow groove and combine the ideal of service with the ideal of renunciation and cease to think of individual salvation. This was a revolutionary idea to some of his fellow-saṁnyāsins in the Maṭh, who had till now been

following the old tradition of striving for personal mukti and realization of the supreme Ātman through severe penance and meditation, away from the cares and sorrows of the world. Therefore, at first, there was some opposition on the ground that the Swāmī's methods of holding meetings, delivering lectures and doing social service were Western in conception, and not Indian, and hence incompatible with the teachings of Śrī Rāmakrishna. But he bore down all opposition by saying that the disciples of Rāmakrishna should not forget the human side of their Master, his love and tenderness towards all beings as manifestations of the Divinity. They should not forget that, after his illumination, he did not shut himself up, but worked hard to bring illumination to others. They should not give a narrow interpretation to the Message of the Master and shut themselves up in their Maṭhs not caring for the welfare of the world. He was the chief disciple of Śrī Rāmakrishna, he knew the mind of the Master better than others, and so he claimed that he interpreted his message rightly when he said that their supreme duty was to work for the religious regeneration of the land through renunciation and service. At last they all agreed, and the Rāmakrishna Mission, which has now branches all over the country doing philanthropic work, was organized in 1897. "Of the Swami's numerous triumphs," say his biographers, "one of the greatest was the conversion of his Gurubhāis from the individualistic to the national idea of religious life, in which public spirit and service to fellow-men occupied a prominent place."

By this time the Swāmī had already worn himself out by his incessant work and had a premonition that he had not many more years to live. As early as 11th August, 1897 he told Swāmī Achyutānanda at Bareilly that he would live only for five or six years more—which indeed proved a prophetic utterance. But this

knowledge did not make him relax his efforts in any way. Though he was far from well, he spent the rest of the year in touring through the Punjab, Kashmir and Rājaputāna, and next year he undertook arduous journeys through the Himālayan districts and the difficult pilgrimage to the cave of Amarnāth, in a high gorge in the Western Himālayas.

VI

The Swami's visit to Amarnāth is one of the turning points in his spiritual life, like his meeting Śrī Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa in 1880 and his appearance before the Parliament of Religions in 1893. For when he joined the throng of pilgrims, bathed like them in the ice-cold stream beside the cave and entered the shrine of Śiva, nude except for a loin-cloth, a great mystical experience came to him, the shock of which resulted in a permanent dilation of the heart. Śiva was a Deity intimately associated with the devotions of Vivekānanda. In fact, the Swāmī was himself a boon from Śiva to his mother, who had prayed to the great god of Benares for a son. So no wonder that he was profoundly moved when he entered the famous shrine of the Lord of the Snows. For days afterwards, he could speak of nothing but Śiva—Śiva, the Eternal Monk, rapt in meditation amidst the Himālayan snows. Some time later, while narrating the story of his pilgrimage to a disciple, he said, " Ever since I went to Amarnāth, Śiva Himself has entered into my brain. *He will not go.*"

After his return from Amarnāth his devotion concentrated itself for some time on Kālī the Divine Mother, and he used to retire frequently and lose himself in intense meditation. As a result of this, one day he had a vision of the Mother, and it was during that experience that he wrote his poem *Kālī the Mother*. It is reported that, when he wrote the last word of the poem, the pen fell

from his hand and he himself dropped to the floor, losing his consciousness in samādhi. Soon after this experience, he retired abruptly for a week to the springs of Kṣīr-Bhavānī and practised severe austerities. The change that came over him as a result of all this is indicated by what he then said to his disciples. "All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only Mother! I have been very wrong." And as the party was descending to the plains, the Swāmī said he had no plans for the future. All that he wished for himself was the life of the monk, of silence and forgottenness. He said that the Swāmījī was dead and gone. Who was he that he should feel the urge for teaching the world? It was all fuss and vanity. The Mother had no need of him, but only he of Her. Work, when one had seen this, was nothing but illusion.

One is not surprised at this development. Of all the burdens that the great men of the earth have to bear, none is so irritating to them as the burden of their own greatness. Their sense of modesty is often outraged by their having to play the part of hero as at the bidding of fate. And there is always an uncomfortable suspicion that they might merely be victims of egotism. Hence their frequent longing to rush away from the limelight into which circumstances have forced them and bury themselves in obscurity. Swāmī Vivekānanda had several such moments at the height of his popularity in America. The mood is one of the ever-recurring notes in his letters. He writes on one occasion, "This nonsense of public life and newspaper blazoning has disgusted me thoroughly. I long to go back to the Himālayan quiet." On another occasion he exclaims, "I long, Oh! I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under trees and my food by begging! India is the only place where, with all its faults, the soul finds its freedom, its God. All this Western pomp is only

vanity, only bondage of the soul". Again, he writes, "My natural tendency is to go into a cave and be quiet, but a fate pushes me forward and I go. Whoever could resist fate?" This under-current of feeling surged up to the surface of his mind after his memorable visit to Amarnāth and the springs of Kṣīr Bhavānī. At the latter place, it even took the form of the Divine Voice reprimanding him for his plans for building a new temple there. "Since I heard that Divine Voice," he said later to a disciple, "I have ceased making any more plans. Let these things be as Mother wills."

The Swāmī returned to Belūr in October, 1898, with his health very much undermined by this pilgrimage. Here the new monastery for the Rāmakrishna Order had been under construction. In spite of his ill-health, he took part in the consecreation ceremony in December. And from the beginning of the year 1899 Belūr Maṭh became the permanent headquarters of the monks of the Order. Thus one of the dreams of the Swāmī's life was realized. On the day on which the grounds were consecrated before the building was erected, he had said, "To-day I feel free from the weight of the responsibility which I have carried with me for twelve long years." Very soon another dream of his, namely, that of establishing a monastery on the silent heights of the Himālayas was also realised. He had left the matter in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and Swāmī Swarūpānanda. They found a beautiful estate fifty miles from Almora, at an elevation of 6,800 feet, and purchased it. Here the Advaita Āśrama was founded in March, 1899.

VII

Having placed these two monasteries on a proper footing, the Swāmī wanted to pay a second visit to the West to see how the work he had started there was pro-

gressing. His friends and doctors welcomed the idea, as they hoped the voyage might improve his health. Accordingly he took Swāmī Turīyānanda and Sister Niveditā with him and sailed in June, 1899. After a fortnight's stay in London he proceeded to America and was welcomed by Swāmī Abhedānanda and other friends of his former days. Here he again threw himself into strenuous work in various places, in spite of his premonition, which he communicated to Swāmī Abhedānanda in private, that his days were numbered and "that his cage of flesh and blood could not hold him for many days more." This time the centre of his activity was San Francisco, in California, where he gave several series of lectures and held private classes for teaching Rāja Yoga and meditation. Before he left this place, he received from one of his followers the gift of a large tract of land, 160 acres in extent, in the district of Santa Clara. Here was established Śānti Āśrama, with Swāmī Turīyānanda in residence. New Vedānta centres were also established at San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. The Swāmī then returned to New York in June, after a fatiguing journey across the continent and was pleased to see the progress of the Vedānta Society in that city. During his stay here he delivered public lectures on Sundays and held Gītā classes on Saturdays. In all these gatherings, during his second visit, the Swāmī, in spite of his failing health, showed the same old fire, eloquence and wit and the same old readiness at repartee. For instance, once some students of Theosophy, who were interested in occult phenomena, asked him, "Swāmī, have you ever seen an elemental?" "O yes," he replied quickly, "we have them in India for breakfast." On another occasion, in a lecture comparing the life of a saṁnyāsin with that of a householder, he suddenly said, "Someone asked me if I was ever married." The audience tittered.

Then, putting on a look of horror, he exclaimed, "I wouldn't be married for anything. It is the devil's own game". After a pause, he again continued with mock-seriousness, "There is one thing, however, that I have against the monastic system, and that is, that it takes the best men away from the community." The audience burst into laughter.

In appreciating these lighter moods and the strenuous work he did during this time, we should not forget that the Swāmī was all the time feeling that he was a dying man. In one of his letters from California in the spring of the same year 1900 he writes:—

"Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless —the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling—'I come, Lord, I come'—'Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou me'. 'I come, my beloved Lord, I come'. Yes, I come. Nirvāna is before me I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath. . . . Oh! it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon every thing, sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows—without fear, without love, without emotion—Peace that one feels alone surrounded with statues and pictures—I come, Lord, I come"

While the Swāmī was in California he received an invitation to attend and address the Congress of the History of Religions to be held in Paris in 1900. So he left New York on 20th July, and reached Paris on August 1, 1900.

On account of his ill-health, he addressed the Congress only twice, though he was present at several of its sittings. He stayed for three months in Paris and left for Egypt, visiting Vienna, Constantinople and Athens on the way. He was now weary and tired, and had a premonition that his friend and disciple, Mr. Sevier, had passed away in India. So he became restless, and, to the grief of his hosts and friends, suddenly

made up his mind to return home. He took the first steamer for India, landed at Bombay, and travelling *incognito* arrived unexpectedly late at night on the 9th December, 1900 at the monastery at Bēlur.

VII

After resting a few months he thought it his duty, in spite of his poor health, to go up to the Advaita Āśram at Māyāvatī in the Himālayas to see Mrs. Sevier after her bereavement. The weather was bad on the way. Māyāvatī was covered with snow most of the time that the Swāmī stayed there. He could not go out, and his health declined further. So he returned to Belūr after only a fortnight's stay. It was now difficult for him to undertake any work requiring physical energy or concentration of mind. However, when pressing invitations came from Dacca and East Bengal, he could not decline them. Moreover his old mother wanted to go on a pilgrimage to the holy places in East Bengal and Assam. So the Swāmī undertook what proved to be practically the last tour of his life in March and April, 1901. He visited Dacca, Gauhati, Shillong and other places, and, as usual, exerted himself more than he should by giving interviews, informal talks and public lectures. For instance, at the Jagannāth College, Dacca, he lectured for an hour before two thousand people on "What have I learnt?" The next day he gave an open air lecture on "The Religion we are born in" lasting for two hours before an audience of three thousand. And at Gauhati he delivered three lectures, and at Shillong, at the request of Sir Henry Cotton, then the Chief Commissioner of Assam, he delivered a lecture before the resident English officials and a large gathering of Indians. These exertions prostrated him. He had been suffering from diabetes. Now he had also severe attacks of asthma. So, when

he returned to the monastery, the monks begged him to give up all thoughts of appearing in public till he was completely restored. Accordingly he lived in comparative retirement at the Belūr Maṭh during the last year of his life, except for a short visit to Buddha-Gaya and Benares in the company of two Japanese gentlemen, who had come to invite him to the Congress of Religions they proposed to hold in their country.

The Swāmī was now evidently sinking. However the last scenes of his eventful life have all the repose and the pathetic beauty of a sunset. He was now a saṁnyāsin pure and simple. He would go about the monastery grounds clad only in a loin-cloth, barefooted and with a long staff in his hand. He was friends with everybody about the place, including the monastery servants, though everybody stood in awe of him. He took interest in gardening, made experiments in cooking and reared up a number of pet animals. One of his letters written during this period about his pets—his ducks and geese, his huge stork and his tame antelope—is most charming. In serious moods he would either wander alone deep in thought along the village paths leading from the monastery or sit in meditation by the Ganges or under a tree in the monastery compound or recline in the upper verandah and gaze wistfully on the familiar turrets of the temple at Dakṣiṇeśvar—the temple which had so many sacred memories for him. If he was in a reminiscent mood, he would tell stories to the assembled monks of his wanderings in India or his adventures in America and Europe. At the same time, he was very strict about discipline in the monastery. He would personally rouse the monks from their beds early in the morning and see that they practised the prescribed austerities. He would get angry with them if there was any infringement of the rules of the monastery. There is a story told that one day, when

he found that many of the monks had absented themselves from the meditation hall at the prescribed hour, he gave orders that no food should be served to them on that day and that they should go to town and beg for their food. But usually he was very loving and tender to them. He carefully trained them, held regular classes for them and gave them also lessons from his own experience. As his biographers put it, he was, to the outside world, the famous Vivekānanda, the teacher and the patriot, but to his brother-monks he was the friend, the leader, the beloved one, the son of Rāmakrishna, their all-in-all.

The end came rather suddenly. On the 4th July, 1902, he rose rather early, and, after taking his morning tea, shut himself up in solitary meditation for three hours and broke forth into a song at the end. That day he unusually dined with his fellow monks and disciples in the refectory. In the afternoon he took his class in Sanskrit grammar for three hours, and in the evening he went on a walk of about two miles with Swāmī Premānanda. After returning from his walk he rested for some time. Then he told his beads and meditated for an hour, from seven to eight, and lay down on his bed. The disciple who was fanning him, as he lay, thought he was sleeping. An hour afterwards suddenly his hands shook a little, he breathed hard and all was over.

Three days before his passing away, as he was walking up and down the monastery lawn with Swāmī Premānanda, he had pointed to a particular spot on the bank of the Ganges and said, "When I give up the body, cremate it there." His instructions were followed, and on that spot stands today a temple in his honour.

VIII

The death of Swāmī Vivekānanda at the early age of thirty-nine was a great national calamity. Within

a decade after his first public appearance at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he raised India in the eyes of the world, gave Hinduism a new turn and put a new spirit in the hearts of his countrymen. One can imagine what he might have done for India and Hinduism, if he had lived at least to the psalmist's age of three score years and ten. But he was destined only to be a pioneer. He broke new ground and led his people across and sighted the promised land, but did not live to enter it. He was the first to interpret living Hinduism in all its aspects to the civilized world in a way which at once brought recognition of its greatness. And by his brilliant success in the West he opened the eyes of many Hindus at home to their own rich spiritual heritage. At the same time, he never stooped to flatter his countrymen and encourage them in their superstitions and sins. On the other hand, he poured vials of wrath on the priest-ridden, superstitious, hypocritical, educated classes, whose God is the kitchen and whose religion is ' Don't-touchism.' One has only to read his letters to know his dynamic personality and to see how his mind teemed with creative ideas for purifying and reinterpreting Hinduism and for raising the masses in India. We have already quoted from his letter describing the thoughts he had at Kanyākumārī on the subject of mass education. Now, to illustrate his ideas on the subject of re-interpretation of Hinduism, we may take the following from a letter dated 7th February, 1896:—

" The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work. The Lord only knows how far I shall succeed."

The Swāmī had to contend against many enemies who spread slanders against him and belittled his work.

Almost every other letter of his refers to the mean jealousy of many of his countrymen. And then there were the rival associations—The Brāhmo Samāj and the Theosophical Society—some of whose members looked with envy on his success in America. But the bitterest of his opponents were the Christian missionaries in India. For he had put an end to the palmy days of their unchallenged supremacy. They could no longer trample on Hinduism as a mere dead mass of superstition and idolatry. For here was a doughty champion of the despised religion they had been running down, a champion who now had the boldness to carry the battle into the enemy's distant camp where, strange to say, he was hailed as a friend. After Vivekānanda, they could not denounce Hindus as heathens and Hinduism as heathenism. They had to change their tactics. But, all the time, the Swāmī believed and taught, like a true Hindu, that all religions are branches of the same tree, and wanted that, after listening to him, his Chrisian brethren should only become better Christians and not Hindus.

IX

We have already seen how, with Swāmī Vivekānanda, the modern Hindu Renaissance becomes self-conscious and adolescent. The three religious movements that immediately preceded the Rāmakrishna movement were rather poor and inadequate representations of the great historic religion of the Hindus. The religion of the Brāhmo Samāj was mere eclecticism, more Christian than Hindu in character. The religion of the Ārya Samāj was mere Vedism, which ignored all the later developments in Hinduism. The religion of the Theosophical Society with its Tibetan Masters, its occult phenomena and its esoteric teachings was looked upon by most Hindus as a kind of spurious Hinduism.

On the other hand, the fourth religious movement of the period—the Rāmakrishna movement—of which Swāmī Vivekānanda was the great apostle, was doubtless not only a full, but also a genuine Avatār of Hinduism. The attitude of the Swāmī himself to the three movements that preceded him throws light on the scope and character of the Rāmakrishna movement. He was himself a Brāhmo, as we have seen, at the beginning of his career, but finding the rationalistic, intellectual creed of the Samāj too barren, he sought refuge in the rich spirituality of Śrī Rāmakrishna. As for the Ārya Samāj, he admired the patriotic fervour of its founder, but also saw the fatal mistake he made in excluding Vedānta, which is the very soul of Hinuism, from the scope of the reformed Hinduism which he preached. For the Swāmī observes in one of his letters, " Now if it is possible to build a consistent religion on the Saṁhitās, it is a thousand times more sure that a very consistent and harmonious faith can be based upon the Upaniṣads, and, moreover, here one has not to go against the already received national opinion. Here all the Ācāryas of the past would side with you and you have a vast scope for new progress". And as for the Theosophical Society, the Swāmī roundly declared that its "occultisms and esotericisms" would only make Indians, who were already weak and superstitious, weaker and more superstitious. " Give up these weakening mysticisms," he cries in one of his lectures, " and be strong. Go back to your Upaniṣads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy, and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things." He had great admiration for Mrs. Besant and said that Indians should be profoundly grateful to her for all the good she had done for India, but that did not mean that they should join the Theosophical Society or accept its teachings. No. India, according to him, could rise only by sitting at

the feet of Śrī Rāmakrishna, the genuine saint and mystic, who embodied in himself the Hindu religious experience of all the past ages. Swāmī Vivekānanda believed that his Master was a modern Avatār and that from the date of his birth began the Golden Age of the future. He considered himself the slave of Śrī Rāmakrishna, to whose service he dedicated himself body and soul. By his zeal and energy he made his Master's ideas current in the modern world and applied them to the problems of national life in India. But he would not press either the idea of incarnation or the miraculous elements in the saint's life on the attention of the public. He would only dwell on his religious experience and emphasize his teachings. Accordingly in his letters he advised his brother disciples to keep to themselves their faith in their Master's incarnation and not to insist on such unnecessary things as miracles, which after all prove nothing. Śrī Rāmakrishna had a world of first-hand religious knowledge to teach. It was therefore enough if his disciples broadcasted the truths he taught so that they might "penetrate every pore of Hindu Society". And the truths that he taught were the same as those of Vedānta, now illuminated for us by his effulgent personality. Hence the aim of the Rāmakrishna movement, according to its greatest apostle, is to spread the gospel of Vedānta in all countries and apply it to practical life and national problems at home in India. He therefore emphasizes the following five characteristic features of Vedānta in his lectures and talks:—(1) its universality, (2) its impersonality, (3) its rationality, (4) its catholicity and (5) its optimism.

To begin with, Vedānta is a universal religion. Its principles underlie all religions. Its three schools of Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita are three stages in the spiritual growth of man. They are not contra-

dictory of one another, but supplementary. Advaita is the complete truth. Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita are partial truths. We progress here not from errors to truth, but from lower truths to a higher truth. Advaita represents the highest state that man could reach. But he can reach it only after passing through the other two stages. The Absolute can be reached only through the medium of names and forms. Hence all the three phases of Vedānta are necessary for us—dualism, organic monism and absolute monism—and all the three have the support of the Upaniṣads. There is no use of torturing the texts and interpreting them all in favour of either Dvaita or Viśiṣṭādvaita or Advaita to the exclusion of the other two. The Upaniṣads are comprehensive accounts of the religious experience of man. So the three schools of Vedānta based on them represent the fundamental patterns of religious thought. All the religions of the world may be considered as only the applications of one or more of these patterns to the particular circumstances of an age or a country. Hinduism itself is this three-fold Vedānta, applied to the ethnic customs and beliefs of India through several ages. Christianity may be looked upon as dualistic Vedānta, applied to the ethnic groups and ideas of Europe. Islam may also be looked upon as dualistic Vedānta, applied to the ethnic groups and ideas of Semitic nations. Similarly, the monistic Vedānta, applied on its psychological and ethical side to certain social groups and ideas, is Buddhism. The same philosophy, applied to a special cult and ceremonial, is Śāktism. In short, religion is one, and that is Vedānta; but religions are many according to the different needs, capacities and surroundings of various groups of men. In one of his letters the Swāmī says:—

"We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Veda nor the Bible nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind

ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of *The Religion,* which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best."

Vedānta alone, under some form or other, is fit to become the universal religion of man. For, while all the other great religions of the world are based on the lives of their founders, Vedānta alone is based on principles. It is absolutely impersonal. Its authority is not affected by the historicity of any particular man. Christianity, Islam and even Buddhism would lose their authority in the eyes of their followers, if Christ, Mohammed and Buddha respectively were proved to be not historical characters. But that is not the case with Vedānta. The names of the Ṛṣis who discovered its truths are not at all important. In many cases they are not even known. The truths are all important, not the men who gave them utterance. They are there to be accepted first on trust, then to be experimented on, as Śrī Rāmakrishna did, and verified and realized. At the same time, the value of personality is not ignored by Hinduism in the application of principles. For what religion gives us more incarnations, prophets and seers than Hinduism? And these are loved, admired and worshipped according to the different needs and tastes of men. All the same, their importance lies in the way in which they enforce or exemplify the principles of Vedānta in their lives. If any of them are proved to be not historical, Hinduism suffers no injury thereby. In fact, the Hindu doctrine of Iṣṭa-Devatā, according to which each man chooses his own form of the Divine, either historical or ideal, for worship and meditation, ensures at once both complete freedom and intense devotion. Thus, just as the God of the Hindus is impersonal and personal at once, that is, impersonal in Himself and personal to men, so their religion is also an impersonal religion, being based on principles and not on persons, and yet it has infinite scope for personality.

Vedānta, again, is in entire accord with the methods and results of modern science. Its conclusions are pre-eminently rational, being deduced by reason from wide-spread religious experience. Take, for instance, the grand Vedāntic idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe. Just as science has discovered that the sun and the moon, the stars and the planets—in fact, all things in the universe—are only waves in an ocean of matter, so has Vedānta discovered that there is but one soul throughout the universe and that all beings are only configurations of that one reality. From this discovery of spiritual unity arise the Vedāntic doctrines of the solidarity of the universe and the brotherhood of all creatures. What life-giving doctrines these would have been, if they had been put into practice and acted upon by the Hindus! Swāmī Vivekānanda is never tired of pointing out in his letters, speeches and conversations that millions of men and women in India are sunk in poverty and ignorance and, in spite of the teachings of Vedānta, no helping hand is given to them by their brethren of the higher classes to enable them to rise out of their misery. If only Vedānta were even now translated into practical life, what a clean sweep there would be of age-long tyrannies and privileges and divisions of men into castes, subcastes and outcastes with impassable barriers! The Swāmī had no patience with those who said that the castes in India could not be levelled up and that by heredity the Brāhmans were more intellectual than the depressed classes. His indignant reply to such assertions was that, if so, there was all the greater reason that not a pie should be spent on the education of the Brāhmans, but that all available money in the country should be spent on the education of the depressed classes. But his serious advice to his countrymen was that all these quarrels about superiority and inferiority, about Āryan and Dravidian, about Brāhman and non-Brāhman

should cease at once and that the Brāhman should be regarded not as a member of a privileged caste, but as an ideal state to which all Hindus should be levelled up. This levelling up could be done only by education. According to him, the education of the masses was the primary need of India. Even for social reform, for which there was so much agitation on the part of some reformers, people must first be educated. In his opinion, most of the reforms that had been agitated for in the nineteenth century touched only the first two castes. The question of child-marriage and widow-marriage, for instance, would not touch seventy per cent. of Indian women. No. The work must proceed from the bottom and not from the top. The principles of Vedānta should first be applied to the uplift of the masses. The masses should be our gods. The Swāmī says:—

"The first of all worships is the worship of the Virāt—of all those around us. . . . . The first gods that we have to worship are our own countrymen."

It is the Vedāntic principle of spiritual unity alone that can give a firm philosophic basis to all ethical teaching. Take, for instance, the teaching—"Love thy neighbour as thyself". One may ask, why should a man love his neighbour as himself? Not simply because a prophet in Galilee said so, for ethical systems cannot rest on mere personal authority, but because a man's neighbour is essentially the man himself, because there is only one self in all beings and, by injuring his neighbour, a man really injures himself. The principle applies not only to men but also to all creatures, to all forms of animal and vegetable life. It gives a philosophic basis, therefore, not only to the love of one's neighbour, but also to kindness to animals and tenderness to plants, which Hinduism so assiduously enjoins us to cultivate. It inculcates universal love. It makes non-violence the highest virtue known to man and regards the ideal man as being, in the words of Swāmī Vivekānanda, one who

is "non-resisting, calm, steady, worshipful, pure and meditative."

The Swāmī says that Europe and America are as much in need of this doctrine of oneness as the down-trodden millions of India. For all their political and social aspirations as well as their ethical ideals will have a firm foundation only when they are founded on this doctrine. Democracy and socialism, liberty, equality and fraternity would be spiritualized and made more potent, if they were understood as mere applications of this Vedāntic truth to political and social life.

But the spiritual oneness of the universe is not the only doctrine that shows the rational character of Vedānta. Its Law of Karma, its theory of reincarnation, its conception of the evolution of the universe, its insight into the psychology of man, its theory of knowledge, its conception of the Absolute and its scheme of Mokṣa, abolishing the popular heavens and hells and leading up to self-realization—all these show its scientific nature. In short, Vedānta is a body of doctrine, rational and scientific through and through. It does not discard reason in favour of faith. Nor does it make reason the absolute sovereign. Intuition or inspiration, as Swāmī Vivekānanda calls it, is a higher faculty than reason, but the truths discovered by intuition have to be examined and systematized by reason. That is why among the Hindus a study of logic is considered indispensable to a student of Vedānta.

(4) Vedānta shows the greatest catholicity in the means it adopts for the end of self-realization. Historically its grand discovery—*Ekam Sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*. (He who exists is one, the sages call Him variously)—put an end to all warfare on behalf of the tribal gods among the ancient Āryans. The gods continued to exist, even as they exist now, but they were all perceived to be so many aspects or manifestations of the One Sat,

the supreme Reality. This great doctrine that God is one, though He is called by many names and worshipped under various forms, has entered into the very life-blood of our nation and made Hindu India the glorious land of religious toleration—a land where Hindus build mosques and churches for religions whose avowed aim is to overthrow Hinduism. Swāmī Vivekānanda says that it would be a great acquisition to civilization, if all the nations of the world should follow the Hindu example and act upon the principle of universal toleration and mutual help in religious matters. We have already seen how, in his famous opening address to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, he stressed this aspect of Hinduism with great effect.

Again, just as Vedānta does not confine itself to any one manifestation of the Divine Spirit as the goal to be reached, so it does not confine itself to any one path, like the other religions of the world. It points out the value and the importance of all paths leading to the goal. Action, devotion, meditation, knowledge—all have their due place in its scheme of religious life. Its Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Rāja-yoga and Jñāna-yoga give a complete chart of religious life. Guidance is therefore given to all kinds of aspirants in all stages of growth. Vedānta is not the pigeon-hole of a single creed into which all minds have to be thrust. There are rooms in the mansion of Hinduism for all classes of men, from the lowest peasant having the crudest conception of God to the highest mystic who sees God as the uncreated light in his own heart.

Lastly, the characteristic feature of Vedānta that is most often stressed by Swāmī Vivekānanda is its unshakeable optimism. Of all the religions of the world, it is Vedānta alone that can make men strong and self-reliant, having unbounded faith in themselves. By insisting on the inherent divinity of the human soul under

all circumstances, it gives hope of infinite progress to every man, however degraded and fallen he may be. It invests human personality with a sacredness and dignity unknown to other religions. Vedānta is thus a religion of strength and hope, not a religion of weakness and despair. Far from saying that man is essentially sinful and must be saved, if at all, from without by the intervention of a Saviour, as Christianity does, it teaches that man is essentially divine—a spark of the Primal Light—and that his salvation must come from within. The light within will shine of its own accord, when the knowledge of the self removes the veil of ignorance covering it. From a hundred platforms Swāmī Vivekānanda told his countrymen that they had become weak and miserable because they did not bring their Vedānta out of their books and apply it to life. They had lost faith in themselves and become the victims of those nations who had that faith. Strength, strength, strength—that was the crying need of the hour in India, according to Swāmī Vivekānanda. He is never tired of saying that it is a strength-giving religion that we want, it is a man-making education that we want. The Upaniṣadic sentence, *Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyah* (this Ātman cannot be realized by a man devoid of strength), may be taken as the motto of many of his lectures. The Swāmī laments that our young men, instead of being taught that nothing is impossible for men who believe in the Vedāntic doctrine, that there is divinity dwelling within them, are being taught that man is a born sinner and is a weak miserable creature; instead of being taught that their ancestors achieved great and glorious things and that they in turn should achieve greater and more glorious things, they are being taught by their foreign masters that their ancestors were superstitious fools or cruel barbarians. On the other hand, nations in the West believe, whatever Christianity may

say, that courage, manliness, self-reliance and strength of will are their great national virtues and that their ancestors were heroes whom they must surpass.

India's need is not, therefore, any fresh imported religion, as Christian Missionaries want to make us believe. On the contrary, the rest of the world is in need of India's Vedānta for making its own religions more liberal and broad-minded. Nor is India's need the suppression of all religion, as some of her own reformers seem to think. On the other hand, Swāmī Vivekānanda says that it is only by making our politics, economics and sociology religious that we can make them succeed in this country. For the people of India are incurably religious. They cannot be made materialistic at the bidding of any reformer. What we can and ought to do is to see that they are not ignorantly religious, but intelligently religious. This can and ought to be done, firstly, by elevating the masses through education, secondly, by putting an end to India's cultural isolation from the world, which has been the cause of her degradation, and, thirdly and lastly, by bringing Vedānta out of books and caves and broadcasting it among all people and teaching the nation to apply its grand truths to all departments of life. It is only then that India will rise again in the eyes of the world and a synthesis will be achieved between the West and the East—a synthesis of which Swāmī Vivekānanda was himself an embodiment, for he combined in himself the highest spirituality of India with the patriotism, the energy and the passion for social justice of the Western nations.

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CHAPTER VIII

ŚRĪ AUŔOBINDO

I

Writing in 1928 about the Neo-Vedāntic movement started by Swāmī Vivekānanda, Romain Rolland says in his book—*Prophets of the New India*:—

"The most noble representative of this great Neo-Vedāntic spirit was—and still is—Aurobindo Ghose, the foremost of Indian thinkers, from whom intellectual and religious India is awaiting a new revelation."

The new revelation, or rather the new interpretation of the old revelation, is now to be found in the volumes of *The Life Divine*—one of the massive products of the present Renaissance, a book which has been hailed by Sir Francis Younghusband as "the greatest philosophical religious work which has been produced in India for centuries." *The Life Divine* is a vast philosophical prose epic of more than one thousand six hundred pages on the spiritual evolution of the universe. We may look upon Śrī Aurobindo as a self-exiled and self-imprisoned Dante and *The Life Divine* as a philosophical *Divina Commedia* having its Inferno in the Spirit's descent into the ignorance of mind, life and matter, its Purgatorio in the ascent into the true knowledge of the so-called Supermind and its Paradiso in the ineffable mysteries of Saccidānanda. His spiritual guides, his Virgil and Beatrice, are the Ṛg Veda and the Bhagavad-Gītā. It is a pity that Śrī Aurobindo had to write his *magnum opus* in English. In normal circumstances, that is, if he had been educated in India and not in England, he would have written it in Bengālī, his mother-tongue, or in Sanskrit, the language of our sacred

books. *The Life Divine* is the characteristic product of a great Indian mind and would have looked more natural and spontaneous in an Indian language. Its philosophical depth and subtlety, its metaphysical moulds of thought and expression, its orthodox way of doing justice to the imaginary opponent, its impressive repetitions, its exuberance, its love of detail and its long, piled up sentences and strange compounds, which make it somewhat of a *tour de force* and difficult reading in English, would have been quite natural and easy in Sanskrit.

Śrī Aurobindo is essentially a poet, a seer with an integral vision. He fixes his gaze on the eternal mysteries, together with their attendant cosmic drama—on Śiva in repose and on Śiva in ecstatic dance. He has no patience with those who say that the dance is an illusion, that the world is unreal or that the individual self is ephemeral. He has no patience with those who want to escape from life and seek refuge in pure spirit, nor with those who want to crucify the flesh to release the spirit within.. For him the Kingdom of God is not only within you, but also without you, if you have eyes to see. Matter, life, mind, spirit—there is nothing to be discarded here. Do not the Upaniṣads say *Sarvam khalu idam Brahmā* (All this is Brahman) as well as *Ekameva Advitīyam* (The One without a second)? Multiplicity is thus as real as unity. In truth, they co-exist. Therefore, says Śrī Aurobindo, we have to accept life with its multiplicity in order to raise, illumine and spiritualize it. Spiritual evolution, which has proceeded from matter to life and from life to mind, is not going to stop there, leaving humanity only half-evolved. Man is mostly a mental being now, and all the discords, evils and oppositions he finds in life are due to the fact that he views things with his finite mind. But there is a far higher power, lying dormant in the spirit in him, which he has to seize and bring into operation. That

power would make a superman of him and lead him to the Life Divine—not in any distant heaven but on this earth, in this life and, possibly, even in this body. To this divine power, the original creatrix of the world, Śrī Aurobindo, borrowing a suggestive Vedic expression, gives the name of Rta-cit or Truth-consciousness or, simply, supermind. Those in whom the supermind has come into operation are really spiritual supermen, the Jīvanmuktas of the Indian religious tradition. Śrī Aurobindo calls them gnostic beings. They are not satisfied with saving themselves, they want to save others as well. They are not satisfied with transcending the world, they want also to elevate and transform it. They do not discard either the body or the mind to escape into the spirit, but want to divinize them and use them for the glorification of the spirit. In a word, they want to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Śrī Aurobindo says that the ills of the present world can never be overcome by new political, social or economic arrangements. They can be overcome only by a new race of men in whom the higher spiritual powers have been brought into operation. The vastly extended scientific knowledge made available to man during the last one hundred and fifty years and the enormous power which he has learnt to wield over the forces of Nature would make him only an evil giant, if he should continue to be the mere mental creature that he is now. It is only great spiritual beings that can rightly wield this new knowledge, and it is only a higher spiritual instrument than the mind that can harmonize the thousand discords and differences of the present world. It is imperative, therefore, in the interests of true spiritual progress, that the leadership of the world should be in the hands of a new race of men who will have a more extended consciousness, a higher power of vision and a diviner spirit. In fact, that is the next step in the evo-

lution of the human spirit, and we must resolutely prepare ourselves to take it.

Is it all Utopia? Not entirely. For Śrī Aurobindo is not a mere dreamer of dreams. He has not only written an elaborate book about his vision, but also sat down like a true Yogin to discover ways and means of realizing it. The integral Yoga which he has been teaching by precept and example is an inseparable adjunct to his ideal of Life Divine. In fact, the practical part of his teaching is more important than the theoretical part. It is the practical part that has made his Āśram in Pondicherry a place of interest to all those who want to study the new developments in religious thought and practice in India.

II

Śrī Aurobindo was born in Calcutta in 1872. He was sent by his father to England when he was only seven years of age, and he returned to India only in his twenty-first year, after completing his education in London and Cambridge. We are told that his father's instructions were that he should receive in England an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East. Accordingly Śrī Aurobindo became a scholar in Greek and Latin and got record marks in these languages in the Indian Civil Service Examination. He also learned French, German and Italian and could read Dante and Goethe in the original. And yet, in spite of his purely occidental education, it is astonishing that no Indian of the present age has shown a more profound knowledge of the soul of India than Śrī Aurobindo in his later life. Mother India seems to have revealed herself in all her holy splendour to this gifted son of hers and thus entirely frustrated the object of his erring father. And rather early in his career Śrī Aurobindo seems to have realized

the destiny that was in store for him. For in the *Envoi* to his Early Poems, which he wrote while he was still in England during 1890-92, he says:—

"For in Sicilian olive-groves no more
Or seldom must my foot-prints now be seen,
Nor tread Athenian lanes, nor yet explore
Parnassus or thy voiceful shores, O Hippocrene.

"Me from her lotus heaven Saraswatī
Has called to regions of eternal snow
And Ganges pacing to the Southern sea,
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow."

Though he passed the Indian Civil Service Examination in 1890, he failed at the end of the probation period to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. And he left for India in 1893.

After his return from England, Śrī Aurobindo spent thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906, in the service of the Gaekwar of Baroda, "first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Mahārājā, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, as Vice-Principal in the Baroda College."[1] It was during this time that he laid the foundations for his future work in India by learning Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages and assimilating the spirit of Indian civilization and Hindu religion. In 1905 the partition of Bengal was effected by Lord Curzon and the whole province was consequently thrown into a violent convulsion of agitation. Śrī Aurobindo now resigned his job and went to Calcutta to take part in the agitation and direct the newly awakened spirit of nationalism. His political activity lasted only four years. But during that short period Śrī Aurobindo, as one of the leaders of the newly formed Nationalist party, wrought a great revolution in the poli-

[1] *Sri Aurobindo, A Life Sketch.*

tical thought of this country through his speeches and writings and through those famous, though short-lived, journals—*Bande Mātaram, The Karma-yogin* and *Dharma.* The revolution may be briefly indicated by the following sentence which he wrote in *Bande Mātaram* in 1907, while recounting the services of the great novelist Bankim Chandra to Bengal:—

"He bade us leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine."

Accordingly Śrī Aurobindo's Nationalist party contemptuously brushed aside the Moderates' policy of begging and petitioning the British Government and declared that, British or no British, Swarāj was the goal of India. And this goal was to be reached through self-help—through the starting of Swadeshi industries, the foundation of Arbitration Courts, the opening of National Schools and Colleges and the organizing of indigenous institutions for self-defence. Bābū Bipin Chandra Pāl, one of the leaders in Bengal, said, "We turn our eyes away from the gods of Simla and fix them henceforward on the hungry and naked three hundred and sixty millions of our countrymen." The New party hoped to capture the Congress, driving away the Moderates, and to make it the centre of a vast net-work of national institutions which would prove a State within the State and ultimately overthrow British supremacy. "When the time comes we will not pay taxes," said Tilak, the father of the movement, in one of his fighting speeches. But the country was not yet ripe for the daring programme of Tilak, Pāl and Aurobindo, and, unfortunately, violence broke out in Bengal and upset all their plans. Śrī Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907, but acquitted. In 1908 he was suspected to be implicated in the Alipūr conspiracy case along with his brother Barīndra, the leader of a revolutionary group, and was kept in the Alipūr jail as under-trial prisoner

for about a year and, finally, through the brilliant advocacy of Chittaranjan Dās, was acquitted. A third prosecution was launched against him in 1910, but, as he had already withdrawn from British territory, his printer was prosecuted and convicted, though the conviction was later set aside by the High Court of Calcutta.

The period of Śrī Aurobindo's detention in the Alipūr jail, if we are to judge from his own words, was the most momentous period in his life. For in the prison he had a profound religious experience, which totally altered the course of his life. He has vividly described it for us in his Uttaraparā speech. He tells us how one day he saw in a vision the spirit of God all around him in the prison compound and, later, again in the court and heard a definite message. It came to him with the familiar form of the Bhagavān of the Gītā, whom he saw everywhere in place of the prison bars, the trees in the compound, the prisoners in chains and, later, in place of the judge and counsel, while he stood in the dock. And a voice told him that he was being prepared for an altogether different kind of work which he should undertake after his release. The message said:—

"Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the rsis, saints and avatārs, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanātana Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanātana Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. . . . . It is for the Dharma that India exists."

In obedience to this message, which was probably an objectification of the inner workings of his own spirit, Śrī Aurobindo retired from public life in 1910 and settled down in the French town of Pondicherry in Southern India and has remained there ever since. He has entirely dedicated himself to the task of helping humanity to take what he considers the next step in its spiritual evolution. And it is for this that he has been preparing himself and preparing those who believe in his mission.

In 1914, four years after he settled down in Pondicherry, he started a philosophical monthly called *Ārya* in which he wrote on various subjects—the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Gītā, the Science of Yoga, the Renaissance in India, etc. His *magnum opus, The Life Divine,* appeared in it in serial form. This book has since been revised and published in three volumes. The journal *Ārya* ceased publication in 1921, after a life of about seven years; and the influence that Śrī Aurobindo has been exerting on the minds of men for the last twenty years is mainly personal, through letters, interviews, etc. The poet Rabīndranāth Tagore saw him on May 29, 1928 and has left a record of his impressions:—

"At the very first sight I could realize he had been seeking for the soul and had gained it, and through this long process of realization had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light and his serene presence made it evident to me that his soul was not crippled and cramped to the measure of some tyrannical doctrine which takes delight in inflicting wounds upon life. I felt that the utterance of the ancient Hindu Ṛsi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. .... Years ago I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him.—

'Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Rabīndranāth.'

To-day I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence:—

'Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Rabīndranāth'"

III

Even while Śrī Aurobindo was working in the political field, no one knew better than he that India was passing through a period of Renaissance, of which political agitation was the least part. His comprehensive grasp of all the problems involved in this Renaissance is contained in a series of invaluable articles which he published in the *Ārya* during 1918-19. Four of these articles with the title of "The Renaissance in India" were prompted by J. H. Cousins's book on that subject; three were a review of Sir John Woodroffe's book, *Is India Civilised?*, which was itself a reply to the infamous attack on India and her civilization in a book, *India and the Future*, by William Archer; six articles entitled "A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture" were Aurobindo's own reply to Archer; and one article on "Indian Culture and External Influence" was again a reply to a writer in a Bengālī periodical, who had maintained that Indian culture should not assimilate any foreign elements in the course of the Renaissance. All these articles, which are found in the fifth volume of the *Ārya*, taken together constitute an excellent Handbook of Indian Culture. Nowhere else do we find such an unerring, comprehensive and profound understanding of the civilization of India—its basis and aims, its merits and defects, its rise and decline as well as its present Renaissance and its importance for the future progress of mankind. If ever a detailed history of this Renaissance comes to be written, these articles should be cited as a manifesto of the whole movement.

In the first article of this series Śrī Aurobindo says, "Now that the salvation, the reawakening has come, India will certainly keep her essential spirit, will keep her characteristic soul; but there is likely to be a great change of the body." He then proceeds to answer the question—what is this ancient spirit and characteris-

tic soul of India? Our Western masters, who came to us in the period of our decline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, told us that an abstract, metaphysical, dreamy mind, turning away from life and activity, was our characteristic, and we slavishly believed it. But if we read the past history of our country, what do we find? Spirituality is, no doubt, our primary characteristic. In the words of Śrī Aurobindo, it is the master-key of the Indian mind, to which the sense of the infinite is certainly native. India, through all her chequered history, has indeed pinned her faith to the supremacy of the spirit. But that is not by any means the whole account of the matter, it could not be the whole account. For spirituality does not flourish in the void, and India's spiritual ideals were not mere day-dreams. Accordingly, Śrī Aurobindo points out, as the second characteristic of the Indian genius, her stupendous vitality, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. He says:—

"For three thousand years at least—it is indeed much longer—she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly, with an inexhaustible many-sidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires; philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences, creeds, arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works; communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals; physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of Yoga, systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual, arts worldly; trades, industries, fine crafts—the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity."

Also, we should not forget that India's ships crossed the oceans, her colonies spread, her arts and creeds and religions conquered China and Japan and that in the West the sayings of Buddha were echoed on the lips of Christ. But even this is not all. Śrī Aurobindo points out that a strong intellectuality is the third characteristic of Indian genius. It is an intellectuality, "at once austere and rich, robust and minute, powerful and delicate, massive in principle and curious in detail." It has

a passion for order and development. It always searched for the inner truth and law of each activity, human or divine, it tried to discover the Dharma of everything. And when the Dharma was discovered, a Śāstra was built on it as a guide to conscious practice. The process was not by any means confined to religion and philosophy. The method was applied with equal earnestness to logic and rhetoric, linguistics and grammar, poetry and drama, medicine and astronomy. It was applied to all sciences and arts, in fact, to all the so-called sixty-four *kalas*. It was applied even to such minute things as the breeding and training of elephants, each of which had its Śāstra, its array of technical terms and its copious literature. "Thus" says Aurobindo, summing up the whole matter, "an ingrained and dominant spirituality, an inexhaustible vital creativeness and gusto of life, and, mediating between them, a powerful, penetrating and scrupulous intelligence, combined of the rational, ethical and aesthetic mind at a high intensity of action, created the harmony of the ancient Indian culture."

Consequently, when the decline came, all these three powers gradually deteriorated. First, the creative power declined, then the critical mind ceased to function and, finally, our spirituality became diseased. The natural result was that, during our period of decadence, in every sphere of activity lifeless imitation took the place of creation, the despotic authority of rules took the place of intelligent appreciation and over-emphasis on certain spiritual truths, to the neglect of others, took the place of a balanced spiritual synthesis. In the opinion of Śrī Aurobindo, diseased spirituality is the root cause of all our decadence. That has to be set right first. Therefore, laying down the programme of work for the Renaissance, he says:—

"The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its most essential work;

the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of the Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualized society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity."

Accordingly Śrī Aurobindo sets to himself the primary and the most important task of renovating the decayed spirituality of the nation. He says that the very fact that the first result of the impact of Western civilization on our own in the nineteenth century was a religious revival represented by the Brāhmo Samāj, the Ārya Samāj and the Rāmakrishṇa Mission shows that spirituality, however decayed, is still the basis of our culture. If the present Renaissance is to prove a success, our basis of spirituality should be repaired, broadened and strengthened, so that all our other activities may be securely founded on it. It is only then that the future civilization of India will be no mere Asiatic modification of European Modernism like the present Japanese civilization, but something truly Indian, and at the same time something of first rate importance for the progress of humanity. The culture of our intellectuals in the nineteenth century, the early generation which came under the influence of Western education, was indeed imitative and artificial and denationalized—"always stumbling in the wake of European evolution and always fifty years behind it." All that is changed now. We are determind to be ourselves, masters in our own house and true to the spiritual ideals of our own race. The question now is not whether India is civilized, but whether the spiritual motive which has shaped her civilization or the intellectual motive which shaped the civilization of ancient Europe or the economic motive which is shaping the civilization of modern Europe is to be the leading motive of human culture. For we are con-

vinced that, while science and reason and all their auxiliaries have their place in human effort, the secret of our well-being is to be discovered within—in spiritual self-knowledge and self-perfection and in the founding of life on these. The aim of culture should accordingly be not only to enlarge and enrich human life but also to give it a spiritual direction. Śrī Aurobindo says:—

"The greatness of the ancient Indian civilization consists in the power with which it did this work and the high and profound wisdom and skill with which, while basing society, ordering the individual life, encouraging and guiding human nature and propensity, it turned them all towards the realization of its master idea, and never allowed the mind it was training to lose sight of the use of life as a passage to the infinite and a discipline for spiritual perfection"

But we must confess that, while the ideals of our civilization were thus of eternal value and while even our individual seeking of them was earnest and sincere, our application of them to the collective life of society was never sufficiently bold and thorough-going. (In the words of Śrī Aurobindo, "we only need to live out thoroughly in life what we always knew in spirit.") Also, now that we are challenged by a powerful and ruthless civilization, which is inspired by distinctly lower ideals than our own, our duty is to put up an 'aggressive defence.' And an aggressive defence implies, in the circumstances, three things. Firstly, it implies a new creation *i.e.*, a bringing of what we have to greater force of form. Secondly, it implies an effective assimiliation of whatever is useful for our new life and is harmonious with the spirit of our culture. And, thirdly, it implies our meeting modern problems with solutions different from those offered by the West—solutions which will effectively justify our own ideals. But to do this we must be well grounded in our own culture and be thoroughly conversant with all its implications. Śrī Aurobindo points out that it is only a man who lives

completely from his own inner self that can go out and embrace the universal, it is only a true *Svarāṭ* that can become a true *Samrāṭ*.

A quarter of a century has passed away since Śrī Aurobindo wrote these papers on the civilization of India. Speaking of the Renaissance of that civilization in 1918, he said that he heard only the sounds made by the tuning of the instruments and that it was too early to forecast what the harmony was going to be. One wonders what he would say if he were writing now after the achievements of Tagore and Gāndhi, of Sir C. V. Rāman and Sir S. Rādhākrishnan and the glorious enactment by the Mahārājāh of Travancore. Whatever he may say, we are bound to acknowledge that, of the many noble strains of music composing the harmony of the present age, the teaching of Śrī Aurobindo himself is undoubtedly one.

IV

The teaching of Śrī Aurobindo may be traced back, through the Tantras, through the Gītā, through the Īśa Upaniṣad, to the Ṛg Veda itself. His view of the import of the Veda is trenchantly set forth in his two papers on Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī, contributed to the *Vedic Magazine* in 1915-16. There he says that, though we may not accept the commentary of Dayānanda on the Veda in all its details, the essential point is that he " seized justly on the Veda as India's Rock of Ages and had the daring conception to build on what his penetrating glance perceived in it, a whole education of youth, a whole manhood and a whole nationhood." He points out that from the beginning there have been two incompatible traditions about the Veda, namely, that it is a book of mythology and ritual and that it is a book of divine knowledge. The Brāhmaṇas represent and continue the former tradition,

while the Upaniṣads represent the latter tradition. It is largely the view of the Brāhmaṇas that is set forth by Sāyaṇācārya in his Vedic commentary. And it is on Sāyaṇa's commentary that Western scholarship has based its interpretation of the Veda. Śrī Aurobindo says that even the Upaniṣads, in their later developments, departed from " the spiritual pragmatism " of the Vedic Ṛṣis, abandoned some of the most valuable elements in their teaching and ignored their suggestive symbolism.

" The complex associations, the rich contents, the luminous penumbra of varied and corollary ideas and significant figures which belonged to the conception of the Vedic words were largely lost in a language more precise and metaphysical, less psychological and flexible."[1]

Śrī Aurobindo agrees with Swāmī Dayānanda in thinking (1) that the Veda glorifies the one God of many names and powers, (2) that it celebrates the Divine Law and man's aspiration to fulfil it and (3) that it purports to give us the Law of the Cosmos. And speaking about Dayānanda's contention that the Veda contains truth of science as well as truth of religion, he says that there is nothing fantastic about the idea. He himself goes a step further and says:—

" I will even add my own conviction that the Veda contains other truths of a science the modern world does not at all possess and, in that case, Dayānanda has rather understated than overstated the depth and range of the Vedic wisdom."

Śrī Aurobindo's own view of the Veda is elaborately set forth with examples in two series of articles in the *Ārya* with the titles—'Hymns of the Atris' and 'The Secret of the Veda'. According to him, the hymns of the Ṛg Veda are the symbolic gospel of the ancient Indian mystics. Their sense is spiritual and psychological, and not mythological or ritualistic. He holds that the Aṅgiras legend and the Vṛtra mythus are the two principal para-

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 208.

bles round which all the rest of the Vedic symbolism is woven. When we determine their sense, we are in possession of the whole meaning of the Veda. He says:—

"If Vṛtra and the waters symbolize the cloud and the rain and the gushing forth of the seven rivers of the Punjab, and if the Aṅgirasas are the bringers of the physical dawn, then the Veda is a symbolism of natural phenomena personified in the figure of Gods and Ṛṣis and maleficent demons. . . If, on the other hand, this is a symbolism of struggle between spiritual powers of Light and Darkness, Truth and Falsehood, Knowledge and Ignorance, Death and Immortality, then that is the real sense of the whole Veda."

In short, Śrī Aurobindo believes that "the Ṛg Veda is the high-aspiring song of Humanity. Its chants are episodes of the lyrical epic of the soul in its immortal ascension." Furthermore, he thinks that the earlier Vedānta, represented by the older Upaniṣads, the Chāndogya, the Bṛhadāranyaka, the Taittirīya, the Aitareya and the Īśa, kept close to the Vedic roots, reflected more faithfully the psychology of the Vedic Ṛṣis and preserved their integral view of life. The later Vedānta became more ascetic in character, anti-pragmatic in outlook and developed a different set of values. In his commentary on the Īśa Upaniṣad, Śrī Aurobindo points out that this later thought "took one series of terms—the world, enjoyment, action, the many, birth, ignorance—and gave them a more secondary position, exalting the opposite series—God, renunciation, quietism, the One, cessation of birth, knowledge—until this trend of thought culminated in illusionism and the idea of existence in the world as a snare and meaningless burden imposed inexplicably on the soul by itself, which must be cast aside as soon as possible." He contends that in the earlier thought these extremes had been reconciled and a balanced view of life had been given. There had been a healthy integration of God and the world, renunciation and enjoyment, freedom of the soul

and action in Nature, Being and Becoming, the One and the Many, Vidyā and Avidyā, knowledge and works, and birth and release.

V

It is this earlier integral view that is set forth by the Gītā in its own masterly way. Śrī Aurobindo explains it at length in the two volumes of his *Essays on Gītā*. The important points that he makes in this elaborate commentary may be briefly stated. Firstly, the Gītā is not merely a gospel of humanitarian work or of social service or of duty for duty's sake, as some modern writers suppose, but primarily a gospel of Yoga or fellowship with God. Secondly, this fellowship implies, on the part of man, both a new birth and a new ideal of work, as exemplified by the birth and the work of the Avatār himself. Thirdly, this fellowship has to be won by disinterested action in society, by self-forgetting devotion, by constant meditation and by a mystic insight into the unity of all things in God. The Gītā thus teaches us a synthetic Yoga, harmonizing all the elements of spiritual life and giving due place to karma, bhakti, dhyāna and jñāna. Fourthly, according to the karma-yoga taught here, we have to surrender not only the fruit of action but also the action itself and its agency. In fact, according to Śrī Aurobindo, the first step in self-liberation is to get rid of the delusion of agency, to realize that it is Nature that acts and not the soul. And the next step is to hand over this agency of Nature to the divine Śakti. In other words, when the soul withdraws itself into God and makes its whole *ādhāra*, or its physical and psychical frame-work act according to His Law—that is its freedom, its utter liberation. Fifthly, when one's own nature is true to the law of its being, the resulting action will be characterized by ease and spontaneity. That is what the Gītā calls Sva-

dharma. Svadharma depends upon Svabhāva. Svadharma, as taught in the Gītā, is not merely caste duty, but work which is organically related to one's own nature. It implies that all action should be determined from within by the natural endowments of the man. Just as the Gītā accepts the Vedic theory of sacrifice but gives it a profound turn and a universal significance, so too it accepts the theory of the four castes but gives it a subjective and universal meaning. It does not teach any such absurd doctrine as that every man should follow, without regard to his personal bent and capacities, the profession of his parents, the son of a milkman being a milkman, the son of a tailor being a tailor and the descendants of shoe-makers remaining shoemakers for all time. What the Gītā is concerned with is not the Āryan social order which has almost died out, but the relation of man's outward life to his inward being, the evolution of his action according to the inner law of nature. Sixthly, the ideal man of the Gītā is one who not only works in accordance with the law of nature, but also transcends nature. By taking refuge in God and surrendering himself entirely to Him he may be said to have gone beyond the qualities of Nature —Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. He is called a Triguṇātīta or one who has transcended the three qualities of Nature. In other words, he is a spiritual being, not merely a moral being or an intellectual and emotional being or a physical being. His body, mind and soul are only the instruments through which his spirit, which is one with God, works in the world. Karma-yoga is therefore union with the Lord in body, mind and soul for the execution of His cosmic purpose. The union results in the descent of the divine Śakti upon the man, transfiguring him and making him the instrument of God. The man is then no longer himself, but is only a channel through whom the divine energy flows into the

world. Seventhly, the Gītā speaks of three Puruṣas, *viz.*, kṣara, akṣara and uttama. According to Śrī Aurobindo, kṣara is the individual soul subject to Nature, akṣara is the Lord supervising the work of Nature, and uttama is the Supreme Spirit who pervades Nature and extends beyond it. The distinction is explained by the famous Upaniṣadic figure of two birds on a tree. Two birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them sits on a lower branch and eats the fruit of the tree. It is called *anīśa,* not lord of itself. The other perched on the top looks on without eating. It is called *Īśa,* lord of itself. The Upaniṣad says that, when the eater looks up and sees the glory of the watcher above, his grief and his sense of impotence pass away. In one of his essays[1] Śrī Aurobindo explains that the tree is Prakṛti or Nature with its sweet and bitter fruits. The bird that eats the fruit is the kṣara puruṣa or the soul immersed in Nature and enjoying it. The bird that watches without eating is the Akṣara Puruṣa or the Lord above Nature, watching its work. But there is One who is not seated on the tree but who possesses it and extends beyond it. He is not only Lord of himself but of all that is. He is Puruṣottama—the Supreme Spirit. Therefore, according to Śrī Aurobindo, the Supreme Spirit is neither the One nor the many, but the One in, through and beyond the many. Similarly, it is both personal and impersonal, for these are all distinctions which are made by our conceptual minds, but which do not exist in the Reality. Lastly, Śrī Aurobindo points out that the Gītā gives no support to such one-sided views as illusionism, asceticism, quietism, etc., held by some of our later schools of philosophy.

This integral view of life with its spear-head of synthetic Yoga, as taught by the Gītā, the earlier Upa-

[1] *The Three Puruṣas.*

niṣads and the mystic parts of the Veda, is retained in the Tantras. For the Tantras, with all their shortcomings, both in theory and in practice, maintain throughout that freedom is to be won within the world, and not outside it, and that it consists in making oneself a perfect instrument of the divine Śakti working in the world. But the truth was lost sight of by other schools of philosophy which overstressed renunciation of the world and the escape of the individual from the wheel of saṁsāra. Buddhism and Jainism and some of our Vedānta schools of both jñāna and bhakti turned away from the world and beckoned their followers to leave the world and follow the spirit to save themselves. Some even taught that the world was an illusion, that action meant bondage and that salvation lay only in quietism. The aim of Śrī Aurobindo is to supplement all such fragmentary views, reaffirm the integral view of life set forth in the Veda, the Īśa-Upaniṣad, the Gītā and the Tantras, and also to rediscover, as it were, the ancient *sādhana* and free it, as far as possible, from the limitations and the symbolism of any particular theology and make it available for all, without distinction of caste or creed, nationality or religion, so that, following it, humanity may reach a higher plane in its spiritual evolution. He says, "All religions have saved a number of souls, but none has yet been able to spiritualize mankind. For that, there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution."[1]

VI

The philosophy that lies behind Śrī Aurobindo's own effort at the promotion of the evolution of the race is fully set forth in *The Life Divine*. A bare outline

[1] *Thoughts and Glimpses*, p. 40.

of it is all that can be attempted here. Śrī Aurobindo takes his stand on what he calls " the original Vedānta, not of the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upaniṣads." He points out that in the Upaniṣads the question asked by one teacher of another is, 'What dost thou know?' and not 'What dost thou think?' For, according to the Ṛṣis, intuition must be corrected not by logical reasoning, but by a more perfect intuition. It is not through logical reasoning that we can arrive at great spiritual truths. In fact, the mind of man is such an imperfect instrument that it can grasp only half-truths and never the full integral Truth. The errors of the conceptual mind have, therefore, to be corrected by the supermind, which, according to Śrī Aurobindo, is the connecting link between the two hemispheres of Being and Becoming, of the Absolute and the Relative, of Knowledge and Ignorance. The inadequacy of the conceptual mind and the integral vision of the supermind are ever-recurring themes in the pages of *The Life Divine*.

The apparent incompatibility between Pure Being and cosmic activity is an error of our limited mind, which is incapable of conceiving a consciousness comprehensive and strong enough to include both in a simultaneous embrace.[1] It is a partial logic which declares that, because the One is the reality, the many are an illusion, that because the Absolute is *Sat*, the relative is *Asat*.[2] We have to emerge from this mental narrowness into " the supramental play where the 'each' and the 'all' co-exist in the inseparable unity of the one truth and the multiple symbol."[3] The logic of the supermind is the logic of the infinite, which can resolve the opposition existing in our conceptual minds between

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 41.
[2] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 54.
[3] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 175.

oneness and diversity, between the universal and the individual and between Being and Becoming. Supermind is pure self-awareness which has become dynamic —Brahman figuring as Īśvara or Śiva energizing his Śakti. It is a state of consciousness which man has gradually to acquire, and not only acquire but also possess, and not only possess but also utilize for transforming his entire being, his body, mind and soul. Supermind is, in fact, the key-word in Śrī Aurobindo's system. It is his *Bīja-akṣara*. In his writings he gives several other names to it as truth-consciousness, spiritual consciousness, real-idea, creative energy, gnosis, vijñāna and amṛtatva. But supermind is his favourite expression, and the consciousness denoted by it is said to be the connecting link between Being and Becoming.

The Absolute of the higher hemisphere of Being is one in reality, but triune to our mental view. It has the three well-known aspects of *Sat, Cit, Ānanda*. Śrī Aurobindo translates these Vedāntic terms into the Pure Existent, Consciousness-Force and the Delight of Existence. It is to be noted that in his interpretation *Cit* is not mere consciousness, but conscious force which is inherent in the Eternal Being and which may be at rest or in motion, for "the immobile and the mobile Brahman are both the same Reality."[1] Force, according to Śrī Aurobindo, is inseparable from Being, as Śakti in Hindu mythology is inseparable from Śiva. Thus the consciousness aspect of the Absolute is in its nature "a self-expressive force capable of infinite variation in phenomenon and form and endlessly enjoying the delight of that variation."[2] All creation is nothing but this self-manifestation. The pure Being, owing to its inherent Force and its sheer Delight, manifests itself, without undergoing any diminution, as the world of forms. By

[1] *L.D*, Vol. II, p. 1250.
[2] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p. 129.

means of self-variation, self-limitation and self-absorption or concentration, the spirit manifests itself in the universe. Accordingly we have here a sort of refraction of the divine Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind into matter, life, psyche or soul and mind. The former terms constitute the higher hemisphere of pure Being, and the latter terms the lower hemisphere of cosmic manifestation. Śrī Aurobindo says:—

"The Divine descends from pure Existence through the play of Consciousness-Force and Bliss and the creative medium of supermind into cosmic being; we ascend from matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of supermind towards the divine being. The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere, is where mind and supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity; for by that rending, by the illuminating descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending supermind, the soul realise its divine self in the all-possessing, all-blissful Ānanda, life repossess its divine power in the play of omniscient Consciousness-Force and matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the Divine Existence."[1]

In this passage we have, as it were in a nutshell, the whole of Śrī Aurobindo's philosophy. The descent of the Divine into matter is the involution of the spirit. Śrī Aurobindo presumes that the spirit passed into matter through the intervening stages of mind and life, but this process is outside time. He presumes too that the descent through these stages resulted in various worlds other than our own, inhabited by appropriate beings—worlds of pure mind unhampered by life, and worlds of pure life unhampered by matter. These higher worlds or planes are also at every moment acting upon and in communication with our own plane of being.[2] Though

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 404.
[2] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p. 755.

their action is not ordinarily present to our waking consciousness, we become aware of it when we extend our consciousness or go back into our subliminal being. The existence of these worlds is of great importance from the standpoint not only of the evolution of our own world, but also of the eschatological conditions of our souls after death. Śrī Aurobindo, of course, believes in rebirth and has written an illuminating chapter on its philosophical necessity and the various stages of the soul, before it takes birth again.

But more important than the descent of the spirit into mind, life and matter is the return movement, its ascent from matter. Evolution, from our standpoint, is more important than involution. The ascent from matter, life, psyche and mind, and accordingly from our physical, vital, emotional and intellectual being into the supermind of pure spirituality, is the evolution of the spirit on earth. The apparent unconsciousness of matter holds in itself darkly all that is eternally self-revealed in the superconscious sphere. To reveal that in time is the aim of Nature in all her processes Śrī Aurobindo calls the electrons and the atoms of matter eternal somnambulists.[1] Each material object contains a consciousness involved or absorbed in the form and driven by an unknown and unfelt inner Existence, the *Antaryāmin* of the Upaniṣads. In the plant this form-consciousness is still in a state of sleep, but full of nervous dreams, "always on the point of waking but never waking." Life has appeared and the plant has become vitally responsive to existence, though not mentally aware. In the animal we have mental awareness and consequently a higher and subtler grade of activities. When we come to man, we have a transition from vital mind to reflecting and thinking mind, and consequently a higher power of observation, invention, aesthetic crea-

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p. 637.

tion, etc. After the human stage is reached, evolution differs from what it has been in two important respects. Firstly, it is henceforward conducted by conscious effort. Secondly, it is not confined to the progression of surface nature, for it goes inward into the secret principle of our nature and outward into the cosmic being as well as upward towards a higher principle. But still mental nature and mental thought are based on the consciousness of the finite. The mind always sees and feels with separateness as its starting-point, and has only a constructed understanding of unity. That is why it cannot effect a complete harmony in the world. It cannot even integrate man's own being. It is too powerless, for instance, before the sub-conscious and the unconscious in him. Even a powerful mind can only keep in subjection, but not effect any transformation of the material and vital parts of its being. It is only when the reins of government are handed over to the supermind that an integral transformation can take place. Also, as long as spirituality works in the world of men with mind as its instrument, it can only exercise a little influence on it, but can never transform it. That is why even eminent spiritual men are satisfied with exercising a little influence here, and seeking fulfilment elsewhere. But the salvation of humanity lies not in simply transcending the world, but in transfiguring it as well. It is not therefore merely a question of the soul's ascent and escape, but a question of integration and transformation as well. And for this purpose the mind of man, as it is, is not enough. The supermind should descend. The contrast between the working of the mind and the working of the supermind is thus pointed out by Śrī Aurobindo:—

"The mind acts by intellectual rule or device or by reasoned choice of will or by mental impulse or in obedience to life impulse: but supramental nature does not act by mental idea or rule or in subjection to any inferior impulse. each of its steps

is dictated by an innate spiritual vision, a comprehensive and exact penetration into the truth of all and the truth of each thing; it acts always according to inherent reality, not by the mental idea, not according to an imposed law of conduct or a constructive thought or perceptive contrivance. Its movement is calm, self-possessed, spontaneous, plastic; it arises naturally and inevitably out of harmonic identity of the truth which is felt in the very substance of the conscious being, a spiritual substance which is universal and therefore intimately one with all that is included in its cognition of existence."[1]

Thus there is a wide gulf between the ordinary mind and what Śrī Aurobindo terms the supermind. This gulf has to be bridged by a long and laborious process of Yoga. Śrī Aurobindo is never tired of saying that the aim of true Yoga is not to reject nature or to escape from births and deaths but to divinize the whole man, to bring down the supermind and transform the human mind, life and body and make them assume its nature. There are, according to him, many intervening stages between the mind and the supermind. And at every stage, as in the rest of evolution, there should be a heightening and widening of consciousness and also a taking up of the lower levels of being. We have here not a logical series of separate steps. The ascent is a slope, not a staircase. The various grades of it interpenetrate and modify one another. The progress is like an advancing tide. But, generalizing from his own experience, Śrī Aurobindo says that certain well-marked stages may be recognized in the ascent. He calls these stages the Higher mind, the Illumined mind, the Intuitive mind and the Overmind, and describes each of them and gives its characteristic features.

When all these stages are traversed and the supermind is reached, the man becomes a superman, a jñānī or a gnostic being. Śrī Aurobindo gives eloquent descriptions of the gnostic being and his way of life in the

[1] L.D., Vol II, p. 1026.

concluding chapters of *The Life Divine*. The following passage may serve as a specimen:—

"The gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man; his whole way of being, thinking, living, acting would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality. All the trinities of the spirit would be real to his self-awareness and realized in his inner life. All his existence would be fused into oneness with the transcendent and universal self and spirit; all his actions would originate from and obey the supreme self and spirit's governance of Nature. . . . . He would feel the presence of the Divine in every centre of his consciousness, in every vibration of his life-force, in every cell of his body. In all the workings of his force of nature he would be aware of the workings of the supreme world-mother, the supernature . . . . . All beings would be to him his own selves, all ways and powers of consciousness would be felt as the ways and powers of his own universality. But in that inclusive universality there would be no bondage to inferior forces, no deflection from his own highest truth; for this truth would envelop all truth of things and keep each in its own place in a relation of diversified harmony. . . . . His own life and the world-life would be to him like a perfect work of art; it would be as the creation of a cosmic and spontaneous genius infallible in its working out of a multitudinous order. The gnostic individual would be in the world and of the world, but would also exceed it in his consciousness and live in his life of transcendence above it, he would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separate individuality."[1]

It will be seen that Śrī Aurobindo's description of a gnostic being is a re-statement in modern terms of the Hindu ideal of Jīvanmukta and the Buddhist ideal of Bodhisattva. He has written a poem called *Jīvanmukta*, in which he says that a Jīvanmukta acts and lives—

"Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the inconscient darkness."

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. II, pp. 1035-36.

But in Śrī Aurobindo's description of the ideal we may note his special emphasis on the following features:—

(1) A gnostic being is a fully integrated being—his body, life and mind having been thoroughly transformed and made automatically responsive to the demands of the spirit.

(2) The instrument with which a gnostic being works in the world is not the finite mind, but the infinite supermind whose fundamental characteristic is its abiding sense of the oneness of all things.

(3) Egoism is indeed completely extinguished in him, but not personality. All gnostic beings would not be the same in nature and character. They would not be colourless entities of perfection In their consciousness, personality and impersonality are not opposite principles, but the inseparable aspects of the same reality. And that reality is the being, who is impersonal in his stuff of nature but forms out of it an expressive personality.[1]

(4) In his consciousness, individuality does not in any way interfere with its universality, and its universality does not interfere with its transcendence. Living in the consciousness of the Infinite, he will create his own self-manifestation, but he will do so as the centre of a larger universality and, at the same time, as a centre of transcendence.[2]

(5) There is no bar against a gnostic individual cultivating and utilizing *Yogasiddhis* or occult powers, which come to all who practise Yoga and which ordinary men are asked to neglect and by-pass. For, at the supramental stage, these powers would be quite natural and not abnormal.

(6) The aim of a gnostic being is ultimately to establish a Kingdom of God on earth. Therefore he

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p. 1067.
[2] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p. 1030.

seeks, first of all, to create a community of perfected individuals like himself for leavening the life of humanity And the inevitable features of such a collective gnostic life would be unity, mutuality and harmony.

In his essay on the Superman, Śrī Aurobindo points out that Nietzche, the German writer, owing to his pro-Hellenic and anti-Christian notions, presented to us a superman who is an asura, not a deva, a Titan, not a god, but that a true superman is one who has not only the divine power but also the divine love and divine wisdom. He says:—

"The gospel of true supermanhood gives us a generous ideal for the progressive human race and should not be turned into an arrogant claim for a class or individuals. It is a call to man to do what no species has yet done or aspired to do in terrestrial history, evolve itself consciously into the next superior type already half-foreseen by the continual cyclic developments of the world-idea in Nature's fruitful musings. And when we so envisage it, this conception ranks surely as one of the most potent seeds that can be cast by thought into the soil of our human growth."[1]

VII

It should be noted that, in Śrī Aurobindo's philosophy, the process of Becoming is as real as Being, as the waves of the sea are as real as the sea itself. For him there is no question of false appearance or superimposition or illusion, as in some of the schools of Vedānta. Whether he is himself able to explain satisfactorily the connection between Being and Becoming or not, he brushes aside all such views as being one-sided and imperfect. Incidentally, it is to be regretted that he commits the grave error of saying that Śaṁkara taught illusionism. We have already pointed out in the introductory chapter that, far from teaching illusionism, Śaṁkara refuted it as being part of Buddhist heresy. Śrī

[1] *The Superman*, p. 1.

Aurobindo says[1] that phenomenon is not phantasm. So also says Śaṁkara. Śrī Aurobindo says[2] that the perception of the spiritualized mind that the world is an unreal dream has no more value than the perception of the materialized mind that God and the Beyond are illusory ideas. Śaṁkara would perfectly agree to this statement. Śrī Aurobindo says[3] that we have to face the two fundamental facts of existence—a fact of Being and a fact of Becoming. To deny the one or the other of them is easy. But to recognize both and find out their true relationship is real and fruitful wisdom. This is exactly what Śaṁkara did. He admitted two orders of reality—the higher order of Brahman and the lower order of the universe, as Śrī Aurobindo himself admits a higher hemisphere of Being and a lower hemisphere of Becoming. So what Śrī Aurobindo says of illusionism is not true of Śaṁkara's teaching, if it is properly understood. But it is true of his predecessor Gauḍapāda's teaching and of some of the later schools of Advaita.

Nor is Śrī Aurobindo entirely in the right when he says that the negation of the materialist in Europe and the refusal of the ascetic in India have resulted in the bankruptcy of spirit in the one place and the bankruptcy of life in the other. Europe can look after herself. Let us consider his statement about India. According to him, a perfect balance between life and spirit was maintained in ancient Indian thought during the Vedic period. There is no pessimism, illusionism or escape from life in the Ṛg Veda and the early Upaniṣads. On the contrary, there is a perfectly balanced view of life on earth and of life beyond. This balance was disturbed by Buddhism with its revolt of spirit against matter. And

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 49.
[2] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 55.
[3] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 119.

almost all subsequent religious thought has been coloured by Buddhist pessimism, and all religious voices cry that "not in this world of dualities can there be our kingdom of heaven, but beyond, whether in the joys of eternal Bṛndāvan or the high beatitude of Brahmaloka, beyond all manifestations in some ineffable Nirvāṇa or where all separate existence is lost in the featureless unity of indefinable Existence."[1] All this is only partly true. For Śrī Aurobindo himself admits, as we have shown earlier in this chapter, that one of the characteristics of the Indian genius is "her stupendous vitality, her almost unimaginable prolific creativeness." Therefore Indian asceticism did not apparently lead to any great bankruptcy of life. And a study of Indian history will show that this fullness of life came to us in post-Buddhistic periods. The rich civilization of the Gupta period, for instance, was not in any way influenced by Buddhist pessimism. Again, the Hindu teaching about the four *Puruṣārthas* or the ends of life and the four *āśramas* or the stages of life shows clearly that, whatever individual philosophers may have said, our religious thought as a whole never neglected this world, never encouraged us to cultivate the spirit at the expense of life. Śrī Aurobindo himself admits the evolutionary synthesis of ancient Indian culture, as seen in the formulas of *Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa* and *Āśrama-dharma*. He says:—

"A synthesis of this kind was attempted in ancient Indian culture It accepted four legitimate motives of human living, man's vital interests and needs, his desires, his ethical and religious aspiration, his ultimate spiritual aim and destiny. . . . . It provided for a period of education and preparation based on this idea of life, a period of normal living to satisfy human desires and interests under the moderating rule of the ethical and religious part in us, a period of withdrawal and spiritual preparation and a last period of renunciation of life and release into the spirit."[2]

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. I, p. 34.
[2] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p. 583.

And he admits that this synthesis "with its spiritual insight, largeness of view, symmetry and completeness" did much to raise the tone of human life. But he says it contained a seed of decay. It did not hold any high offer of life-fulfilment, it did not attach a divine significance to life. It regarded escape from life as a desirable end. Therefore the impatience of human nature favoured a short-cut to the final stage of life and looked upon the first three stages as tedious and dilatory steps. Thus, in course of time, the old scheme of life collapsed and its place was occupied "by an exaggeration of the impulse of renunciation, which destroyed the symmetry of the system and cut it into two movements of life *in opposition to each other*, the *normal life of* interests and desires with an ethical and religious colouring, and the abnormal or supernormal life founded on renunciation."[1]

The truth is that, in theory, Hindu society rarely wavered in its allegiance to the ideal of synthesis and harmony between life and spirit. The very fact that the Bhagavad Gītā, which, as Śrī Aurobindo would be the first to admit, is a gospel of such harmony, has been the most popular of Hindu scriptures throughout our subsequent history down to the present day shows that the Hindus never really belittled the importance of life on earth. But it must be confessed there has been some world-weariness on the part of our people and on the part of certain teachers during the dark periods of our history, when there was no strong central government and no security of life or property and when men longed for the place "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." It is unfair to generalize from these passing moods and say that latter-day Hinduism always teaches asceticism or otherworldliness or escape from life, as it is unfair to genera-

[1] *L.D.*, Vol. II, p 584.

lize from the writings of a few later Advaita philosophers and say that Hinduism teaches illusionism. At the same time, we are greatly indebted to Śrī Aurobindo for his powerful re-statement of the integral spiritual ideal taught in our best scriptures and for the new emphasis he has laid on the personality of the ideal Yogin of the Bhagavad Gītā.

Some of his detractors might say that there is nothing original in his teaching, that what he says against illusionism and quietism and about the personality of the Supreme Being, the permanence of the individual soul and the reality of the world, has all been anticipated in the schools of theistic Vedānta and that what his followers consider as his original teaching, namely, the descent of the supermind, the divinization of body and mind, the formation of a gnostic community and the emergence of a higher species of man is all mere moonshine. But the same thing might be said of almost all the prophets of this age. Their greatness lies not in revealing new truths; but in reinterpreting the old truths according to the needs of the times, and making them dynamic once again. There is nothing original, for instance, in the religious toleration taught by Śrī Rāmakrishna, in the sympathy with the poor and the downtrodden taught by Swāmī Vivekānanda, in the gospel of humanity taught by Rabīndranāth Tagore and in the doctrines of Truth and Non-violence taught by Mahātmā Gāndhi. But the force and conviction with which they taught these well-known principles, even though in teaching them they often went beyond the possibility of ordinary life, revolutionized the minds of men and created in them new forms of thoughts and new modes of feeling. Similarly, Śrī Aurobindo's gospel of a higher spiritual consciousness may not be new, may not be immediately practicable, but it will certainly make us think, not twice but ten times, before we proceed to apply our little minds

to the great political, social and economic problems that confront us to day. He cries to us, " Reform your minds before you try to reform the world. Think in terms of unity, not of diversity, of harmony, not of discord, of All, not of Each. He reiterates in impressive language the teaching of the Upaniṣad—" Happiness lies in the infinite, not in the finite."

VIII

Again, the importance of the mission of Śrī Aurobindo lies not so much in his restatement of the integral spiritual ideal taught in the Ṛg Veda, the early Upaniṣads and the Gītā and his clearing the air of imperfect ideals like quietism, illusionism and asceticism, as in his actual practice of Pūrna Yoga, by which this supramental consciousness is brought down to influence the mental, vital and physical being of man. When one sees the sādhana that he prescribes for Yoga, one is struck with the absence from it of all difficult feats of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* and mechanical exercises in concentration. His is a profoundly religious and spiritual process. The very first step in it is an absolute and unconditional surrender to God—*ātmasamarpaṇa*. And he insists on this primary condition throughout. Man can achieve nothing by his own unaided effort. It is the power of God—the Divine Śakti—coming down into the soul that can effect the transformation which is desired. So all that man can do is to make his self-surrender complete and unqualified and to open up his mind for the grace of God to enter and cleanse and uplift. Then the second step is to stand aloof, as it were, from himself and watch how the machinery of Nature works in him, while the divine grace comes and operates. He should be a silent witness like a *yajamāna* at a sacrifice, which is being conducted by a body of priests for his benefit. And then the third step is to cultivate the sense of the pre-

sence of God in all things, not only as an immanent spirit filling and sustaining them, but also as a Person manifesting Himself in all forms and appearances. The crowning experience of this step, according to Śrī Aurobindo, is when you become aware of the whole world as the expression, play or *līlā* of an infinite and divine Personality.

To take these steps one by one and overcome all the difficulties that lie in the way and to help others also to take them and to prove the efficacy of the *sādhana* is a more arduous undertaking and demands more thought, concentration and vigilance than the mere writing of books or the making of speeches. For this purpose Śrī Aurobindo has found it necessary, as our ancient Ṛṣis did, to establish an Āśram where his personal influence and his ripe spiritual experience would be available for all aspiring *sādhakas*. In the statement issued by him about his Pondicherry Āśram, he says that in this discipline the inspiration and the guidence of an expert are indispensable and that the expert in Yoga helps not only by precept and example but also by a power to communicate his own experience to others.

How far Śrī Aurobindo has succeeded in his practical aims we do not know. But his influence seems to be spreading. Groups of earnest men are being formed in various centres to study his books and practise his methods of Yoga and meditation. At the same time, it must be confessed that there are many who regret the choice which Śrī Aurobindo made and say that his career has been a profound disappointment to them, many who regret that a great genius like him, who might have been a power in the land guiding an awakened nation in its struggle for freedom, should have deserted his post and gone in pursuit of a will-o'-the-wisp and practically buried himself in solitude and, unlike other great teachers, made himself so inaccessible.

Time alone can decide whether the light which Śrī Aurobindo has been pursuing is a will-o'-the-wisp or the uncreated light of God. Meanwhile the reply to critics of this kind may be given in Śrī Aurobindo's own words:—

"To be ourselves liberated from ego and realize our true selves is the first necessity, all else can be achieved as a luminous result, a necessary consequence That is one reason why a spiritual call must be accepted as imperative and take precedence over all other claims, intellectual, ethical, social, that belong to the domain of ignorance For the mental law of good abides in that domain and can only modify and palliate; nothing can be a sufficient substitute for the spiritual change that can realize the true and integral good, because through the spirit we come to the root of action and existence "[1]

As a matter of fact, Śrī Aurobindo gave Romain Rolland the following reason for his withdrawal from the world:—

" India possesses in its past, a little rusty and out of use, the key to the progress of humanity. It is to this side that I am now turning my energies, rather than towards mediocre politics. Hence the reason for my withdrawal. I believe in the necessity for *tapasya* (a life of meditation and concentration) in silence for education and self-knowledge and for the unloosing of spiritual energies. Our ancestors used these means under different forms; for they are the best for becoming an efficient worker in the great hours of the world."[2]

And as for the Light which a Yogin should seek, Śrī Aurobindo gives the following caution in one of his letters:—

" One must see what is the nature of the light or where it comes from or what is in it before one can say that it is the true Light. False lights exist and misleading lustres, lower lights too that belong to the inferior reaches. One must therefore be on one's guard and distinguish the true discrimination has to come by growth of the psychic feeling and a purified mind and experience."[3]

One who has said these words and who gives this caution is not likely to have gone wrong himself.

[1] *L D.*, Vol. II, p. 512.
[2] *Prophets of the New India*, p. 503.
[3] *Bases of Yoga*, p. 67.

CHAPTER IX.

RABĪNDRANĀTH TAGORE

When Rabīndranāth Tagore died in 1941, the Syndicate of the University of Calcutta placed on record his services to the Motherland in the following terms, which show clearly the part played by the poet in the modern Renaissance:—

"Through him India has given her message to mankind, and his unique achievements in the fields of literature, philosophy, education and art have won imperishable fame for himself and have raised the status of India in the estimation of the world."

Tagore is the Leonardo da Vinci of our Renaissance. His versatility is extraordinary. He is poet, dramatist, novelist, actor, composer, educator, philosopher, painter and prophet. But, first and foremost, he is, of course, a poet. His position as a world-poet is now universally recognized through the English translations of some of his works. But there seems to be a general impression that he is only a religious poet. Undoubtedly he is a great religious poet—one of the greatest that the world has ever seen. But at the same time he is a Nature poet, a love poet, a patriotic poet and a poet of childhood. His manner, again, is as varied as his matter. He could be realistic as well as idealistic, he could sing of a storm in the sea as well as of the delicate scent of a tiny flower, he could express a fierce consuming passion as well as a vague feeling for the Infinite, and he was a master, when he chose, of irony and satire and of humour and pathos. But, above all, he is a Maker of Songs. His greatest contribution to Bengālī literature lies in the two thousand and odd exquisite songs he is

said to have composed in different tunes. Unfortunately these are untranslatable. A translation may give us the substance of a song, but how can it give the music which is its very soul? Shelley's observation about the vanity of translation is particularly true of a song:

"It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower—and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel"[1]

The curse of Babel is particularly heavy in a country like modern India, where as yet there is no common national language. The result is that the works of a great national poet like Tagore—the greatest since Kāḷidāsa—can be read by his countrymen outside the province of Bengal only in scrappy English translations.

Tagore's fecundity, as a man of letters, is as extraordinary as his versatility. He lived eighty years—a rather full age for an Indian; and of these eighty years nearly seventy were productive of literature, for he began writing verses as a child of eight and he was dictating verses on his death-bed at eighty. During this long literary life there is not a year in which his pen lay idle. Poems, songs, dramas, short stories, novels, letters, diaries, sermons, addresses, essays of various kinds and articles on all kinds of subjects—politics, religion, education, social reform, literary criticism, language, music and science—flowed in an incessant stream, for over two generations, from the pen of this extraordinary man, who seems to have done the work of half-a-dozen men of letters. It is yet too early to say how many scores of volumes all his writings in Beṅgāḷī and English, if collected, would run to. We do not know whether the attempt will ever be made. Those who have read only his English books will have no idea of the enormous output of this myriad-minded genius.

[1] Shelley—*Defence of Poetry*.

For his English books, whether translations or original works, form only a very small fragment of his writings. By the way, it is surprising that, though the poet learned to write in English rather late, he was able to achieve, in this foreign medium, a style of his own which is extraordinarily rhythmical and beautiful. And it is more surprising still that, though he learned to paint only when he was nearing seventy, he achieved something like an individuality of style even in that sister art. In fact, one great characteristic of the works of Tagore, whether they are poems or songs, or prose writings or paintings, is their sureness of style. This should be regarded as a rare achievement on the part of an artist who has produced so much. Naturally all his numerous works are not on the same level of excellence, when both matter and form are taken into consideration. But, when all deductions are made, there is plenty of first class work, which, in the opinion of competent judges, entitles him to a place among the world-poets.

Tagore is not only a poet and an artist, but also a prophet of humanity. His love of humanity is as great as his versatility or his fecundity. Love of man is the very corner-stone of his religion. This mother Earth of ours is dearer to his heart than any fabled heaven. His philosophy is frankly geocentric, and man the divine is for him the measure of all things. In his conversation with Einstein he is reported to have said that "if there be any truth absolutely unrelated to humanity, then for us it is absolutely non-existing." It is his intense love of man that made him undertake, in the latter part of his career, those famous world-tours in which he fiercely denounced the aggressive nationalism of the West as a crime against humanity. He thought that it was a world-tragedy that Western civilization, with all its splendid achievements in science, social service and organization, should lose its way and dig its own grave

by robbing and exploiting the weaker nations of the earth. He therefore denounced the robber nations of Europe, uttered a solemn warning to Japan against following their example and exhorted the United States of America to fulfil the promises of Western civilization. It is his intense love of humanity that made him pour vials of prophetic wrath on all those nations in the West or the East who have made a Moloch of the political State and offered it bloody sacrifices in the shape of the maimed souls of men, whom they had enslaved in their own countries or in the countries they conquered. The future historian of the world will have to record how the grave warnings of this prophet of humanity, hailing from India, fell on deaf ears and how Japan and some of the nations of Europe paid for their pride and inhumanity in blood and tears and destruction on a vast scale, before the air which they had fouled with their misdeeds was purged and cleansed. It is sad to contemplate how the prophet saw the end of all his hopes, when, amidst a second great world-war, he lay on his death-bed. In the famous address on *The Crisis of Civilization* given on his eightieth birth-day, a few months before his death, he said:—

"I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. But to-day, when I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt altogether. As I look around, I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility."

But, though his hopes of European civilization became bankrupt, he did not lose his faith in humanity. For he went on to say:—

"And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history, after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises."

Tagore's love of humanity is the outcome of his

spirituality. His love of man is only the obverse of his love of God. The same may be said of his love of Nature. Being a great mystical poet, he sings of man and Nature, life and death, love and beauty, not in their apparent isolation, as ordinary lyric poets do, but in their relation to the eternal background of the infinite spirit. To him that spirit is not a vague abstraction, but a concrete Reality to which every kind of experience leads. To him the laughter of children and the beauty of flowers, as well as the prayers of saints, are only ripples on the surface of the Infinite. To him every soul is like a river flowing into the ocean of the Eternal Spirit. At one end the soul has already attained, and at the other end she is ever attaining. At one end, it is all completion and rest; and, at the other end, it is all movement and change. "He who has been gained in eternity is now being pursued in time and space."[1] Therefore the suggestion of the Infinite is ever present in Tagore's poetry, whether he sings of clouds or flowers, or of love or beauty. *The Times Literary Supplement* rightly says in its tribute to him: "Perhaps no living poet was more religious, and no man of religion was more poetical, than this great Indian." In this respect Tagore is like the poet-prophets of our Upaniṣads, whose message he has so clearly interpreted in his philosophical essays in *Sādhana*. In his preface to those essays, he tells us what great part the Upanisads played, along with the teachings of Buddha, in shaping his spiritual life.

"To me the verses of the Upaniṣads and the teachings of Buddha have ever been things of the Spirit and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth, and I have used them both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality."

[1] *Sādhana* (Indian Edition), p. 161.

It is well known that the Upaniṣads, out of which flows the main stream of the religious philosophy of India, had their origin in the mystic teachings of Ṛṣis, who lived in contemplation in their forest āśramas. Tagore points out in his essays how these āṣramas have left their impress on Indian civilization, as the city walls of Athens and Rome have left their impress on Western civilization. In the āśramas there were no walls of exclusion between Nature and man. There the gulf between man and the rest of creation was bridged. The Ṛṣis lived in the bosom of Nature, felt kinship with all her myriad forms of life and saw the continuity of spirit in plant, animal and man. Hence they taught a religion based on the unity of all life and a system of ethics based on non-violence. They never dreamt of conquering Nature, they tried to live in harmony with her. They never aimed at power, they aimed at the perfection of their souls. Their ideal was not self-assertion, but self-abnegation.

Probably no modern Indian has imbibed the spirit of the Upaniṣads so well as Tagore. His *Sādhana* shows how deeply he pondered over the sacred texts and how clearly he pointed out their significance to the modern mind. He quotes as freely from the Upanisads as Śaṁkara does, though his intention is not to build a system of philosophy. His poetry is transfused with the experience of the ancient seers which he made his own, and his message is the same as theirs. Professor Rādhākrishnan, in his book on Tagore, has shown, with the warm approval of the poet himself, that his philosophy of life is only the ancient wisdom of India, restated to meet the needs of modern times, that his writings form a modern commentary on the Upaniṣads and that the soul of ancient India is mirrored in them.

But the poet was not satisfied with merely restating the forest message. He wanted to live the life

of the poet-prophets of old and bring up a community around him imbued with the spirit of the āśramas. It was with this aim that, in his middle age, he established a school at Śāntiniketan at considerable sacrifice, surrounded himself with children and taught them to live in harmony with Nature. He has given us an account of the origin of this educational experiment of his in his paper, *My School,* in which he tells us how the ancient ideal of education took possession of his mind, when he was immersed in literary activities, and how the contrast between the free life of the student in natural surroundings under the ancient system and the caged life of the student under modern conditions struck him with painful intensity. It seemed to him that it was not only his own soul, but also the soul of his country, that was struggling for breath through him. Therefore the poet voluntarily turned into an educator and started his school with only ten boys in the beginning. The school passed through many changes, its growth reflecting the growth of the poet's mind. Kindred souls like Andrews and Pearson were attracted in course of time to come and help him. The place became a real abode of peace, as its name indicates, and a place of pilgrimage for all who wanted to see the best in modern India. Tagore made his home here and lived with his boys. Most of his songs were composed here, his latter-day dramas were written here and enacted by the children of the school, and his sermons were delivered here. And, finally, it was here that he established his Viśvabhārati—an international University, where he hoped that the cultures of all the Asiatic countries would be reverently studied, with the object of revealing the Eastern mind to the world and promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West.

Tagore's conception of this Eastern University is in accordance with his conception of what he called

Greater India. He believed that in India the history of humanity was seeking to realize a specific ideal, *viz.*, that of the reconciliation of different races with different religions and civilizations in one geographical unit. He wrote a book, *Greater India*, in which he asks the question—"The History of India,—of whom is it the history?" Is it the history of the Āryans? Is it the history of the Dravidians? Is it exclusively the history of the Hindus? Have not the Muslims come in with their own religion and traditions and made India their home? And have not the British come in with their own contribution to the racial and cultural problem? This New India, according to Tagore, belongs not to this race or that race, this religion or that religion, but to humanity. People of various races, religions and traditions have to live in peace and amity like the members of one family. This was the ideal that was sought to be realized when the caste system was established. That system has outlived its period of usefulness. It must be scrapped now, and a new system based on the same principle of racial and cultural harmony has to be established. That is the task before modern India. Tagore points out that all the greatest men of modern India—Rām Mohun Roy, Rāṇade, Swāmī Vivekānanda, and Bankim Chandar Chatterjee—have done their best to bridge the gulf between the East and the West and realize the ideal of harmony of races and religions.[1] It is obvious that to this glorious band of spiritual architects beginning with Rām Mohun Roy belongs

[1] How persistent this belief is on the part of thinking Indians from the time of Rām Mohun Roy down to the present day is shown by the speech which Mr Brelvi, the President of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, delivered in Vellore on 14th January, 1944, on Hindu-Muslim unity He said, "It was India's destiny to evolve unity out of diversity, to create that unity of aspiration of man out of a diversity of religions and faiths What was wrong was that all were not alive to this great destiny of India."—*The Hindu*, 17th January, 1944.

Rabīndranāth Tagore himself. His Viśvabhāratī is a symbol of his passionate faith in the brotherhood of nations. That is why, in responding to the invitation of Professor Gilbert Murray in 1934 to join in the task of healing the discords of the present political world, through the international co-operation of thinkers in all countries, he wrote:—

"Willingly, therefore, I harness myself in my advanced age to the arduous responsibility of creating in our educational colony at Śāntiniketan a spirit of genuine international collaboration based on a definite pursuit of knowledge, a pursuit carried on in an atmosphere of friendly community life, harmonized with Nature and offering freedom of individual self-expression."

This was the ideal which the poet cherished in his mind for forty years and which he sought to realize in his Viśvabhāratī at Śāntiniketan.

II

Rabīndranāth Tagore was born in Calcutta on May 6, 1861. He was the youngest of the seven sons of Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore, the great Brāhmo leader, of whom we spoke in a former chapter. An account of the first twenty-five years of his life is given in his own delightful *Jībansmriti,* translated as *My Reminiscences.* We read here how, even as a child, the future poet would run into the garden in the early autumn mornings, as soon as he was awake, to enjoy the scent of the dewy grass and the foliage of trees and the cool fresh sunlight, how he began composing verses, when he was only eight years old, and how, when he was growing into boyhood, music was enthusiastically cultivated in the Tagore family, so that he was able to imbibe a taste for it without any effort. His education was very desultory. As a child, he no doubt attended school and had private tutors at home. But neither the schools he attended nor the tutors he had did him

any good. According to the custom of the family, he was invested with the sacred thread when he was twelve years old, and that very year he was taken by his father for a long stay in the Himālayas. This was the first time he came into intimate contact with his father, for shortly after Rabīndranāth's birth the Maharṣi had taken to constant travelling, so that in his early childhood he hardly knew him. After they reached the Himālayas, Debendranāth allowed his son to wander freely as he liked on the mountains. The poet gratefully records:—

"As he allowed me to wander about the mountains at my will, so in the quest of truth he left me free to select my path. He was not deterred by the danger of my making mistakes, he was not alarmed at the prospect of my encountering sorrow. He held up a standard, not a disciplinary rod."

After a few months' stay in the Himālayas, the boy was sent back home. But all attempts to make him resume his school-life proved fruitless. His brothers and sisters gave up all hopes of him. His eldest sister said, "We had all hoped Rabi would grow up to be a man, but he has disappointed us the worst." Rabi, however, began to read for himself. He says he read all the readable and unreadable books that there were at the time in Beṅgālī literature. In particular he loved and admired the lyrics of Bihārilāl Chakravartī, of whom he says:—

"His poems appealed to me most of all that I read at the time The artless flute-strains of his lyric awoke within me the music of fields and forest-glades."

Then came Bankim Chandar Chatterjee's famous monthly journal, *Baṅgadarśan,* which took all Beṅgālī hearts by storm. Rabīndranāth was destined to be the successor of Bankim Chandar in literary sovereignty, and he records his delight in reading the issues of his predecessor's journal.

"It was bad enough to have to wait till the next monthly

number was out, but to be kept waiting further, till my elders had done with it, was simply intolerable."

One great advantage which Rabīndranāth enjoyed in those days was the literary and artistic atmosphere which pervaded his home. Nearly all the members of the Tagore family were interested in literature, art and music. His elder cousin Gānendra was a great enthusiast in literature. He had translated Kāḷidāsa's *Vikramorvaśī* and composed many hymns, songs and patriotic poems. His next cousin Guṇendra (the father of the now well-known artists Gaganendra and Abanīndra) was a ready patron of theatricals and other social entertainments. Rabīndranāth's own eldest brother Dvijendranāth was the author of *The Dream Journey* and a prolific writer of verse. His fifth brother Jyotīndra was greatly interested in music and would spend days at his piano creating new tunes. Jyotīndra's wife was again a great lover of literature; she would often invite the poet Bihārilāl Chakravartī to her house and make him read his new lyrics. Thus Rabīndranāth was brought up in an atmosphere of letters, art and music.

In 1877 Jyotīndra started a new monthly journal *Bhāratī*, to which Rabīndranāth contributed a number of poems, articles and reviews. It was in this journal that his first work to be published in book form—*Kavikāhinī* (A Poet's Story)—appeared. Rabīndranāth was a keen student of old Vaiṣṇava lyrics and loved their symbolism of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. His ambition was to imitate them and make his poems pass for those of an old singer of the times of Candīdās or Vidyāpati. He had also heard of the story of the English boy-poet Chatterton, who in his day successfully imitated the old romantic poetry of the middle ages. He says, "Leaving aside the suicide part, I girded up my loins to emulate young Chatterton's exploits." And he was more successful

than that ill-fated boy. For, when Rabīndranāth published his imitations in the pages of *Bhāratī* as the original poems of an old Vaiṣṇava poet—Bhānu Siṁha (a synonymous transcription of his own name), a Beṅgālī scholar, who was then in Germany, wrote a thesis on the lyric poetry of Bengal, giving a place of honour to the poet Bhānu Siṁha, and got his Ph.D. degree. Rabīndranāth's prose articles too were remarkable achievements for a boy of seventeen. He wrote on such varied topics as Anglo-Saxon Literature, Petrarch and Laura, Dante and his Poetry and Goethe. It is interesting to note that, in one of these early essays, which he wrote as a boy, he pleads for the synthesis of Indian and European cultures which would prove the basis for a higher civilization. So early does the master passion of his later life make its appearance. Of all this juvenile output of his in the pages of *Bhāratī*, he says in his *Reminiscences*:—

"This shames me not for its literary defects alone, but for its atrocious impudence, its extravagant excesses and its high-sounding artificiality. At the same time, I am free to recognize that the writings of that period were pervaded with an enthusiasm the value of which cannot be small."

When *Bhāratī* was running the second year of its course, it was decided that Rabīndranāth should be sent to England for his education. The idea of the family was that he should study law and become a barrister. Accordingly he left India and reached England in 1878. For some time he attended school at Brighton, and later went to London, where he took private lessons in Latin and attended lectures on English Literature at University College. Though his experiences in London were not all of them pleasant, his stay there added considerably to his equipment as poet. For he studied the plays of Shakespeare and the poems of Milton, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Tennyson. His acquaintance with these English poets enabled him later

to depart from the traditions of Indian verse, and introduce new metres and a greater variety of themes and greater freedom in the handling of his subject-matter. Also he had opportunities, during his stay in England, of hearing and learning European music, which is so different from Indian music. This experience enabled him to invent new tunes in composing his songs. Naturally, the poems he wrote immediately after his return home in 1880 show the strong influence of European poetry and music. *Bhagna Hridaya* (The Broken Heart), *Vālmīki Pratibhā* (The Genius of Vālmīki) and *Kāl Mṛgayā* (The Fateful Hunt) are musical plays, in which the tunes are partly Indian and partly European. These musical dramas were enacted in the poet's own house before an audience of friends and relatives, and the leading parts in the performances were taken by the poet himself, who had histrionic as well as poetic and musical talents. The enthusiasm of the Tagore family at this time for an artistic Renaissance may be seen from the following words of the poet:—

"In our house at the time a cascade of musical emotion was gushing forth day after day, hour after hour, its scattered spray reflecting into our being a whole gamut of rainbow colours. Then with the freshness of youth, our new-born energy, impelled by its virgin curiosity, struck out new paths in every direction. We felt we would try and test everything, and no achievement seemed impossible. We wrote, we sang, we acted, we poured ourselves out on every side. This was how I stepped into my twentieth year."

It was in this mood of enthusiasm that Tagore wrote his *Sandhyā Saṅgīt* (*Evening songs*), which roused the admiration of the great Bankim Chandar Chatterjee. The story of Rabīndranāth's meeting Bankim Chandar after the publication of *Sandhyā Saṅgīt* is very pleasant, and the meeting itself is symbolic. At the wedding of Romesh Chandar Dutt's eldest daughter, Bankim was welcomed by the host with the customary

garland of flowers at the door. But, when Bankim saw Rabīndranāth coming up, he eagerly took the garland and placed it round the young poet's neck saying, "The wreath to him, Romesh! Have you not read his *Evening Songs?*" Thus did the mantle of Bankim fall visibly on Rabīndranāth. But the young poet was still only feeling his way. *Evening Songs* were still only experiments in metre and style. He has given us his own later opinion about them in his *Reminiscences*:—

"As poems my *Evening Songs* may not have been worth much; in fact, as such they are crude enough. Neither their metre nor language nor thought had taken definite shape. Their only merit was that, for the first time, I had come to write what I really meant, just according to my pleasure. Even if those compositions have no value, that pleasure certainly had."

His next considerable work in poetry was a sequel to his *Evening Songs*. It bore the significant title of *Prabhāt Saṅgīt* (*Morning songs*). Between the *Evening Songs* and the *Morning Songs* there came to the poet a profound mystic experience, of which he speaks in several places and which wrought "a momentous revolution" in him. He was then staying with his brother Jyotīndra, who had taken a separate house in Sudder Street near the Museum in Calcutta. It was in this place that he had the vision which he describes in the following passage:—

"The end of Sudder Street and the trees on the Free School grounds opposite were visible from our house One morning I happened to be standing on the verandah looking that way. The sun was just rising through the leafy tops of those trees. As I continued to gaze, all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. This radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accummulated over my heart and flooded it with this universal light. That very day the poem, *The Awakening of the Waterfall*, gushed forth and coursed on like a veritable cascade. The poem came to an end, but the curtain did not fall upon the joy aspect of the universe And

it came to be so that no person or thing in the world seemed to me trivial or unpleasing."

He tells us that he was in a state of bliss for some days. He would stand on the balcony and observe how extraordinarily wonderful were the gait, the figure and the features of the passers-by, whoever they might be as if they were waves in the sea of universe. He felt that till now he had seen the world only with his eyes, now he saw with his whole consciousness.

"I had never before marked the play of limbs and lineaments which always accompanies even the least of men's actions, now I was spell-bound by their variety, which I came across on all sides at every moment. Yet I saw them not as being apart by themselves, but as parts of that amazingly beautiful greater dance which goes on at this very moment throughout the world of men, in each of their homes, in their multifarious wants and activities."

This is an important passage which explains why Tagore developed in fullness of time into one of the great mystical poets of the world. Soon after this experience, he went to the Himālayas near Darjeeling in the company of his brother with the fond hope that he would be able to see more deeply into what had been revealed to him in Sudder Street, Calcutta. But, however sky-piercing the King of Mountains may be, he was not able to give back to the poet his lost vision. Rabīndranāth wandered among the firs, he sat near the water-falls, he bathed in the mountain-streams, he gazed at the grandeur of Kinchinjunga, but he found not what he had come to see. He felt that these were only the attractive figures on the casket in which the priceless gem he was seeking was hidden away. But he says it is something to know that there is a gem, though we cannot see it, and that the casket we admire so much is not an empty box. It is this knowledge that made the poet feel " that the days when he wrote excessively plain poems about *The Lotus* and *A Lake* had gone for ever." For he had seen the One behind all lotuses and lakes,

behind all men and women. Those who complain that the meaning in Tagore's poems is not always clear should remember this statement of his. He is not simply a poet, but a mystic and a poet. *The Awakening of the Waterfall* is symbolic of the poet's own mystic awakening. The stream which breaks out of the ice-bound Himālayan cave and leaps from hill to hill and flows into the plains as a mighty river is not only his beloved Ganges, but also the spirit of the poet which is awakened out of its isolation to the love and service of mankind. The symbolism of the river flowing inevitably into the sea and becoming united with it is a favourite one with Tagore; it is seen in many of his poems. But more symbolic and mystical than *The Awakening of the Waterfall* is the poem called *The Echo,* which is one of the last of his *Morning Songs.* The Poet tells us that two friends laid a wager as to its real meaning and came to him. But, as he was at that time equally unable to explain the enigma, neither of them lost any money over it. He had, of course, no intention of propounding a riddle in his poem. He had a certain new longing in his heart, a new kind of reaction to the love and beauty he saw in the world and, unable to find a suitable name for it, called it an echo. The explanation of the poem which he offers later is this:—

"When from the original fount in the depths of the universe streams of melody are sent forth abroad, their echo is reflected in our heart from the faces of our beloved and the other beauteous things around us It must be, as I suggested, this echo which we love, and not the things themselves from which it happens to be reflected; for that which one day we scarce deign to glance at may be, on another, the very thing which claims our whole attention . . The stream which comes from the Infinite and flows towards the finite—that is the True, the Good; it is subject to laws, definite in form Its echo which returns to the Infinite is Beauty and Joy, which are difficult to touch or grasp and so make us beside ourselves. This is what I tried to say by way of a parable or a song in *The Echo.*"

We do not know how far Tagore's poem was influenced by Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,* besides his own experience. But there is no doubt that Tagore was a great admirer of Shelley at that time, and of the *Hymn* in particular, and in his *Morning Songs* he included translations from Shelley and Victor Hugo. As a matter of fact, Tagore was called, in the early period of his career, "the Bengal Shelley", though the poet modestly says, "This was insulting to Shelley and only likely to get me laughed at".

Closely akin to the *Morning Songs* in thought and feeling is his next work, a dramatic poem called *Prakṛtir Pratisodh* (*Nature's Revenge*), which was later translated into English as *Sannyāsī.* This was written at Karwar on the West Coast of the Bombay Presidency, where his second brother Satyendranāth was then a judge. The hero of the poem is an ascetic who tries to achieve the knowledge of the Infinite by repressing all natural desires and affections. He is brought back into the world of men by a little girl and made to see "that the great is to be found in the small, the infinite within the bounds of form, and the eternal freedom of the soul in love." This is only a variation of the theme of *The Awakening of the Waterfall.* The poet once again suggests that our salvation consists not in isolation from the world, but in the warm currents of love and service that flow from our heart into the world. The importance of this early poem in showing the philosophy of the poet is stressed by himself in his *Reminiscences.* He says:—

"This *Nature's Revenge* may be looked upon as an introduction to the whole of my future literary work, or rather this has been the subject on which all my writings have dwelt—the joy of attaining the Infinite within the finite."

Shortly after his return to Calcutta from Karwar, Tagore was married. He was then twenty-two years of age. He says that at this time a faculty of 'many-

sightedness' possessed him. He would often sit near a window in his house in Lower Circular Road and watch eagerly the multifarious activities of the folk in a populous settlement near by. He would watch the people at their work and at their rest and play. In the mood in which he then was, nothing in the world seemed trivial to him. The world seemed to him to be like a harp, whose strings were stretched everywhere, and the nearest string could serve as an accompaniment to his song as well as any other. He felt that, if he had the faculty of painting with colours, he would have painted idyllic pictures of what he saw and felt. But, as he was a poet and not a painter, he wrote a number of poems which he called *Chhabi O Gān* (Pictures and Songs) giving his minute observations of ordinary men and women, often with astonishing realism. Another surprising feature of these poems is the poet's ability to express a great and consuming passion, as in *The Love of Rāhu* in the collection.

His next book of poems, *Kadi O Komal* (*Sharps and Flats*) has a greater variety, a greater zest for life and a more sensuous beauty. Love of Nature yields precedence to love of woman, which is sometimes expressed with rather extreme frankness. The first poem beginning with " This world is sweet, I do not want to die " is typical of the whole collection. With the publication of *Sharps and Flats,* the poet's period of apprenticeship was over. His position in the world of Beṅgālī letters was assured. He had distinguished himself by this time, not only as a poet, but also as a critic, essayist and story-teller He had published four volumes of essays of various kinds. He had also entered into a controversy with Bankim Chandar Chatterjee over the neo-Hindu movement of which the great novelist was the leader. And he had been made the secretary of the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj ,of which his father was the head.

It is to be regretted that Tagore's *Reminiscences* comes to a stop with the end of this early period, and we cannot have his guidance in giving an account of the rest of his long literary career. The next period of that career may be said to extend from 1887 to 1900. This was a period of marvellous fecundity and of peaceful happy life on his estate at Shelidah. At the request of his father, he took charge of the management of the Tagore estates in 1890, but before settling down at Shelidah, the head-quarters of the estates, he paid a short visit to Europe, an account of which he published next year in the form of a traveller's diary. He visited England, France and Italy, and on his return home went to live at Shelidah on the Padmā. This river will ever be associated in our minds with the poet, for he gives in his letters beautiful descriptions of its various moods and of the tranquil scenery round its banks and of the simple country folk who live in the vicinity. He used to live in a house-boat for long periods and travel from place to place along the river in his zemīndāri, leading a leisurely life, enjoying the beauty of the landscape and sympathetically entering into the joys and sorrows of his peasantry. This kind of life made Tagore a poet of streams and rivers rather than of hills and mountains. He has immortalized, both in verse and prose, the level land of Bengal with its smooth water-ways, its July rains and its autumn moonlight. In one of his letters he writes:—

"Many look down on Bengal as being only a flat country, but that is just what makes me revel in its scenery all the more. Its unobstructed sky is filled to the brim, like an amethyst cup, with the descending twilight and peace of the evening; and the golden skirt of the still, silent noonday spreads over the whole of it without let or hindrance. Where is there another such country for the eye to look on or the mind to take in?"

It was in the peaceful surroundings of Shelidah and its neighbourhood that he wrote his lyrics, plays,

short stories, imaginary conversations, essays, articles and letters of this period. There were as many as nine collections of poems of exquisite beauty in the ten years 1890-1900—*Mānasi, Sonār Tarī, Chitrā, Chaitali, Kaṇikā, Kshaṇikā, Kalpanā, Kathā* and *Kāhini*. *Mānasi* (*The Heart's Desire*) is the first fruit of this period of maturity. In one of the poems in this collection, *The Cloud Messenger,* Tagore pays his tribute to the old masters of Sanskrit poetry—Kāḷidāsa and Jayadeva. The greatest poem in the group, according to Thompson, is *Ahalyā*. Unfortunately we have only a mutilated paraphrase of it in English. But even from this fragment we can have an idea of the beauty of the original. According to the old Hindu legend, Ahalyā sinning against married love was turned into a stone by her husband's curse and was later, after many ages, restored to humanity by the touch of Śrī Rāmacandra's sacred feet. In Tagore's poem the life of the stone in the forest, after "plunging deep into the primitive peace of the earth", is given with profound psychological insight and marvellous sympathy with the dim stirrings of life in the sub-human and sub-terranean world. Another poem from *Mānasi* which requires attention is that which Thompson has translated as *Sea-Waves*. He thinks it is "as great a sea-poem as was ever written." It describes the wreck near Purī of a pilgrim ship carrying eight hundred passengers. Poems like *Love of Rāhu* and *Sea-Waves* show the poet's power which lies hidden behind his usual imagery of clouds and dreams, stars and flowers. He is like Mother Earth herself whom he loved so passionately, who usually wears a green mantle of grass, but who can throw up at times burning lava from the fires that rage within. *Mānasi* has also a number of poems on political and social subjects, where the poet shows his bitter sarcasm and ironic humour. With remarkable courage he ridicules his

countrymen in *Wild Hopes, Heroes of Bengal, Dharma Prachār* and *Deserted* for their laziness, vanity, boastfulness and bravado, and for their reprehensible customs and habits. The Hindu marriage system comes in for specially savage treatment. It is enough to quote one passage translated by Thompson:

"Playing our flutes, let us bring home a bride of eight years. Let us snatch and tear open the bud of childhood, let us force out the sweet of youth. Pressing a weight of scriptures on the new, expanding life, let us make it one with the dust of wrinkled ages!"

The next two collections of verse, *Sonār Tarī* (*The Golden Boat*) and *Chitrā* (*Beauty*) are important not only for the sheer beauty of some of the poems in them, but also for what is known as the "Jīban-devatā" conception of Tagore, which comes into prominence in them. Thompson discusses this conception at some length in his two books on Tagore. But later than these books is the explanation given by the poet himself in his Hibbert Lectures. We have already seen how, when he was eighteen, he had a mystic vision of the unity of all things and how under its influence he wrote *The Awakening of the Waterfall*. At a later date, he tells us, he had again a similar vision, when he was living in a village, but this time it was a vision of an internal unity, the unity of all his experiences.

". . . On that morning in the village the facts of my life suddenly appeared to me in a luminous unity of truth. All things that had seemed like vagrant waves were revealed to my mind in relation to a boundless sea. I felt sure that some Being, who comprehended me and my world, was seeking his best expression in all my experiences, uniting them into an ever-widening individuality, which is a spiritual work of art. To this Being I was responsible, for the creation in me is his as well as mine."

This Being is not exactly God, but rather his own higher self—not the universal consciousness, but a special centre of that consciousness. For he says:—

"It may be that it was the same creative Mind that is shaping the universe to its central idea, but in me, as a person, it had one of its special centres of a personal relationship growing into a deepening consciousness."

This Being, which is thus intermediate between his own empirical self and the universal Spirit, he called his Jībandebatā, the Lord of his Life. He believed that the poetry he wrote was not entirely his own, but that it was the result of his Jībandebatā working through him, that it was "a mystery of a meeting of the two in creative comradeship." The full significance of many of his poems of this period would be lost on us, if we did not understand his Jībandebatā belief. Take, for instance, the following passage:—

> "I know not why thou chosest me for thy partner,
> Lord of my Life!
> Didst thou store my days and nights,
> My deeds and dreams for the alchemy of thy art,
> and string in the chain of thy music my songs of
> autumn and spring,
> and gather the flowers from my mature moments
> for thy crown?"

It will be observed here how the poet's experiences are the raw material which is turned into artistic creations by a higher power within him. Rabīndranāth is not the only poet who felt that his poetry was divinely inspired. On the contrary, almost every great creative artist—be he a poet or a composer or a sculptor—has felt, especially if he was a religious man, that he got his inspiration from some mysterious source beyond his waking consciousness and that he was only an instrument in the hands of a higher power. In fact, the very conception of the Muse or Sarasvatī dictating to the poet his unpremeditated verse owes its origin to this feeling. Far from the poet's claim to inspiration being the urge of vanity, it is an expression of his deep humility. A man who has written poems of such transcendent beauty as

Ahalyā or *Urvaśī* or *The Farewell to Heaven* cannot but say that it is not he that did it, but a greater and richer personality behind his ordinary self. He cannat but feel that the flaws in the creation, if there are any, are his own, but not the creation itself. And in a country like India, where people do not believe that there are any impassable barriers between the human self and the Divine Self, it is immaterial whether we take Tagore's Jībandebatā as the poet's higher self or the Eternal Puruṣa who is in the hearts of all of us.

The next collection of poems is entitled *Chaitāli*, which means "Late harvest". It looks both before and after. Some of the poems in it are in the manner of the old *Pictures and Songs*, giving the poet's close observation of Nature, while others foreshadow the patriotic spirit of the next period, glorifying India's past and rebuking the present generation for their sins. Then came towards the close of the century *Kaṇikā* (*Trifles*) a collection of aphorisms of very unequal merit, and *Kshnikā* (*The Fleeting*), *Kalpanā* (*Dreams*), *Kathā* (*Stories*) and *Kāhinī* (*Tales*) containing some of his easiest and most pleasant lyrics and narrative poems.

Next in importance to the volumes of lyrics and narrative poems in this period are his short stories. There are, in fact, some critics who prize his short stories higher than his poems. But that is apparently because the stories require less of intellectual effort and make a direct appeal to the unsophisticated mind. Tagore's stories are, however, the best of their kind, many of them, like *The Cābuliwāllah*, *Home-coming*, *Subhā*, and *The Bābūs of Nayanjore*, revealing the highest art which conceals art. They deal with the simple lives of men and women in Indian towns and villages and touch the primary affections of the human heart. They hold the mirror up to the tears and laughter

of our everyday life and hence they are deservedly popular. Tagore is now recognized as one of the world's best short story writers. His stories were first published in the pages of *Sādhana*—a new Beṅgālī Monthly which he started in 1891—and later collected in five volumes.

To this period also belong a number of dramas and dramatic dialogues or imaginary conversations.[1]

Of these the lyrical drama of *Chitrāngadā* is the best. It is one of Tagore's greatest works. And of the shorter pieces the imaginary conversation of *Karṇa and Kuntī* is the best. It can bear comparison with the best of Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*. It is a pity that Tagore has not attempted more dialogues of this kind. He is generally more interested in ideas and situations than in growth of character or sustained action. Many of his regular plays are therefore lacking in constructive power and frequently repel one by their melodramatic changes in character and their inadequately motivated actions.

To his numerous poems, short stories, dramas and dramatic dialogues of this period we have to add his letters and all the essays, reviews and articles on various subjects which he contributed to his journal *Sādhana*. A selection from his letters has been translated and published with the title of *Glimpses of Bengal*. These make delightful reading and throw a good deal of light on his poems and short stories. *Sādhana* ceased to appear after four years. Then he turned his attention

[1] The dramas are *Māyār Khelā* (*Play of Illusion*), *Rājā o Rāṇī* (*The King and the Queen*), *Bisarjan* (*Sacrifice*) *Chitrāngadā* (later translated into English as *Chitrā*, to be distinguished from the volume of poems entitled *Chitrā* mentioned already), *Bidāyabhiśāp* (*Curse at Farewell*), *Satī, Lakṣmīr Parīksā* (*The Trial of Lakṣmī*) and *Mālinī* Besides these serious dramas he wrote two witty social comedies *Baikunthar Khata* (*Baikuṇṭha's manuscript*) and *Chirakumār Sabhā* (*The Bachelors' Club*) The dramatic dialogues of the period are *Gāndhārir Ābedan* (*The Request of Gāndhārī*) *Narakbās* (*Life in Hell*), *Panchabhūtar Dayari* (*The Diary of the Five Elements*) and *Karna-Kuntī-Sambād* (*The Conversation between Karna and Kuntī*).

to *Bhāratī*, of which he became the editor in 1898. He wrote on all sorts of subjects in these two periodicals—literature, politics, education, social reform and religion. In the sphere of religion, it is interesting to note that he continued his opposition to Neo-Hinduism and vigorously assailed the orthodox group who, following the example of some Theosophists, began to defend, in their organ *Nabajīban*, all their superstitious beliefs on pseudo-scientific grounds, thinking that they were thereby rendering a service to Hinduism.

III

The beginning of the twentieth century is also the beginning of a new phase in the career of Tagore. In 1901 he left Shelidah and settled down at Śāntiniketan and began his educational experiment with a few boys. As we have seen, his idea was to found here a national school on the model of the forest āśramas of ancient India. It is well known how his school has now grown into Viśvabhāratī—an international University—under the fostering care of the poet. But the early years of the new century were covered with gloom for the poet, as he had several bereavements. His wife died in 1902, his eldest daughter in 1904, his aged father in 1905 and his youngest son in 1907. Moreover in 1905 came the great national calamity of the Partition of Bengal, which drew the poet for a time into the whirlpool of politics. He threw himself heart and soul into the agitation against the Partition, composed many patriotic songs and addressed public meetings. He initiated the *Rākhibandhan* ceremony symbolizing the unbreakable unity of Bengal and headed a huge procession through Calcutta, singing a patriotic song he composed—"Are you so mighty as to cut asunder the bond forged by Providence?" He presided over meetings of students and protested against the orders of the Government for-

bidding them to attend public meetings and drew up plans of work for the newly founded National Council of Education. But after two years of activity, he suddenly withdrew to Śāntiniketan to the chagrin and disgust of many of his friends. Those who read his novel *Home and the World*, which he wrote afterwards describing the days of the anti-partition agitation, can very well understand how his feelings at the time drove him away from the political field. Like Nikhil in that novel, he was disgusted with unscrupulous characters like Sandīp Bābū, who were acclaimed as leaders of the people. Moreover Rabīndranāth was always for social reconstruction going hand in hand with political work in an atmosphere of peace and goodwill, whereas the popular leaders were all for violence and coercion and confined themselves to political agitation. So he soon discovered that his mission did not lie in the politics of his day and wisely retired and followed his true vocation as a man of letters and an educator at Śāntiniketan.

The early years of the twentieth century mark a definite period in Tagore's art as well as in his life. This is the period of his devotional, elegiac and patriotic poems, and of his long novels and symbolic dramas. *Naibedya* (*Offerings*), which is a collection of one hundred songs published in 1901, is symbolic of the change in the outlook of the poet. It contains not only religious lyrics in a new style, but also some patriotic songs. In both the sections his Muse becomes grave, there is less gaiety, but more strength and poise and humility. The following passage is typical of the new mood:—

"If the door of my heart is ever closed, then come into my heart by breaking the door and do not go back, O Lord!"

The next two collections of poems—*Smaraṇ* (*In Memoriam*) and *Śiśu* (*The Child*)—arose out of the domestic circumstances of the poet, to which we have

already made reference. His wife died in 1902, and in memory of her he wrote the poems contained in *Smaraṇ*. It is symptomatic of his new religious mood that he submits to the cruel stroke of Fate with calm resignation and humble faith in God.

> "Her night is morning now.
> You took her in your arms, O Lord,
> And at your feet today I lay the gifts,
> That I prepared for her erstwhile."

After his wife's death, he had to look after his motherless children and enter into their minds to make them happy, and this gave the occasion for a number of poems on child life, unsurpassed in the world's literature for their psychological insight as well as their tender pathos and subtle humour. The collection of poems known as *Śiśu,* some of which were later translated into English with the title of *Crescent Moon,* makes Tagore as great a poet of childhood as of Nature or of mystical love. No quotations of single lines or passages can do justice to these wonderful poems. They must be read entire.

In 1903, the second edition of Tagore's Collected Poems was published in thirteen volumes, the first edition having been published as early as 1885. The poet wrote a dedication in verse for each of the volumes of the new edition, and later these dedications along with some other poems were published with the title of *Utsarga.* Naturally, therefore, this collection has no unity or homogeneity. But it has six beautiful poems on the Himālayas, where the poet had retired for some time. Three years later, in 1906, the poet brought out a volume of lyrics with the title *Kheyā* (*Crossing*), so called because his mind was then occupied with the idea of death and crossing. The shadow of death certainly hovers over it, as it does over *Smaraṇ*, though the poet's religious faith and spirit of resignation stand secure. But the crowning achievement in the poetry of this period is, of

course, *Gītāñjali*, the English version of which in 1912 made Tagore a world-figure. In these famous songs, which the poet composed in 1910, he gives perfect musical expression to his experience of communion with God, using universal terms unlike his masters, the old Vaiṣṇava lyrists, who used the symbolism of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Hence, while the songs of Vidyāpati and Candīdās could appeal only to a sect, those of Rabīndranāth appealed to every religious soul, irrespective of caste or creed, nationality or race. Moreover Rabīndranāth was as great a genius in music as in poetry. Hence many of his songs, both in his collections of verse and in his dramas, sing themselves.

Gītāñjali was soon followed by two other collections of songs of the same kind—*Gītimālya* and *Gītāli* —in 1914. Then came finally at the end of this period, in 1916, one of his greatest books of lyrics called *Balākā* (*A Flight of Cranes*). "In these lyrics," says Thompson, "his intellectual greateness is revealed. His mind is like a spring from whose depths thoughts and similes bubble incessantly. The effervescence of ideas is never checked for a moment and especially notable is the flow of abstract ideas."[1] In the religious poems in this collection there is an advance from the position taken up in *Gītāñjali*. There is greater emphasis now on the mission of man on earth. Man has to make his earth a heaven and not seek for a heaven somewhere else. He should be in a position to say to himself:—

"To-day heaven lives in my body, in my love, in the anxiety of my heart, in my timidity and my strivings, my joys and sorrows

Today heaven sings in my song and has found its fulfilment in my life."

Next in importance to the poems and songs are the dramas of this period.[2] They are all symbolical plays

[1] *Rabindranāth Tagore*, p. 241.

[2] *Saradotsab* (*Autumn Festival*) 1908, *Prāyascitta* (*Atonement*)

studded with exquisite songs. What the poet says of *Māyār Khelā* is true of all of them.

"In *Māyār Khelā* the songs were important, not the drama. . . . The play of feeling, and not action, was its special feature."

Through the play of feeling, the poet conveys his thought. That Rabīndranāth attached as much importance to the spiritual significance of these plays as to their elusive beauty or their delightful music is shown in one of his letters. He wrote to C. F. Andrews from Berlin on June 4, 1921:—

"I saw *Post Office* acted in a Berlin theatre. The girl who took the part of Amal was delightful in her acting, and altogether the whole thing was a success. But it was a different interpretation from that of ours in our own acting in *Vichitra*. I had been trying to define the difference in my mind, when Dr. Otto of Marburg University, who was among the audience, hit upon it. He said that the German interpretation was suggestive of a fairy story full of elusive beauty, whereas the inner significance of this play is spiritual."

The period (1901-16), which we are now considering, is distinguished not only for Tagore's lofty religious poetry and his symbolical plays, but also for his long novels. Following the lead of Bankim Chandar, who was known as "the Scott of Bengal", Rabīndranāth had written in his youth two rather crude historical romances. He soon gave up this type of novel and discovered his own realistic style of fiction in his famous short stories. He now continued that style in his longer stories. But it must be said that he is not as successful with the long novel as with the short story, though in parts he rises to a high level of excellence. For one thing, just as all his plays tend to become symbolic plays, so his novels of this period tend to become problem novels, and his characters are mostly types and not indi-

1909, *Rājā* (*The King of the Dark Chamber*) 1910, *Achalāyatan* (*The Immovable Stronghold*) 1912, *Dākghar* (*The Post Office*) 1912, and *Phālgum* (*The Cycle of Spring*) 1916.

viduals. Through these novels[1] the author wants to drive home some lesson in religion or politics or social life.

It is difficult to give here an account of all the miscellaneous prose writings of Tagore during this period. He wrote innumerable pamphlets and articles and essays of various kinds—political essays, biographical essays, essays on language, literature, education, social reform, etc. He wrote many text-books and humorous sketches, edited *Bangadarśan* for five years and started a new journal, called *Bhaindar,* for the discussion of political and economic question. It was again during this time that he wrote his *Jībansmriti* (*My Reminiscences*). It was also during this period that his letters (*Chinnapatra*) and the sermons that he delivered at Śāntiniketan were published. But the most outstanding prose work of this period is *Sādhana,* which consists of a course of philosophical lectures he delivered in English at the Harvard University during his American tour in 1913. This *Sādhana* has, of course, to be distinguished from the journal *Sādhana,* to which reference has already been made.

We have now to resume the narrative of the poet's life during this eventful period. We have already seen how he suddenly withdrew from the political field to the annoyance of many of his countrymen and retired to Śāntiniketan to follow his true vocation of a man of letters. His literary reputation grew, and when his fiftieth birthday came, all misunderstandings over what was considered his desertion were forgotten, and the Golden Jubilee of the poet was celebrated with unparalleled enthusiasm by the whole of educated Bengal. The strain caused by these celebrations was too much for

[1] The most important novels of the period are *Chokher Bāli* (*The Eyesore*) 1903, *Naukādubi* (*The Wreck*) 1906, *Gorā* 1910 and *Ghare Bāire* (*The Home and the World*) 1916. All of them were published serially.

the poet, who had already been ill. So to regain his health he retired to Shelidah, and to while away his time began to translate into English some of his songs in *Gītānjali*. After he recovered a little, he was advised to go on a voyage. Accordingly he left for England on the 27th May 1912, and continued translating his poems on board the ship, because the work gave him great pleasure. In London he came into touch with Rothenstein, the artist, whom he had met before in India. One day when the artist, who had heard that Rabīndranāth was a poet, wanted to have an idea of his work, he said he had with him some prose translations of his Beṅgālī poems, but knew that his English was not good. Rothenstein, out of curiosity, took the translations with him, and when he read them, he at once saw their merit. He became quite excited, as he thought they were the most wonderful things he had ever seen. So he had copies typed of them and sent them to Yeats, Stopford Brooke, Bradley and others. Yeats read them and announced to his friends that a great poet had come among them, 'greater than any of us.' A meeting of friends was soon arranged at Rothenstein's house, where he gave a reading of them. It was at this meeting that Rabīndranāth first met Charles Andrews, who afterwards became his life-long friend. Yeats later wrote in his Introduction to the English *Gītānjali*:—

"I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it, lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention—display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back

again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and the noble."

The publication of this book in 1912, in a limited edition by the India Society, is a memorable event in the history of our Renaissance, for it resulted in the world-wide recognition not only of the genius of Tagore, but also of the spiritual greatness of India. Reviewing the book in *The Nation* of November 16, 1912, Evelyn Underhill, the well-known authority on mysticism, pointed out its importance thus:—

"Hence for those interested in the spiritual history of man, the continuance in our own day of that living tradition of intercourse with reality, which we owe to the mystical saints, the appearance of these poems is an event of great importance. From the point of view of pure literature their high quality can hardly be contested; yet it is not mere literary excellence which their author has sought, nor is it here that their deepest interest lies. They are offerings from finite to infinite, oblations, as their creator holds that all art should be, laid upon the altar of the world."[1]

As a token of the world-wide recognition of the genius of the poet, after the publication of the English version of *Gītānjali,* he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in November, 1913. In December of the same year the University of Calcutta conferred on him the honorary degree of D. Litt., and in 1915 the Government made him a knight. The news of the award of the Nobel prize was received by the poet while he was in India, as he had returned home in September 1913, after visiting the United States in 1912 and delivering a course of lectures (later published as *Sādhana*) at the Harvard University.

IV

After the award of the Nobel prize, Rabīndranāth became a world-figure, and there was a demand in all

[1] The whole article is reproduced in the Tagore Birthday Number of *The Viśva-Bhārati Quarterly,* May-October, 1941, from which much of the information about Tagore given in this chapter is drawn.

civilized countries for his poems, plays and stories. Accordingly some of his works were translated into English and other European languages. But the translation was often so free that its resemblance to the original was rather remote. The poet omitted a good deal, simplified the original and occasionally improved on it. The most distinguishing feature of his poems and songs in Beṅgālī is their musical quality. And, as it was impossible to convey this quality in another language, he created similar rhythms natural to that language and sacrificed much of the original matter to the exigencies of the new form. The titles of his translations too bore only a remote resemblance to those of the originals. For instance, in the English *Gītānjali* there are 103 poems. Of these only 51 are from the Beṅgālī *Gītānjali*. The other 52 are from other collections—17 from *Gītimālya*, 11 from *Kheyā*, 16 from *Naibedya* and so on. And, unfortunately, as this work of translation had to be done under pressure and in the intervals of more creative activities, the later translations were mostly from the simpler and second-rate poems of the author. His first-rate poems were untranslatable and so they were left alone. His second-rate poems, in which the same ideas were repeated, though in a new form and with a different melody, were translated in rather monotonous language and produced a somewhat wrong impression about Tagore's poetry. Instead of God's plenty, it was imagined that they contained only a mystic's monotonous yearning for the Infinite, couched always in vague, dreamy phrases. Hence the poet's reputation suffered a slight set-back after the initial triumph.

There were also other reasons for this change. Tagore refused to be a mere poet hidden in the light of thought—

"Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not."

He soon appeared before the world in the new rôle of a prophet, frankly expressing his hopes and fears about the future of humanity. The mystical poet of Gītānjali turned into a prophet of Man calling upon all nations to come together, to shed their 'Nationalism' to exchange their gifts of the spirit, to develop 'Personality' and to achieve 'Creative Unity'. To such a call the choice spirits of all nations readily responded, but not those who were in seats of power, nor those especially who were seeking to enrich their own nation by keeping down other nations. While the gods rejoiced, the Titans refused to hear, and the Titans had their way. For one great world-war was on when Tagore began his mission in 1916, and there was another and greater world-war when he died in 1941, after twenty-five years of preaching. The unwearied prophet went on sounding his clarion call from country to country and from continent to continent. The foreign tours that he undertook to deliver his message during the last twenty-five years of his life form the most distinctive feature of this period.

He sailed for Japan in May 1916 and delivered lectures at the Universities of Tokyo and Keio Gijiku, in which, he condemned all aggressive Nationalism and reprimanded Japan for her policy of imperialism in China. The lectures were afterwards published with the title, *Nationalism*. He left for the United States in September and continued his lectures on Nationalism in the various States. His lectures on art, education, etc., during this tour, were later published with the title, *Personality*. He returned to India by way of Japan in March 1917. And next year was laid the foundation-stone of Viśvabhāratī, the International University

which was to be the meeting place of the cultures of the East and the West.

In 1919, he visited all the important towns in Southern India delivering lectures, and returned to Calcutta in March. A month later he was deeply agitated over the news of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre and other martial law atrocities in the Punjab and wrote the famous letter to the Viceroy renouncing his knighthood. In this he said:

"The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my country-men who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings."

Next year after a short tour in Western India, during which he visited Gandhiji's Sabarmati Asram, he left for Europe in May accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law. He had a cold reception in England on account of his giving up the knighthood and his outspoken comments on British rule in India, but was warmly received on the continent. He visited France, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Germany and Switzerland, delivering lectures, and met many illustrious men like Bergson, Sylvain Levi, Romain Rolland, Count Keyserling and Thomas Mann. He then paid a short visit to the United States and lectured on *The Meeting of the East and the West* and *The Poet's Religion.* The lectures that he delivered on this foreign tour were afterwards published as *Creative Unity.*

He returned home in 1921, and found Mahatma Gandhi's Non-co-operation movement in full swing. The prophet who had been touring all over the world preaching the co-operation of all nations in the interests of a common culture could not, of course, sympathize with the movement, and there was a controversy on the subject between him and Gandhiji. In three forceful letters in *Young India,* Tagore denounced non-co-ope-

ration as "a doctrine of narrowness, negation and despair." Gāndhijī, in his own inimitable way, replied that his Non-co-operation movement was intended to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary co-operation, based on mutual respect and trust and that the struggle he started was against compulsory co-operation. He pointed out:—

"An India prostrate at the feet of Europe can give no hope to humanity. An India awakened and free has a message of peace and goodwill to a groaning world. Non-co-operation is designed to supply her with a platform from which she will preach the message."

That Gāndhijī was not averse to a real and voluntary co-operation of cultures is shown also by his remarkable utterance in the course of this controversy. He wrote:—

"I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave."

This was, of course, only a friendly controversy, and the two greatest men of our age have ever remained good friends. In fact, three months after this passage of arms, Gāndhijī met Tagore at his residence in Calcutta and had a long private talk with him about the Non-co-operation movement.

It is interesting to note that it was when India was in the throes of the Non-co-operation movement that Tagore's international University of Viśvabhāratī was formally inaugurated by the great scholar, Dr. Brajendranāth Seal, on 22nd December, 1921. The membership of the University was open to all persons in the world without any distinction. As we have already seen, the aim of Viśvabhāratī was to bring together, first of all, the various scattered cultures of the East so as to realize the fundamental unity of Asia, and then to work for a true co-operation between the East and the West so as to achieve universal culture. The poet made over

to the institution, by a trust-deed, the land, buildings, library and his other properties at Śāntiniketan. The interest rights on the entire amount of the Nobel Prize had already been transferred to the school. And two years later, he made over the copyright of his Beṅgālī works published till then; and many of his subsequent tours were undertaken with the object of collecting funds for the University. The progress of the institution may be judged by what Ramānanda Chatterjee writes in his article on Tagore in the Tagore Birthday Number of *The Viśva-Bhāratī Quarterly* in 1941:—

"Viśvabhāratī now comprises a primary and a high school, a college, a school of graduate research, a school of painting and modelling and of some crafts, a music school, a school of agriculture and village welfare work, a co-operative bank with branches and a public health institute."

Students of both sexes are admitted, and there is co-education in all stages. As for international co-operation, it may be said here that Prof. S. Levi arrived at Śāntiniketan as the first visiting Professor from France in 1921 to help in the organization of higher research in Chinese and Tibetan studies. Prof. Carlo Formichi arrived as a visiting Professor from Italy in 1925 and Mr. Takagaki, a well-known exponent of jiu-jitsu, arrived at the poet's invitation in 1929, to teach his art to the students, and the Shah of Persia sent Poure Davoud as a visiting Professor in 1933. Thus Chinese, Tibetan and Islamic studies, as well as the study of ancient and mediaeval Hindu and Buddhist cultures, have become the special features of Viśvabhāratī.

In 1922 Tagore undertook a three months' tour in South India and Ceylon, and in 1923 a tour in Western India to collect funds for his University. In 1924 he visited China and Japan and delivered his message of cultural unity. In the same year, on an invitation from the Republic of Peru, he sailed for South America, but fell ill during the voyage and so disembarked at

Buones Ayres, and after recovery went to Italy. But, owing to illness again, he was forced to cut short his visit, and returned to India in February, 1925.

Invitations came pouring in again from Italy in 1926, and in response to them he sailed for Italy on 15th May and was welcomed at Rome by the Italian Government. Mussolini professed to be a great admirer of the poet and had a long interview with him. The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce also met him and told him he admired his poetry "not only for what it impresses but for its sober form, as we Italians call it, classical form." After leaving Rome and going to Switzerland, Tagore came to know that an attempt was being made by the Italian newspapers to create an impression that he was enthusiastic about Fascism. The poet was very much upset by this information and reiterated his views on Imperialism, stating, "I have said it over and over again that the aggressive spirit of Nationalism and Imperialism—religions cultivated by most nations of the West—is a menace to the whole world." He also denounced the atrocities for which, he learnt, Fascism in Italy was responsible. On account of these frank statements, he was bitterly attacked by the Italian press, which had welcomed him a short while before. Tagore then left Switzerland and continued his tour, visiting England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Balkan States, Greece and Egypt, and was everywhere received with honours by the high and the low. He returned home after this strenuous tour in December, 1926.

In July, 1927, he started again on a tour. This time he went east to Malacca, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and Siam. At Bangkok he was warmly received by the King of Siam and he delivered there a lecture on *The Ideals of National Education.* In 1928, he once again visited South India and Ceylon, met Śrī

Aurobindo at Pondicherry and was the guest of Mrs. Besant at Adyar. In 1929, at the invitation of the National Council of Education of Canada to attend its Triennial Conference, he sailed from Bombay on the 1st March, arrived at Vancouver on the 6th April, and delivered a lecture on *The Philosophy of Leisure* at the Conference. He then left for the United States, at the invitation of the Harvard, Columbia and other Universities. But, on arriving at Los Angeles, he experienced difficulties owing to the loss of his passport. He resented the treatment accorded to him as an Asiatic by the Emigration Officers and, cancelling all his engagements, returned home in July, passing through Japan and Indo-China. He had been invited to deliver the Hibbert Lectures in England, and so he left again for Europe on 2nd March, 1930, and after delivering these lectures on *The Religion of Man* he visited Germany and Denmark. From Denmark he went, on the invitation of the Soviet Government, to Russia, where he was enthusiastically welcomed by the "Society for Cultural Relation with Foreign Countries" and the "Moscow Association of Writers" and other public bodies. He stayed in Russia for twelve days, and in his farewell speech he said:

"I am thankful, truly thankful, to you all who have helped me in visualizing in a concrete form the dream which I have been carrying for a long time in my mind, the dream of emancipating the people's minds which have been shackled for ages"

After leaving Russia, he went to the United States, where he was received by President Hoover in Washington and entertained at a great public banquet by the residents of New York, then came back to England and left for India in January, 1931.

His next foreign tour was through Iran and Iraq. At the invitation of Shah Pehlavi, he left for Iran by air in April, 1932 and reached Shiraz, where he was accorded a most enthusiastic welcome. He spent a fort-

night at Teheran and was overwhelmed with civic receptions and entertainments on a truly oriental scale. He had a long interview with the King and wrote a poem in his honour. On his way back he visited Bagdad, where he met King Feisal of Iraq, and reached Calcutta early in June.

This was the year of the epic fast of Gāndhijī in Yeravāda Jail over the "Communal Award". Tagore was very much perturbed at the news and sent Gāndhijī a telegram in which he said, "I fervently hope that we will not callously allow such national tragedy to reach its extreme length. Our sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love." He then proceeded to Poona to see Gāndhijī and was present in Yeravāda Jail when the Mahātmā broke his fast.

Next year, on the invitation of Professor Rādhākrishnan, he went to the Andhra University at Waltair and delivered three lectures on *Man,* which form a sequel to his Hibbert Lectures on *The Religion of Man.* In 1934 he toured again in Ceylon, and gave a broadcast talk at Colombo on Viśvabhāratī. It was during this year that Professor Gilbert Murray wrote a letter to him, asking for his collaboration in starting a society of thinkers of all countries for clearing the misunderstandings among nations. The poet's reply and Gilbert Murray's original letter were afterwards published in book form with the title *East and West.*

After 1934, Tagore's tours were confined to Northern India. He had seven more years to live. But his enthusiasm for his mission was unabated, as also his eagerness to collect funds for his Viśvabhāratī. In fact, when Gāndhijī met him in Delhi in 1936, the Māhatmā was much perturbed to hear that the aged poet had to undertake these arduous tours for collecting funds for his University, and at his instance an anonymous donor gave Rs. 60,000 to the institution. It is

particularly gratifying to know that the relations between Gāndhijī and Guru Dev, as Tagore was affectionately called, were most cordial to the end. Gāndhijī's birthday used to be celebrated regularly at Śāntiniketan, and the poet used to give an address on these occasions. In 1938, on the occasion of the Mahātmā's seventieth birthday, he is reported to have said, "To this great soul in a beggar's garb it is our united privilege to offer felicitations on his birthday." And in 1940, when Gāndhijī and Kastūribā visited Śāntiniketan, the poet held a formal reception and said, "We accept you as our own, as one belonging to all humanity." And Gāndhijī's reply was, "Even though I call this visit a pilgrimage, allow me to say that I am no stranger here. I feel as if I had come to my home."

During September, 1940, the poet fell seriously ill, but slowly recovered. On 14th April, 1941 his eightieth birthday was celebrated at Śāntiniketan, and it was on that occasion that his famous address on *The Crisis of Civilization* was read, as he was still too weak to attend the function. And on the 7th August he passed away.

One would naturally expect that, during all this crowded period of journeys, tours, receptions and addresses all over the world, the poet had cast aside his singing robes and added little to his literary output. But the exact reverse of it is the fact. It is amazing to know that, during this period of incessant activity, he found time to write and publish more than twenty collections[1] of poems, fifteen dramas[2], five novels[3] and five

[1] The chief collections of poems are *Palātaka, Śiśu Bholānāth, Purabi, Mauhā, Banabāni, Parišesh, Bichitrita, Bīthikā, Chhadār Chhabi, Prāntik, Senjuti, Ākāsh Prādip, Nabjatak, Sānāi, Roga Sajyaya, Ārogya* and *Janmadine*. The following are collections of prose poems:—*Punaścha, Śesh Saptak, Patraput* and *Śyāmalī*

[2] The dramas are: *Muktadhārā, Basanta, Grihaprabeś, Śodh-bodh Raktakarabi, Natir-Pūja, Rturanga, Śesh Raksha, Nabīni, Śāp Mochan, Kāler Jātra, Chandālikā, Tāsher Desh* and *Bānsari*.

[3] The novels are: *Jogā Jog, Śesher Kabitā, Dui bon, Mālancha* and *Chār Adhyāya*.

volumes of lectures, not to speak of miscellaneous essays, sketches, letters, diaries and short stories. And, as if these were not enough, the poet, at seventy years of age, learned to paint with brush and colours and acquired considerable skill in this art. An exhibition of his paintings used to form a regular feature of his later tours. We are told that there are now about one thousand five hundred drawings and pictures by him. This takes one's breath away. We are forced to conclude that the goddess Sarasvatī—the patron deity of poetry, music and painting—caught hold of Rabīndranāth Tagore when he was a boy of eight, made him slave for her day and night and left him at peace only when he breathed his last at eighty. For the poet used to dictate poems even on his sick bed during his last illness. The last poem he dictated was on 30th July, 1941, eight days before his death, and curiously enough it is reminiscent, like his early poems, of the Vaiṣṇava lyrics on Kṛṣṇa—which shows that the wheel had come full circle.

> "Your creation's path you have covered
> with a varied net of wiles,
> You Guileful One!"

As most of the works of this period have not yet been translated, we are not in a position to say much about them. It is said that his later poems are more reflective, their metre is more free and their language approximates more to the spoken tongue. And some of them are actual prose poems. The dramas of the period are of three kinds—symbolic dramas, musical dramas and dance dramas. The novels became either more intellectual and epigrammatic or more poetic and romantic, thus moving away from life in either case. They are either problem novels of a more pronounced type than those of the preceding period or poetic romances more fit for treatment in verse than in prose. Consequently the characters are either types or ideals.

Among the miscellaneous prose works of the period we have fanciful tales, short stories, prose sketches, accounts of voyages to Japan and South America, letters from Russia and a satire on educational methods. And, lastly, we have in English his lectures and addresses—*Nationalism, Personality, Creative Unity, The Religion of Man, Man,* and *Letters to a Friend.*

When we view the astonishingly large and varied output of Tagore in all the periods of his literary career, one regret inevitably rises in our minds. We have said above that Sarasvatī caught hold of the poet when he was a small boy and left him at peace only when he died at the ripe old age of eighty. We should have been more grateful to the goddess, if she had, at any time in all these years, forced him to write a little less and made him concentrate all his powers on one long sustained poetic flight on the level of *Gītāñjali* or *Balākā.* For Tagore, in spite of all his equipment, *viz.,* deep religious feeling, comprehensive philosophy of life, perfect ear for music and unfailing power of expression, has not given us any work which we can place by the side of the *Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost.* Consequently he cannot take the first rank, and can be placed only in the second rank, among world-poets. In exchange for one great religious epic of the quality of the *Divine Comedy,* for which his genius was most fitted, we could have gladly given all his novels, dramas, pictures and more than half of his poems. The poet himself seems to have felt at one time the regret that we feel, if we can judge from the following verses in *The Gardener*:—

> "My love, once upon a time your poet launched a great epic in his mind.
> Alas! I was not careful, and it struck your ringing anklets and came to grief.
> It broke up into scraps of songs and lay scattered at your feet."

Who is this lady with ringing anklets? Shall we call her Dallying Distraction? Or Fatal Facility?

V.

A detailed consideration of Rabīndranāth Tagore as a man of letters is beyond the scope of this book. It will require a volume by itself, and the work can be done satisfactorily only by a competent Beṅgālī scholar. We are concerned with Tagore here only as one of the leaders of the Renaissance of Hinduism. Fortunately, Tagore, though originally belonging to the Ādi Brāhmo Samāj of his father, never considered himself as being outside the pale of Hinduism, as some misguided members of the Brāhmo Samāj do. Like his father, he went to the Upaniṣads, those pure Himālayan springs of Hinduism, to slake his spiritual thirst. But, unlike his father, he avoided the pitfalls of subjective rationalism. His poetic instinct and his historic sense saved him here. He tells us that his religious life followed the same mysterious growth as his poetic life. The two were wedded to each other. His religion thus became at last a poet's religion, as he often says. " I have my conviction," he tells us in his Hibbert Lectures, "that, in religion and also in the arts, that which is common to a group is not important. Indeed very often it is a contagion of mutual imitation. After a long struggle with the feeling that I was using a mask to hide the living face of truth, I gave up my connection with our church." Hence he was in a position to see the excesses of the iconoclastic zeal of some sections of the Brāhmo Samāj in Bengal. In his *Gorā* he has given us his impartial criticism of the Brāhmo Samāj as well as of Hindu orthodoxy. He has painted a faithful picture of the parent community and its protestant sect as they appeared to him at the time. In this novel there is an unforgettable scene in which the heroine,

the good Sucharitā, who was brought up in a strict Brāhmo family, rebels against the sectarian intolerance and self-righteousness of the Brāhmo preacher, Haran Bābū, who had hopes of marrying her. Haran comes one morning to her, while she was frying vegetables in her kitchen, and severely taxes her for her conduct in encouraging her 'sister' Lalitā to marry Vinoy, who does not belong to the Brāhmo Samāj. In reply to all his stinging remarks, Sucharitā keeps exclaiming, "I am a Hindu", "I know I am a Hindu", "I can tell you one thing, I am a Hindu", "The Lord of my heart knows about my religion and I do not propose to discuss it with anyone. But you can be certain of one thing, namely, that I am a Hindu". As against this, we have at the end of the novel the words of the hero, Gorā, to Paresh Bābū, the saintly Brāhmo householder, when he found that the bottom of all his enthusiastic championship of Hindu orthodoxy throughout the novel was knocked out by the revelation that he was himself a foundling of Irish parentage, and hence technically, according to Hindu orthodoxy, an outcaste:—

"To-day give me the *mantram* of that Deity who belongs to all, Hindu, Mussalmān, Christian and Brāhmo alike, the doors to whose temple are never closed to any persons of any caste whatever, He who is not only the God of the Hindus, but who is the God of India itself."

Thereupon the hero and the heroine join hands. The lesson that Tagore wants to teach through these situations is obvious.

His own religion he calls a poet's religion. He brings his poetic genius to bear on the sacred texts of the Upaniṣads and interprets them in the light of his own religious experience. It is well known that the Upaniṣads speak of both the personal and the impersonal aspects of God. The personal aspects gave rise later on to Vedāntic theism, and the impersonal aspects to Vedāntic absolutism. To look upon God as

a Person possessing such qualities as love, mercy and grace is to take a poetic view of the ultimate Reality. It is to view God through human spectacles, it is to view Him in relation to the world. It is to see Him as He is to us in relation to human needs. Whereas to look upon God as the impersonal Absolute, of which nothing that we know of can be predicated, is to take a scientific view of the Reality. It is to view God not as what He is to us, but as what He is in Himself. From the relative standpoint we get the poetic view, from the absolute standpoint we get the scientific view. It is like our seeing the sun rise in the east and set in the west, while he remains stationary all the time. Naturally the poet takes the poetic view. Tagore, in his Hibbert Lectures[1], makes mention of both the views and of his own choice. He does not deny the truth of the absolutist view. In that respect he is more liberal than his father. But he thinks that, for the Religion of Man, the theistic view alone is of any value.

Having thus made his choice, the poet looks upon the whole world as a song[2], which is never for a moment separated from its eternal singer, or a dance[3], which is never for a moment separated from the eternal Lord of Dancing. The Creator is pouring out the joy of His heart in all these beautiful forms that we see around us on the earth and in the sky. As the Upaniṣad says, "From joy does spring all this creation, by joy is it maintained, towards joy does it progress and into joy does it enter. . . . Who could have breathed or moved, if the sky were not filled with joy?"[4] To partake of this joy, to take delight in this music or dance of creation we have to attune not only our minds, but also our hearts. Our attitude towards the universe should be one of deep

[1] See *The Religion of Man*, Chapter XV.
[2] *Gītānjali* III, *Sādhana*, p. 143.
[3] *Poems* No. 82.
[4] *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 7.

adoration. Truth is the object not only of knowledge, but also of devotion. Jñāna is not a mere feat of the intellect, it is a supreme effort of the heart as well. For mere unaided intellect will see things only in their isolation and miss the deeper truth of their unity. The things of the world are like the letters in a book. They are both separate and united. The letters are separate in themselves, but they are united in the meaning they convey. When the individual letters claim all our attention, as when a beginner is spelling out words, they fatigue us.[1] But, when they combine into words and sentences and convey an idea, they give us joy. When the idea is conveyed, the letters and words do not vanish, they remain in their place, but become a transparent medium through which the meaning is seen. We lose sight of their isolation, we only feel their unity. Similarly, as long as we see things in their separateness only, our knowledge is fragmentary and superficial. It is only when we see them in their unity, in one divine harmony, that we know the joy and love that lie behind them. The poet had such a vision, and so all his poems, whatever may be their immediate subjects, point to the same end. He says:—

"Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, 'He comes, comes, ever comes'."[2]

And he prays:—

"Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current, and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee."[3]

It is this lively consciousness of the presence of God behind all things in the world and behind all experiences in man that makes Tagore a mystical poet. His poetry reveals two well-known types of mysticism—

[1] *Sādhana*, p. 27.
[2] *Gītānjali* XLV.
[3] *Gītānjali* CIII.

devotional mysticism and what is called Nature mysticism. The former, of course, is nothing new in Indian religious literature. Many of the innumerable hymns addressed to God, under various names and forms, in Vaiṣṇavite, Śaivite and Sākta literature in India rise to the level of devotional mysticism. The emotional relation between the human soul and the divine spirit is represented in these hymns in terms of love, either between the servant and the Master or the son and the Father, or the beloved and the Lover. The Vaiṣṇavite songs which use the symbolism of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa belong to the last category. We have seen how much Tagore was influenced in his early years by the songs of Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdās and other Vaiṣṇavite singers of Bengal. He was also an admirer of the religion of the Bauls—a sect in Bengal who dispense with all temples, rituals, scriptures and caste regulations and sing of God simply as a Lover. What repels us frequently in the hymns of our mediaeval singers is their reference to the fabled adventures of the god whom they adore or to the miracles he has wrought or to the fantastic forms he has assumed on earth. The poet either believes in these things or uses them as rhetorical devices. In any case, the appeal in these terms becomes sectarian, and at times even sounds insincere. Hymns that are the handmaids of any particular theology or mythology bear on their faces the signs of decay, whereas hymns that express the universal religious experience of men have everlasting life. Tagore's religious poems belong to the latter class. He dispenses with all mythological symbols and sectarian names and forms. He uses the universal language of men. He speaks of God as king, master, friend, father, poet, bridegroom or lover, and not as any mythological deity or Avatār. And for the substance of his poems he draws upon his profound know-

ledge of the human heart in its spiritual aspiration, and not upon his knowledge of legends and stories. Every reader of *Gītāñjali* knows how pure and universal in language and feeling are the religious poems in that collection. The subtle temptations that assail the soul, the obstacles that lie in the path of prayer, the numerous backslidings of the spirit in the very act of devotion, the hard refusals that our prayers often meet with, the pain of the withheld Presence, the joys and hopes of Grace and a hundred similar things known to every one who tries to lead a spiritual life are indicated by the poet in a masterly way and in imperishable language.

Another point of difference between Tagore and the devotional singers of mediaeval India is that his life of prayer and adoration does not lead him to saṁnyāsa or renunciation of the world. On the contrary, one of the marked features of his religious teaching is its severe condemnation of asceticism and quietism. Following in the footsteps of the Bhagavad Gītā, he says that God is a worker, and that, if we love Him, we must work with Him.

> "Our master is a worker and we work with him
> Boisterous is his mirth, and we laugh with his laughter.
> He beats his drum and we march.
> He sings and we dance in its tune."[1]

The poet puts the whole teaching of the Gītā in a nut-shell, when he says in the last chapter of *Śādhana*:—

> "Where can I meet thee, unless in this my home made thine? Where can I join thee, unless in this my work transformed into Thy work? If I leave my home, I shall not reach thy home; if I cease my work, I can never join thee in thy work. For thou dwellest in me, and I in thee. Thou without me or I without thee are nothing."

God is not only a worker, but also a dweller among the lowest of the low who work. "He is there where the

[1] *Poems*, No. 43.

tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle, and even like him come down on the dusty soil."[1] His feet rest there "where live the poorest and lowliest and lost."[2] Therefore any prayer or act of devotion on the part of those who despise their fellowmen that are poor and low, is unacceptable to Him. The poet narrates the story of the great Brāhman teacher, Rāmānanda, who one morning passed by in scorn an insanitary, evil-smelling village of tanners on his way to the Ganges. The teacher bathed in the sacred waters and prayed for the divine light "to bless his thoughts and open his life to truth." But he did not feel any purificatory touch in his heart, nor any illumination in his mind that morning. So he went back and, finding an old tanner working at a saddle under a tree, approached him and, to the consternation of the man, drew him to his heart and embraced him. The tanner cried, "Master, why bringest upon thee such pollution?" And the Master said, "While on my way to my bath, I shunned your village and thus my heart missed the blessings of the Ganges, whose mother's love is for all. Her own touch comes down at last upon me at the touch of your body with mine, and I am purified."[3]

Nor is harsh asceticism acceptable to God. God has created this beautiful world. He ever pours for us the fresh draught of his wine[4] of various colours and fragrance, filling our earthen vessels to the brim. Therefore, says the poet, "I will never shut the doors of my senses." The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear for him God's delight. A passionate

[1] *Gītānjali* No. XI.
[2] *Gītānjali* No. X.
[3] *Poems* No. 94.
[4] *Gītānjali* No. LXXIII.

love of the earth and of human joys and sorrows is a characteristic feature of Tagore's poetry. Addressing the earth in one of his poems, he says:—

"Your smile which is shadowed with pain is sweet to my eyes.
Your love which knows not fulfilment is dear to my heart.
For ages you are working with colour and song, yet your heaven is not built, but only its sad suggestion.
Over your creations of beauty there is the mist of tears
I will pour my songs into your mute heart, and my love into your love."[1]

In the collection of his poems called *Chitrā*, there is a beautiful piece with the title *The Farewell to Heaven*, which has been translated by Thompson in his book on Tagore. Here we have a comparison between life on earth among men and life in heaven among the gods. The poem is supposed to represent the thoughts and feelings of a soul, whose merit is exhausted and who has therefore to take leave of heaven and return to the earth for his reincarnation. He had lived in bliss among gods in heaven for ten million years. And so he had expected that there would be some grief on the part of his companions on the day of his parting, some sympathy for the soul going out of the abode of bliss. But, as heaven is a place of unclouded joy, he found no trace of tears in heavenly eyes. Griefless and heartless were the denizens of heaven looking listlessly at him. They did not feel even so much pain as a twig does, when a withered leaf falls from it. And so he exclaims:—

"Remain, O Heaven, with thy laughing face! Gods, quaff your nectar! Heaven is an abode of bliss for you alone, we are exiles Earth, our motherland, is not heaven From her eyes tears flow, if after a brief sojourn any leaves her, though but for moments . . . . . Let nectar flow in your heaven; but in Earth the river of love, ever-mingled joy and sorrow keeping green with tears the tiny heavens of Earth."[2]

[1] *The Gardener* No. LXXIII.
[2] *Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, p. 118.

Passages like these which abound in Tagore's poems would give us the clue to the poet's view of evil and suffering in the world, even if it were not fully explained in his philosophical essays in *Sādhana*. Evil, pain and death are inevitable in this imperfect world of ours, where the infinite has to struggle against the finite and attain self-realization. They are our aids to progress. They are to the Spirit in us what the banks are to a river. Just as a river presses against its banks and is sped on its course, so does man, the eternal, gain his spiritual momentum by pressing against the limiting conditions of life on earth. Though evil is present in the world, it is only the good that counts. Though we have to shut and open our eyes every second, it is only the openings that count. Evil is necessary for our moral life. It is the fuel that our moral life has to burn to keep up its vital warmth. Pain also should be judged in its proper context of the evolving universe. It should be viewed not within the narrow bounds of everyday human life, but as an element in the harmony of everlasting life. The cosmic aspect of pain would give the necessary correction to the tragic aspect which we usually over-emphasize.

"The facts that cause despondence and gloom are mere mist, and, when through the mist Beauty breaks out in momentary gleams, we realise that Peace is true and not conflict, Love is true and not hatred, and Truth is One, not the disjointed multitude. We realise that creation is the perpetual harmony between the infinite ideal of perfection and the eternal continuity of its realisation; that, so long as there is no absolute separation between the positive ideal and the material obstacle to its attainment, we need not be afraid of suffering and loss."[1]

According to the Vedānta philosophy, evil has no place in the ultimate Reality. It is only relatively real, not absolutely real. When imperfection is overcome, it ceases to exist. Tagore explains and illustrates this

[1] *Creative Unity* (Indian Edition), p. 15.

view of evil and suffering in his *Sādhana*. He says of pain, "She is the vestal virgin consecrated to the service of the immortal perfection, and when she takes her true place before the altar of the infinite, she casts off her dark veil and bares her face to the beholder as a revelation of supreme joy."[1] He further points out that evil and suffering are the privileges of man. They are an honour to him, for they are the signs of his freedom. Wealth and fame are the gifts of God. He is free to give them or withhold them. But our sorrows are absolutely our own.[2] They are our gifts. And when we make an offering of them to God, He rewards us with His Grace. For we too are free to offer or withhold. God's rule of law prevails over the whole universe and absolute obedience is exacted everywhere, except in the small dominion of the mind of man, where freedom of will is granted. Even man's physical being is subject to law, only his mind is free. God does not send His armed forces into this self-governing dominion.[3] He stops at the gate and sends Beauty to court our love.

Beauty, according to Tagore, is the harmony realized in things which are bound by law, while love is the harmony realized in wills which are free.[4] God creates beauty in the world, but He asks for our love. He wants our love freely offered, as much as we want His. Else our love to Him would be the one-sided importunity of a slave.[5] Tagore here adopts the Vaiṣṇavite doctrine that God's love finds its completion in man's love and says that "the lover, man, is the complement of the Lover, God, in the internal love drama of existence." He finds this mystical doctrine of love

[1] *Sādhana* (Indian Edition), p. 65.
[2] *Gītānjali* No. LXXXIII.
[3] *Sādhana*, p. 41.
[4] *Personality*, p. 101.
[5] *Creative Unity*, p. 82.

in greater purity in the religion of the Bauls. One of their songs quoted by him[1] runs thus:—

"My longing is to meet you in play of my love, My Lover,
But this longing is not only mine, but also yours.
For your lips can have their smile, and your flute
its music, only in your delight in my love;
and therefore you are importunate, even as I am.

To the same effect is one of his own songs:—

"Yet I know the endless thirst in your heart for sight of me, the thirst that cries at my door in the repeated knockings of sunrise."[2]

And he expresses the doctrine in general philosophical terms, without the poetic symbolism of love, thus:—

"The Infinite for its self-expression comes down into the manifoldness of the Finite; and the Finite for its self-realisation must rise into the unity of the Infinite. Then only is the cycle of Truth complete."[3]

But, continuing the symbolism in his poetry, the poet says that, in this drama of reciprocal love, man need not despair that he is too small or too low for God. God can fill a man's heart as lovingly as He fills the sky. 'Small' and 'big' are spatial concepts which do not apply to the spirit. When a sweet cake is halved, the sweetness in it is not halved. Any fragment of the cake is as sweet as the whole cake. Tagore has an exquisite little poem on this point. The dewdrop weeps and cries to the sun, "I dream of thee, but to serve thee I can never hope. I am too small to take thee unto me, great Lord, and my life is all tears." The Sun replies, "I illumine the limitless sky, yet I can yield myself to a tiny drop of drew. I shall become but a sparkle of light and fill you, and your little life will be a laughing orb."[4]

[1] *Creative Unity*, p 81.
[2] *Fruit-gathering*, LXXX.
[3] *Creative Unity*, p. 80.
[4] *Fruit-gathering*, LXII.

Nor should a man despair on account of his sin. "O Fool," says the poet, "to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders! Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all, and never look behind in regret."[1] We are like autumn clouds roaming in the sky. The touch of the ever-glorious sun has not melted our vapour, and so we count our months and years separated from him. When he touches us, we become one with his light.[2] For the soul is essentially divine. Its *dharma* is to become one with the Infinite Spirit, as the *dharma* of the river is to join the sea. Tagore rejects the doctrine that man is essentially sinful and that he can be saved only by a miracle from without. He says that "this is like saying that the nature of the seed is to remain unfolded within its shell and that it is only by some special miracle that it can be grown into a tree."[3]

Nor, again, need a man be baffled by the presence of death in the world. Death is not the end of life. It is only the call of the Infinite to another sphere of life. When the call comes, the soul should depart as the bride departs from her home to meet the bridegroom in the solitude of the night.[4] She should regard her life on earth as the garland she has been weaving for the bridegroom.[4] We ignorantly cry at the time of the transition from one life to another, as the baby cries when the suckling mother transfers it from one breast to another.[5] We should realize that death is a necessary step in our evolution. Our self has to go through endless lives, before it learns that its so-called independence is only a delusion and a snare, but that the harmony of love is the truth.[6] As long as the self hugs its separateness and isolation, it is only hugging its chains and lying imprisoned in its finitude. "He whom I enclose with my name," says the poet, "is

[1] *Gītānjali*, IX.
[2] *Gītānjali*, LXXX.
[3] *Sādhana*, p. 74.
[4] *Gītānjali*, XCI.
[5] *Gītānjali*, XCV.
[6] *Sādhana*, p. 87.

weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this wall goes up into the sky, day by day, I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow."[1]

Thus, like many of his predecessors among the poets of India, Tagore has sung of his passionate love of God in its various moods. He has improved upon them by avoiding all mythological forms and legendary lore and confining himself to actual religious experience, and also by observing a certain reticence and moderation in his use of the symbolism of love.

But his originality consists not in his poems of devotional mysticism, exquisite flowers of the heart as they are, but in those of Nature mysticism. Here he breaks what is practically new ground in our religious literature. For in modern times we have had no conspicuous instances of intense religious feeling arising out of love of Nature. It is rather strange that in a country, where the Vedas themselves arose out of a passionate feeling for the glories of Nature, this type of poetry should have receded into the background. Even the great Kālidāsa, with all his intense love and accurate knowledge of mountains, trees and flowers, had no *religious* feeling for Nature. He had sympathetic insight into Nature, he interfused the workings of Nature with human feelings, but he did not have a vision of the universal spirit behind Nature. He sang of the harmony between man and Nature, not of man's realization of God through Nature. And in the lesser poets Nature became either conventionalized or was represented mostly by the old Vedic personifications of gods and goddesses. There are indeed hints of a genuine Nature mysticism here and there in the Upaniṣads, but they were almost lost sight of in our later scriptures. For instance, there is a story told in the

[1] *Gītāñjali*, XXIX.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad of the way in which a student had his illumination. Satyakāma Jābāla went to the sage Gautama for religious instruction. The sage, having initiated him, gave him four hundred lean and weak cows and asked him to take them to the forest and tend them. The student took them and lived in the forest for a number of years, till they grew to a thousand. Then he started to return home with the herd. On his way, we are told, the truth about Brahman was revealed to him part by part. The first part was revealed by the bull of the herd, the second by the fire he made in his camp, the third by a swan, and the fourth by a diver-bird. At last he reached the house of his teacher. The teacher looked at him and said, "My dear boy, you are shining like one who knows Brahman. Who has taught you?" Satyakāma replied, "Others than men". And he desired that his teacher should, however, teach him, as he had heard that the knowledge given by one's own teacher was the best. The Upaniṣad concludes the story by saying that the sage Gautama taught Satyakāma the very same thing he had already learnt—"Yea, nothing was left out." This story is very significant. The student, living all alone in the forest grazing his teacher's cows for a number of years, pondered deeply on all that he saw in Nature around him, and slowly the truth dawned upon him by degrees. He felt the presence of God at first vaguely in the East and the West, in the North and the South. Then he saw Him in the earth and the sea, in the sky and the firmament. Then he saw Him in the sun and the moon, in the fire and in lightning. And, finally, he saw Him in the sight and the hearing, in the breath and the mind of man. He saw and felt Him to be the Luminous, the Endless, the Flaming and the Abiding. And, above all, he saw and felt the mystic unity of the spirit behind Nature and the spirit of man. This teaching of the Upaniṣads

appears in our later scriptures only in the form of a hardened doctrine, the doctrine of divine immanence. We miss both the poetry of the Vedic hymns and the mystic insight of the Upaniṣads. Even in the Gītā, which is undoubtedly the reservoir into which have flowed all the Upaniṣadic streams, it appears only as a doctrine, though, of course, it is very beautifully expressed by the Avatār, as in the following passage:—

"All this is strung on me as rows of gems on a string. I am the taste in the waters, O Arjuna. I am the radiance in the sun and the moon I am the syllable Om in all the Vedas. I am the sound in the ether and the manliness in men. I am the pure fragrance in the earth and the brightness in the fire. I am the life in all creatures and the austerity in ascetics. Know me to be the eternal seed, O Arjuna, of all things that are. I am the wisdom of the wise and the glory of the glorious."

From Tagore's *Reminiscences* we see how sensitive he was to the beauties of Nature even when he was a child, and how later as a young man he had a vision of the mystic unity of the world, and felt that all the grand and beautiful things of the earth, which he loved so well, were only the figures carved on a casket containing a priceless gem. This experience he carried with him throughout his life. No Indian poet since Kālidāsa has loved Nature so passionately as Tagore, and no Indian poet since the Vedic times has felt so intensely the presence of God behind the phenomena of Nature. The following passages are typical of his feeling:—

"Yes, I know this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart—this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes—this is thy message to my heart."[1]

"In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of the Formless."[2]

[1] *Gītānjali*, LIX.
[2] *Gītānjali*, XCVI.

As his love of Nature is thus an intense religious feeling, beauty is to him not something material, but something spiritual. It eludes the man who wants to possess it with a greedy heart. It is accessible only to him who has purged his heart of all desire. The earth with all her immortal gifts is waiting to welcome only those "who tread the arduous path of detachment."[1] Both in his essays and in his poems Tagore often underlines the famous Upaniṣadic text—*tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāh*—"through detachment alone shalt thou enjoy". The lover in one of his poems complains, "I hold her hands and press her to my breast, I try to fill my arms with her loveliness. . . . I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me leaving only the body in my hand. How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch?"[2]

The poet surrenders himself to Nature without any desire of possession, and so his consciousness is enormously extended through love and sympathy. He is able to identify himself with all forms of life that he sees around him—animals and plants as well as men—and enter into all their moods of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow.

"I sit in the tamarind grove, where the cries of dumb life congregate—the cattle's lowing, the sparrows' chatter, the shrill scream of a kite overhead, the crickets' chirp, and the splash of a fish in water.

"I peep into the primeval nursery of life, where the Mother Earth thrills at the first living clutch near her breast."[3]

In another poem in the same collection, he exclaims,

"How often, great Earth, have I felt my being yearn to flow over you, sharing in the happiness of each green blade that raises its signal banner in answer to the beckoning blue of the sky!"

Poems, 104.
The Gardener, XLIX.
The Fugitive, III, 70.

At times his contemplation of Nature takes him back, across the gulf that divides man from other creatures and through all the play of life in the vast sub-human world, to that dim distant time of the beginning of the earth's creation, when the spirit moved upon the waters, the land was separated from the sea and received its first embrace of warm sunshine and all the children of the earth still lay in her womb.

"When in the evening, the cattle return to their folds, raising dust from the meadow paths, as the moon rises higher than the smoke ascending from the village huts, I feel sad as for some great separation that happened in the first morning of existence."[1]

On seeing a little girl standing still at her window, ignoring the calls of her sister and brother and looking intently at a rainbow on a bright morning which has succeeded a rainy night, he says:—

"The first great voice was the voice of wind and water in the beginning of earth's creation

That ancient cry of Nature—her dumb call to unborn life—has reached this child's heart and leads it out alone beyond the fence of our times: so there she stands possessed by eternity."[2]

This mystic memory or cosmic feeling finds very beautiful expression in some of his longer poems, especially in *Ahalyā* and *Ūrvaśī*. We find it also set down, without any adornment of the poetic art, in one[3] of his letters:—

"I feel as if dim, distant memories come to me of the time when I was one with the rest of the earth; when on me grew green grass and on me fell the autumn light; when a warm scent of youth would rise from every pore of my vast, soft, green body at the touch of the rays of the mellow sun, and a fresh life, a sweet joy would be half-consciously secreted and inarticulately poured forth from all the immensity of my being . . . . . My feelings seem to be those of the ancient earth in the daily ecstasy of its sun-kissed life; my own consciousness seems to

[1] *The Fugitive*, III. 7.
[2] *The Fugitive*, III. 9.
[3] Letter, dated 20th August 1892, in *Glimpses of Bengal*.

stream through each blade of grass, each sucking root, to rise with the sap through the trees, to break out with joyous thrills in the waving fields of corn, in the rustling palm-leaves."[3]

Experiences such as these reveal to the poet the absolute identity of the spirit in man and that in the universe—a truth which the Upaniṣads declare in a hundred voices. This again has been hardened into a doctrine in our philosophical systems and repeated *ad nauseam*. But in the poetry of Tagore we find it once more as a live experience, as in the Upaniṣads, with all the warm colouring derived from the poet's heart. For he sings:—

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

"It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth and in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers."[1]

Tagore points out in his *Sādhana* that "the fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was her life-object to realize this great harmony in feeling and in action."[2] People in this country were enjoined, through meditation and service, to realize the unity of all life in God. In fact, it is only this unitive view of the universe that is called real knowledge (Vidyā), whereas the separative view is called ignorance (Avidyā). Tagore further points out that the significance of the Gāyatrī mantra, which is considered the epitome of all the Vedas and which is used in daily meditation by millions of Hindus, lies in the sedulous cultivation of the consciousness of this fundamental unity. He says of this mantra:—

"By its help we try to realise the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man, we learn to perceive the unity held together by the one Eternal Spirit whose power creates the earth, the sky and the stars, and at the same time

[1] *Gītānjali*, LXIX.
[2] *Sādhana*, p. 7.

irradiates our minds with the light of a consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the outer world."

Thus does Tagore, both in his mystical poetry and in his philosophical writings, reiterate and emphasize the immemorial teachings of the Hindu Scriptures, *viz.*, (1) that the universe in which we live is a partial manifestation of the infinite Spirit, (2) that there is no hard and fast line between Nature and man or between man and God, (3) that evil and suffering are not absolute realities, but only the temporary expedients of the evolving Spirit, (4) that the Absolute Spirit is all ineffable joy and love, (5) that true knowledge is that which perceives the unity of all things in God, and (6) that the emancipation of man consists in his absolute self-surrender in service and love. And, finally, being a prophet of Modern India, which is no longer isolated from the rest of the world, he is able to view all the religions of the world as parts of one whole—the religion, as he calls it, of Man the Eternal. Every Hindu would echo his words, when he says that "the civilizations evolved in India or China, Persia or Judaea, Greece or Rome are like several mountain peaks having different altitude, temperature, flora and fauna, and yet belonging to the same chain of hills."[1]

[1] *The Religion of Man*, p. 56.

CHAPTER X

MAHĀTMĀ GĀNDHI: SATYĀGRAHA IN SOUTH AFRICA.

I

If the writings of Rabīndranāth Tagore are a modern commentary on the Upaniṣads, the life of Mahātmā Gāndhi is the best modern commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, as he is the embodiment of the ideal Karma-yogin described in that scripture. But the works of Tagore, like the Upanisads, are for the cultured few. Even in India, the masses outside Bengal know very little of the poet. Whereas there is not a man, woman or child in this vast country who has not heard of the Mahātmā and known something of his message. No Hindu saint or seer has ever touched the mass mind of the whole of India as Gāndhijī has done during his own life-time. His voice has penetrated even to the hovels of the most obscure villages in the country and has reached the ears of the lowest of the low.

When he travels from place to place wearing only a loin cloth, like the poorest of our peasantry with whom he wants to identify himself, people in their tens of thousands run to get a *darśan* of him or to prostrate themselves before him. There is no doubt that he reigns supreme in the hearts of the millions of his countrymen. He has within a short time brought about a mighty upheaval in the Indian nation and has released a flood of spiritual energy which has transformed the lives of many men.

And yet one can never find a single act or a single word on Gāndhijī's part, which may be construed as

calculated to flatter the crowd or to play to the gallery. On the other hand, many of his speeches are severe rebukes of the people for their want of discipline and their many thoughtless acts of inhumanity and selfishness as well as for their deliberate acts of wrongdoing. It is a remarkable feature of the Mahātmā's leadership that he is able to lead and direct great mass movements without lowering any of his moral standards even by a hair's breadth. He has made the common people in their thousands resist injustice and tyranny in high places—resist the Government of South Africa, the Government of India, the Indian Princes, capitalists and priests—and yet insisted on their having not a trace of anger or personal hatred or racial rancour in their hearts. The people know that he always means what he says, that he practises before he preaches and that he is far more severe on himself than on others. They know that he is not simply a political leader or a social reformer or a friend of the poor, but first and foremost a man of God, a saint and a saṁnyāsin after their own heart. He represents what every Hindu admires and tries to be, but cannot be. Renunciation, self-control and penance (Vairāgya, Brahmacarya and Tapas) have been the cherished ideals of Hindus from time immemorial, and here is a man who is an embodiment of these ancient virtues and who combines with them the most far-sighted statesmanship, the widest toleration and the tenderest love. No wonder, therefore, that the Hindus of the present day look upon him as the true descendant of their ancient Ṛṣis and law-givers, reinterpreting their Sanātana Dharma according to the needs of the present age and giving them a new code of conduct. They look upon him as the greatest Indian of modern times, the most significant product of the present Renaissance. But he is something more. He is one of the greatest men that have tried to lead

mankind to a higher plane of thought and action. For the aim of his life is not simply to give bread to the hungry millions or give strength to the weak and the down-trodden, but to make mankind turn a difficult corner in their toilsome journey up the hill of God. He has thus taken upon himself the work of the saviours of the human race like Buddha and Christ, and his place will ultimately be with them in the memories of men.

II

Mahātmā Gāndhī's life is a great religious epic. There is no doubt that in years to come his *Autobiography* and the various accounts of his life by others will take their place among the sacred books of Hindus. And they will be not only scriptures but also hundred per cent. history. We have said that Gāndhijī's place will be among the saviours of mankind like Buddha and Christ. But, while we have no detailed accounts of the lives of Buddha and Christ which are free from incredible legends and miracles, we have the life of Gāndhi set forth in its minutest detail before our very eyes in the twentieth century. Millions of men have seen him, millions of men have heard his voice and millions of men have read his writings. Hosts of journalists have interviewed him, visitors from all parts of the world have seen his Āśram and thousands of his followers have watched him at work at close quarters. His life is an open book which even a child can read. His activities are mainly in the field of politics, where secrecy and diplomacy are generally recognized as legitimate methods of work. But he has condemned secrecy as a sin in politics. For the first time in history he has raised politics to the level of religion. He says in the Introduction to his *Autobiography* that his aim in this life is mokṣa or self-realization and that his ventures in the political field are directed to that end. He has worked for swarāj for

India, but says he prefers Truth to swarāj. He is one of the greatest votaries of Truth who have appeared on this earth. To him Truth is God. Hence his *Experiments with Truth,* as he calls them, are all conducted not in secrecy, but in the open. There may be differences of opinion about the results of these experiments, but no fair-minded person can say a word against the character of the scientist who conducts them.

There is perfect harmony between Gāndhijī's life and his teaching. In fact, his whole life is an embodiment of his teaching. His greatest contribution to the thought of our age is contained in the word Satyāgraha which he has invented. If his writings are an exposition of this new dharma, he is himself an incarnation of it. He is not only the author of Satyāgraha but also an ideal Satyāgrahī. Therefore his character, as revealed by his actions, is as important for us as his writings, and so we have to trace his career in some detail and see in what circumstances exactly Satyāgraha arose, to what conditions of life it was later applied and how far it proved a success on each occasion.

Moreover Gāndhijī is primarily a man of action, as Tagore is primarily a man of letters. His life is crowded with political events, as Tagore's life is with literary events. But both of them have an abiding sense of the Infinite behind all events. If Tagore reveals the Infinite to us through his songs, Gāndhijī reveals it through his actions. If the former is a poetical mystic, the latter is a practical mystic. Thus each has made his own contribution to the spiritual traditions of our country. And, to assess the value of that contribution, we have to give an account of the political activities of Gāndhijī, as we had to give an acccount of the literary activities of Tagore, though in this book we are concerned with religion and not with literature or politics.

III

Mohandās Karamchand Gāndhi was born at Porbandar, Kāthiāwār on the 2nd October, 1869. His father and his grandfather were the Prime Ministers of the state of Porbandar. His father afterwards became the Prime Minister also of two other Kāthiawār states—Rājkot and Vankaner. When he died he was a pensioner of the Rājkot state. Gāndhi's mother, who had a great influence on his life, was a saintly woman, deeply religious, but also well-informed about all matters of state and possessing strong common sense. Gāndhi passed his childhood at Porbandar. When he was about seven, his father left Porbandar for Rājkot. The boy was put into a primary school at Rajkot, and when he was twelve he went to the High School. Gāndhijī records that two plays which he witnessed during his boyhood have left an indelible impression on his mind—*The Filial Love of Śrāvaṇa* and *The Devotion to Truth of Hariscandra.* He says:—

"To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Hariscandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me. I literally believed in the story of Hariscandra. The thought of it all often made me weep. My common sense tells me today that Hariscandra could not have been an historical character. Still both Hariscandra and Śrāvaṇa are living realities for me, and I am sure I should be moved as before, if I were to read these plays again today."[1]

Thus the torch of Truth passed from the hands of the ancient and legendary Hariscandra to the modern and historical Hariscandra. Of religion in the narrow sense Gāndhijī had only a few glimpses during his boyhood. At school all sorts of subjects were taught to him, but not religion. Like every Hindu boy in those

[1] *The Story of My Experiments with Truth, p* 17 (one-volume edition)

days, and unfortunately even today in most places, he had to pick up his religion here and there from his surroundings. He belonged to a Vaiṣṇava family, and when he was a child his nurse taught him *Rāmanāma* to cure his fear of ghosts and spirits. The seed sown by that good woman was not lost, for *Rāmanāma* is still looked upon by Gāndhijī as an infallible remedy for all the ills of life. The boy also listened to the reading of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Tulsīdās in the presence of his father during his illness. Naturally he was profoundly impressed and has come to regard Tulsīdās's book even today as the greatest book in all devotional literature. Also at this time a Gujarātī stanza gripped his mind and heart, especially its concluding lines:—

> "But the truly noble know all men as one,
> And return with gladness good for evil done."

Its precept that one should return good for evil became thenceforth the guiding principle of his life.

Gāndhi passed his Matriculation examination in 1887 and joined the Śāmaldās College at Bhavnagar. But when, after the first term was over, he returned home, a family friend, a shrewd and learned Brāhman, strongly urged that he should be sent to England so that he might become a barrister in three years and aspire to the post of Dewān like his father. The boy jumped at the idea, though the finances of the family at the time did not allow such an expensive undertaking. But seeing his eagerness to go to England, his brother promised to find the money for it somehow. The religious obstacles were, however, more formidable than the financial ones. The Gāndhis, being strict Vaiṣṇavas, were all vegetarians and total abstainers. None of their community had yet gone to Europe. Gāndhi's mother rightly feared that he might eat forbidden food and drink wine and get into bad ways in a distant and foreign country and so was unwilling to let him go.

But another family friend now came to the rescue of the eager youth. He was a member of their own community, but had become a Jain monk. He said he would make the boy take three solemn oaths that he would not touch wine, woman and meat during his stay in England, and then he might be allowed to go. The oaths were taken, the permission of the mother was obtained and Gāndhi left for England.

He sailed on the 4th September, 1887, in the company of one Mazumdār, a pleader from Junagadh, who was also going to England for being called to the bar. It may be noted that, though Gāndhi was only eighteen at this time, he had already been married, and his wife was of the same age as himself.

IV

Gāndhi stayed in England as a student for three years and nine months. During this time he learned Latin and French, improved his English, passed the London Matriculation and his Law Examinations and was called to the bar on the 10th June, 1891. In spite of the many temptations to which a lonely Indian student is subject in London, he kept his three vows with a strong will.

He was now a strict vegetarian not only by habit but also by conviction. He organized a vegetarian club in his locality, did some propaganda for vegetarianism and was elected to the executive committee of the Vegetarian Society in London. At the meetings of this society, he tells us, he could never stand up and make a speech. He could not even read a written speech consisting of a few sentences He was too shy and timid for that. Those of us who have seen him in his later life hold spell-bound mobs of thirty to fifty thousand by his clear, cogent speeches cannot but wonder at this revelation. He now thinks that his hesitancy in

speech in his early life has been all to his advantage and says, "My shyness has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth."[1]

It was during his stay in England as a student that Gāndhijī read the *Gītā* for the first time. He read Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of it in the company of two Theosophist brothers. The book at once struck him as one of priceless worth, though it was only later that it became a book of daily reading for him as for millions of Hindus. On the recommendation of the same brothers, he then read Arnold's *The Light of Asia* with even greater interest. The brothers also advised him to join the Theosophical Society, but with his meagre knowledge of religion he did not want to join any religious body. At this time he also read the Bible at the instance of a vegetarian Christian friend. He took no interest in the Old Testament, but the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, gripped his attention, and he tried to unify in his own mind the teachings of the *Gītā*, *The Light of Asia* and *The Sermon on the Mount*. This whetted his appetite for studying the lives of other religious teachers, and, on the recommendation of another friend, he read with interest and admiration Carlyle's account of Mohammed as Prophet in his *Heroes and Hero-worship*.

Gāndhijī returned home in 1891, to find that his saintly mother,[2] whose memory kept him pure in England all these years, had passed away and that his brother had kept the news from him to save him from pain and sorrow in a foreign land. After he returned home he tried to set up practice in Bombay. But he found it impossible to make both ends meet. So he went back

[1] *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p 17 (one-volume edition)

[2] "His voice softens when he speaks of her and the light of love is in his eyes. She must have been a beautiful character." J.J. Doke.

to Rājkot to live with his brother and try his luck in the local Court there. But he had a very unpleasant experience with the Political Agent in whose Court he had to appear. Consequently he was in a state of profound depression, when an offer came from Dāda Abdullah and Co., a firm in Porbandar which had business in South Africa. He was asked whether he would go to South Africa to instruct the Company's Counsel in a big case involving £40,000. He was offered a fee of £105 for a year, all expenses found. He at once closed with the offer and sailed in April, 1893.

V

Gāndhijī went to South Africa with the hope of finishing his professional business and returning home in a year. He little knew that Providence was taking him to a place where he had to spend twenty years of his life and forge a spiritual weapon for the regeneration of India, if not of the world. He arrived at Durban, the port of Natal, in South Africa towards the end of May, 1893. The case for which he came was going on in Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. But the head of the firm which engaged him—Abdulla Sheth—was in Durban. So Gāndhijī stayed in Durban[1] for a week before he set out for Pretoria.

The Indians resident in Natal at that time consisted of several groups—Muslim merchants from Gujarāt who called themselves Arabs, Parsi clerks who called them-

[1] A day or two after his arrival Abdulla Sheth took him to see the Durban Court and made him sit next to his attorney. The Magistrate looked up, stared at the new visitor for a few minutes and asked him to take off his turban. This Gāndhijī refused to do and left the Court. This is the beginning of the many indignities to which he was subjected during his residence in South Africa. He wrote to the press about the incident and the question was very much discussed in the papers This gave an unexpected advertisement to Gāndhijī, who was called "an unwelcome visitor"

selves Persians and many Hindus who were either clerks or petty traders. But by far the largest class was that of labourers, especially from the Madras Presidency. These were again divided into indentured labourers and freed labourers. The indentured labourers were those who went to Natal on an agreement to serve for five years, and the freed labourers were those who, after their five years of indenture, settled down in Natal instead of returning to India. At this time there were in Natal about 60,000 indentured labourers, 10,000 ex-indentured men and 10,000 free Indians. The other elements in the population were 400,000 Zulus, the primitive children of the soil living in crude huts, and only 40,000 European colonists, both British and Boer. But the white colonists were, of course, the men in power. Natal was an English colony, and so was the Cape Province. But the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in the interior were Boer republics. The first batch of indentured labourers had arrived in Natal more than thirty years before, on 16th November, 1860, which Gāndhijī calls a truly ominous date for India. They had come there under an agreement between the Government of India and that of Natal. As the Zulus were lazy and could not be made to work, the white colonists of Natal wanted labourers from India to work in their sugar-cane, tea and coffee estates. The Government of India readily accommodated their fellow-whites, and the indentured system, which was described by the historian Sir W. W. Hunter as a state of semi-slavery, came into existence. The labourers who went to South Africa under this system were practically the slaves of their employers for the period of their agreement. They had no means of redress if they had any grievances against their employers. And, being cut off from home and having no communal restraints of any kind in that distant land, many of them led rather licen-

tious lives. They were mostly illiterate men and women. Their standard of life was very low and their ideals of sanitation very poor. They were therefore contemptuously called 'coolies' or 'sāmīs'.[1] And, as the labourers formed an overwhelming part of the Indian population, all Indians would sometimes be called coolies or sāmīs. The free Indian merchants would be called coolie merchants, the free Indian clerks would be called coolie clerks and Gāndhijī was actually called a coolie barrister. Even when the indentured labourers became free labourers, they were subjected to various restrictions which distinguished them as a separate class. For instance, they were required to obtain a pass if they wanted to go from one place to another, they were required to register their marriages in the office of the Protector of Immigrants and so on. When, in spite of all these disabilities, the ex-indentured Indians flourished and purchased lands and carried on trade, competing with European colonists, they were hated and various measures were devised to drive them back to India. This was the state of things when Gāndhijī arrived in Natal. In the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, which were Boer republics, it was worse still. There Indians were treated as untouchables.

VI

After a week's stay in Durban, Gāndhijī was instructed by Abdulla Sheth to go to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. He had a very adventurous journey thither in which he was once forcibly ejected from his compartment in the train for being a coloured man, though he was a barrister and possessed a first class ticket, and once savagely boxed on the ear and roughly

[1] Both of these names are derived from South India The first is the name for a labourer who works for wages in South India. The second is derived from the names of Tamil labourers which often end in Swāmī, as Rāmaswāmī, Nārāyaṇaswāmī, etc.

handled by the guard of a stage-coach, because he refused to shift from his seat and sit on the footboard at the foot of the coachman like a servant, though he had paid the full fare and was entitled to a seat inside the coach. Going through such humiliating experiences and resolving not to yield and go back, he reached his destination after two days and called upon the attorney Mr. Baker. With his help he secured lodging and boarding in a private house. Mr. Baker informed him that there was no immediate work to be given to him, as the best counsel of the place had already been engaged for the case. His business would only be to get the necessary information from the client and supply it to the attorney, whenever he asked for it.

Gāndhjī stayed in Pretoria for a year and attended faithfully to the work for which he had come to South Africa. This stay was in several ways a most valuable experience in his life. His mind expanded now in three different directions. First of all, it was during his stay in Pretoria that he acquired a true knowledge of legal practice. Secondly, he had in Pretoria opportunities of coming into touch with his brother Indians, who were suffering from various disabilities, and of acquiring a capacity for public work which was of immense use to him afterwards, not only in South Africa but also in India. Thirdly, the contacts he made here with the many Christian and Muslim friends who were enthusiasts in their own religions made him read a good deal of their religious literature, study his own religion and discuss religious questions with others. The result of all this was that the religious spirit in him became an active and living force permeating every one of his activities.

The preparation of the case was, of course, his primary object. He took the keenest interest in this work, read all the papers connected with it and mastered

all the facts. In fact, he came to have greater knowledge of the details than even the parties themselves, and he saw that his client was bound to win. But he also saw that, if the litigation was continued, the expenses would ruin both the plaintiff and the defendant. So he approached the opposite party, Tyeb Sheth, and advised him to consent to arbitration. He suggested that an arbitrator commanding the confidence of both parties might be appointed and the case argued before him and his award accepted. He strained every nerve to bring the two parties together and make them accept the compromise. They agreed. An arbitrator was appointed, the case was argued before him, and Abdulla Sheth, Gāndhijī's client, won. The other party had to pay £37,000 and costs. It was impossible for Tyeb Sheth to pay down the whole amount at once. It would mean bankruptcy. And a Meman Merchant would prefer death to bankruptcy. So Gāndhijī again stepped into the breach and, with the greatest difficulty, persuaded his client to accept payment in easy instalments. All were happy over the result and Gāndhijī's joy was boundless.

But the mind of the coolie barrister was, as we have said, active in other directions also. He began to make a deep study of the social, economic and political conditions of Indians in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and get into touch with every Indian in Pretoria. His first step was to call a meeting of all the Indians in Pretoria. The meeting was held in a Sheth's house and Gāndhijī made the first public speech of his life. His audience consisted mostly of Meman merchants from Gujarat and a few Hindus. He first stressed the importance of honesty and truthfulness in trade and pointed out the responsibility of the Indian merchants in this matter in a foreign land, where millions of their countrymen would be judged by their conduct. He

urged them to pay more attention to sanitation and follow the example of the European colonists around them. He exhorted them to forget all such distinctions among them as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Gujarātīs, Punjābīs, Madrāsīs and so on and be strong and united as one community. And he finally suggested the formation of an Association for representing their common grievances to the authorities and promised to place at their disposal as much of his time and service as was possible. This meeting was followed by other meetings and there was a free exchange of ideas. Gāndhijī gradually became acquainted with the condition and feelings of every Indian in Pretoria. This knowledge emboldened him to go and speak to the British Agent in Pretoria about the grievances of Indians and to communicate with the railway authorities about the disabilities of travelling under which Indians laboured.

But the religious ferment in the midst of which he was living gave him the most valuable experience of his life at this time. Mr. Baker, the attorney with whom he was working in the case, was himself one of the Directors of the South Africa General Mission and a lay preacher in a church which he had built at his own expense. He belonged to a group of pious Christian men and women who often met for prayer. Through him Gāndhijī came into contact with all the members of the group who took great interest in the salvation of the poor heathen. They prayed for Gāndhijī, pointed to him the beauties of Christianity, gave him edifying books to read, and drew him often into discussion on religious doctrine. While his Christian friends were thus trying to convert Gāndhijī to Christianity, his Muslim friends, especially Abdulla Sheth, his client, were not idle. They were pointing out to him the beauties of Islam and inducing him to study the Koran and accept their religion.

He therefore purchased a copy of Sale's translation of the Koran and read it along with other books on Islam.

If he could not accept either Christianity or Islam as a perfect religion or as the greatest of religions, neither could he accept Hinduism as such. The defects of Hinduism were only too visible to him. What was the *raison d'être* of its multitude of castes and sects? What was the justification for the evil of untouchability? And if the Vedas were claimed as the word of God, the same claim might be put forward for the Bible and the Koran. In all this ferment of the soul, Gāndijī turned for help to Rāychandbhāi in India, whose friendship he had cultivated on his return home from England. Rāychandbhāi was a young jeweller. He was a good connoisseur of pearls and diamonds. But he was also a poet and a man of God with a passion for self-realization. Gāndhijī found his talk on religious matters of absorbing interest. He says of him in his *Autobiography*:—

"I have since met many a religious leader or teacher. I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths and I must say that no one else has ever made on me the impression that Rāychandbhāi did."[1]

And he concludes the chapter on this young friend of his by saying:—

"Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life and captivated me—Rāychandbhāi by his living contact, Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God is within you* and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*."[2]

He advisedly says "three moderns", because the other influences—those of the *Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *The Sermon on the Mount*—belong to ancient times.

VII

The year which Gāndhijī spent at Pretoria was thus the seed-time of his career. From Pretoria he went

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 113.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

back to Durban after his case was over and made preparations to return to India. At the farewell party arranged by Abdulla Sheth Gāndijī chanced to see a small paragraph in the corner of a newspaper with the heading "Indian Franchise". It referred to a Bill then before the House of Legislature, the object of which was to deprive the Indians of Natal of their right to elect members to the Natal Legislative Assembly. Gāndhijī asked his hosts and the other guests about the franchise they had hitherto had. He learnt from them that one of their best attorneys, one Mr. Escombe, once wanted to defeat his rival candidate at the elections and so he persuaded all the Indians to register themselves as voters and vote for him. They did so and never knew the value of the franchise—which was proved by the fact that none of the guests assembled knew anything about the Bill mentioned in the newspaper. But Gāndhijī told them that, if the Bill was passed and became law, it would make the lot of Indians in Natal extremely difficult and that it would strike at the root of their self-respect. Thereupon one of the guests suggested that, if Gāndhijī cancelled his passage and stayed a month longer, they would all fight against the Bill under his leadership. The suggestion was taken up at once by the others and they all requested Abdulla Sheth to detain Gāndhijī somehow in the interests of the Indian community. But Abdulla Sheth, being a shrewd business man, asked them what fees they would pay the barrister, if he remained and worked for them. The mention of fees in this connection pained Gāndhijī, who said that it was against his principle to accept any payment for public work but that he would gladly stay a month longer, if they all promised to co-operate with him, provide him with honorary workers and meet the necessary expenses for stationery, printing, etc. A chorus of voices then exclaimed, "Allah is great and

merciful" and gave their joyful consent. Thus, as Gāndhijī says, the farewell party was turned into a working committee, and Gāndhijī began the campaign. A meeting was soon held in Abdulla Sheth's house under the presidentship of the foremost leader of the Indian community in Natal at that time—Sheth Hājī Muhammad. It was there formally resolved that opposition should be offered to the Franchise Bill and volunteers were enrolled. A wave of enthusiasm passed over the whole community and all distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, master and servant, were forgotten. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians—all joined together as the common children of Mother India under the leadership of Gāndhijī.

Meanwhile the Bill had already made progress and was about to pass its second reading. The very fact that Indians had hitherto offered no opposition to it was urged as proof that they were unfit for the franchise. Gāndhijī now despatched a telegram to the Speaker of the Assembly to postpone further discussion, pending a petition to be presented to the Assembly, and another telegram to the Premier. The Speaker replied that the discussion would be postponed for two days. Encouraged by this, Gāndhijī got five copies of the petition prepared and asked the volunteers to get as many signatures to the petition as possible. They worked night and day, as the time was short. The carriages of the rich merchants were placed at the disposal of the volunteers, and the petition was at last despatched, and copies were sent to the Press. A favourable impression was created in the Assembly, and the Press also made favourable comments. However, the Bill was passed.

Now Gāndhijī proposed that a monster petition should be submitted to Lord Ripon, who was at that time the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He worked hard, read all the available literature on the subject and

prepared the petition. He argued that it was both a matter of principle and of expediency to allow Indians to retain their franchise. And he made the volunteers collect ten thousand signatures in a fortnight from the whole province of Natal, and despatched the petition. A thousand copies of it were printed for circulation and distribution, not only in Natal but also in India. Thus, for the first time, the Indian public came to know of the condition of their countrymen in Natal. As it was now impossible for Gāndhijī to leave Natal, he was requested by the community to remain there permanently and guide them. They were prepared to allow him a decent sum from the public funds for setting up an establishment of his own. But Gāndhijī would not accept any payment for public work, and so he suggested that, if they gave him a part of their private legal work, he would stay in Durban and set up practice. They all jumped at the idea, and twenty merchants at once came forward and gave him retainers for one year for their legal work.

VIII

Thus Gāndhijī who went to South Africa on professional business for a year had to decide to settle in Natal and practise as a lawyer. He therefore applied for admission as an advocate of the Supreme Court. But the Law Society of Natal opposed the application on the ground that, when the regulations regarding the admission of advocates were framed, they could not have contemplated the possibility of a coloured man applying for admission, and engaged a distinguished lawyer to support their opposition. The Chief Justice, however, ruled out the opposition, saying that the law made no distinction between white and coloured people. Gāndhijī was accordingly sworn in.

But practice as a lawyer was only a subordinate

occupation with Gāndhijī. His main occupation was public work. He had despatched the petition to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, but to produce an impression on the Government in England sustained agitation was necessary. And for this purpose a permanent organization was needed. So the temporary committee which had sent up the petitions to the Natal Assembly and to the Secretary of State was now placed on a permanent footing. And, in a happy moment of inspiration, Gāndhijī recommended that the organization should be called " The Natal Indian Congress ", so that the Indians in the colonies might feel the relationship of their body to the Indian National Congress in the motherland. Thus the Natal Indian Congress came into being on the 22nd May, 1894, with Gāndhijī as secretary and Sheth Hājī Muhammad as president. The first task of the Congress was to strengthen itself by canvassing for membership. This was easily done, for many men came forward with enthusiasm to do this work. Members were enlisted even from remote villages and subscriptions collected. Gāndhijī kept strict accounts to the very pie, gave receipts for all payments, and slowly educated the infant organization in methods of public work. The next task was to do propaganda, not only among Indians but also among the English in South Africa and England and among all classes in India. With this purpose Gāndhijī wrote two pamphlets—one called *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* on the general condition of Natal Indians and another called *The Indian Franchise—An Appeal* on the franchise question. These contained a clear statement of facts supported by evidence and were widely circulated. Side by side with this external agitation, the Congress took up the question of internal reform. As the opposition of the white colonists to Indians was based largely on the low standards and the insanitary ways of

life of the latter, lectures were delivered and suggestions made at the Congress meetings on such subjects as personal hygiene and domestic sanitation, and well-to-do merchants were exhorted to have separate buildings for their business and their residence and to live in a style befitting their position. Moreover, under the auspices of the Congress, an Association called "The Natal Indian Educational Institution" was formed for the benefit of the children of the ex-indentured labourers born in Natal. It was a sort of debating society with a library attached. Its object was to bring together free Indians and colonial-born young Indians and make them feel that they were all kith and kin.

The indentured labourers alone were still outside the pale of the Congress. They could not come in, because they could not afford to pay the subscription, which was a minimum of five shillings a month or £ 3 *per annum*. But the Congress tried to win their attachment by serving them. One day when an indentured labourer came to Gāndhijī trembling and weeping, with a bleeding mouth and two of his front teeth knocked off, as a result of the heavy blows given by his employer, Gāndhijī sent him to a doctor, got him a certificate and took him to a magistrate and submitted his affidavit. Then he called on the employer, told him he had no intention of proceeding against him, but asked him to release the labourer from his indenture. The employer readily agreed to do so and Gāndhijī found another employer for the labourer. This case reached the ears of all indentured labourers, and they began to pour into the Congress office to ventilate their grievances and hardships, for at last they had found a friend who could sympathize with them and help them. When Gāndhijī was in the midst of these activities, the glad news came from England that the Secretary of State for the Colonies disallowed the Natal Franchise Bill on the ground that

the British Empire could not agree to the establishment of a colour bar in legislation.

The Natal Government, undeterred by this defeat, proceeded to secure their object, as we shall see, by indirect means. Meanwhile they proposed that, if a labourer, on the expiry of his period of indenture, should stay in the colony, he should either renew his indenture or pay an annual tax of £ 25. And they sent a deputation to get the consent of the Government of India to this proposal. Lord Elgin, who was then the Viceroy, disapproved of the £ 25 tax, but agreed to a poll tax of £ 3. This iniquitous impost meant that, if a labourer had a wife and two children above thirteen years of age, he had to pay a tax of 4 by 3 or £ 12 *per annum*. The Natal Congress offered resistance to the measure, but in vain.

IX

Having stayed in South Africa for three years (1893-96), during which he did immense service to his countrymen there and established for himself a fairly good practice, Gāndhijī obtained leave of absence for six months to go to India and bring his wife and children to Durban and settle down there. He sailed in a ship bound for Calcutta in the middle of 1896. On the very day he landed in Calcutta he took train for Bombay. On the way the train stopped at Allāhābād for forty-five minutes. Gāndhijī went to see the town and was not able to come back in time and so had to stop at Allāhābād for a day, which he decided to spend on behalf of the Indians in South Africa. He interviewed the editor of *The Pioneer* and spoke to him about the demands of the Indians. The editor heard him patiently and promised to notice in his paper anything that Gāndhijī might write on the subject. Gāndhijī left Allāhābād the next day and went straight to Rājkot

without halting at Bombay. He spent a month there writing a pamphlet on the situation in South Africa, purposely using more moderate language than that which he had used in the two pamphlets which he wrote in Natal. Ten thousand copies of this pamphlet were printed and sent to all the papers and the leaders of all parties in India. As the pamphlet had a green cover, it afterwards came to be known as the Green Pamphlet. Every important newspaper commented on it. *The Pioneer* was the first to do so in an editorial, and a summary of this editorial was cabled by Reuter to England, and a summary of that summary was cabled from London to Natal. It roused the wrath of the European colonists there and almost cost the life of Gāndhijī, when he returned to Natal, as we shall see.

Meanwhile plague broke out in Bombay and there was fear of an outbreak in Rājkot also. Gāndhijī offered his services to the state and he was put on a committee appointed to take the necessary measures of sanitation. The committee had to inspect the quarters of the untouchables. But no member of the committee, except one, would accompany Gāndhijī to the quarters. It was the first time he visited such a locality and, to his agreeable surprise, he found the houses clean and well-kept both inside and outside.

At this time Gāndhijī served also on the Committee appointed for the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and faithfully discharged the duties assigned to him. But the most important work he did, while he was in India, was that of educating public opinion on the position of Indians in South Africa by addressing meetings of all parties in the cities of Bombay, Poona and Madras. This was the occasion for his meeting the great leaders of public opinion in the several provinces. Madras especially was wild with enthusiasm. And the copies of the Green Pamphlet, which had run

into a second edition, sold "like hot cakes". But his experience in Calcutta was not encouraging. While the editors of the Anglo-Indian papers—the *Statesman* and the *Englishman*—realized the importance of the question, the editors of the Indian papers were apathetic. However, with the help of Bābū Surendranāth Banerjī, 'the idol of Bengal' and of Mr. Saunders, the editor of the *Englishman*, Gāndhijī was hoping to hold a public meeting, when he received a cable from Natal—"Parliament opens January, return soon". So he had to leave Calcutta abruptly and go to Bombay, from where he sailed with his wife and children in the beginning of December, 1896 in the steamship *Courland*, which had just been purchased by Abdulla Sheth. At the same time another ship *Naderi* also left Bombay for Durban. The total number of passengers in the two ships—both run by Dada Abdulla & Co.—was about eight hundred, most of whom were old residents of South Africa now returning to the Transvaal or Natal after a visit to India.

Meanwhile an agitation had been set on foot against Gāndhijī among the Europeans in Natal. They had heard exaggerated reports of Gāndhijī's speeches in India through Reuter's telegrams and thought he had exposed them to the scorn of the world. As a matter of fact, he had, as we have seen, used stronger language in the pamphlets he wrote while he was in Natal than in the Green Pamphlet he wrote in India. But they never cared to read what he wrote in Natal, while they eagerly read Reuter's telegrams. And so, when they heard he was coming back with eight hundred Indians on board two ships, they imagined he was coming to flood Natal with Indians and were roused to a fury of anger and violence. Meetings were held and resolutions passed that the passengers in these ships should not be allowed to land, but be driven back to India at any cost.

The two ships, after weathering a dangerous storm in the ocean on their way, reached Durban on the 18th December, 1896 to encounter another kind of storm in the port. The Government of Natal illegally put the ships in quarantine for the unconscionably long period of twenty-three days, and threatening notices were served on the passengers that, if they tried to land, they would all be thrown into the sea, but that, if they went back, even their passage money would be given to them. But most of the passengers belonged to the Transvaal or Natal and they flatly refused to go back. Meanwhile Gāndhijī went about cheering the passengers on board his ship and sent messages of comfort to the other ship. After twenty-three weary days of threats and inducements, the pretence of quarantine was dropped and the ships were permitted to enter the harbour and the passengers landed. Word had been sent to Gāndhijī by Mr. Escombe, who was one of the members of the cabinet and who had taken a prominent part in the anti-Indian agitation, that his life would be in danger, if he landed before it was dark. But Mr. Laughton, the legal adviser of Dada Abdulla & Co., said to him that it was not desirable that he should enter the city by stealth and proposed to accompany him. So Gāndhijī sent away his wife and children safely in a carriage to his friend Mr. Rustomjī's house. But as soon as he himself landed, some young fellows recognized him and shouted, "Gandhi, Gandhi". Soon a mob collected, forcibly separated Laughton from Gāndhijī and began to pelt the latter with stones, brickbats and rotten eggs. They snatched away his turban and kicked him. He fainted and caught hold of the railings of a house to stand and take breath. But they gave him no rest, as they continued battering him. Just then Mrs. Alexander, the wife of the Superintendent of Police, happened to be passing by, and she came to his rescue and spread her parasol over

him and stood between him and the crowd. The crowd found it difficult to injure him, without at the same time injuring the lady. So their fury was checked a little. Meanwhile an Indian youth who had witnessed the scene ran and informed the police. And the Superintendent sent a posse of constables to escort him safely to his destination. The police station was on the way, and the Superintendent advised Gāndhijī to take refuge there. But Gāndhijī declined the offer and went to Rustomjī's house escorted by the police. While he was having his bruises and wounds attended to in the house by a doctor, a mob of whites gathered round the house, shouted and yelled that, if Gāndhi was not handed over to them to be burnt, they would burn down the house. When the Superintendent of Police came to know this, he joined the crowd with a number of detectives, stood on a bench at the gate and began to talk to the crowd and keep them in good humour, while he sent word inside that, if Gāndhijī wanted to save his friend's house and all those in it, he should make good his escape through the crowd disguising himself as an Indian constable and reach the corner of the street, where a carriage was waiting to take him to the police station. It was a desperate game, but it had to be played, and it was played When the Superintendent knew that Gāndhijī had reached the police station, he left off singing and asked the crowd seriously what they wanted. They yelled again that they wanted Gāndhi, so that they might take him and burn him because he had vilified them in India and wanted to flood Natal with Indians. Then he gently told them that Gāndhi was not in the house, as he had just passed through them and reached a place of safety. They laughed at this and said they would not believe it. Then the Superintendent made a sporting offer that they might appoint a small committee among themselves to go and search the house and

that, if the committee found no Gāndhi inside, they should all disperse peacefully without injuring anybody. They agreed. A committee was appointed. The house was searched through and through. The result of the search was reported to the crowd. They were greatly disappointed. But they kept their word and dispersed peacefully. This was on the 13th January 1897.

When Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, heard of this incident, he cabled to the Natal Government to prosecute the assailants of Gāndhi. So Mr. Escombe, who had warned Gāndhijī not to get down from his ship before dark, now came and asked him whether he could recognize any of his assailants and said that, if he could, they would be arrested and prosecuted. But Gāndhijī declined to prosecute anybody, though he could recognize some men in the mob, as the mistake was not the men's, but that of the leaders like Mr. Escombe himself, who had misled them by their agitation and speeches. Thereupon Mr. Escombe asked him to give it in writing that he did not want to prosecute anybody so that the Government might cable his statement to Mr. Chamberlain. Gāndhijī at once took a sheet of paper and wrote out his statement and gave it to him.

Meanwhile the papers published the interview which Gāndhijī had given to the representative of the *Natal Advertiser* on the morning on which the ships were permitted to enter the harbour. In this interview he successfully met all the charges levelled against him, gave the interviewer copies of the speeches he made in India and pointed out that he said nothing there which he had not said in stronger language in Natal itself. He further showed him that he had absolutely no hand in bringing those eight hundred passengers to Natal. Most of them belonged to the Transvaal and Natal and they were coming back home after a stay in India. All these

facts, as well as the fact that Gāndhijī declined to prosecute anybody, eased the situation. The press declared that Gāndhijī was innocent,[1] and the better class of Europeans were ashamed.

X

Though these incidents enhanced the prestige of the Indian community, they by no means lessened the prejudice against it. Two bills were now passed by the Natal Legislature—one imposing severe restrictions on Indian Trade and another on Indian immigration. By the former, no one could trade without a license, and in practice licenses were freely granted to Europeans, but only with the greatest difficulty to Indians. By the latter, only such immigrants as were able to pass an education test in an European language could enter the colony. Gāndhijī organized opposition against these bills and appealed again to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. But it was all in vain. The bills became law.

Public work thus absorbed most of Gāndhijī's time, though he had also his professional work to attend to. Fortunately, most of his professional work was chamber work consisting of conveyancing and arbitration. So he had time to strengthen the Natal Indian Congress by appealing for membership and funds. He was able to secure for it a permanent fund of Rs. 5000, with which he purchased a piece of property which brought the

[1] The *Natal Mercury* changed its angry tone and said, "Mr Gandhi on his part, and on behalf of his countrymen, has done nothing that he is not entitled to do, and from his point of view, the principle he is working for is an honourable and legitimate one. He is within his rights and so long as he acts honestly and in a straightforward manner, he cannot be blamed or interfered with. So far as we know, he has always done so, and his latest pamphlet, we cannot honestly say, is an unfair statement of the case from his point of view. Reuter's cable is a gross exaggeration of Mr. Gandhi's statement" Quoted in Doke's *M. K. Gandhi*.

institution sufficient rent to meet its current expenditure. He tried to strengthen the bonds between the Indians in Natal and their motherland. He felt that it was their duty to help the motherland in times of distress and was able to induce them to send handsome contributions to India for famine relief in 1897 and 1899. He also established contacts with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress in England. He wrote weekly letters on the situation in South Africa to Dādhābhāi Naorojī, the grand old man of India residing in England, and took his advice on the contacts to be made with those interested in Indian affairs, men like Sir William Wedderburne, Sir W. W. Hunter and Sir M. Bhownagree, who were all very helpful. He also sent his colleague, Mansukhlāl Nāzar, in deputation to England on behalf of the Indian community to explain the situation in detail. The result of all this activity on Gāndhijī's part was that the question of overseas Indians became one of first-rate importance in the eyes of the British Government.

While carrying on this public work, Gāndhijī was slowly revolutionizing his private life. A passion for simplicity of life and service to others took hold of him. He cut down the expenditure of his household, became his own barber and washerman, made himself an expert in laundry work, and taught his children at home without sending them to any school. He volunteered to become a compounder and nurse in a charitable hospital and gave two hours of his time in the morning to this work. It was again at this time that he began seriously to think of brahmacarya, that is, of living a life of sexual abstinence, though married. He tells us that it was his friend Rāyachandbhāi that set his thoughts in this direction. The poet had suggested that deep attachment between husband and wife through mutual love and service, without any lustful contacts,

was an ideal relationship to be aimed at. Gāndhijī now began to make persistent efforts to realize this ideal—efforts which culminated later in the vow of brahmacarya which he took in 1906. It was as aids to a life of brahmacarya that he began to make those experiments in dietetics and fasting, which form so large a part of his private life and personal religion.

XI

Thus passed the years 1897, 1898 and a major part of 1899. In October, 1899, war broke out between the British Empire and the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and was waged with varying fortunes for about three years, till the Boers surrendered at last on the 31st May 1902, according to the terms of the Conference at Vereeniging. This war cost the British nation more than 20,000 men. It is curious that one of the causes of the war alleged by the British was the treatment accorded to Indians by the Boers, and yet Indians suffered more when the Boer Republics became British crown colonies, as a result of this war. The Indians of South Africa were placed in a dilemma when the war broke out. Were they to aid the British or not? But Gāndhijī had no doubts on the point. In those days he believed that the British empire was on the whole an instrument for good and that Indians, who had all along been pleading in their petitions for their rights in South Africa as the subjects of that empire, should throw in their lot with the British. Here was a golden opportunity to show that they were as eager to shoulder the responsibilities of British citizenship as to claim its rights. Indians were no doubt treated as the helots of the empire, but so far they had been trying to better their position while remaining in the empire. At any rate, that was the policy of the political leaders in India. The Natal Indian Congress should follow the

same policy as the Indian National Congress. So, under the guidance and leadership of Gāndhijī, a large number of Indians got themselves trained in ambulance work and offered their services. But the Government rejected their offer. Meanwhile the Boers advanced in great numbers and the British suffered reverses. There were heaps of wounded to be taken care of, and Indians were continually renewing their offer of help. At last the Government gave sanction for the formation of an Ambulance corps. Accordingly, a large and splendid corps of nearly eleven thousand men—both indentured and free Indians—was formed and sent from Durban to the front. It acquitted itself well carrying the wounded on stretchers and marching sometimes twenty to twenty-five miles a day. At first its work was outside the firing line, but later it was also allowed to work within the range of fire. It had the honour of carrying the body of Lieutenant Roberts, the son of Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-chief, from the field. The work of the Indians was much applauded, and their prestige increased as a result of this sacrifice. General Buller mentioned the corps in his despatches and the leaders were awarded the War Medal. After six weeks' service, the Indian corps as well as the European corps was disbanded, though the war continued long afterwards. The members of the corps were always prepared to rejoin, and the Government promised to utilize their services, if operations on a large scale were necessary. But by 1900 the most important phase of the war was over. Only guerilla warfare was continued afterwards.

After Gāndhijī was relieved from his war duty, he wanted to return to India. He thought his work in South Africa was over and felt that he should go back and do some public work in India, as he saw there were capable men in South Africa who could carry on his

work. His countrymen, however, before letting him go, made him promise that he would come back, if any unexpected situation arose. And they loaded him with costly presents at the farewell meetings they arranged for him. But Gāndhijī's principle was not to accept any remuneration for public service. So he returned all the gifts and the costly jewels presented to Mrs. Gāndhi, deposited them with a bank and constituted them into a trust to be used for the service of the community.

XII

Gāndhijī reached home towards the end of 1901 in time to attend the Congress session of that year at Calcutta under the presidentship of Dinshaw Wacha. It was his first experience of the Congress. The Congress in those days was a three days' show, during which mostly overworked lawyers, who had very little time to spare for public work, assembled in some city, passed a number of resolutions, all unanimously, listened to wordy orators and returned home to attend to their own business. Gāndhijī saw the perfunctory nature of the whole show, the inexperience of the volunteers and the shocking insanitation of the Congress camp. He offered his services as a volunteer[1] and assisted the Secretary of the Congress in disposing of his correspondence.

After the Congress was over, he stayed in Calcutta for a month with Gokhale. He had made the acquaintance of Gokhale during his visit to India in 1896, and a feeling of sacred affection grew up between the two. Gāndhijī always looked up to Gokhale as to his elder brother, and Gokhale saw the immense possibilities latent in Gāndhijī and loved and cherished him as his own younger brother. These happy relations continued till the death of the elder statesman. During the month

[1] Incidentally he made the other volunteers stare, when he gave them an object-lesson by taking a broom and cleaning a latrine.

that he stayed in Calcutta, Gāndhijī met many notable men and women of the day and paid a flying visit to Burma. He then took leave of Gokhale and went back to Rājkot, travelling third class and stopping on the way at Benares, where he bathed in the Ganges in the proper orthodox manner and visited the temple of Viśvanāth. After staying in Rājkot for a short time, he was induced by his friends to set up practice in Bombay. He took up a house in Bombay, and was settling down to his profession, when he received an unexpected cable from South Africa—"Chamberlain expected here. Please return immediately." He remembered his promise and started at once, leaving his wife and children in Bombay.

When he reached Durban, he was amazed to hear of the state of things in the Transvaal after the war. The hopes which the Indians in South Africa had entertained that, when the Transvaal came under the British flag, all their disabilities would be removed were dashed to the ground. Nobody could now enter the Transvaal without a permit. But, while an European got a permit for the mere asking, an Indian found it extremely difficult to get one. And a new engine of oppression called the Asiatic Department was created to deal with Indians. This Department was manned by English adventurers who had come with the armies from India and Ceylon. They were unsympathetic and insolent, and some of them were also corrupt. To justify their own existence they tightened all the old restrictions and anti-Asiatic laws and devised new ones. Though Gāndhijī travelled all the way from India to represent the grievances of the Transvaal Indians to Mr. Chamberlain, the Asiatic Department excluded him from the deputation that had to wait on the minister on the ground that he was an outsider and that he had already met Mr. Chamberlain in Natal. He saw that Chamberlain could do nothing, as he was more anxious to humour the Europeans than to

see that justice was done to Indians. The prospect was dark and so Gāndhijī decided to stay in South Africa till the clouds dispersed. As before, he wanted to maintain himself by legal practice and do what service he could to his countrymen in the Transvaal. He soon enrolled himself as an attorney of the Supreme Court and opened an office in Johannesburg, as this town contained the largest number of Indians, and began to direct the activities of the Transvaal British Indian Association. He first collected evidence against the corrupt officials of the Asiatic Department and saw the Superintendent of Police. The offenders were prosecuted and, though the evidence against them was clear and one of them had absconded and was brought back, the white jury pronounced them " not guilty." The Department, however, dismissed them. Gāndhijī now settled down to work in Johannesburg in 1903, as he had settled down to work in Durban in 1893.

XIII

The next four years, 1903-1906, form the most important period in the life of Gāndhijī. They were the years during which he took the most far-reaching decisions of his life. The moral and religious forces that had been shaping his inner life reached their culminating point in this period. The philosophy of life which he applied afterwards to various political, economic, educational and social questions in South Africa and India took its final form and became crystal clear to his own mind during these years. The great Satyāgraha movement, of which he is the author, may be said to have had its birth in the speech which he gave on the 11th September 1906 in Johannesburg to his countrymen. But both in his private life and in his public life he had been taking steps for some time which led him finally to Satyāgraha.

The first step was his intense study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which from 1903 became his infallible guide in conduct. Just as, ten years before, his religious sense was kept alive by his contact with his Christian friends in Pretoria, now it was exercised by his contact with his Theosophist friends. It is in their company that he read Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in the original. These two books gripped his mind, and he wanted to put into practice the *Gītā* teaching—that one should be *in* the world, but not *of* it. He wanted to practise *aparigraha* (not having any possessions) and *samabhāva* (treating all as equals). So he deliberately allowed his Life Insurance policy to lapse and wrote to his brother giving him all his savings up to that moment and telling him that all his future savings, if any, would be utilized for the benefit of the community.

The second step was the launching of a weekly journal called *Indian opinion* in 1904, financed by him and practically edited by him. Its object was to educate the Indian public in all matters affecting the welfare of the community and to ventilate their grievances. Later it became the organ of the Satyāgraha movement. Therefore, along with *Young India, Navajīvan* and *Harijan* of later years, *Indian Opinion* has come to be intimately associated with Gāndhijī's life and teachings.

The third step was the work that Gāndhijī did in connection with the Black Plague which broke out among the Negroes working in one of the mines near Johannesburg and spread to the "location" where the Indian poor lived, totally neglected by the Municipality. This plague was a pneumonic plague more terrible and fatal than the bubonic variety. Gāndhijī and his office staff risked their lives in attending upon and nursing the poor plague-stricken Indians till the Municipality came tardily to their relief.

The fourth step was the founding of the Phoenix

Settlement in the same year on a communistic basis. This was the result of Gāndhijī's reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last* on one of his railway journeys from Johannesburg to Durban. He at once tried to put its economic teaching into practice, and within a week purchased a farm of one hundred acres near the Phoneix station in the vicinity of Durban and removed there the press which published *Indian Opinion* and all the workers connected with it. It was agreed that all the people in the Settlement should maintain themselves by manual labour on the farm and draw the same living wage of £ 3 *per mensem*. A number of friends and relatives of Gāndhijī also joined the establishment and worked enthusiastically in putting up the necessary huts and sheds and running the press. Gāndhijī's original idea was that he should wind up his practice and live at the Settlement and earn his livelihood by manual labour. But public work in the Transvaal prevented him from doing so.

The fifth step was his organizing an Indian Ambulance Corps in connection with the measures taken by the Natal Government to put down the Zulu 'rebellion' of 1906. As in the Boer War, Gāndhijī did not go into the merits of the case in the Zulu 'rebellion'. He looked at both of them purely from the point of view of a citizen of the British empire and tried to do his bit to help the Government when it was confronted with danger. His offer was accepted by the Government. And so he broke up his establishment, sent away his family to the Phoenix Settlement, and went to the scene of the rebellion with his corps of twenty-four Indians. He was given the temporary rank of Sergeant Major and was on active service for six weeks. The work of the corps was to take care of the Zulu wounded whom the white people refused to nurse.[1] They were attached

[1] "Mr. Gandhi speaks with great reserve of this experience. What

to a column of mounted infantry whom they had to follow on foot with stretchers on their shoulders, and twice or thrice they had to march forty miles a day. And wherever they went they did good work carrying the uncared-for Negro wounded to the camp.[1]

It was while he was thus marching as a stretcher-bearer in the solemn solitudes of hills and dales, where the crude hamlets of the Zulus lay scattered, that Gāndhijī fell into deep thought and made up his mind to take a vow of brahmacarya or sexual abstinence for life. This may be considered his sixth step. The actual vow came a few days later after the corps was disbanded.

In taking all these steps, Gāndhijī was unconsciously preparing himself for Satyāgraha, the mission of his life. He practically became a saṁnyāsin, having taken the vows of poverty and chastity. He dedicated himself to the service of others and recognized the dignity of manual labour. No work was to be too low for him, nor no man. He loved scavenging and he rejoiced when the indentured labourers called him bhāi or brother. And the most charming feature of his life at this time was the absence of all racial and religious distinctions in the people who gathered round him in Johannesburg and the Phoenix Settlement and in the work he gave them Europeans, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Indian

he saw he will never divulge I imagine it was not always creditable to British humanity. As a man of peace, hating the very thought of war, it was almost intolerable for him to be so closely in touch with this expedition. At times he doubted whether his position was right. No one besides his men, however, was prepared to do the work, and sheer pity for the sufferers forbade them to relinquish it. Not infrequently the condition of lashed men, who were placed in their charge, was appalling, the wounds filthy, their lives hanging in the balance." Doke.

[1] "There is no perception of the immense distance which separates the Indian from the Kaffir in the scale of civilization. To the average Colonial they are all 'niggers' alike. But to those who think, this Ambulance Corps, tenderly ministering to the wounded or cruelly-lashed Zulus—with the son of an Indian Prime Minister at their head—is worthy of an artist's brush. Some day, perhaps, it will have its meed " Doke.

Christians, rich and poor, men and women, vied with one another in their love and loyalty to him, and he gives charming sketches of some of them in his *Satyāgraha in South Africa*. And, above all, he had absolute trust in God, as seen in the amazing experiments in earth and water treatment he made at this time and the extent of self-suffering he would undergo for the vindication of a principle.

XIV

Meanwhile the Asiatic Department of the Transvaal Government was not idle. Mr. Lionel Curtis, who was on the staff of it, suggested that, as a first step in stopping fresh Indian immigration, there should be effective registration of all the old Indian residents in South Africa with the photographs and the finger-prints of the men. The Indians of the Transvaal objected, and, as a result of negotiations, they agreed to renew the permits which had been given to them after the Transvaal came under British rule and to have the new form of permits only for fresh immigrants. By 1906 the re-registration was completed and the Indians hoped that they would be left in peace. But that was not to be. Mr. Curtis was not satisfied that re-registration should be carried out by mere mutual understanding. He thought the measure should have the force of law behind it and the principle of discrimination based on colour be recognized for all time. The re-registration by mutual consent had only enhanced the prestige of the Indian community. He wanted to lower it and frighten the community into submission and thus give an object lesson to the other Dominions. Therefore he drafted an Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, which was duly published in the Transvaal Government Gazette before its introduction in the Legislative Council. At this time Gāndhijī was still serving with his corps in the Zululand. So letters

and telegrams were sent to him by Indians to return at once to Johannesburg. After the corps was disbanded, he came, and when he read the various sections of the draft Ordinance reeking with hatred to Indians, he shuddered. He saw that, if the Ordinance was passed and meekly accepted, it would spell "absolute ruin for the Indians in South Africa." It was better to die than to submit to such a law. Even the laws to which the indentured labourers were subject were a mere flea-bite compared to the drastic rules and penalties proposed for all free Indians, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Gāndhijī thought the Ordinance could only be compared to some of the drastic laws directed against criminal tribes in India and would not suffer in comparison. Under its provisions even women and children had to be registered.

The next day a small meeting of the leading Indians was held. Their feelings could be gauged from the fact that, when the various sections were explained by Gāndhijī, one of them burst out, "If anyone came forward to demand a certificate from my wife, I would shoot him on the spot and take the consequences." But Gāndhijī's aim in all such circumstances, as he put it at the time of the Jalianwāllah Bāgh massacre in India, is to convert the incandescent vapour of the anger of the people into an incombustible rock. With this aim he advised his countrymen to hold a public meeting. The meeting was held on the 11th September, 1906 and attended by delegates from various places in the Transvaal. The building was packed from floor to ceiling. There were assembled three thousand men. Abdul Gani, the Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association and one of the oldest and richest Indian residents of the Transvaal, presided. The fourth resolution on the agenda, by which the Indians solemnly determined not to submit to the Ordinance, if it became law, and to suffer

all penalties attaching to such non-submission, was explained by Gāndhijī and formally proposed, seconded and supported by several speakers. One of the speakers, Sheth Hājī Habīb, was deeply moved and said that the resolution should be passed with God as witness. This was tantamount to an oath. Gāndhijī was startled. He wondered whether the audience fully realized the implications of the Sheth's suggestion. So, with the permission of the president, he again stood up and made a speech which will go down into history. He explained the consequences of taking a solemn oath, he announced that he himself was taking the oath and would not violate it, even if all others did and left him and he had to face the wrath of the Government alone, and asked every man in the hall to come to a decision for himself individually. Others also spoke to the same effect including the President. "And at last all present, standing with upraised hands, took an oath with God as witness not to submit to the Ordinance if it became law." Thus was Satyāgraha born on the 11th September, 1906.

Steps were soon taken to send a deputation to the Government and to acquaint them with the feelings of the Indian community on the proposed legislation and the pledges they had taken. The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Duncan, informed the deputation that the Government was going to be adamant on the main provisions of the Ordinance and that only some details might be modified in consideration of the feelings of Indians—the registration of women, for instance. The deputation withdrew, informing him that acquiescence in such circumstances was out of the question.

The Ordinance was duly passed by the Legislative Council practically as it was drafted; only the clause about the registration of women was deleted. As the Transvaal was now a crown colony, the measure passed by its legislature had to receive the royal assent before

it became law. The royal assent was not a mere formality as in England and in the Dominions enjoying responsible Government. The King, as advised by his cabinet of ministers, might withhold assent to a measure which was found to be in conflict with the spirit of the British Constitution. And the present measure, which was based on a colour bar, was obviously one such. Therefore it was proposed to send a deputation to England to wait upon the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Secretary of State for India and to acquaint them with the feelings of Indians and to tell them how they were prepared to resist the measure if it became law. Gāndhijī and M. H. O. Alī, one of the members of the Transvaal British Indian Association, were accordingly elected as representatives and sent to England.

The deputation reached England, sought the help of Dādābhāi Naorojī, Sir M. Bhownuggree and the British Committee of the Indian National Congress and waited on Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Mr. Morley, the Secretary of State for India. Lord Elgin expressed his sympathy and promised to do all he could, though he referred to the difficulties in the way. After a stay of about six weeks, during which they were able to see a number of influential people interested in the question and organize a Committee called "The South African British Indian Committee" to watch over their interests, the deputation left England for South Africa. On their way home, they rejoiced to receive a cable from England that Lord Elgin disallowed the Black Act, as Indians called it. But their joy was short-lived. For, on reaching Johannesburg, they came to know that Lord Elgin did not really play them fair, as he resorted to a subterfuge. No doubt he disallowed the measure, as it was a departure from the fundamental principles of the British empire. But he had previously assured the Agent for the Transvaal that, as responsible

government would be conferred in a few months on the crown colony, if an identical measure was again passed after that event and sent up for sanction, the royal assent would automatically be given to it. The Agent, of course, agreed to this excellent arrangement, which, in the eyes of the Indian deputation, was clearly a breach of faith.

XV

Responsible government was duly established in the Transvaal at the beginning of 1907. The new Government almost immediately passed the Asiatic Registration Act, which was an exact replica of the original Ordinance. The measure was rushed through all its stages at a single sitting on the 21st March, 1907. The royal assent was duly received, and the Black Act became law, and Indians were required to register themselves under it before the 31st July. The community now became greatly agitated. A new association called the "Passive Resistance Association" was formed to carry on the fight. The word Satyāgraha had not yet been coined to designate the struggle. But, as the movement progressed, Gāndhijī saw that the English term "Passive resistance" was misleading and did not correctly indicate the nature of the Indian movement. Passive resistance was supposed to be the weapon of the weak, who would use methods of violence, if and when they could use them. The term could not therefore be applied to the Indian movement, which had renounced all violence in thought as well as deed and which aimed at conquering untruth by truth, hatred by love, and violence by non-violence. Gāndhijī therefore offered a prize in his journal *Indian Opinion* for the man who would invent the most suitable Indian expression in place of "Passive Resistance." Maganlāl Gāndhi was one of the competitors. He suggested the word "Sadāgraha", meaning

firmness in a good cause. Gāndhijī improved upon it and changed it into Satyāgraha or firmness in the cause of Truth.

Meanwhile the fateful month of July was drawing to a close. Both sides were preparing for the fight. The Government opened permit offices and Indians began to picket them. The police were called in on one side, the number of volunteers began to swell on the other. Some European colonists sympathized with the movement, but a few Indians backed out of it and secretly took their permits. A mass meeting of all Indians was called on the last day of the month at Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. It was an open air meeting and was held on the grounds of the Pretoria mosque. About two thousand men attended and the Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association presided. General Botha and General Smuts sent one of their officers to the meeting to admonish the leaders not to break their heads against a stone wall, but be reasonable and suggest any minor changes they thought desirable in the regulations to be framed under the Act. The Officer delivered his message and retired. The meeting continued. And one of the speakers, Muhammad Kachhālia, expressed the feelings of the audience when he thundered with his right hand on his throat, "I swear in the name of God that I will be hanged, but I will not submit to this law and I wish every one present here will do likewise." This hero proved as good as his word. He bore the brunt of the battle, saw the end of it and died in 1918, four years after the struggle was over.

Thus July was gone and August came. The Asiatic Department, with all their attempts, were able to get only five hundred Indians registered out of a total of 13,000 in the Transvaal. So the Government decided to make arrests. At first they warned some of the

leading men and fixed a time limit before which they must either register themselves under the Act or leave the country. Gāndhijī, of course, was one of them. He did neither, and so he was arrested. In the very court in which he had so often appeared as counsel he had to enter the prisoner's box and was sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment and taken to Johannesburg jail. This was his first experience of jail life. He was asked to put off his clothes and given jail dress which was very dirty. With pain and loathing he put it on and was taken to his cell in the Negro ward. Within one week, more than a hundred Satyāgrahī prisoners joined him. Every day the numbers increased, and the new-comers brought information about the progress of the movement outside. After a fortnight came the news that some negotiations for a compromise were going on, and two or three days after, the editor of the *Transvaal Leader,* a daily paper, came to see Gāndhijī with some terms of settlement approved of by General Smuts. The terms were that Indians should register voluntarily and not by compulsion and that, if a majority of them should do so, the Black Act would be repealed. Gāndhijī and his fellow-prisoners, after making sure that the Black Act would be repealed under the conditions specified, agreed to the terms. Two days afterwards, the Superintendent of the Police came and took Gāndhijī to Pretoria to meet General Smuts. The General told Gāndhijī in this interview that he accepted the proposed terms and gave him an assurance that the Asiatic Act would be repealed as soon as most of the Indians had undergone voluntary registration. And he set the prisoner free on the spot.

Gāndhijī at once took train and reached Johannesburg, and that very night a meeting was held at which he explained the terms of settlement. Though a few opposed it, a large majority approved of it as the best

under the circumstances. Those who opposed it were a party of Pathāns who believed the rumour circulated by some interested persons that Gāndhijī had taken £ 15,000 from General Smuts and betrayed the community by agreeing to re-registration with finger-prints. One of them was so angry that he threatened to kill the man who took the lead in re-registration. But Gāndhijī assured him that, according to the terms of the settlement, the giving of finger-prints was purely voluntary. One need not give them if one felt it to be against one's conscience or honour. He himself, as the chief party responsible for the settlement, would be the first to take a certificate with all the ten finger-prints.

Within two or three days after this, the form of the new certificates was settled by the Registrar in consultation with Gāndhijī and other leaders. And on the morning of 10th February 1908 Gāndhijī set out to the Registration Office to be the first to register himself. On the way he was accosted by Mīr Alām, the Pathān who had criticized him at the meeting, and was asked where he was going. Before Gāndhijī could finish his reply, the Pathān struck him on his head with a heavy cudgel. Gāndhijī at once fainted and fell down senseless and the Pathān and his companions gave the prostrate figure some blows and kicks, and, when Gāndhijī's friends tried to ward them off, they were also attacked. Attracted by the noise, some European passers-by came to their rescue. Thereupon the Pathāns fled, but they were pursued and caught by the Europeans and handed over to the police.

After Gāndhijī regained consciousness, he accepted the offer of his friend Mr. Doke, a British clergyman, and was taken to his house to be attended to by a doctor. Meanwhile the Registrar also arrived on the scene and Gāndhijī requested him to bring the papers of registration to him so that he might keep his promise that he

would be the first to register himself. After the officer went away to bring the papers, Gāndhijī sent a wire to the Attorney-General that he did not hold Mīr Alām and others guilty of the assault and that, in any case, he did not wish to prosecute them and that they should be discharged for his sake. They were discharged, but were re-arrested, when the Europeans who had witnessed the scene protested and said that an assault committed on a public road could not be ignored. They were tried, and though Gāndhijī was not summoned as a witness, they were sentenced to three months' hard labour on the evidence of the European witnesses.

Gāndhijī remained with the Dokes for about ten days and was most affectionately looked after. For some time he was not allowed to speak, as the wound on his cheek and upper lip had to be stitched up and he had to be silent till the stitches were removed. But, as his hands were free, he asked for writing materials and wrote a note to the Chairman of the Indian Association and asked him to publish it. In this he urged that all Indians should get themselves registered as soon as possible and that the accident that he was assaulted by a Muslim should not in any way affect the bond of friendship between Hindus and Muslims.

When Gāndhijī was assaulted and wounded in Johannesburg, his wife and children were at the Phoenix Settlement. They had not the money to undertake a journey from there to Johannesburg. Therefore, as soon as he recovered, he went to see them. He stopped at Durban on the way and cleared up the misunderstanding about the agreement he had come to with General Smuts.

He also wrote a long imaginary conversation in *Indian Opinion* disposing in detail of all the objections raised by his opponents to the settlement he had effected. This cleared the air and almost all Indians

registered themselves voluntarily and fulfilled their part of the settlement.

XVI

Now it remained for the Government to fulfil their part by repealing the Black Act. The whole community was expecting it. But General Smuts, far from repealing the Act, took a fresh step forward. He retained the Act on the statute book and introduced into the legislature a Bill validating the voluntary registrations effected subsequent to the date fixed by the Act and making further provision for the registration of Asiatics under the same Act. Gāndhijī, who had risked his life in making his countrymen register themselves voluntarily, was simply astounded at this breach of faith. How could he face his community after this? What reply could he give to their taunts? But face it he did. And, when they taunted him, he smiled. He then called a meeting of the Committee, explained the situation and counselled patience. He addressed a letter to General Smuts saying that his new Bill was a breach of the compromise they had arrived at. But there was no reply. Gāndhijī then saw Mr. Cartwright, the editor of the *Transvaal Leader,* who had acted as mediator, and complained to him. The honest editor was shocked at the turn of events and cried, "Really I cannot understand this man at all. I perfectly remember that he promised to repeal the Asiatic Act." Gāndhijī also wrote articles in *Indian Opinion* under the heading "Foul Play". But General Smuts remained unmoved.

The community was now face to face with the question, what next? They eagerly scanned *Indian Opinion* week after week to see what their own General would advise them to do. The advice came at last. If negotiations failed, they should hold themselves in readiness to make a public bonfire of their registration certi-

ficates. Meanwhile the new Bill introduced by General Smuts was taken up by the legislature. A petition was now sent up on behalf of the Indians. The last sentence of the petition ran as follows:—

"We regret to state that if the Asiatic Act is not repealed in terms of the settlement, and if the Government's decision to that effect is not communicated to the Indians before a specific date, the certificates collected by the Indians would be burnt and they would humbly but firmly take the consequences."

General Smuts called this letter an ultimatum sent to the Government by people who had no idea of its power. Many members of the Assembly reddened with rage, when they listened to the contents of this petition and enthusiastically passed the Bill. The 'ultimatum' was to expire on the same day as the Bill was to be passed. A public meeting was announced to be held two hours after the time limit, for the purpose of the ceremony of making a bonfire of the certificates. It was 16th August 1908. On the mosque ground of Johannesburg every inch of available place was filled by Indians of all classes. An iron cauldron of the largest size available in the market was brought and set up on a platform in the grounds for the burning of the certificates. As the meeting was about to commence, a volunteer who had been posted at the Telegraph Office arrived on a cycle with a telegram from the Government announcing their inability to change their minds. The telegram was read to the audience, who received it with cheers, and then the meeting began. Gāndhijī gave an account of the various stages of the negotiations that preceded their resolution to make a bonfire of their certificates and said, "If there is any Indian who has handed his certificate to be burnt, but wants it to be returned to him, let him step forward and have it". . . . . No one need be ashamed of getting his certificate back just now, as in doing so

he will be exhibiting a certain kind of courage. But it would not only be shameful but also detrimental to the best interests of the community to get a copy of the certificate afterwards."

During this speech the people cried, "We do not want the certificates back. Burn them." Mīr Alām, the Pathān who had assaulted Gāndhijī, was also at the meeting. He acknowledged openly the wrong he had done and handed his original certificate to be burnt. He had never taken a voluntary certificate. Gāndhijī took hold of his hand, pressed it and assured him that he never harboured any resentment against him.

The Committee had collected two thousand certificates, which were now thrown into the cauldron, soaked in paraffin and set on fire. The whole assembly rose to their feet and continued cheering as the flames went up. Some of them who had withheld their certificates till the last moment now rushed up and threw them into the burning cauldron.

The struggle began again. The Satyāgraha committee decided to offer resistance to both the Black Act and the Transvaal Immigration Act, which was passed in the same year (1907), as both had the same end in view. A party of men started from Natal, crossed the frontier and went into the Transvaal to get arrested. They were arrested and ordered by the magistrate to leave the Transvaal within seven days. They disobeyed the order, were re-arrested and deported without trial. They entered the Transvaal three days after and were sentenced to a fine of £ 50 or three months' hard labour. They, of course, elected to go to jail. The movement was now in full swing. There were arrests everywhere under both the Acts, and jails began to be filled. The jail authorities did their best to harass the prisoners. They gave them scavenger's work and asked them to break stones or dig tanks. Some of them fainted under

the hardships, but none ever gave in. Gāndhijī was also arrested and sentenced on the 25th February 1909 to three months' hard labour. He was imprisoned along with seventy others, including his son, in Volksrust jail. The prisoners complained about food and so they were asked to cook their own food. Gāndhijī became the cook, for he alone could satisfy the claims of all his fellow-prisoners for their respective shares in the rations. Seeing that his influence on the rest was great, the Government decided to separate him from them and transferred him to Pretoria on the 2nd March 1909 and confined him in a solitary cell reserved for dangerous criminals. He has given us a vivid account of his experiences on this occasion, how he had to accompany his warden to the railway station in pelting rain with his luggage on his head, how he was not allowed even to walk to and fro in his cell of ten feet by seven, how a warden would be watching him even when he was answering calls of nature, how his food was bad and how, when he had to be taken to the court as a witness, he was handcuffed and taken on foot. However, he served his term of three months and came out in May.

When the jails became overcrowded with the Satyāgrahī prisoners, the Government tried the method of deporting them. A large batch of prisoners was sent to India. These men suffered great hardships, as they were sent as deck passengers and had nothing to eat except what the Government chose to provide them with. Many of them had never seen India before. They were born in South Africa and had their families and properties there. But this method of deportation was given up when there was an outcry against its cruelty both in South Africa and in India. Then the policy of separating the prisoners and giving them the harshest possible treatment, as in the case of Gāndhijī, was tried. For instance, in winter when the cold is bitter in the Trans-

vaal, some of the prisoners were kept in a road-side camp and taken out early in the morning to work on the road. Two brave lads, Nāgappan and Nārāyaṇaswāmī, fell victims to these hardships and lost their lives. Still the community did not falter. The firmer it stood the more cruel grew the Government. The treatment in one of the prisons was so harsh and insulting that the prisoners had to go on a hunger-strike for seven days before they were transferred to a better place of confinement. In course of time both parties became rather wearied.

Meanwhile there was a movement in South Africa for the union of all the four colonies into one Dominion with Dominion Status, and a deputation of the British and the Boers was sent to England to lay their case before the British Cabinet. Now the Indians, who were being suppressed in all these colonies, also resolved to send a deputation to represent their grievances. They chose as their representatives Gāndhijī, who had come out of prison, and Sheth Hājī Habīb, a long-established trader in the Transvaal and a man of wide experience. The representatives left South Africa for England on the 23rd June 1909.

This second deputation, like the first, interviewed a large number of people who were interested in the Indian question and held discussions with them. Lord Ampthill, a former Governor of Madras, was particularly helpful. He frequently met the Boer leaders—General Botha and General Smuts—on behalf of Indians and brought a message from them that it was impossible for them to repeal the Black Act or the Immigration Act, as the European population of the colonies insisted on the maintenance of the colour bar, but that they were willing to meet some minor demands. Sheth Hājī Habīb said he was willing to close with the offer for the time being, but Gāndhijī on behalf of the Satyāgrahīs, who

had taken a vow to resist these Acts, declared it was impossible for him to accept those terms. Lord Amptˈhill thereupon said that he had nothing but congratulations to offer to those who were so willing to suffer for a principle and carry on such a righteous struggle with such clean weapons. The representatives then took leave of their friends and left England.

XVIII

It was on his return voyage to South Africa in 1908-09 that Gāndhijī wrote his famous book—*Hind Swarāj or Indian Home Rule.* It is in the form of a dialogue between the Editor and the Reader. The Editor is Gāndhijī, and the Reader is a hypothetical Indian anarchist who would use methods of violence for driving the English out of India and achieving Swarāj. Gāndhijī had met a number of such young Indians while he was in England and had discussions with them about Western civilization, the Indian political parties, the Indian National Congress and the movement for Swarāj or Home Rule. He embodied these discussions in the imaginary conversations in this book, which he wrote on board the ship. It is remarkable that this booklet written more than thirty years ago contains in a nutshell the whole Gāndhian gospel. His insistence on Truth and Non-violence under all circumstances, his determined opposition to Western civilization and his views on machinery, on education, on law-courts and lawyers, on doctors and vivisection, on Hindu-Muslim Unity, on cow-protection, on Hindī as the common language of India with two scripts, on poverty and chastity, on the dignity of manual labour—all are there. The only exception is the spinning-wheel, which he discovered only later in India. In this booklet, in opposition to mills and machinery, we have the hand-loom in place of the spinning-wheel.

This imaginary dialogue was written in Gūjarātī and was published in *Indian Opinion* after Gāndhijī reached South Africa. An English translation of it was sent to Tolstoy in April 1910 for his opinion. Gāndhijī had already opened correspondence with the great Russian writer when he was in London. And Tolstoy had written to him, "I greet you fraternally and am glad to have intercourse with you." Now again, on the receipt of the book, he wrote two letters to Gāndhijī. In the second letter he says:—

"The longer I live and especially now, when I vividly feel the nearness of death, I want to tell others what I feel particularly clearly and what to my mind is of great importance, namely, that which is called Passive Resistance, but which is in reality nothing else than the teaching of love uncorrupted by false interpretations . . . .—this law (of Love) was proclaimed by all—by the Indian as by the Chinese, Hebrew, Greek and Roman sages of the world. I think this law was most clearly expressed by the Christ who plainly said that 'in this only is all the law and the prophets'."[1]

Gāndhijī's *Hind Swarāj* is one of the seminal books of the world. Its aim is not to present us with a cut and dried scheme of political action, but to set forth in unqualified language a noble and powerful ideal which runs counter to all our conventional notions, as, for instance, in the following statement:—

"The force of arms is powerless when matched against the force of love or the soul."[2]

Or take the following passage:—

"*Reader*: As is Japan, so must India be. We must own our navy, our army, and we must have our own splendour, and then will India's voice ring through the world.

Editor: You have drawn the picture well. In effect it means this: that we want English Rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it

[1] It may be stated that Tolstoy died in the same year (1910), aged eighty-two.

[2] *Hind Swarāj*, 1938 Edition, p. 114.

will be called not Hindustān but *Englistān*. This is not the Swarāj that I want."[1]

XIX

As the deputation led by Gāndhijī came back empty-handed, the struggle had to be carried on indefinitely. Till now, the families of the Satyāgrahīs who had gone to jail were maintained by monthly allowances in cash according to their needs and status. Gāndhijī saw that the system was expensive and unsatisfactory and might result in fraud or injustice. The only solution for the difficulty was to keep all the families in one place as members of a co-operative commonwealth. A great saving in public funds could thus be effected and there were the additional advantages of training them to a life of simplicity and bringing together a number of people coming from different provinces in India and professing different religions. But where was the place? Cities were out of the question, for they would be too expensive. There was, of course, the Phoenix Settlement, where already there were some families, including Gāndhijī's, working on co-operative lines. But it was in Natal and three hundred miles away from Johannesburg, and the journey required thirty hours. So, a place in the Transvaal, and as near to Johannesburg as possible, was required. Fortunately Mr. Kallenbach, a friend of Gāndhijī and one of the heroes of the Satyāgraha campaign, had a big farm of eleven hundred acres containing a thousand fruit-bearing trees and a small bungalow, only twenty-one miles from Johannesburg and one mile from Lawley, the nearest railway station. Kallenbach was a German, an architect by profession and a man after Gāndhijī's own heart. He lent the use of his farm for the Satyāgrahī families without rent. Gāndhijī and Kallenbach decided to build houses upon

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

this farm and accommodate the families. This is the famous Tolstoy Farm, where Gāndhijī had ample opportunities for three years of experimenting with all his ideas on dietetics, cooking, education, moral and religious training, household remedies, sanitation, scavenging, etc., not to speak of the principles of Satyāgraha—Truth and Non-violence. In the words of Gāndhijī, " Tolstoy Farm proved to be a centre of spiritual purification and penance for the final campaign."[1] The campaign was organized afresh on a large scale in 1913.

Meanwhile one great and important event took place, and that was Gokhale's visit. Gāndhijī had been requesting Gokhale for a long time to go to South Africa and to study the condition of the Indians there on the spot. Gokhale, as usual with him, had made a thorough study of the system of Indentured Labour and had initiated debates in the Legislative Council of India. The speech which he made on this subject during the Council session of 1912 is a masterpiece of its kind. Hoyland says of it, " This great speech on behalf of a voiceless multitude of his exiled fellow-countrymen places Gokhale in the ranks of that noble fellowship of the enemies of slavery, which includes the names of Wilberforce, of Clarkson and of Garison".[2] Gokhale was also keenly following the movement led by Gāndhijī. So, in spite of failing health, he now made up his mind to go to South Africa to acquaint himself with the situation at first hand. He wrote to Gāndhijī to arrange a programme of six weeks' tour. He also informed the Secretary of State for India of his intention, and the Secretary of State informed the Union Government of Gokhale's high rank and position in the empire. So both Indians and Europeans vied with one another in welcoming and honouring the great Indian statesman. He

[1] *Satyāgraha in South Africa*, p. 393.
[2] *Gopāl Krishna Gokhale*, p. 180.

landed at Capetown on the 22nd October 1912. From Capetown he went to Johannesburg, stopping at some intermediate stations for a few hours. From Johannesburg he went to Natal, visited Durban, Maritzburg, Kimberly and other places, went back to the Transvaal, proceeded to Pretoria the capital, where he conferred with the ministers, and left South Africa on the 17th November. Everywhere meetings were held presided over by the Mayors of the places, addresses were read and banquets given. Special trains were arranged for him, cars were placed at his disposal, and the Government treated him as its distinguished guest. And Gokhale won the hearts of all by the concise, lucid and firm, but courteous speeches he delivered everywhere. Throughout the tour Gāndhijī acted as his private secretary. Gāndhijī would do anything, even personal service, for Gokhale, so great was his love for him.[1]

Gokhale's interview with the ministers at Pretoria lasted two hours. For this he had thoroughly prepared himself the previous night. It was decided that Gāndhijī should not accompany him, as his presence might embarrass the ministers. So he was asked to prepare a short summary of the whole history of the Indians in the four colonies of South Africa during the preceding eighteen years and instruct Gokhale on all the necessary points. The two leaders then sat up the whole night, discussed every detail till Gokhale felt sure that he was posted up to date with all the necessary information. He went over the whole ground again and was at last satisfied. What exactly happened at the interview the next day we do not know. But when Gokhale returned from it, he said to Gāndhijī, "You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act

[1] In fact, one night at the Tolstoy Farm he and Kallenbach entreated Gokhale to let them shampoo his feet, while he was lying on the floor like themselves, having discarded the cot which they had procured for him. But Gokhale sternly forbade them to touch him.

will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the emigration law. The £ 3 tax will be abolished." And when Gāndhijī expressed his doubts about all this, Gokhale continued, "What I have told you is bound to come to pass. General Botha promised me that the Black Act would be repealed and £ 3 tax abolished. You must return to India within twelve months, and I will not have any of your excuses." Then the two friends went rejoicing to Zanzibar, where Gāndhijī took leave of Gokhale and returned to South Africa to see the promised settlement carried out. But they had been counting without their hosts, the Boer Generals. Nothing came out of the promises made to Gokhale. General Smuts said in the Assembly that, as the Europeans in Natal objected to the repeal of the £ 3 tax, the Government could not pass any legislation.

XX

Thus the only result of Gokhale's tour was that the Satyāgrahīs became more determined to carry on the fight, including in their programme a third item *viz.*, resistance to the £ 3 tax. The inclusion of this item enormously increased the scale of operations, for indentured labourers, who had till now been kept out of the struggle, had now an opportunity of participating in it. Gāndhijī wrote to Gokhale about the breach of promise and the necessity of intensifying the fight, and the latter was deeply pained. The Satyāgrahīs began to make the necessary preparations. The Tolstoy Farm was temporarily closed. The Phoenix settlement was considered more convenient as a base of operations, as the indentured labourers of Natal were coming into the struggle.

At this juncture, quite unexpectedly, another intolerable grievance cropped up which drew women also into the fight. On the 14th March 1913, the Cape Supreme

Court decided in a case that all marriages that were not celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages were outside the pale of legal marriages in South Africa. Thus, according to this judgment, all Hindu, Muslim and Zoroastrian marriages were illegal unions in the eye of the law, and therefore the married women of these communities became degraded by a stroke of the pen into concubines and their children into illegitimate offspring who could not inherit their parents' property. Gāndhijī at once wrote to the Government asking them whether they agreed with this judgment and, if they did, whether they would amend the law recognizing the validity of the Indian marriages celebrated according to non-Christian religious rites and recognized as legal in India. The community thought it would be an intolerable position for them, if the Government did not comply with their request. But the Government did not care in the least for the feelings of Indians and did nothing. Gāndhijī now invited women to come into line with men to offer Satyāgraha. He first explained to them the difficulties and hardships of jail life and asked them to think for themselves whether they were equal to the task. But the feeling ran so high among them that even women with babies in arms came forward to take part in the struggle.

The first batch of people to offer Satyāgraha consisted of ten, and nine of them were Tamils. They crossed the Transvaal border from Natal without permits, but the police did not interfere. They began to hawk things without a license. But they were not arrested. They recrossed the border and came into Natal without permits, which was also against the law. But they were not interfered with. Then Gāndhijī took the drastic step of advising them to go to mining centres and call upon the indentured labourers to strike.

This they did, and the labourers struck. The women Satyāgrahīs could no longer be ignored. They were therefore arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Meanwhile another batch of men and women, including Mrs. Gāndhi, started from Phoenix, crossed the Transvaal border without permits, refused to disclose their identity and were arrested and imprisoned. All these women were kept in Maritzburg jail and were harassed and ill-treated in various ways. But it did not break their spirit.[1]

The arrest of women and their imprisonment with hard labour stirred the hearts of all Indians, not only in South Africa but also in the Motherland. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the great Bombay leader, declared in a speech that his blood boiled at the thought of these women lying in jail herded with ordinary criminals and that India could not sleep over this matter any longer. The strike among indentured labourers also began to spread like wild fire. They came out in large numbers. And their employers retaliated by cutting off their light and water supply, driving them out of their quarters and even whipping them. This made matters worse. And more men struck and came to Gāndhijī. How was he to feed all of them? They were now to be counted by hundreds and soon they might be thousands. The only possible solution was that all the strikers should leave their quarters and go with their families to wherever Gāndhijī should lead them. Luckily for them

[1] Gāndhijī is never tired of citing the case of one Valliamma to illustrate the bravery of the women who offered Satyāgraha at this time She was a young girl of sixteen. She came out of the jail with fever on, which had terribly emaciated her Gāndhijī met her and asked her whether she repented of having gone to jail "Repent?" she said, "I am ready even now to go to jail, if I am arrested." "But what if it results in your death?" asked Gāndhijī "I do not mind it. Who would not love to die for one's motherland?" replied the brave girl. And within a few days of this conversation she died of the fever. She was a Tamil girl belonging to a Mudaliar family.

the weather was favourable. There was neither rain nor cold, and so they could camp in the open. The Indian traders of the neighbouring places supplied Gāndhijī with bags of rice and other provisions and the necessary cooking vessels. Those who could not give anything served as volunteers in looking after this illiterate multitude of workers. Gāndhijī's idea was to lead this army to the Transvaal border and make them cross it, so that they might be arrested by the Government and safely lodged in jails. The strength of the army was now five thousand, and the Transvaal border was thirty-six miles from Newcastle, the mining centre. Gāndhijī had no money to take them all by rail. So he decided to take them on foot. The march was to be accomplished in stages. And those who were disabled were to be sent by rail. While the preparations for the march were going on, Gāndhijī received an invitation from the coal-owners to meet them in Durban. He gladly went and had an interview with them. But they had nothing but threats to offer. So he came back to Newcastle and explained the whole situation to the labourers and told them that, if they were not prepared to undergo all the hardships of the march with women and children and the subsequent jail life, they might go back to their work. But they replied they would not be downhearted so long as he was by their side. So they were informed one evening that early next morning, *i.e.*, on 28th October 1913, they were to commence the march, and all the rules that were to be observed on the march were read to them and they promised obedience. Gāndhijī told them that the daily ration per head was only a pound and a half of bread and an ounce of sugar. But if any of the traders gave anything on the way, the rations might be increased. The march should continue even if the leader was arrested. Arrangements were made for a succession of leaders.

Then the march began. Charlestown was the first stage and it was reached safely. Gāndhijī, besides being the general manager of the caravan, was also the head cook, and he was the man in sole charge of the distribution of food. The next stage was Volksrust on the other side of the border. It is a place in the Transvaal, while Charlestown is a village in Natal. Before crossing the border, Gāndhijī wrote to the Government that the march was only a protest against the ministers' breach of promise, that there was nothing secret or surreptitious about it and that, if the Government gave an assurance about the repeal of the £ 3 tax, the strike of the indentured labourers would be called off. He would welcome the Government's arresting his men in Charlestown itself before they crossed the border. No answer came to this letter. So Gāndhijī decided to cross the border with his company and march about twenty miles a day till they reached Tolstoy Farm, where he proposed the labourers should settle down and maintain themselves by labour till the struggle was over. And Kallenbach promised to make all the necessary arrangements. According to their calculations the march would last eight days at a stretch. The only rations available were bread and sugar, and so they thought it would be more convenient if somebody were to supply bread at each stage as they passed. It is not surprising that a large European bakery at Volksrust undertook to do it and faithfully fulfilled the contract, and that the European railway officials afforded special facilities of transit, for they all knew that the Satyāgrahī army harboured no enmity in their hearts towards anybody and that they were seeking redress for cruel wrongs only through self-suffering. At the last minute, before the march was recommenced, Gāndhijī phoned to General Smuts in Pretoria that some Europeans in Volksrust had held out a threat that the Indians would be shot if they crossed

the border and the progress of their march would be checked, and so there might be a breach of peace and loss of life. All this trouble could be avoided if he promised even at this eleventh hour to abolish the £ 3 tax. In half a minute the Private Secretary to the Minister replied, "General Smuts will have nothing to do with you. You may do just as you please."

So the next day at the appointed hour prayers were offered and the march was continued. The threatened attack did not materialize. For Kallenbach, at the risk of his life, had gone to a meeting of the Europeans at Volksrust two days before and told them that the Indians were not going to flood their country or challenge their position as rulers or fight them with arms, but that they were seeking elementary justice through self-suffering. They were prepared to march through the Transvaal to Tolstoy Farm even in the face of their gunfire; they were not going to retreat for fear of their bullets or spears. On the first day the army had to stop in the evening at a place called Palmford, about eight miles from Volksrust. The men took their rations and retired to rest. Gāndhijī also was retiring, when a police officer came and quietly arrested him. He roused Mr. P. K. Naidoo, who was sleeping by his side, gave him instructions for the march the next day and accompanied the police officer to the railway station. The next day he appeared before the court in Volksrust, but the case was adjourned, as the Public Prosecutor was not yet ready with evidence. Gāndhijī applied for bail and the magistrate had to grant it according to law. So Gāndhijī at once rejoined the 'invaders' in Kallenbach's car and the march was continued. The next day he was re-arrested at Standerton. Here too the case was remanded and he was set free on his own recognisance of £ 50. And he rejoined the pilgrims. Four days' march was over according to programme, and four days' march yet re-

mained. The Government was getting more and more anxious. It was the firmness of the Indians coupled with their peacefulness that distressed General Smuts. If they had taken to rioting or violence of any kind, they could have been easily shot down. But something had to be done before they reached their destination. So the next day at a place called Teakworth between Standerton and Greylingstad they re-arrested Gāndhijī. Polak had come to take instructions from him before going to India to meet Gokhale. The two friends were marching at the head of the army and talking, when a carriage came up and a police officer stepped out and took Gāndhijī aside and said he was under arrest. Thus he was arrested three times in four days. He asked Polak to assume charge, informed the marchers and went away with the police officer. He was taken to Greylingstad and from there to Heidelburg. Here he asked the magistrate for a remand once again, but the magistrate declined and sent him to Dundee, where he was to be prosecuted for having induced the indentured labourers to leave Natal. At Dundee he was tried and sentenced to nine months' hard labour. From Dundee he was taken to Volksrust to take his second trial on the charge of abetting prohibited persons to enter the Transvaal. Here he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment along with his friends Polak and Kallenbach. The Government now wanted to send Gāndhijī away to some far-off place where no Indian could go and see him. They accordingly sent him to the Bloemfontein jail in the Orange State. He was the only Indian prisoner in that jail, the rest being either Negroes or Europeans.

Meanwhile the pilgrims resumed their march, halted for the night at Greylingstad and reached Balfour the next morning at 9 o'clock. Here three special trains were waiting to deport them back to Natal. The

pilgrims at first refused to get into the trains unless Gāndhijī should come and ask them. But, on the advice of other leaders, they entrained peacefully. It was expected that, on reaching Natal, they would all be prosecuted and sent to jail. In fact, that was what was desired. But a much less agreeable fate was awaiting them. They were, no doubt, put in jail, but at the same time the mine compounds at Dundee and Newcastle were declared out-stations of the jails, the mine-owners' European staff were declared warders, and the labourers were forced to work in mines as convicts. And when the men refused to work, they were brutally whipped, kicked and maltreated in various ways. The strike now spread to all mining centres on the south coast as well as the north coast, and the men came out in thousands. The Government adopted a policy of blood and iron. Mounted policemen chased the strikers, brought them back and forced them to work. When the strikers resisted, fire was opened on them killing some and wounding others. These atrocities were all reported by cablegrams to Gokhale, who broadcasted the news from his sick bed. All India was deeply stirred. And the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, made a famous speech in Madras, which created a stir in England and South Africa. He openly and whole-heartedly defended the action of the Satyāgrahīs and supported the civil disobedience they offered to the unjust legislation of the South African Government. Gokhale now requested C. F. Andrews to go to Natal to take the place of the arrested leaders and help the movement. And Andrews, accompanied by his friend Pearson, left India at once.

But it was only the darkest hour before the dawn. The Union Government was much upset by these widespread strikes and imprisonments as well as by the Viceroy's attitude and decided to get out of the awkward situation by appointing a Commission to inquire into the

grievances of Indians and make recommendations. No commission was really necessary, as the grievances had been made clear times without number. But the Government had to save its face, and so a commission had to sit and make recommendations of foregone conclusions. At the very outset the Commission recommended that, to make the investigation thorough, Messrs. Gāndhi, Polak and Kallenbach should be released. The Government accordingly released them on the 18th December 1913, after an imprisonment of about six weeks. And so Gāndhijī was able to welcome Andrews and Pearson when they landed at Durban.

Gāndhijī knew nothing about the Commission till he came out of the prison. As soon as he knew the personnel of the Commission, he consulted his friends and wrote a letter to General Smuts strongly objecting to the inclusion in it of two gentlemen who had often expressed their dislike of Indians and saying that, unless all prisoners were released and one gentleman chosen by the Indians was included in the Commission, they could not lead evidence before it. General Smuts declined to appoint any more members to the Commission. His reply was received on the 24th December, 1913, and the Indians published a notification that a party of them courting imprisonment would commence their march on January 1st, 1914. But before this date Gāndhijī again wrote to General Smuts asking for an interview at which he wanted to place some facts before him. The request was granted and Gāndhijī went to Pretoria with Andrews. At that time there was a great strike of the European employees of the Union Railways and the Government was in a difficult position. It was thought that Gāndhijī would take advantage of this and commence the threatened march. Far from doing so, he announced that Indians would undertake the march, if necessary, only after the railway trouble ended, for they

were not out to harass the Government. Their struggle was entirely different from that of the railway men. This decision, of course, produced a good impression on all, and it made the final settlement easier. Gāndhijī met General Smuts and found him considerably sobered. He did not, of course, yield on the point of appointing another member to the Commission, but said the Government had decided to redress the grievances of Indians and the Commission would make recommendations favourable to that decision, and that it would really strengthen their hands, if the Commission consisting of men who had been hitherto strongly opposed to Indian interests should make the recommendations. Gāndhijī was satisfied. A number of interviews followed this interview, and letters passed between them. Andrews was present along with Gāndhijī at these interviews with General Smuts. By this time, Sir Benjamin Robertson sent by the Viceroy to open negotiations with the South African Government also arrived at Pretoria. He was at first not very helpful. For he tried to create a split among Indians by inducing some to lead evidence before the Commission which the community had boycotted. But the Satyāgrahīs stood firm and he had to fall into line with the leaders. A provisional agreement was soon reached and Satyāgraha was suspended, though some of the Satyāgrahīs naturally murmured that General Smuts should not be trusted. Meanwhile the Commission set to work. Its boycott by Indians proved an advantage, because it shortened the labours of the Commissioners and the report was soon published. It recommended compliance without delay with all the demands of the Indian community—the repeal of the £ 3 tax, validation of Indian marriages, entry of educated Indians and the recognition of the original domicile certificates as evidence of the right to enter the Union. Soon after the report was published, the Indian Relief Bill embody-

ing its recommendations was published in the Gazette of the Union and was duly passed by the Union Parliament at Cape Town.

Thus the great Satyāgraha struggle in South Africa, which began in September 1906, was closed in June 1914 after eight years. Gāndhijī's success in it was due primarily to the fact that the Indian community stood solidly behind him and had unfaltering faith in his leadership. The community consisted of Hindus, Muslims and Christians, and they spoke various languages—Hindūstānī, Gujarātī, Tamil and Telugu. In fact it was a miniature India. And yet they all acted together as one man from the rich merchant down to the indentured labourer. They looked upon their leader as one who was above all castes and creeds, above all considerations of race, religion or rank. In this conection the following account of Gāndhijī's religion and the influence of his movement on the Indian community given in Doke's book written in 1908 may be found interesting:—

"I question whether any religious creed would be large enough to express his views or any Church system ample enough to shut him in. Jew and Christian, Hindu and Mohammedan, Parsi, Buddhist and Confucian—all have their place in his heart, as children of the same Father. This breadth of sympathy is indeed one note of the Passive Resistance movement. It has bound together all sections of the Indian community. It would be impossible to determine which religious section has done most for its interests. . . . All have suffered imprisonment, and all have rendered unstinted service, while common suffering has drawn these and other helpers into a brotherhood of sympathy in which differences of creed are forgotten."

It was therefore a wrench for Gāndhijī to leave South Africa, where he had spent twenty-one years of his life and where he was so universally loved and so faithfully followed by his community. But he was eagerly looking forward to serving his Motherland under the guidance of Gokhale and with the experience he gained in South Africa. So on the 18th July 1914 he

sailed for England to meet Gokhale, who was there at that time, and to take instructions from him and then return to India. He reached London on the 6th August, two days after the declaration of the Great War. He learnt that Gokhale had been stranded in France, whither he had gone for reasons of health. So he had to wait in England indefinitely till Gokhale returned.

In the meantime he offered to raise a volunteer corps of Indian residents in England to do ambulance work in the war. His offer was accepted by the Government, and the corps was formed and given the necessary training. But he himself could not be on active service, as he fell seriously ill at this time and was found to be suffering from pleurisy. The doctors saw that it was difficult to control his ailment, as he refused to take meat or even milk or milk products. He had taken a vow never to take cow's or buffalo's milk in his life, when, some two years before, he had come to know that cows and buffaloes were being tortured in Calcutta to give their last drop of milk. So he was advised to leave England at once and go home. As by this time Gokhale too had returned from France and left for India, Gāndhijī followed him.

CHAPTER XI.

MAHĀTMĀ GĀNDHI: SATYĀGRAHA IN INDIA

I

We may say that when Gāndhijī left South Africa for good in 1914, the Rāmāyaṇa of his life was over; and when he landed in India at the beginning of 1915, its Mahābhārata began. The latter is a much longer epic than the former and is still in progress.

Before he reached Bombay, the Phoenix party consisting of his followers had already arrived in India and had been conducted by Mr. Andrews first to the Gurukul at Kangri and then to Śāntiniketan, the Āśram of the poet Rabīndranāth Tagore. He was therefore anxious to see them and arrange for their permanent residence. But before doing so he was anxious to meet Gokhale at Poona. Meanwhile Gokhale himself wrote to him to meet Lord Willingdon, then the Governor of Bombay, who had expressed a desire to see him. Gāndhijī accordingly called on the Governor. It is interesting to note that at this meeting Lord Willingdon said to him, "I ask one thing of you. I would like you to come and see me when you propose to take any steps concerning Government." Gāndhijī, of course, replied that, as a Satyāgrahī, it was his duty to do so.

After this interview Gāndhijī went to see Gokhale at Poona. Gokhale was anxious that Gāndhijī should join his "Servants of India Society", but some of the members of the Society thought that Gāndhijī's principles and methods of work were so different from theirs that it would not be proper for him to join them. About a month later Gokhale died when Gāndhijī was at Śānti-

niketan, and Gāndhijī in his great grief tried once more to join the "Servants of India Society," for he thought that that would please his master's spirit. But once again there was difference of opinion among its members as to the wisdom of their admitting him. Gāndhijī thereupon withdrew his application. Gokhale had hoped that he would carefully train Gāndhijī for public work in India and that Gāndhijī would take his place in course of time. But that was not to be. The high opinion he had of his younger contemporary may be seen from the following words which he has left on record:—

"In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Gāndhi does—our great patriarch, Mr. Dādhābhāi Naorojī and my late master Mr. Rānade, men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy."[1]

Gāndhijī now looked out for a place where he could establish an Āśram on the lines of the Phoenix Settlement for his followers. Various places were suggested to him by his friends. He finally chose Ahmedābād, because it was the capital of Gujarāt, his own province, and he could here reasonably expect more financial help than elsewhere, and also because it was the centre of hand-loom weaving in which he was greatly interested. The Āśram was finally established on the 25th May 1915 on the banks of the Sabarmatī, a few miles from Ahmedābād. The name Satyāgraha Āśram was chosen for the settlement because Gāndhijī's aim in establishing it was to acquaint India with the method he had tried so successfully in South Africa, and to see the extent to which its application would be possible in India. To begin with there were twenty-five men and women in the Āśram. For the conduct of these a number of rules and regulations were drawn up. The inmates had to take the vows of truth, non-violence, celibacy, non-

[1] *Gopāl Krishna Gokhale*, p. 184.

stealing, non-possession and the control of the palate. They had also to undertake to observe Swadeshi, to cultivate fearlessness, to train themselves in their respective vernaculars, to live by manual labour—especially agriculture and weaving—and to regard politics, economics and social service as part of religion. Children who were admitted had to undergo a course of instruction for ten years, and, when they became majors, had either to take the vows or to leave the Āśram at their discretion.

II

Gokhale had obtained a promise from Gāndhijī, when the latter returned to India, that he would not express any opinion on Indian affairs for a year—*i.e.*, till he had time to travel all over the country and gain experience. Accordingly Gāndhijī made a tour throughout the country in 1915—the first of his many tours. He was everywhere welcomed for his work in South Africa, and he made a great impression by his frank and unconventional speeches, which revealed the originality of his mind. These speeches implied nothing less than the re-orientation of the national mind. He no doubt kept the promise he had made to Gokhale by not speaking on any specific Indian question in the first year of his return, but he spoke frankly about the general principles which he himself held sacred in his public as well as his private life and which he now recommended to the nation. He declared that he was a determined opponent of modern European civilization, as it was based on violence, greed and competition and was materialistic in character. He believed that the ancient civilization of India was superior to modern European civilization, because it was based on non-violence, contentment and co-operation, and was spiritual in character. Therefore the advancing tide of modern Western civilization should be

stemmed at all costs, and we should be strictly Swadeshi —Swadeshi in religion, Swadeshi in politics and Swadeshi in economics.

To be Swadeshi in religion for the Hindus was to be faithful to Hinduism. Hinduism was the most tolerant of religions. It might not be perfect any more than the other great religions of the world. But it was capable of infinite expansion, for it could assimilate what was good in Islam and Christianity, as it had already assimilated what was good in Buddhism, which therefore ceased to exist as a separate religion.

In politics India should be true to her own traditions, revive her old village republics and trade guilds and never divorce religion from the affairs of the state. Gāndhijī strongly condemned political assassinations and dacoities as being thoroughly un-Indian in character. They were only importations from European political life. He also denounced secrecy and diplomacy in politics. There should be no sacrifice of truth even for the good of one's country, even for Swarāj. Non-violence and truth should be strictly observed in politics as well as religion. Violence and untruth are the weapons of the coward. He would plead strongly for courage and fearlessness. What we thought about the Government we should say frankly and openly and take the consequences. And we should not be satisfied with mere speeches and resolutions. The nation was tired of speeches and resolutions. Action, action—that was the supreme need of the country.

In economics the Swadeshi spirit should show itself in making the villages self-sufficient in every way. As Gāndhijī had not yet discovered the spinning-wheel, he laid stress at this stage only on hand-weaving and not on spinning. He said that agriculture and hand-weaving should form a compulsory part of the education of every youth in the country. And, of course, education should

always be only through the mother-tongue. Gāndhijī held that it was a shame that English, a foreign language, should occupy a predominant place in our schools and colleges, in our councils and conferences. Hindustānī should take its place and become the *lingua franca* of India, because it was already spoken by a large majority of the people—both Hindus and Muslims. If this was done, the gulf that existed between the masses and the educated classes would be bridged and the ideas of the latter would percolate to the former. The educated classes should come into touch not only with the masses, but also with the merchant class. And, above all, the classes which possess wealth—Rājāhs, Zamīndārs and merchant princes—should hold it only in trust for the nation.

At this stage, Gāndhijī held that we should be loyal to the British empire, because under that empire there was more freedom of speech and action than under any other. We should therefore agitate for self-government within the empire. But at the same time we should set our own house in order. We should undergo a process of self-purification. We should abolish untouchability, cultivate communal unity, improve sanitation, raise the status of women and definitely set moral progress above economic progress. He said:—

"Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but cleanse our houses, our palaces and our temples of the attributes of wealth, we can offer battle to any combinations of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia Let us first seek the Kingdom of God and righteousness, and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added unto us"[1]

This is the gist of all the speeches he delivered in the first two or three years of his return to India. At the time when these speeches were delivered many of

[1] *Speeches and Writings of Mahātmā Gāndhi*, Fourth Edition, p. 355.

his countrymen did not agree with Gāndhijī in all his strictures on Western civilization. However he cleared the air of all false ideas and superstitions regarding the supremacy of Western civilization, the value of English education, the necessity of secrecy in politics and the importance of rapid industrialization and acquisition of wealth, irrespective of their attendant moral and spiritual evils. All this was a great revolution in Indian political life. The thought of generations of Indians was given a new turn by Gāndhijī's teaching. Henceforth in politics and economics, no less than in religion, India began to think for herself and develop her own individuality and refused to imitate Europe slavishly.

The discovery of the spinning-wheel added the last touch to the new outlook on life which Gāndhijī was inculcating in the first few years of his return to India. On account of the tremendous importance the wheel assumed in Gāndhijī's programme of national regeneration, the three chapters he devotes to the discovery of it in his *Autobiography* are of special interest. There he tells us that, when he returned to India in 1915, he had never seen a spinning-wheel. When the Satyāgraha Āśram was established, a few handlooms were introduced and hand-weaving was taught to some of the members. But the yarn had to be purchased from the Indian spinning-mills. He wanted to spin his own yarn for his hand-looms without depending on the mills. Moreover some of the mill-owners informed him that, by pleading for Swadeshi cloth in his national propaganda, without at the same time arranging for more mills to be opened and more cloth to be produced in the country, he was only making the price of the cloth manufactured by the existing mills go up higher and higher. That was exactly what had happened at the time of the anti-Partition agitation in Bengal. Therefore Gāndhijī was on the look-out for some means of producing yarn for the hand-

looms, so that Swadeshi cloth might be produced without our depending in any way on the mills, which could never cope with a country-wide demand. In 1917 when he went to Broach to preside over the Educational Conference held there, he spoke of his difficulty to a remarkable lady, called Gangābehn Majmundār, who was an enthusiastic social worker. And she promised to make a search for the spinning-wheel. She wandered all over Gujarāt and found it at last in Vijapūr in the Baroda state. Several people in that place had spinning-wheels in their homes, but had consigned them to their lumber rooms. They, however, expressed their readiness to resume spinning, if somebody promised to supply them with slivers and buy the yarn spun by them. This joyful news was communicated to Gāndhijī. The wheel was then revived. The spinners were at first supplied with slivers from the mills. But soon a carder was found who could card cotton and make slivers, and with his help a few men were trained in the art. Thus Gāndhijī's panacea for removing the poverty of India *viz.*, the production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth called Khādi or Khaddar became an absolutely self-sufficient process independent of cotton mills. Later, when Gāndhijī dominated the Congress and inspired all its activities, the spinning-wheel became the symbol of Indian nationalism and its image was imprinted on the national flag.

III

Thus by these early speeches and activities Gāndhijī tried to make his countrymen ready for receiving the weapon of Satyāgraha from his hands. Already he had one or two occasions when he thought of taking out his patent weapon, but the wrongs were righted before he took it out, and so the country heard little about it. The first occasion was in the year 1915 itself. For,

while he was proceeding from Poona to Rājkot a few days after his landing in Bombay, one Motilāl, a tailor by profession and an ardent public worker, who had heard of him, came to Gāndhijī at the Wadhwan railway station and spoke to him about the customs barrier at Vīramgam between British India and the Kāthiāwād States and the hardships which the railway passengers were put to on account of it, and requested him to do something to end the trouble. Gāndhijī had little inclination to talk, as he had then fever on. He listened to the story and asked him briefly, "Are you ready to go to jail?". "We are ready to march to the gallows" was the quick reply of Motilāl. After reaching Rājkot, Gāndhijī obtained all the necessary information about the customs barrier at Vīramgam and opened correspondence with the Government. He also dropped a hint in his speeches at Bagsara and elsewhere in Kāthiāwād that the people should be prepared, if necessary, to offer Satyāgraha at Vīramgam. The speeches were duly reported by the C. I. D. to the Government of Bombay. When Gāndhijī saw the Governor, he was told that the Government of India was responsible for the customs barrier and that he should turn to them for relief. He then met the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, and placed the facts before him. The Viceroy was astonished, for he knew nothing about the matter. He at once called for the papers and within a few days of the interview the customs cordon was removed. Gāndhijī regards this event as heralding the advent of Satyāgraha in India. For, though Satyāgraha was not actually offered, the imminent possibility of its being offered was the chief factor in obtaining redress.

IV

The second occasion was in 1917. There was then considerable public agitation over the abolition of in-

dentured immigration.) In February 1917, Paṇḍit Madan Mohan Mālavīya asked for leave to introduce a bill in the Central legislature for the immediate abolition of the indenture system. The Viceroy refused permission. Thereupon Gāndhijī thought of starting an all-India agitation. And, before doing so, he sought an interview with the Viceroy, and the talk was satisfactory. Gāndhijī then began his tour from Bombay. A public meeting was held under the auspices of the Imperial Citizenship Association and a resolution was adopted fixing 31st July as the latest date by which the abolition should be announced by the Government. Gāndhijī then visited Karāchī, Calcutta and other places, and a similar resolution was passed everywhere amidst scenes of unbounded enthusiasm. And also a ladies' deputation organized by Mrs. Jaijī Petit waited upon the Viceroy, who gave an encouraging reply. And before the 31st July, the Government announced that indentured emigration from India was stopped. Here too success came, because there was preparedness for Satyāgraha. But public agitation was also necessary before redress could be got.

V

Close on the heels of this agitation, in the same year 1917, came the Champaran struggle in which Satyāgraha had atually to be offered before redress could be got. Chāmparan is a district in the Tirhut division of Bihar. It is far up north of the Ganges at the foot of the Himālayas near Nepal. Its headquarters is Motihari. The Chāmparan tenant was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as *tinkāthia* system, and it worked as a great hardship for thousands of agriculturists. When Gāndhijī attended the Congress at Lucknow in 1916, he was requested to

go to Chāmparan and do something to relieve the distress of the people.' So, early in 1917, after his Calcutta meeting, he left for Chāmparan, of which he had not known even the geographical position before. As his object was to understand the grievances of the agriculturists against the indigo planters, he thought it his duty, before starting the inquiry, to know the planters' side of the case. He interviewed both the Secretary of the Planters' Association and the Commissioner of the Division. Both of them resented his intrusion, said that an outsider like him had no business to come between the planters and their tenants, and advised him to leave the place at once. When he did not take their advice and went to Motihari, the headquarters of the district, a notice was served on him to leave Chāmparan, and when he refused to leave till his enquiry on behalf of the ryots was finished, he received a summons to take his trial the next day for disobeying the order. The news of the summons spread like wild fire, and huge crowds gathered together in Motihari and followed Gāndhijī wherever he went. The people had now lost all fear of the authorities. They yielded obedience to Gāndhijī and not to the Police. The officials did not know how to proceed with the case. The Government pleader pressed the magistrate to postpone it, but Gāndhijī requested him not to do so, as he wanted to plead guilty. He read a statement in which he said he had come to Chāmparan on a pressing invitation from the ryots, who had some grievances against the indigo planters. He had come to study the situation and, if possible, to assist the Administration in doing justice. He had no other motive. He could not believe that his coming would in any way disturb public peace or cause loss of life. As a law-abiding citizen his instinct was to obey the order of the magistrate. But his sense of duty to those who had invited him compelled him to stay.

Amidst this conflict of duties he would throw the responsibility of removing him on the Administration. Therefore he decided to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. The statement concluded with the words, "I have disregarded the order served on me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."[1] The magistrate was taken by surprise and postponed judgment. Gāndhijī had wired the details of the situation to the Viceroy, to Paṇḍit Madan Mohan Mālavīya and other friends. The result was that, before Gāndhijī could appear before the court to receive the sentence, the magistrate wrote to him that the Lieutenant Governor had ordered the case to be withdrawn, and the Collector wrote to him that he might conduct the proposed enquiry and that all the necessary help would be given to him by the Government officials. The planters were greatly displeased at the conduct of the authorities and carried on a scurrilous agitation against Gāndhijī. But Gāndhijī quietly proceeded with the enquiry in a business-like manner. Crowds of peasants came to give evidence. Five to seven volunteers were required to take down their statements. The C. I. D. men were present at the enquiry. They were welcomed, as their presence would make the peasants give accurate statements. And, whenever serious personal allegations were made against any planter, Gāndhijī wrote to him and obtained his version of the case. In this way the enquiry went on for some months.

Thousands of statements from the lips of the peasantry were recorded. The planters and the Government became impatient, and Gāndhijī was officially asked to finish his business soon and leave Bihar. He replied

[1] On July 9, 1942, Gāndhijī told Louis Fischer, "That day in Chāmparan became a red-letter day in my life. . . . . This was my first act of civil disobedience against the British. . It became the method by which India could be made free."—*A Week with Gandhi*, p. 98-99.

that it was open to the Government to terminate his enquiry by recognizing that the ryots had made out a *prima facie* case for official investigation and redress of the grievances. Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor, thereupon appointed a committee to go into the whole question and invited Gāndhijī to serve on it. Gāndhijī consented on condition that he should be free to advise the ryots as to the course of action they should take, if he was not satisfied with the official enquiry. His condition was accepted and he joined the Committee. The Committee found in favour of the ryots, and recommended that a portion of the unlawful exactions made by the planters should be refunded and that the *tīnkāthia* system should be abolished by law. A bill to that effect was introduced. It was fiercely opposed by the planters. But, owing to the firmness of Sir Edward Gait, it was passed, and the *tīnkāthia* system, which had been in existence for a century, was abolished in 1917. This was the third occasion in India on which Satyāgraha gave relief to the people.

VI

The very next year there were two more occasions for Satyāgraha—in connection with the strike of the mill-hands in Ahmedābād and the famine in Kaira District. The mill-owners of Ahmedābād were led by Mr. Ambālāl Sarabhāi with whom Gāndhijī's relations were most friendly. So he was in a very delicate position. He requested both parties to refer the dispute to arbitration, but the mill-owners refused to recognize the principle of arbitration when their own mill-hands were concerned. So Gāndhijī had no option but to advise a strike. But before doing so he made the workers take a pledge that they would never resort to violence, never molest blacklegs, never depend on charity, but earn their bread by some other manual labour and never resume

work till their demands were satisfied. The strike went on for three weeks. For the first two weeks the mill-hands remained faithful to their pledges. But in the third week they began to waver. Gāndhijī saw signs of rowdyism, molestation of blacklegs and despondency. He did not know what to do. It was at his instance that they had taken the pledge, and now out of sheer despair they were going back on it. So to rally them back he declared that, unless they continued the strike till a settlement was reached or till they left the mills altogether, he would not touch any food. He tells us that these words came to his lips unbidden, all by themselves. The labourers were thunderstruck and craved forgiveness for their lapses and undertook to fast with him. But he prevented them from fasting and said it was enough if they remained true to their pledges. By Gāndhijī's fast the mill-owners were moved. And, though he assured them that there was not the slightest necessity for their withdrawing from their position by his fast, they agreed to arbitration and the strike was called off after three days. It was a victory for Satyāgraha. But Gāndhijī says it was not a pure victory. For the fast, which he undertook to keep the labourers firm, exerted an indirect pressure on the mill-owners who were on friendly terms with him. If the strikers had by their non-violence in thought, word and deed melted the hearts of their masters and won their love, the victory would have been pure. But they were non-violent only in action, and not in thought and word.

VII

Hardly was this strike over when Gāndhijī had to plunge into another Satyāgraha struggle. In the district of Kaira in Gujarāt there was a wide-spread failure of crops in the year 1917-18. Under the Land Revenue Rules, if the crops are under four annas in a rupee the

cultivators are entitled to full suspension of the revenue assessment for the year. If the crops are above four annas but below six, they are entitled to half suspension. The Government granted full suspension with regard to only one village out of six hundred, and half suspension in the case of about one hundred villages. But it was claimed on behalf of the ryots that in most villages the crop was under four annas, that the Government estimate was wrong and that the suspension granted was not at all adequate. Investigations were made in a few villages by responsible men on behalf of the Gujarāt Sabhā and on behalf of the Servants of India Society. And the result of their enquiry was the conclusion that the crop was below four annas. Gāndhijī was appealed to, and he undertook a full enquiry with the assistance of more than twenty experienced men. He personally visited over fifty villages, inspected the fields, cross-examined the cultivators and came to the conclusion that their crops were under four annas. The methods adopted by his co-workers were the same. In this manner four hundred villages were examined, and, with but a few exceptions, the crops were found to be under four annas, and only in three cases were they found to be above six annas. Gāndhijī now suggested to the Government to appoint an impartial committee of enquiry, with the representatives of the people upon it, or gracefully accept the popular view. But the Government rejected these suggestions and insisted upon applying coercive measures for the collection of the revenue. The Collector of the District, the Commissioner of the Division and the Governor of the Province were approached on the question. But there was no redress. The final suggestion made by Gāndhijī was this. Although in a majority of cases the people were entitled to full suspension, half-suspension might be granted throughout the district, except for villages which by common consent had crops

above six annas. If this were done, the workers would undertake to persuade all those ryots who could really afford to pay up their dues to pay them fully. This would leave only the poorest people to take advantage of the concession. All this shows how fair, moderate and considerate Gāndhijī generally is in his demands and how he exhausts all possible means of seeking redress before he starts Satyāgraha. But the Commissioner rejected the interference of Gāndhijī and his coworkers on principle and threatened the people with dire consequences if they withheld payment. So there was no other course left open but Satyāgraha.) On the 22nd March 1918, at a meeting at Nadiad, about two hundred ryots signed the solemn pledge that they would not pay the full or remaining revenue, but would let the Government take such steps as they thought fit and would gladly suffer the consequences of their refusal to pay. They would allow their lands to be confiscated, but would not of their own accord pay anything and prove themselves wrong. Then attachments followed. The revenue officials sold the ryots' cattle and seized whatever movables they could lay hands on. In some cases the standing crops were attached. And in some places people lived away from their houses to avoid attachments and suffered terribly. The Commissioner threatened that he would for ever confiscate lands worth over three crores of rupees for a revenue of four lakhs and abjured Gāndhijī and the ryots to desist from their subversive actions at a time of war and peril to the empire. Gāndhijī replied that the Commissioner's attitude constituted far greater peril to the empire than the German peril. It was peril from within. The Kaira ryots were solving an imperial problem of the first magnitude in India. They were trying to show that it was impossible to govern men without their consent. He held it was the sacred duty of every loyal citizen to fight unto death

against such a spirit of vindictiveness and tyranny as was exhibited by the Commissioner.

The campaign lasted for a little over two months, with great suffering on the part of the poor and great cruelty and insolence on the part of the officials. But it came to an abrupt end. (On June 3, 1918 the Mamlatdār of Nadiad Taluka sent word to Gāndhijī that, if well-to-do Patidārs paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension. Gāndhijī asked for a written undertaking to that effect, which was given. Then he wrote to the Collector whether this held good for the whole district, and the Collector replied that orders declaring suspension in terms of the Mamlatdār's letter had already been issued. That was exactly what the Satyāgrahīs wanted.) They had already declared that they would persuade the well-to-do people to pay their dues, if the poorer peasants were granted suspension. And so they did now.

But Gāndhijī was far from happy at the end of this fifth Satyāgraha struggle in India. He says it lacked the grace by which the termination of a Satyāgraha campaign should be accompanied. The Collector carried on, as though he had done nothing by way of a settlement. He claimed that, even as early as the 25th of April, he had issued orders to all Mamlatdārs that no pressure should be put on those unable to pay and that those orders were only a restatement of what were publicly known to be the standing orders of Government on the subject. Moreover, it was the people's right to determine who was poor and who was not in the circumstances of this struggle, but they were too weak to exercise that right. According to Gāndhijī, "a Satyāgraha campaign can be described as worthy only when it leaves the Satyāgrahīs stronger and more spirited than they were in the beginning." The Kaira Satyāgraha did not satisfy this test.

VIII

While the Kaira campaign was still going on, the Viceroy held a War Conference at Delhi and Gāndhijī was one of those who were invited to take part in it. At first he had no inclination to attend a conference to which leaders like Tilak, Mrs. Besant and the Alī Brothers were not invited. But after prolonged private discussions with the Viceroy and his Private Secretary on the subject, Gāndhijī agreed to take part in it and give his support to the resolution about recruiting. He made no speech, but spoke only one sentence in Hindustānī to this effect—"With a full sense of my responsibility I beg to support the resolution." Afterwards he wrote a letter to the Viceroy in which he fully explained his position and published it with his consent. His position now was the same as during the Boer War. Indians should whole-heartedly fight for the empire, hoping by that very act to secure full Responsible Government or Home Rule for India.

Accordingly Gāndhijī began his recruiting campaign. He hoped that he could succeed best in the Kaira district, where he had been rousing people for some months to a sense of their rights and duties. They had come out successful in the Satyāgraha campaign against the Government in June, and now he exhorted them to undertake a greater campaign in aid of the Government in July. There were six hundred villages in Kaira, and if every village gave at least twenty men, the district would be able to raise an army of 12,000 men. He called on them to make this sacrifice for the Empire and Swarāj. But the response was poor. The bitterness between the people and the Government officials had not yet subsided. And Gāndhijī's appeals fell on deaf ears. But he would not give up his attempts. He walked long distances from village to village, as people would not give him carts even for hire. And

the arrangements for his food were very unsatisfactory. He thus ruined his constitution and had a bad attack of dysentery, which proved nearly fatal. It was while he was tossing on his bed of pain at his Āśram that the news was brought that the Great War had come to an end, that armistice had been declared and that the Commissioner had sent word that recruiting might be stopped. This was a great relief. But his illness was long and protracted. For he had become extremely weak and it was found impossible to persuade him to take any non-vegetarian extracts or eggs or milk, even when his life was trembling in the balance. He had taken a vow, as we have seen, never to take cow's or buffalo's milk in his life. But now he was requested by Mrs. Gāndhi and the doctor to take goat's milk, as that did not come within the range of his vow. And he consented, but not without regret, for, though taking goat's milk was not against the letter of his vow, it was in his opinion against the spirit of it.

IX

He was hardly convalescent when he happened to read in the papers the Rowlatt Committee's report which had just been published. And he was at once startled. The Rowlatt Committee, so called because it was presided over by Sir Sidney Rowlatt, a judge of an English High Court, was a committee set up by the Government in 1918 to report on revolutionary crime in India and to recommend measures to cope with it. It conducted its deliberations *in camera,* and the material laid before it largely consisted of secret police records. And the recommendations that it made in the report published on 19th July 1918 were very drastic. They were in effect a continuance of all the emergency regulations passed during the war. It was proposed to set up special tribunals for conducting cases *in camera.* There

were to be no preliminary proceedings for committal, no juries and no right of appeal. And under this procedure people could be hanged or transported for life. There were various other provisions equally summary and equally drastic. Early in February 1919, the Government proceeded to carry out these recommendations by introducing two Bills in the Legislative Council. There was consternation everywhere in the country. The Bills were attacked in the Press and on the platform by all political parties. They were vehemently opposed in the Legislative council by Paṇḍit Madan Mohan Mālavīa and the Hon'ble Mr. Srīnivāsa Śāstrī. And Gāndhijī pleaded earnestly with the Viceroy both in public and in private. But it was all in vain. The Government were determined to proceed with the legislation. Therefore there was no other course left open for Gāndhijī but to offer Satyāgraha. Extremely weak as he was on account of his recent illness, he bestirred himself, held a small conference of friends at his Āśram and drafted the Satyāgraha pledge which ran as follows:—

"Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bill known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. I of 1919, and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based, we solemnly affirm that, in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit, and further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."

This famous pledge was published on February 28, 1919 along with a manifesto in which Gāndhijī explained why this step "probably the most momentous in the history of India" was taken. Then Gāndhijī, in spite of his poor health, undertook an extensive tour, the

second of its kind, throughout the country to explain the principles of Satyāgraha and the circumstances which necessitated the offering of civil disobedience to the Government. He visited Allāhābād, Bombay, Madras and several other towns in Southern India. He was so weak at the time that seated in a chair he could speak only a few words in a low voice at the meetings held. Very often his speeches had to be written out and read by others. It was while he was in Madras and discussing with the leaders there the details of the civil disobedience to be offered that the news came that the Rowlatt Bill had received the Viceroy's consent and become an Act. That night thinking over the whole question he fell asleep. He awoke in the small hours of the morning earlier than usual, and while he was still in the twilight condition between sleeping and waking the idea of advising the nation to observe an all-India *hartal* and a twenty-four hours' fast broke upon him as if in a dream. Early in the morning he told Mr. C. Rājagopālāchāri, whose guest he then was, all about it. Mr. Rājagopālāchari at once welcomed the idea. It was afterwards communicated to other friends, and all approved of it. Then Gāndhijī drafted a brief appeal to the nation to observe a twenty-four hours' fast and a complete all-India *hartal,* to regard the day to be fixed by the leaders as a day of national humiliation and prayer and to hold meetings on that day in all cities, towns and villages throughout India and pass resolutions praying for the withdrawal of the hateful Act. The date that was fixed at first was 30th March 1919, but it was subsequently changed to 6th April. The appeal went home to the hearts of the people and, though the notice was short, there was a complete suspension of work throughout India on that date, and in all big cities monster meetings such as were never witnessed within living memory were held. Thus did Gāndhijī devise a

remarkable and unprecedented national gesture, and we may say that with this gesture begins the Gāndhian era in Indian national life.

The wire postponing the *hartal* to 6th April reached Delhi too late, and so the *hartal* was held there on 30th March. The capital of India had never witnessed a *hartal* like that before. Hindus and Muslims joined together for the purpose. Swāmī Śraddhānanda was invited to deliver a speech in the Jumma Musjid, and there was a meeting of 40,000 men in perfect peace and order. But there was a scuffle between the police and the people at the railway station and the former opened fire causing a number of casualties. There was the same story in Lahore and Amritsar. From Delhi and Amritsar telegrams came to Gāndhijī asking him to go there at once. Gāndhijī wired back that he would do so after the demonstrations at Bombay on the 6th April. On the day of the *hartal* at Bombay the citizens flocked in their thousands to the Chowpati sands for a bath in the sea in the morning and went back in procession to their temples and mosques. And in the evening arrangements were made for offering civil disobedience by way of selling books which the Government had proscribed. Two of Gāndhijī's books, *Hind Swarāj* and *Sarvodaya,* which had been proscribed, were reprinted and sold.

On the 7th night, Gāndhijī started for Delhi and Amritsar. On the way, a little before the Palwal railway station, he was served with a notice prohibiting him from entering the Punjab, as his presence there was likely to result in a disturbance of the peace. Gāndhijī refused to comply with the order, saying that he was going to the Punjab to allay unrest and not to foment it. So he was arrested at Palwal and taken into police custody and was taken back to Bombay by the Inspector of Police on the 11th. As soon as Bombay was reached, the Inspector told Gāndhijī that he was

free and requested him to get down at the Marine Lines to avoid the crowd at the terminus. Gāndhijī consented and got down. The carriage of a friend happened to be passing by, and it took him to his destination. Here he was informed that people had become greatly excited over the news of his arrest, that the outbreak of a riot was apprehended at Pydhūni and that nothing but his presence could pacify the crowd. So he got into a car and rushed to Pydhūni where a huge crowd had assembled. The people on seeing him went mad with joy. The sky was rent with shouts of *Allāho Akbar* and *Vande Mātaram*. And immediately a procession was formed and began to march in the direction of the Fort. But on the way at the Crawford Market it was confronted by a body of mounted police, who had arrived to prevent them from proceeding further. The crowd was too vast for Gāndhijī's voice to reach all the men. The Police Officer now gave the order to disperse the crowd and the mounted police charged through the assembled people and dispersed them.[1]

When Gāndhijī went to the office of the Police Commissioner to protest against this, he was angrily informed that people had everywhere gone mad, that there were riots at Amritsar, Ahmedābād and other places, but that full details were not available as the telegraph wires had been cut and communications interrupted. The disturbances at Ahmedābād deeply disturbed Gāndhijī, as it was his own place and he expected the people there to know his principles of truth and non-vio-

[1] Gāndhīji describes the scene thus —

"In that seething mass of humanity there was hardly any room for the horses to pass, nor was there any exit by which the people could disperse So the lancers blindly cut their way through the crowd. I hardly imagine they could see what they were doing. The whole thing presented a most dreadful spectacle. The horsemen and the people were mixed together in mad confusion. Thus the crowd was dispersed and its progress checked"—*The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1940 Edn), pages 569-570.

lence. He proceeded at once to the place and found it was under martial law. There had been acts of sabotage and murder on the part of the people. The mill-hands heard a rumour that not only Gāndhijī but also Anasūyābehn had been arrested, and so they went mad, struck work and killed a sergeant. Gāndhijī held a meeting on the Āśram grounds on the 14th with the permission of the Commissioner, condemned the violence of the mob, and for his share in their wrong-doing declared he would go on fast for three days.

After the fast he went to Bombay, and on the 18th he advised a temporary suspension of civil disobedience. For he felt that he had made a "Himālayan miscalculation" in calling upon the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had qualified themselves for it through willing and spontaneous obedience to the laws of society. Before re-starting mass civil disobedience, he thought it was necessary to create a band of volunteers well trained in the principles of Satyāgraha.

He had been hitherto expounding the doctrines of Satyāgraha through manifestoes and leaflets, but now an opportunity for educating the people through a regular journal presented itself. About a week after the suspension of civil disobedience, Mr. B. G. Horniman, the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle,* was deported and the paper was stopped temporarily. The syndicate which controlled the *Bombay Chronicle* also controlled *Young India,* which was a weekly, and they requested Gāndhijī to edit the weekly. As he was anxious at that time to expound the inner meaning of Satyāgraha to the public, he took up the editorship and converted *Young India* into a bi-weekly. But later, when the *Bombay Chronicle* was restored, he made *Young India* again a weekly and removed it to Ahmedābād. About the same time *Nava Jīvan,* which was originally a Gujarātī monthly, was also placed at his disposal. Gāndhijī con-

verted this into a weekly and issued both the weeklies—one in English and the other in Gujarātī—from Ahmedābād. His principle was not to publish any advertisements in these journals and to stop the journals if they were not self-supporting. So we find him appealing to the readers of *Young India* on 8th October 1919—the date on which it reverted to its weekly form under his editorship—to see that it secured the minimum circulation of 2,500. But in a year or two its circulation as well as that of *Nava Jīvan* rose to 40,000. These two journals, along with their predecessor *Indian Opinion* and their successor *Harijan,* will be regarded by posterity as the inexhaustible mines of Gāndhian philosophy.

Meanwhile, with the suspension of civil disobedience on the 18th April 1919, the sixth Satyāgraha struggle in India, which had been started for the purpose of resisting the Rowlatt Act, came to an end. It was, of course, a defeat, for violence broke out and nullified Satyāgraha.

X

When Gāndhijī suspended civil disobedience in Bombay on the 18th April 1919, he was not aware of what was going on in the Punjab. He could not go there because there was the Government prohibition against his entering the province. If he disobeyed the order and went, he would again be arrested and brought back to Bombay. That would serve no purpose. Moreover, when once the Civil Disobedience movement was suspended, he could not go against the Government order. Tales of incredible cruelty and horror came pouring in daily and he had to sit helplessly by and gnash his teeth. The actual facts were revealed to the public only long after the events. There were disturbances at Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwāla and Kasūr attended with serious violence. On the 10th April

Dr. Satyapāl and Dr. Kitchlew, who were organizing the activities of the Congress to be held that year at Amritsar and who had invited Gāndhijī to the Punjab, were suddenly spirited away by the Government to some unknown place. So an angry crowd gathered and wanted to go to the District Magistrate to know the whereabouts of their leaders. But they were prevented by the military pickets. There was a scuffle and the crowd was fired upon. There were some casualties and one or two deaths. Then the mob grew violent, set fire to some public buildings and killed five Englishmen. The civil authorities of the place now took fright and, on their own initiative, handed over the town to the military, in anticipation of the sanction of the higher authorities. Martial law was actually declared at Amritsar only on the 15th, but even from the 10th the place was in the hands of the military.

On the 13th, which was the Hindu New Year's day, there was a large gathering of men in a place called Jāllianwāla Bāgh. The place was once a garden, but for a long time it had been an open space enclosed on all sides by the walls of high buildings surrounding it, except for a narrow lane, which formed a kind of bottle-neck entrance to it. Brigadier General Dyer, who had issued a proclamation in the morning that any gathering of four men would be considered an unlawful assembly and would be dispersed by force of arms, if necessary, heard of this gathering at 4-30 P.M. and went there with a party of troops and two armoured cars with machine guns. The lane leading to the Bāgh was too narrow for the armoured cars. So they were left behind. He marched with the infantry through the narrow lane and, without giving any time for the huge crowd to disperse, ordered his men to fire. A continuous fire was directed wherever the crowd was densest. After firing 1,600 rounds in ten minutes he

had to stop, because his ammunition had amost run out. He admitted later in his evidence that he would have used the machine guns, if he had been able to get the armoured cars down the lane into the Bāgh. After this heroic deed, he marched back his troops to his quarters. He made no attempt to attend to the wounded. He sent no ambulance cars or any kind of assistance to the maimed and the dying. They were left the whole night there, without any water to drink and without any kind of medical assistance. Asked later at the enquiry why he did not attend to the wounded, he said it was not his job. Even according to the official estimate, there were 1,137 serious casualities and 397 deaths, as a result of firing on that day. General Dyer frankly confessed thus in his written statement on the incident:—

".. ..it was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from the military point of view not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity."

His action had the full support of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, who caused a telegram to be sent to him, "Your action correct. Lieutenant Governor approves."

The gallant General distinguished himself in various other ways also. During his regime in Amritsar public flogging was common, the machinery for the operation having been set up in many prominent parts of the town. But the most noteworthy of his achievements was what was known as "the crawling order." A missionary lady doctor named Miss Sherwood had been attacked in a lane by some people, but later rescued by others. So General Dyer stationed his soldiers at either end of the street in which this incident had occurred and gave orders that every Indian who had to go through the street must crawl through it on his hands and knees. This order was in force from 19th to 24th April.

The atrocities were not confined to Amritsar. Lahore, Gujaranwāla, Kasūr and Sheikupura witnessed similar scenes. Colonel Johnson, Colonel O'Brien, Captain Doveton and Mr. Bosworth Smith shared the honours with Brigadiar General Dyer. Incredibly severe punishments were inflicted on the people even for minor offences, the aim of the military authorities being to strike terror into the hearts of the people. For instance, it is reported that, when a martial law notice which had been put up on the walls of a College in Lahore was found torn, the whole staff of the College, including the Principal, were arrested and marched to the Fort, where they were kept in custody for three days. To make a long story short, we may say that the military rule in the Punjab in those terrible months of April and May 1919 was one of the darkest pages in the history of the British Indian Administration.

The facts about these atrocities leaked out only gradually after the Martial Law was withdrawn on the 11th June. A shock of horror passed through the whole country. There was indignation everywhere, and a demand for an immediate inquiry. The Viceroy, therefore, announced in September the appointment of a Committee presided over by Lord Hunter, a Scottish judge, to inquire and report. The Committee began to work in October, that is, six months after the events, and its report was published only in May, 1920, that is, a year after the events. But before the Committee began to work, the Government of India passed an Act of Indemnity protecting its officers. After the Hunter Committee began its work, its President refused to secure even the temporary release of the Punjab leaders from their jails to collect evidence. So the Congress decided not to lead evidence before the official committee, but appointed a Committee of its own to enquire and report on the Punjab affairs. The Congress Committee

consisted of Gāndhijī and other eminent men like Messrs. C. R. Das, Abbas Tyabji and M. R. Jayakar. The task of organizing the work of this committee and of drafting its report was entrusted to Gāndhijī. Accordingly he visited the Punjab in October 1919 and brought out his report in March 1920. He says there is not a single conscious exaggeration in the report anywhere and that every statement made is substantiated by evidence and that the evidence published is only a fraction of what was in the Committee's possession. And his opinion of this painful episode in the history of British rule in India may be stated in his own words:—

"This report, prepared as it was solely with a view to bringing out the truth and nothing but the truth, will enable the reader to see to what lengths the British Government is capable of going and what inhumanities and barbarities it is capable of perpetrating in order to maintain its power."[1]

XI

While the Congress inquiry in the Punjab was still going on, Gāndhijī received an invitation to attend a joint conference of Hindus and Muslims in Delhi during November to discuss the question of the Khilāfat. The Muslims of India had helped the British Government against Turkey in the Great War on the promise of the Premier that their holy places in Arabia, Mesopotamia, etc., would be kept under Muslim control and that nothing would be done to disturb the integrity of the Turkish Empire, the Sultan of which was their Caliph. When the war came to an end and the severe terms that were about to be offered to Turkey got abroad, there was alarm among the Muslims. And the Hindu leaders sympathized with them. So the first Khilāfat conference was held at Delhi on November 23, 1919, and Gāndhijī was invited to attend it. Many resolutions

[1] *The Story of My Experiments,* (1940 Edition), p. 585.

were passed at this conference, One of them called upon Hindus and Muslims to take the Swadeshi vow and to boycott foreign goods. But Gāndhijī felt that something more than a boycott was necessary. It was then that the idea of non-co-operation with the Government came into his mind. He was speaking at the conference in broken Hindī and could find no suitable word for his idea. So he used the English word non-co-operation for the first time—a word which has now become current coin to designate a species of Satyāgraha.

A month after this conference, the Congress session was held at Amritsar, and with that session in 1919 begins the influence of Gāndhijī in Congress politics. That influence has remained unimpaired till today. Curiously enough the most important subject discussed in the Amritsar Congress session was not the atrocities in the Punjab, as the Congress inquiry report on these was not yet ready, but the so-called Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. To understand these we have to go back a little.

On the 20th of August 1917, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, had made his famous declaration that the policy of His Majesty's Government was the progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. To formulate a scheme of reforms in accordance with this declaration Mr. Montagu visited India in the winter months of 1917. He and the Viceroy interviewed representatives of all schools of thought and drew up a report, which was published in July 1918 after Montagu's return to England. In accordance with this report and the despatches of the Government of India, which were considered very reactionary by Indians, a Bill was brought before Parliament in July 1919. The Bill was referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses, and a number of deputations from

India went and pressed their views before this Committee and especially pleaded for some element of responsibility in the Central Government. But this was not granted, and after some minor changes, the Government of India Bill was passed and became law in December 1919. So at the Amritsar Congress session the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms embodied in this Act came up for discussion.

There was great disappointment in the hearts of Indians, and some leaders were for rejecting the reforms altogether as being inadequate and unsatisfactory. This section was headed by C. R. Dās. But there were others who were for working the reforms for what they were worth. This section was headed by Gāndhijī, and after a keen fight Gāndhijī won. His amendment was finally accepted by all in a slightly modified form. At this stage, therefore, Gāndhijī was still an apostle of co-operation with the British Government, as he had been its recruiting sergeant. Also, when the Punjab atrocities came up for discussion, he was anxious that the Congress should condemn the acts of mob violence as well. But his resolution was thrown out by the Subjects Committee. Gāndhijī was disappointed. No one knew more than he the extent of the cruel wrongs done to the people of the Punjab, for he had conducted the inquiry and was drafting its report, but he also knew there was violence on the part of the people and he was particular that the Congress should condemn it. Therefore when the Subjects Committee threw out his resolution, he firmly, but respectfully, declared that it would be impossible for him to be in the Congress, if it did not accept his view on this point. Thus he threatened to non-co-operate, not with the Government, but with the Congress at Amritsar. The Congress finally passed his resolution, expressing its deep regret and its condemnation of the "excesses committed in certain

parts of the Punjab and Gujarāt resulting in the loss of lives and injury to person and property during the month of April last."

XII

But all this was unfortunately changed in a few months. Circumstances forced the great apostle of co-operation of 1919 to become a greater apostle of non-co-operation in 1920. In May 1920 both the Hunter Committee's report and the proposed terms of peace to be imposed on Turkey were published, and both of them profoundly shocked the Indian public. The Hunter Committee's report was not unanimous. On the question of facts there was no difference of opinion. But the interpretation of the facts by the European members, who formed the majority, was widely different from the interpretation by the Indian members, who formed the minority. The European gentlemen characterized General Dyer's action as only a grave error of judgement, while the Indians characterized it as inhuman and un-British. In fact, even the Government's despatch took a more serious view of General Dyer's action than the majority report of the Hunter Committee, though the Indian public regarded the despatch as being far too lenient. But the most surprising and alarming thing of all was that the House of Lords refused to endorse even the mild censure of General Dyer contained in the majority report. This seemed to show that the British rulers had absolutely no regard for Indian feelings and that the proposed reforms were only an eye-wash. Gāndhijī's comment, given in *Young India* dated 9th June 1920, was:

"A scandal of this magnitude cannot be tolerated by the nation, if it is to preserve its self-respect and become a free partner in the empire."

The publication of the Treaty of Sevres again

dashed to the ground all the hopes of the Indian Muslims. All their Khilāfat conferences and deputations came to nothing, and they were asked by the Viceroy gently to swallow the bitter pill. These two events, therefore, set the country in a blaze. On the 30th May, the All-India Congress Committee met at Benares to discuss what action should be taken on the Hunter Committee's report and on the Turkish peace terms and decided to hold a special session of the Congress.

Meanwhile Gāndhijī wanted to educate the country and suggest a line of action in keeping with the traditions of India. On the 22nd June, he addressed an open letter to the Viceroy in which he explained his attitude to the Khilāfat and the Punjab wrongs and pointed out how he was being driven to advise his countrymen to withhold their co-operation from a Government which had so little regard for the feelings of its subjects. And on the 1st of August, when Non-co-operation was formally inaugurated, Gāndhijī again wrote to the Viceroy returning the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal which had been granted to him in 1915 for his humanitarian work in South Africa. In this letter he gives in a nut-shell his reasons for non-co-operating with the Government.

"Your Excellency's light-hearted treatment of the official crime, your exoneration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Mr Montagu's despatch and, above all, the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and callous disregard of the feelings of Indians betrayed by the House of Lords have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the empire, have estranged me completely from the present Government and have disabled me from tendering, as I have hitherto whole-heartedly tendered, my loyal co-operation."

He then toured the country along with the Alī Brothers and explained the policy and programme of Non-co-operation to vast audiences. He also wrote

illuminating articles on the movement in his two journals —*Young India* and *Nava Jīvan*. Thus having prepared the ground, he went to Calcutta in the first week of September to attend the special session of the Congress which was held there from 4th to 9th under the Presidentship of Lālā Lājpat Rāi. The momentous resolution on non-co-operation was moved by Gāndhijī himself and was hotly contested. An amendment to the effect that a mission should instead be sent to England to lay India's grievances before the Prime Minister and explain the temper of the people was moved by Bepin Chandra Pāl and supported by C. R. Dās—the two great Bengālī leaders. But, after a long discussion, it was thrown out and the original resolution was passed by 1886 against 884 votes. By this resolution the Congress adopted the policy of progressive non-violent non-co-operation until the Khilāfat and the Punjab wrongs were righted and Swarājya was established and advised the country to take the following steps:—(*a*) surrender of titles, honorary offices and the nominated seats in Local Bodies, (*b*) refusal to attend Government levees, durbars and other official and semi-official functions, (*c*) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned or aided by Government, and the establishment of national schools, (*d*) gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and the establishment of private arbitration courts, (*e*) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for services in Mesopotamia, (*f*) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature from the Reformed Councils and the refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate, and (*g*) boycott of foreign goods.

In connection with the last item, the nation was advised to adopt Swadeshi and to revive hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of the

millions of weavers who had abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement.

The passing of the non-co-operation resolution by the special Congress at Calcutta in September, 1920 had its immediate effect on the elections to the Reformed Councils which were held in November. About 80 per cent. of the voters refrained from voting and in many places empty ballot-boxes were returned. In various parts of India Congressmen resigned their titles and honorary offices, lawyers suspended their practice and joined the movement and students gave up their studies. There was wild enthusiasm throughout the country. To many it appeared like the dawn of a new day. But some began to wonder whether the man who let loose forces of such magnitude amidst a vast population would be able ultimately to control them and whether the country so suddenly awakened from its torpor of sleep could really take a sober view of things. Gāndhijī was no doubt declaring in a thousand voices, here, there and everywhere, that non-violence, discipline, self-purification and absolute honesty were the very essence of the movement. But the vast majority of the people who hailed the movement with joy were only carried away by the novelty, the excitement and the defiance of authority which inevitably accompanied the non-co-operation programme and were far from cultivating the virtues demanded by their leader. Even the older Congressmen who had opposed Gāndhijī at first now bowed down to the inevitable and allowed themselves to be carried away by the flood. The movement spread not only from town to town, but also from village to village, and it may be said that for the first time in its history the Indian National Congress came into touch with the masses of the land and became truly national.

If the special session of the Congress at Calcutta was a triumph for Gāndhijī and his programme of non-

co-operation, the usual session in December at Nāgpūr was a greater triumph. The Nāgpūr session of 1920 was in many ways a momentous one. It marked the parting of the ways. The old Congress was dead, and the new Congress, reorganized by Gāndhijī and inspired by his ideals, came into existence. At this session, which was attended by over 14,000 delegates and presided over by an old veteran leader from the south, Mr. C. Vijayarāghavāchariār of Salem, not only was the non-co-operation resolution of the Special Congress confirmed and passed unanimously after a few minor changes, but also the creed and the constitution of the Congress were radically changed. The constitution of the old Congress was a legacy from Gokhale. He had drawn up a few rules which served as a basis for the Congress machinery. These rules were now felt to be inadequate for the growing needs of the Congress. At Amritsar, the preceding year, Gāndhijī had been requested to draw up a constitution with the help of a small committee. The new constitution framed by this committee came up for discussion at Nāgpūr. According to the new creed, the goal of the Congress is defined to be "the attainment of Swarājya by the people of India by peaceful and legitimate means." And the most important changes in the constitution were the restriction of the number of delegates, the reorganization of the Congress provinces on a linguistic basis and the appointment of a Working Committee of fifteen members including the President of the Congress, the Secretaries and the Treasurers. The last was a momentous change, for, as we shall see, the Working Committee henceforth became the Cabinet of the Congress Government and provided a continuous organization for carrying out the Congress resolutions and initiating new policies. The Working Committee began to meet month after month at different centres to take stock of the situation and give the necessary

instructions to the people.

At the end of March 1921, it met at Bezwāda and drew up what came to be known as the Bezwāda programme. According to this programme, it was resolved that before 30th June the Congress should raise one crore of rupees for the Tilak Swarājya Fund, enrol one crore of members for the Congress and set up twenty lakhs of spinning-wheels in the country. Therefore tremendous efforts were made in the next three months by the Congress workers in all provinces. Gāndhijī made a whirlwind tour through Bihār, Assam and Southern India, addressing meetings attended by tens of thousands. A graphic account of this tour is given to us by Krishṇadās in his *Seven months with Mahātmā Gāndhi*. It really takes one's breath away to note the superhuman energy put forward by the great leader in travelling incessantly from place to place without sleep, granting interviews to all and sundry, discussing details with the Congress workers, giving *darśan* to crowds at every railway station along his route even at dead of night, and all the time regularly contributing articles to *Young India* and *Nava Jīvan* on the various aspects of non-co-operation—articles which will be treasured by posterity as the authoritative exposition of the philosophy of Satyāgraha. We know from Krishṇadās's account amidst what scenes of terrific din and bustle, which would have driven any ordinary man mad, Gāndhijī would sit down quietly and write those masterpieces in which there was not a comma to be changed afterwards. The whole nation was borne aloft on a mighty wave of enthusiasm in those wonderful months of 1921. Some of the finest spirits in the country made the greatest sacrifices of their lives. Men who were earning thousands at the bar and living in great luxury voluntarily gave up their practice, burnt their foreign clothes and, clad in coarse Khaddar, threw themselves

into the struggle. Many a poor man in humble walks of life reduced himself to beggary rather than co-operate with Government and earn his bread. If an impartial history of those days should ever be written, what tribute of praise would have to be paid to those thousands of nameless men and women who threw themselves into the struggle and lost their all and remained beggars for the rest of their lives—which is a harder lot than death! Gāndhijī's formula of "Swarāj within a year" was caught up and echoed and re-echoed throughout the country. But the qualifying conditions which went with the formula were conveniently forgotten. No doubt, by the end of July, the Bezwāda programme was almost carried out. The Tilak Swarāj Fund of one crore of rupees was over-subscribed. The charkas came up nearly to twenty lakhs. But the membership of the Congress reached only half of the required number. And, what is important, little or no attention was paid to the most fundamental part of Gāndhijī's programme *viz.*, discipline in non-violence. Already there were ominous signs of the coming disaster. Some incidents which were not directly due to non-co-operation but which might be said to be due to the spirit of defiance engendered by it occurred in various parts of the country. The agrarian riots in U P., the Akāli Movement in the Punjab resulting in the Nankāna tragedy, in which some two hundred Sikhs lost their lives, the disturbances in Malegaon in Nāsik District, where several policemen were killed, the exodus of the coolies from the Assam Tea Plantations resulting in sympathetic strikes in East Bengal, and, above all, the rebellion of the Moplahs in Malabar, who committed indescribable outrages on the Hindu population, were all pointers on the way that Non-co-operation was going.

Meanwhile the Government was carefully watching the movement. At first it looked upon it as "the most

foolish of all foolish schemes." Then it took action only against those who went beyond the limits of non-violence set by Gāndhijī. But from the beginning of March 1921, repression began in right earnest, for no Government could sit quiet, when a movement with the avowed object of paralysing it was gaining strength every day. In April Lord Reading succeeded Lord Chelmsford as Viceroy. An interview was arranged between him and Gāndhijī by Paṇḍit Madan Mohan Mālavīya, as a result of which the Alī Brothers were made to apologize for some of the passages in their speeches which had a tendency to incite people to violence. But the truce did not last long. For in July the All-India Khilāfat Conference at Karāchī presided over by Moulāna Mahomed Alī passed a resolution, declaring it unlawful for faithful Muslims to serve in the army or help or acquiesce in its recruitment. And, soon after, the All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay and passed a series of resolutions boycotting the forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales, advising all persons belonging to the Congress to discard completely the use of foreign cloth from the first of August and to burn the discarded cloth and calling upon people to carry on more vigorously the peaceful picketing of liquor shops. Accordingly, on the 31st July, Mahātmā Gāndhi set fire to a huge pile of foreign cloth at Bombay. Lord Reading now decided to act and on the 14th September Maulānā Mahomed Alī was arrested at Waltair while he was travelling with Gāndhijī, and his brother Shaukat Alī was arrested at Bombay. These arrests were made on account of the resolution passed at the Karāchī Conference. The challenge of the Government was at once taken up by both Muslims and Hindus. At hundreds of meetings held by Muslim organizations the Karāchī resolution was repeated, and Gāndhijī and fifty other prominent Congressmen issued a manifesto assert-

ing similar opinions.[1]

It was into this troubled atmosphere that the Prince of Wales was ushered, when he landed at Bombay on the 17th November 1921. The Congress had advised a *hartal* on that day throughout India. The Bombay *hartal* resulted in serious riots which went on for three or four days. The mob violence expressed itself in the burning of tram-cars, smashing of liquor shops and assaults on Parsis who took part in the welcome. Gāndhijī was in Bombay at the time and he saw with his own eyes some of these acts of violence done by persons shouting "Mahātmā Gāndhiki Jai". He was sick of the whole thing and declared that Swarāj under these conditions stank in his nostrils and imposed on himself a fast for five days till order was restored. The success of the *hartal,* however, produced panic among Europeans, and they pressed the Government to take immediate action against the Khilāfat and Congress volunteer corps which was organizing the boycott in various places. So, in Bengal, these and similar bodies were declared unlawful, and immediately many prominent Congress leaders courted arrest by becoming members of these associations. Mr. C. R. Dās, the President-designate of the Congress that year, his wife and son and Paṇḍit Motilāl Nehru, and his son Jawaharlāl, Lālā Lājpat Rāi and many others were accordingly sent to jail. Paṇḍit Mālavīya at this juncture tried to bring about peace between the Government and the Congress. Lord Reading was willing to negotiate, for he was anxious

[1] In a letter, dated 11th October, 1921, the Right Hon'ble V. S. Śrīnivāsā Śāstrī writes to a friend —"This morning's news is that he (*viz*, Gāndhijī) has in so many words called on the Government to arrest him. How can Government forbear any more? Of course the outcome will be terrible You and I can't help it. But we can weep, let us do so. If a great man, honoured and venerated as semi-divine, *will* run amok and occasion a tragedy, he can do so. There must be a tragedy. He plays his part, Government plays its part, and between them the country bleeds, suffers and loses. Fate, my dear man, fate."—*Śāstrī's Letters,* p. 225.

that there should be no boycott of the Prince in Calcutta on the 25th December. Negotiations were opened with C. R. Dās in Alipore Jail and Gāndhijī at Ahmedābād. But, as India is a country of distances, even telegraphic replies came too late and negotiations were broken off. And the *hartal* at Calcutta was complete. It was reported that the Prince passed through what looked like a deserted and dead city.

A few days afterwards, the Congress session was held at Ahmedābād—Gāndhijī's own place. As the President-elect, Mr. C. R. Dās, was in jail, Hakīm Ajmāl Khān was elected to take his place. It was a short session, there being only one important resolution. But the atmosphere and the physical features of this session were entirely different from those of the preceding sessions. The members were all dressed in white *khādi*, they squatted on the floor, as chairs and tables were dispensed with, and the proceedings were mainly in Hindustānī. The main resolution that was passed, after reaffirming the faith of the Congress in non-violent non-co-operation and calling upon all to become members of volunteer organizations, proceeded to lay down "that Civil Disobedience is the only civilized and effective substitute for an armed rebellion" and advised all Congress workers and others who believed in peaceful methods "to organize individual Civil Disobedience and mass Civil Disobedience, when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence." And, in view of the country-wide arrests of prominent leaders, the resolution appointed Gāndhijī the sole executive authority of the Congress, with the full powers of the All-India Congress Committee, except the power of concluding peace with the Government or of changing the creed. It is interesting to note that at this session a resolution moved by Maulānā Hasrat Mohāni to change the creed, so as to make complete independence

the goal of the Congress, was bitterly opposed by Gāndhijī and thrown out by a large majority. This was the position at the end of 1921. But, as we shall see, independence did become the goal of the Congress in 1929, with the full assent of Gāndhijī.

The year 1922 began full of hope for Congressmen. It was thought that, within a few days, Gāndhijī would start Civil Disobedience and that the Government, unable to face a no-tax campaign, would, no doubt, try repression on a larger scale than before, but would ultimately be forced to come to terms. But some prominent men in the country who did not belong to the Congress were alarmed at the prospects of the Civil Disobedience and held a conference at Bombay in the middle of January to arrange for a truce between the Government and the Congress and negotiate for a Round Table Conference for discussing the three points at issue—the Khilāfat, the Punjab wrongs and Swarāj. Gāndhijī attended this conference and helped its deliberations, not as an official representative of the Congress, but in his private capacity. This Conference unanimously passed a resolution and opened correspondence with the Viceroy. But the Viceroy rejected their terms. And so Gāndhijī, who had postponed the starting of Civil Disobedience to the end of the month, was left free to go his own way.

While these negotiations were going on, the attention of the whole country was rivetted on the Bardoli tāluk in Gujarāt, where Gāndhijī proposed to start a no-tax campaign in a few weeks. In this tāluk there were many men who had worked with Gāndhijī in South Africa and who had returned home. They knew his methods thoroughly and he had absolute faith in their non-violence. He was anxious that the whole country should watch this unique experiment in Satyāgraha on a large scale conducted by himself personally. He really hoped that, if he succeeded in Bardoli, it would be

unnecessary for other parts of the country to resort to Civil Disobedience and undergo all the untold suffering it involved for the simple reason that Government would yield to the demands of the Congress and the whole campaign would be called off or suspended. So in the month of January 1922 India was tense with excitement. Thousands of men and women joined the struggle and were arrested and imprisoned. Many well-known leaders who had sacrificed their fortunes and careers were already behind the prison bars. It was said that at this time there were about 25,000 political prisoners in the country and more were being added every day. And there was competition among some districts as to which of them should satisfy the conditions for Civil Disobedience and get the permission of the Generalissimo to start the campaign and take the first place in national martyrdom. Thus passed the tense month of January 1922. On the 1st of February, Gāndhijī in his usual manner addressed a letter to the Viceroy notifying that, if within seven days' time all the non-co-operation prisoners who were not guilty of violence were released and if the Press were freed from all administrative control, he would postpone civil disobedience of an aggressive character. The Government promptly published a reply, justifying their repressive policy on the ground that there had been a systematic campaign of violence, intimidation and obstruction by volunteer associations connected with the non-co-operation movement. But, before the time limit mentioned in Gāndhijī's letter was past, the tug of war between him and the Government, which began in such high spirits on both sides, suddenly came to an end on account of an incident which set back the hands of the clock and made the Congress go into the wilderness and eat the humble pie for eight long years. Thus does man propose and God dispose.

On the 5th of February, a Congress procession at Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpūr, United Provinces, came to a clash with a posse of about twenty police constables and a sub-inspector, as a result of which all the policemen perished. Let the gruesome tragedy be related in Gāndhijī's own words:—

"I understand that the constables who were so brutally hacked to death had given much provocation. They had even gone back upon the word just given by the Inspector that they would not be molested, but when the procession had passed, the stragglers were interfered with and abused by the constables. The former cried for help. The mob returned. The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was exhausted and they returned to the Thāna for safety. The mob, my informant tells me, therefore set fire to the Thāna. The self-imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life and, as they did so, they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into raging flames."[1]

Gāndhijī was shocked by the news. He looked upon this incident as the third great warning given by God that India was not yet ready for mass civil disobedience. The first warning was in 1919, when violence broke out as a result of agitation against the Rowlatt Act. The second warning was the Bombay riots in November 1921, when he was an eye-witness to the deeds of violence perpetrated in his name. The third warning was the mob-violence at Chauri Chaura. It was to him 'the bitterest cup of humiliation'. He drank it and came to a momentous decision which paralysed the whole country for several years. The Working Committee meeting was held at Bardoli on the 12th February, and under his guidance the Committee called off the Civil Disobedience movement in all its forms and asked the people of Bardoli and other places, who were preparing themselves for a no-tax campaign, to pay up their taxes at once and divert their attention to the peaceful constructive programme of (1) enlisting

[1] *Young India*, February, 16, 1922.

members of the Congress (2) popularizing the spinning-wheel and producing Khaddar (3) organizing national schools (4) improving the condition of depressed classes (5) organizing temperance campaigns (6) reviving the village Panchāyat system (7) promoting goodwill among all classes through social service and (8) collecting regular subscriptions to the Tilak Swarāj Fund. The country stood aghast when this resolution was published. Many people cried, " Chauri Chaura has cut the throat of India." But Gāndhijī stood unmoved. Angry letters were sent to him. He was bitterly attacked and torn to pieces at the All-India Congress Committee meeting by the Bengal and Mahārāṣṭra members. A vote of censure was tabled against him, but could not be passed. Even to this day there are people who say that the Bardoli decision, consequent on Chauri Chaura violence, was the greatest political blunder of Gāndhijī's life. But to this day he stands by what he wrote at the time:—

" The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound, and I venture to assure the doubters that the country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error."

The impending danger of mass Civil Disobedience was past. The leader of the movement courageously reversed the whole movement at the eleventh hour and himself put on sackcloth and ashes, to the intense surprise and chagrin of his followers. At this psychological moment, the Government of Lord Reading, by one of its most graceless and unchivalrous acts, arrested Gāndhijī on the 13th of March 1922 and committed him to trial on a charge of sedition. The great trial, which began on the 18th, has, in the opinion of many, already gone into history and taken its place by the trial of Socrates and the trial of Jesus. The written statement

submitted by Gāndhijī to the Court is a terrible indictment of the British Rule in India. In this statement he gives a brief account of his career and explains why he, who was a staunch loyalist and co-operator, has become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. The Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwāla Massacre, the broken promises of the British Prime Minister to the Muslims of India and the unsatisfactory reforms introduced after the war and the more unsatisfactory spirit in which they were administered were only the immediate causes of disaffection. The root cause is the appalling poverty of the Indian masses, which is the result of systematic exploitation. He writes:—

"No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history."

He goes on to say that the section of the Indian Penal Code under which he was charged was one under which mere promotion of disaffection was a crime. Some of the most loved of India's patriots had been convicted under it. He therefore considered it a privilege to be charged under it. He had no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less could he have any disaffection towards the King's person. But he held it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which, in its totality, had done more harm to India than any previous system. India was less manly under the British rule than she ever had been before. Holding such a belief, he considered it to be a sin to have affection for the system. In his opinion non-co-operation with evil was as much a duty as co-operation with good. But in the past non-co-operation had been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. He was endeavouring to show to his countrymen that vio-

lent non-co-operation only multiplied evil and that, as evil could only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil required complete abstention from violence.

And replying to the charge that, as an educated man, he ought to have known the consequences of his preaching disaffection to the Government and that he should be held responsible for the outbursts of mob violence in Bombay and Chauri Chaura, Gāndhijī said in his oral statement:—

"I knew them. I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk, and if I was set free, I would still do the same. I would be failing in my duty if I did not do so.....I wanted to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is the last article of my faith. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I consider has done an irreparable harm to my country or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it; and I am therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here therefore to invite and submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what, in law, is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen."

The judge then passed his judgment. He sentenced Gāndhijī to six years' simple imprisonment, and the august prisoner was spirited away from the nation. This was the end of the seventh Satyāgraha struggle known as Non-violent Non-co-operation. It was again a definite defeat, as the struggle had to be given up on account of the outburst of violence.

XIII

The prison walls closed on Gāndhijī on the 18th of March 1922. The outside world knew nothing about him for a year and ten months. On the 13th of January 1924 the painful news was announced that he had to

undergo an operation the preceding night at the Sassoon Hospital, Poona. A press communique issued later on the same day stated that his temperature was normal and that the doctors were satisfied with the results of the operation. The country heaved a sigh of relief. The same day, the Right Hon'ble V. S. Srīnivāsa Śāstrī, who had seen Gāndhijī immediately before the operation, also issued a statement giving some details of his interview. In the course of that statement he said:—

"I then pressed him again for a message to his people, his followers or the country. He was surprisingly firm on this subject. He said he was a prisoner of Government and he must observe the prisoner's code of honour scrupulously. He was supposed to be civilly dead. He had no knowledge of outside events and he could not have anything to do with the public. He had no message....."

On the 5th of February Gāndhijī was released, but he did not leave the hospital till the 10th of March, when he was removed to Juhu, a sea-side resort, a few miles from Bombay. Here he stayed nearly three months to recoup his health. But we may say he re-entered public life in the first week of April 1924, when, after two years' interruption, he resumed the editorship of his two weeklies—*Young India* and *Navajīvan*. In the very first article he wrote:—

"I had hoped for the release by the act of the Swarāj Parliament and to be able to take my humble share in serving free India. That was not to be. We have yet to attain freedom. I have no new programme. My faith in the oldest is just as bright as ever, if not brighter."

During his absence of two years the country had been in a state of profound depression. Many people had burnt their fingers and undergone terrible suffering —all for nothing. Many students especially had been disillusioned and had to go back to their schools and colleges with abject apologies. The tide of enthusiasm generated by the non-co-operation movement, but sud-

denly checked by the Chauri-Chaura incident, began to ebb, leaving behind much ugly slime and many rotten weeds. When Turkey became a secular republic and the bottom was knocked out of the Khilāfat agitation, the Hindu-Muslim unity of the non-co-operation days disappeared, and its place was taken by serious Hindu-Muslim riots in many important towns. Within the Congress itself there arose divisions and parties. Many Congressmen were dissatisfied with the tame constructive programme of Bardoli. Some wanted to go ahead with Civil Disobedience, some were for entering the councils and fighting the Government there. In fact, the history of the Congress from 1922 to 1929 is one long-drawn struggle between the 'No-changers', who were satisfied with the Bardoli programme and wanted no change, and the 'Pro-changers', who were dissatisfied with it and wanted to enter councils and offer parliamentary opposition. The latter constituted themselves into the Swarājya party under the powerful lead of Paṇḍit Motilal Nehru and Mr. C. R. Dās. When Gāndhijī came out of the prison, he saw at once that the country was more in favour of some political action than of mere social reconstruction, as contemplated by the Bardoli programme. So, to the great vexation and disappointment of his own loyal followers, the No-changers,[1] he began to make one concession after another to the Swarājya party. While personally he confined himself to the spread of khādi, the removal of untouchability, the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and other items of the constructive programme and exhorted the No-

[1] One famous Non-co-operator and leader of the 'No-changers' of those days—Mr. C. Rājagopālāchārı—has since recanted his faith. For in *The Way Out*—a pamphlet published in 1943—he writes:—

"In 1919, and again in 1930, we refused our co-operation in the making of the constitution, and though this refusal may have helped to vindicate national self-respect it did not help in a positive way, but left constructive work to reactionary elements. It will be sad if that mistake is repeated for a third time. Let us prevent this by doing the right thing now"

changers to help him, he allowed the Swarājya party a free hand in the councils. Thus by his selflessness, generosity and statesmanship he kept the two wings of the Congress together. Greater tact and skill were required in guiding the nation through the period of depression than through the period of elation. There is no doubt that, but for Gāndhijī and his unfailing political sense, the Congress would have split into two during these years, as it had done at Sūrat in 1907. But even he could not keep the Hindus and the Muslims together. Hindu-Muslim unity was the very breath of his nostrils. It was so in South Africa, where the wealthy Muslim merchants were all his intimate friends. It was so in the Non-co-operation days, when he befriended the Alī Brothers and made common cause with them. In fact, many Hindu leaders were greatly dissatisfied with the part he played in the Khilāfat agitation. They feared that, by the encouragement he gave to the extra-territorial religious sentiments of Muslims, he was making a fanatical people more fanatical. Their fears had come true to a certain extent already in the Moplah rebellion of Malabār in South India. And now came a series of Hindu-Muslim riots in Northern India to vex the soul of Gāndhijī. In the very year in which he was released, there were riots in Dēlhi, Gulbarga, Lucknow, Shāhjahānpūr Allāhābād, Jubbalpore and Kohat. The Kohat riots were the worst of all. They occurred on the 9th and 10th of September 1924. After the lootings, the forced conversions and the carnage of those two days, four thousand Hindus had to flee from the place and take refuge in Rawalpindi and other towns and live on the charity of others. Gāndhijī was then at Delhi as the guest of Moulānā Mahomed Alī. He was deeply pained by these events. He thought that in some way he was responsible for these riots. He said to himself,

"Had I not been instrumental in bringing into being the vast

energy of the people? I must find the remedy if the energy proved self-destructive."[1]

He passed two days and nights in restlessness and pain and imposed upon himself as a penance a fast of twenty-one days commencing from the 18th of September. On that date he issued a statement in which he said:—

"The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that, whenever there is distress which we cannot remove, one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my own dearest ones. Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am therefore imposing on myself a fast of twenty-one days together."

The country was shocked to hear that Gāndhijī, who had just recovered from a major operation for appendicitis, made up his mind to do this severe penance for himself and his people. It breathlessly followed the progress of the fast from day to day. And the leaders of both communities met in a conference at Delhi and pledged themselves to do their utmost to preserve peace and laid down certain principles relating to freedom of conscience and religious practice and the limitations to which they must be subject. The fast,[2] of course, had its immediate effect on the Hindu-Muslim tension, and for the time being there was created a fund of good feeling between the two communities.

[1] *Young India*, 25th September, 1924.

[2] Incidentally it was the occasion also for one of the most profound utterances of Gāndhi the saint. For in the article in *Young India* written on the eighth day of the fast he says:—

"I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source *I cannot therefore detach myself from the wickedest soul (nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous)*. Whether therefore I will or no, I must involve in my experiment the whole of my kind. Nor can I do without experiment. Life is but an endless series of experiments."

Thus does Gāndhijī lay the unique claim that in his great experiment of non-violence is involved the future of humanity.

The twenty-one days' fast came to a successful termination on the 10th of October, and we find him with his usual energy attending the All Parties' Conference in Bombay on the 21st and 22nd of November and the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the 23rd and 24th and presiding over the Belgaum Congress session in December. His Presidential Address at Belgaum set the seal on the compromise arrived at between himself and the Swarājya party in the Congress. As Dr. Pattābhi Sītārāmayya puts it in his *History of the Congress,* " They agreed to the spinning franchise. He agreed to their work in councils." The spinning franchise meant that in future the members of the Congress should, instead of paying the annual subscription of annas four, give 2,000 yards of hand-spun yarn every month. But this proved unworkable, and the very next year the four anna subscription was restored as an alternative. However, the clause about spinning franchise shows Gāndhijī's ideal of Swāraj. He explains its significance in his address:—

" The qualification for the franchise should be neither property nor position, but manual work, such, for example, as suggested for the Congress franchise. Literacy or property test has proved to be elusive. Manual work gives an opportunity to all who wish to take part in the government and the well-being of the state."

Thus, if Gāndhijī had his way, he would peacefully alter the very basis of the present society and establish a new social and economic order in which there would be no distinction between classes and masses, and hatred of rank and riches would give place to the feelings of love, equality and brotherhood. His philosophy would result in a superior kind of socialism, in which private property is not violently abolished but peacefully regulated, and human personality is not smothered by the State, but given the fullest scope for expansion.

After giving the first place to the manual labour

franchise, Gāndhijī enumerates the following items as some of the requirements of Swarāj, as he would have it—the reduction of military expenditure, the cheapening of justice, the abolition of intoxicating drugs and liquors, the reduction of salaries, the re-distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis, the examination of the monopolies of foreigners, the guarantee of status to the Indian chiefs, the repeal of arbitrary powers, the abolition of race distinctions in services, the recognition of complete religious freedom for all denominations and administration through vernacular languages, with Hindustānī as the language of the Central Government and English as the language of inter-national diplomacy.

As a Congressman wishing to keep the Congress intact, Gāndhijī advised the suspension of non-co-operation, because the nation was not ready for it. But, as an individual, he himself would not suspend it so long as the Government remained what it was. He could not and would not hate Englishmen. Nor would he bear their yoke. He must fight unto death the unholy attempt to impose British methods and British institutions on India. But he would combat the attempt with non-violence. For him God is truth, and non-violence is the light that reveals the Truth. Swarāj is part of that Truth, and Satyāgraha is search for Truth. Satyāgraha in India was only suspended. He believed that India would come to her own in the near future, and that only through Satyāgraha.

XIV

After the Belgaum Congress in December 1924, Gāndhijī confined himself for about four years to the constructive programme and left the political field entirely to the Swarājya party. He toured through the country to spread his message. He exhorted the people to produce khaddar, to remove untouchability and to

promote Hindu-Muslim unity. In March 1925, we find him at Vaikom in Travancore, bringing about a settlement between the Travancore Government and a batch of people who offered Satyāgraha for the removal of the prohibition against the untouchable classes passing along certain streets in the town. In October we find him organizing the All-India Spinners' Association as an adjunct to the Congress organization, but with independent powers. In December he went to Cawnpore for the Congress session and formally handed over charge to the next President, Śrīmatī Sarojinī Devi.

In April 1926 Lord Irwin succeeded Lord Reading as Viceroy. On the day of his landing there were fierce communal riots going on in Calcutta. These riots ceased only after six weeks of confusion, vandalism and bloodshed. The new Viceroy's early speeches inspired some hope and confidence, especially as he passionately pleaded for communal unity. Communal unity was, however, fast receding from Indian politics. For, while the delegates for the Congress session were assembling at Gauhati in December 1926, the news came that Swāmī Śraddhānanda was shot dead in his sick bed by a Muslim, who had asked for an interview. And in the summer of 1927 there were again Hindu-Muslim riots in Lahore, Multān, Bareilly and Nāgpūr. The Viceroy repeated his exhortations and several unity conferences were held, but all in vain.

While the national leaders were still depressed on account of this ever-widening gulf between Hindus and Muslims, there came the sensational news in November 1927 of the appointment of the Simon Commission which was to decide the question of constitutional advance in India and from which Indians were totally excluded. According to the Act of 1919, a statutory commission for considering the question of further advance should be appointed at the end of ten years, *i.e.*, in 1929.

The Central Legislature, no doubt, passed a resolution, as early as 1921, asking for " a re-examination and revision of the constitution at an earlier date than 1929," but the request was turned down by the Secretary of State. And now the British Government suddenly appointed a statutory commission before the expiry of ten years. The time was most inopportune, as the country was in the throes of communal riots and political life was in a disorganized condition. It was thought[1] by some people that the conservative party wanted to settle India's constitutional question before the General Elections in 1929, lest a more progressive Government should come into power after the elections and concede the demands of Indians. Whatever that may be, there is no doubt that, since the tragedy of the Jallianwāllah Bāgh, there had been no act of the British Government which received such universal condemnation as the appointment of the Simon Commission. The appointment meant that, in deciding India's future, Indians should have absolutely no hand. They could plead, they could make representations, they could give evidence. But the recommending authority was a British Commission, and the deciding authority was the British Parliament. All political parties in India joined together in condemning this principle underlying the Simon Commission. The immediate effect of the appointment of the Commission was that the Congress decided not only to boycott it, but also to declare that the goal to be sought by Indians thereafter was not simply Swarāj, but Pūrṇa Swarāj or complete independence. Two resolutions to this effect were passed at the Congress session held at Madras in December 1927 and presided over by Dr. Ansāri. A resolution about independence had been brought up in the previous year at Gauhati, but it was thrown out, when Gāndhijī opposed it vehemently. Even this year,

[1] See Graham Pole's *India in Transition*, p. 79.

it was passed by the Subjects Committee when he was absent from it. And his comment on it afterwards in *Young India* was, "The Independence Resolution that was rejected last year was passed almost without opposition. I know the wording was harmless, but, in my opinion, it was hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed."

When the year 1928 opened, the whole country was pre-occupied with the boycott of the Simon Commission, and the Government was pre-occupied with the task of making the Commission a not too ridiculous failure. On the 2nd February, the Viceroy made a fighting speech in which, after taking pains to show that the Commission was not an affront to the honour of India, he declared that, whether Indian assistance was forthcoming or not, the enquiry would proceed and a report would be presented to Parliament. The very next day the Commission landed in Bombay. Its arrival was the signal for an immediate all-India *hartal*. The Government was incensed, and there were police charges wherever the Commission was greeted in its travels with black flag demonstrations and cries of "Go back, Simon."[1] After touring through India for about two months in this kind of atmosphere and making the best of a bad job, the Commission left for England at the end of March.

XV

The agitation over the Simon Commission had hardly subsided, before the attention of the whole country was riveted on an important Satyāgraha campaign going on in Bardoli. The campaign was not con-

[1] In Lahore, for instance, there was a vast gathering of people headed by Lālā Lājpat Rāi to demonstrate against the unwelcome Commission. There was a conflict between the police and the mob and many respected leaders received lāṭhi blows. Lālājī himself was beaten, and it was believed by some that his death, which occurred not long after, was probably due to this assault.

ducted by Gāndhijī directly, but by his follower, Vallabhbhāi Patel. Gāndhijī only blessed the movement and wrote encouraging articles about it in his *Young India*. As in every way it was an ideal Satyāgraha campaign after Gāndhijī's own heart, some account of it must find a place in any account of his career. The peasants of Bardoli led by Vallabhbhāi fully justified the trust which Gāndhijī had reposed in them in 1922, when he wanted to start a civil disobedience campaign, but was prevented by the developments at Chauri Chaura.

In one of the periodical resettlements of land, the Government proposed an enhancement, by about 20 per cent., of the land-tax due from the taluk. The peasants of Bardoli felt that, in the conditions prevailing in the taluk, the enhancement was thoroughly unjustified and prayed that an impartial Committee should be appointed to investigate the whole question and fix the percentage of enhancement, if at all any enhancement was found to be justifiable. The Government turned a deaf ear to this prayer and proceeded entirely on the report of their own Settlement Commissioner. The peasants, after exhausting all constitutional means, turned to Vallabhbhāi Patel to come to Bardoli and help them. Vallabhbhāi had already distinguished himself in two successful Satyāgraha campaigns—one at Borsad in 1922 and another at Nāgpūr in 1923. So he knew the whole technique of it, and, when he was convinced that the Bardoli peasants had a just case and were prepared for every kind of sacrifice, he undertook to lead them. The struggle began about the middle of February 1928, when the enhanced assessment fell due. The peasants refused to pay the assessment and allowed their cattle and other belongings to be attached and all stood united. The Government appointed special attachment officers and sent a number of Pathāns to help them. The presence of the Pathāns infuriated the people and made

them more determined than ever. The Government tried all possible means of collecting the revenue. They threatened, they coaxed, they took away the cattle of the poor peasants and sold them for nominal prices. They confiscated the lands and auctioned the crops. But the peasants endured all hardships, went through great suffering with quiet heroism and were thoroughly non-violent throughout. By the end of May, Bardoli became the talk of India and even beyond. And subscriptions came pouring in, when once Vallabhbhāi began to appeal for funds. The Government became more infuriated, and the Governor of Bombay declared that all the resources of the empire would be used to crush this no-tax campaign in Bardoli. But Vallabhbhāi repeatedly said that people were prepared to pay the enhanced tax, if only the impartial Committee they prayed for pronounced the enhancement justifiable. At last the Government had to yield after a face-saving device was discovered in August. A Committee was appointed consisting of Mr. Bloomfield, the judge who had tried Gāndhijī in 1922, and Mr. Maxwell, an executive officer. The Committee went into the matter and recommended that not more than $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. should be the measure of enhancement. But even this $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent could not be given effect to, when certain other factors urged by the ryots were taken into consideration. So that, at the end, there was practically no enhancement at all and the peasants' attitude was proved to be thoroughly justified. According to the terms of the agreement, all the Satyāgrahī prisoners were released, the confiscated property was restored and the dismissed village officers were reinstated. Everybody felt happy at the termination of the Bardoli Satyāgraha, and congratulations came pouring in from all parts of India.[1]

[1] The Rt. Hon'ble Śrīnivāsa Śāstrī, who was then the Agent of the Government of India in South Africa, wrote to Gāndhijī.—

XVI

The Simon Commission came to India again in the winter months of 1928, and again there were disturbances in the places they visited. While they were touring the country, the Congress session was held at Çalcutta presided over by Paṇḍit Motilāl Nehru. Gāndhijī attended the session and took an active part in the deliberations. There was a struggle between the advanced wing of the Congress including Jawaharlāl Nehru, Subhāsh Chandra Bose and S. Śrīnivāsa Iyengar, who were for the declaration of independence, and the older leaders like Gāndhijī and Motilāl Nehru, who would be satisfied with full Dominion Status as described in what was called the Nehru Committee Report of the All Parties' Conference. A compromise was reached at last, and it was resolved that, if, on or before the 31st December 1929, the constitution drawn up by the All Parties' Conference was not accepted by the British Parliament, the Congress would organize "a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon." The compromise resolution was moved by Gāndhijī himself. Thus a year's time was given to the British Government to redeem its pledges. If there were to be no response, then it would be time for the declaration of independence and such

"First allow me to say how happy I was to hear of the end of the Bardoli affair. It does honour to all parties concerned. Vallabhbhāi Patel has risen to the highest rank. I bow to him in reverence. . . . I don't speak of your part in it, for you chose to remain outwardly apart and won't like that anyone should consider you as coming for a share of the glory. Like unto God, who according to some philosophers has started the inexorable wheel of *samsāra* and seems no longer necessary (and yet He is the indispensable condition of its life), so have you been the invisible guide and vivifying example, active in the hearts of all and keeping them in the straight path. Certainly you don't divide the glory with them. Yours is a different order, incapable of being shared even as it cannot be put aside." *The Story of Bardoli*, p. 268.

direct action as might be found suitable in the circumstances.

During the one year allowed by the Congress, there appeared at first some favourable signs that a conflict would be avoided. There was a General Election in England in May. The Conservative Government was defeated and the Labour Party came into power, with Ramsay MacDonald as Premier and Wedgwood Benn as Secretary of State for India. And Lord Irwin the Viceroy went on four months' leave to England at the end of June to have personal consultations with the Labour Government on the question of the Simon Commission's Report. He returned on the 25th October and made an important announcement on the 31st. He said that it was proposed to hold a conference in London in which His Majesty's Government would meet representatives of both British India and the Indian States " for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament." He then went on to say that he was authorized to state that the famous declaration of 1917 contemplated the attainment of Dominion Status as the natural issue of India's constitutional progress. Within twenty-four hours of this announcement, the Working Committee of the Congress and other leaders issued a joint manifesto, appreciating the spirit that lay behind the Viceroy's announcement and hoping that the proposed conference was to meet, not to discuss when Dominion Status was to be established, but to frame a Dominion Constitution for India. But the leaders were disillusioned, when on the 23rd December they met the Viceroy at Delhi. On behalf of the Congress, Gāndhijī told the Viceroy that, unless assurances were given by His Majesty's Government that the purpose of the London Conference was to draft a scheme for Domi-

nion Status, which the Government would undertake to support, there would be grave difficulty about Congress participation. But the Viceroy made it plain that it was impossible for him or His Majesty's Government to prejudge in any way the action of the conference or to restrict the liberty of Parliament. So the conversations left the parties where they were, and all the hopes raised by the Viceroy's October announcement were dashed to the ground.

A few days after this, the Congress met at Lahore in an atmosphere of great excitement, as the time limit of one year allowed by the previous session was drawing to a close. The older leaders including Gāndhijī had hoped that, by granting the substance of Independence through Dominion Status, Britain would make it unnecessary for the Congress to change its creed and start non-co-operation once again. But that was not to be. His Majesty's Government had, as it were, justified the move for independence on the part of the younger leaders. Gāndhijī knew what was coming. Therefore, though he was elected for the Presidentship of the Congress in 1929, he resigned and made room for Jawaharlāl Nehru. It was under the leadership of the younger man that the Congress crossed the Rubicon at Lahore. The main resolution of the year was about independence. In this resolution the Congress declared (1) that nothing was to be gained in the existing circumstances by its being represented in the London Round Table Conference, (2) that the Nehru Committee's scheme of Dominion Status had lapsed, (3) that the word Swarāj in the Congress creed should mean complete independence, (4) that the nation should boycott councils and elections and concentrate on the constructive programme and (5) that the All-India Congress Committee should, whenever it deemed fit, launch a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes under such safeguards as it might consider necessary.

We are told that it was exactly at midnight on the 31st December 1929 that the poll on the most controversial clause of this resolution was taken, and, as the period of one year given to the Government to comply with the National Demand had just expired, the whole Congress proceeded at that hour to unfurl the flag of complete independence.

XVII

With the beginning of the year 1930 the period of action began for the Congress. The new Working Committee met on the 2nd January and decided to call upon the people to observe Sunday the 26th January 1930 as the Independence Day all over India, to hold meetings in all villages and towns and to adopt the Independence Resolution.

The response of the country to this call far exceeded the expectations of Gāndhijī. The Independence Day was observed with great enthusiasm throughout India. The news of this celebration appeared in the papers along with the speech of the Viceroy to the Legislative Assembly on the 25th. In this speech Lord Irwin once more made it clear that the proposed Round Table Conference in London was only for elucidating and harmonizing Indian opinion and thus affording guidance to His Majesty's Government "on whom the responsibility must subsequently devolve of drafting proposals for the consideration of Parliament", and not for fashioning the Indian constitution which should thereafter be accepted unchanged by Parliament. Thus there was an impassable gulf between the Congress and the Government. The Congress wanted to sever the British connection and have absolute independence, while the Government declared that the British Parliament alone had the right to say what measure of freedom India should have. Conflict was inevitable. Therefore we find Gāndhijī

addressing the students of Gujarat Vidyāpīṭh soon after and saying, "Other nations might have different and other means for getting their country's freedom, but for India there is no way but non-violent non-co-operation. May you be the exponents of this *mantra* of Swarāj, and may God give you strength and courage enough to give all you have in India's fight for independence, a fight which is drawing very near!" The Working Committee met at Sabarmatī on the 15th February and authorized Gāndhijī and those working with him who believed in non-violence, not simply as a policy but as an article of faith, to start Civil Disobedience as and when they desired.

XVIII

Gāndhijī had already made up his mind about the form which Civil Disobedience should take this time. The salt law was the most obnoxious of all the laws. It taxed one of the primary necessities of life and was a burden to the poor. As the aim of Gāndhijī was to obtain freedom for India in the interests of the poorest of the poor, he selected this law for his Civil Disobedience. He would march with his companions to some spot on the seashore, where there are natural salt deposits, and pick up salt and thus openly break the salt law. But, before he started the Civil Disobedience campaign, he wrote, as is usual with him, a letter to the Viceroy fully unburdening his mind and laying his plans before him.[1]

Gāndhijī gave notice in this letter that on the 11th March he would proceed with his co-workers in his Āśram to disregard the provisions of the salt tax. His Excellency quickly replied, expressing his regret that

[1] It is in this letter that he gives those striking figures about India's average income and the salary of the Viceroy of India. He writes —

Gāndhijī should be contemplating a course of action which would involve the violation of the law and danger to public peace. The march was now inevitable. On the 11th, addressing thousands of people who had gathered on the sands of the Sabarmatī, Gāndhijī said: "Our case is strong, our means the purest and God is with us. There is no defeat for the Satyāgrahīs till they give up truth. I pray for the success of the battle which begins to-morrow."

The famous march to Daṇḍi, which has already gone into history, began at day-break on the morning of the 12th amidst scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm. There were 79 volunteers and the distance to be covered was 223 miles. Gāndhijī, with a long stick in his hand, was at the head of the procession. Thousands of men, women and children stood as spectators on either side of the road for a distance of ten miles. Those who could not find a place on the road climbed up trees, houses and compound-walls to witness the historic scene. We may say that the whole of India was on tiptoe that morning, seeing with the eye of the mind the solemn march from the Satyāgraha Āśram. Paṇḍit Motilāl Nehru is reported to have said, "Like the historic march of Rāmacandra to Lankā the march of Gāndhi would be memorable, and the places he passes through would be sacred."

The march lasted twenty-four days, and as the procession passed on foot from village to village, Gāndhijī preached his gospel of non-violence to the assembled

"Take your own salary. It is over Rs 21,000 per month, besides many other direct additions. The British Prime Minister gets £5000 per year, *i.e.*, over Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 700 per day against India's average income of less than 2 As. per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income On bended knee I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon . . Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration."

crowds and exhorted the people to revive the spinning-wheel, to give up drink, to cultivate unity, to remove untouchability and to non-co-operate with the Government. At Aslai on the way he said he would never come back to his Āśram till swarāj was won. At Borsad he said, " The British rule in India has brought about moral, material, cultural and spiritual ruination of this great country. I regard this rule as a curse. I am out to destroy this system of government . . . . . Sedition has become my religion. Ours is a non-violent battle. We are not out to kill anybody, but it is our *dharma* to see that the curse of this Government is blotted out." At Bhatgam he turned the search-light inwards and severely castigated the people for the luxuries they provided for him and his followers and said, " To live above the means befitting a poor country is to live on stolen food. Nor did I bargain to set out on this march for living above our means." The party at last reached Daṇḍi on 5th April, and on the 6th morning Gāndhijī broke the salt law by picking up the salt lying on the sea-shore and said, " Now that the technical or ceremonial breach of the salt law has been committed, it is now open to any one who would take the risk of the prosecution under the salt law to manufacture salt, wherever he wishes and whenever it is convenient."

This was the signal for huge demonstrations with tens of thousands of men and women in all the important towns of India. The whole country was ablaze with the fire of Civil Disobedience. The salt law was broken in many places. And there were picketings of foreign cloth shops and drinking booths by women. All these were, of course, followed by arrests on a vast scale. And government by ordinances began. There were the Bengal Ordinance, the Press Ordinance, the Unlawful Instigation Ordinance and the Prevention of

Intimidation Ordinance. Considering the scale of the movement which was spread all over India, it must be said to the credit of the Satyāgrahīs that this time they scrupulously observed their leader's behests about non-violence. But, when huge demonstrations are held and *hartals* observed, it is not the Satyāgrahīs alone that take part in them. The bad characters of every place get mixed up in the crowds and, when they create disturbances, the police are bound to come into conflict with them and the inevitable shootings take place. But there was no Chauri Chaura this time. There were, on the other hand, two new features in the movement; women played a great part in civil disobedience and the Government began the experiment of lāṭhī charges instead of arrests. And both of these were bound to inflame passions and enhance the difficulties on both sides.

Gāndhijī once again toured from village to village preaching against salt laws, against foreign cloth, against drink and untouchability and against the methods of the Government. He had to stop his *Young India* and *Navajīvan* on account of the Press Ordinance and could guide the movement only by his tours and speeches. He now went a step further in his technique of "Salt Satyāgraha." He wrote a second letter to the Viceroy stating it was his intention to go to the Salt Works at Dharśana in the Sūrat District and take possession of the Government salt depots and asked him to prevent the "raid" either by abolishing the salt tax or by stopping him and his companions by breaking their heads, as the Government had been illegally doing in several places. His arrest was now inevitable. At dead of night on the 4th May 1930, he was secretly arrested at his camp at Koradi and taken to Yerrawāda jail. No one knew anything about it, till he was safely lodged in the jail.

The arrest was followed by *hartàls* and demonstrations all over the country. And there was a stir even outside India. Representations were made to the Labour Premier, Ramsay MacDonald, to come to terms with Gāndhijī. And the Liberals in India urged the Viceroy to extend the scope of the Round Table Conference, so that the Congress representatives also might attend it. Meanwhile the Salt Satyāgraha was continued by other leaders. Gāndhijī's place was taken by Tyabjī, and when he was arrested, Śrīmatī Sarojinī Devī took his place. And later she was also arrested. There were attempts at raids by huge crowds of Satyāgrahīs, not only at Dharśana but also at Wadala, and they were beaten back by the police, helped by the military, and there were many casualties. The most striking thing about these raids, as reported by foreign correspondents, was the perfect discipline of the volunteers. They were thoroughly non-violent, even when their heads were broken by the lāṭhī charges. But the Government went on with its policy of the firm hand. Almost all the Congress leaders were arrested, the Working Committee was declared illegal, and there were lāṭhī charges all over the country. This gruesome struggle between violence and non-violence continued throughout the year 1930, involving, according to the statement of the Working Committee, the imprisonment of about 75,000 men and women, indiscriminate lāṭhī charges and shootings resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people. The Viceroy's own pronouncement on the struggle was:—

"However emphatically we may condemn the Civil Disobedience movement, we should, I am satisfied, make a profound mistake, if we under-estimated the genuine and powerful meaning of Nationalism that is today animating much of Indian thought."

Meanwhile the Round Table Conference opened in England on the 12th November 1930 and was presided over by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald.

Various sub-committees were appointed and they duly reported on their several subjects. And a plenary session was again held on the 19th January 1931, when the Premier hinted that, if there was response from those engaged in Civil Disobedience to the appeal which Viceroy was about to make, steps would be taken to enlist their services also. Accordingly, on the 25th, the Viceroy issued a statement, releasing Gāndhijī and the other leaders and withdrawing the notification that had declared the Working Committee of the Congress illegal. And the next day, the 26th January, which the Working Committee had fixed as the anniversary day of complete independence, Gāndhijī came out of his prison. As soon as he came out, he issued a message to his people which is characteristic of a Satyāgrahī:—

"I have come out of jail with an absolutely open mind unfettered by enmity, unbiassed in argument and prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and discuss the Premier's statement with Śrī Tej Bahādūr Sapru and others on their return."

He then hastened to Allāhābād to meet the members of the Working Committee, especially Paṇḍit Motilāl Nehru, who was then seriously ill. Even after the meeting of the Committee, he stayed on at Allāhābād till 7th February, when Paṇḍitjī passed away. By this time some of the delegates of the Round Table Conference returned to India and made an appeal to the Congress to co-operate with them and make its contribution to the scheme before the conference. Though arrests and imprisonments were still going on, as the Government on their part had unconditionally released the members of the Working Committee, it was felt that Gāndhijī should respond to this gesture and explore the avenues of peace. As a Satyāgrahī, he had, of course, no considerations of prestige like the Government. So he wrote to Lord Irwin asking for an interview, and the reply came by telegram on the 16th February. On

the 17th he saw the Viceroy and had a talk with him for four hours. He had been invested by the Working Committee with powers to act on behalf of the Congress and negotiate a settlement. The conversations continued for a fortnight with occasional breaks for consultation, and the whole country was following with breathless excitement the Delhi rumours about these prolonged talks from day to day. At one stage all hope was given up, and it was thought that the negotiations would break down. Fortunately, a tentative agreement was at last reached after fifteen days of strenuous discussion and an earnest striving for peace both by Gāndhijī and by Lord Irwin. And it was formally published by the Government of India on the 5th March 1931. It is a famous document now known as the Gāndhi-Irwin agreement and contains twenty-one paragraphs. Like the Gāndhi-Smuts agreement in South Africa it marks the close of a great Satyāgraha campaign. It may be recalled that Gāndhijī's letter to the Viceroy, proposing to start the Civil Disobedience campaign, was delivered on the 4th March 1930, and exactly one year afterwards, the agreement was signed between Gāndhijī and the Viceroy on the 5th March 1931. On the very day on which the agreement was signed, Gāndhijī gave an important and historic statement to the assembled pressmen.[1]

Lord Irwin and Gāndhijī paid high tributes to each other on the patience, honesty and wisdom which each displayed during the negotiations. The most important terms of the agreement were that the Civil Disobedience movement should be discontinued by the Congress, that the Government should withdraw the ordinances and release the political prisoners and that the representatives

[1] This statement and the answers which Gāndhijī gave to the various questions put by the pressmen the next day should be read along with the Gāndhi-Irwin agreement. We are told that it took over an hour and a half for him to dictate his statement to the press, and it was done without a single note and without the need to make a single correction afterwards.

of the Congress should take part in the next session of the Round Table Conference. Accordingly, at the Congress session held at Karāchī in the last week of March, Gāndhijī was authorized to represent the Congress at the Round Table Conference. This was the end of the eighth Satyāgraha struggle in which Gāndhijī was directly engaged in India. The struggle is popularly known as Salt Satyāgraha. At the moment it appeared to be a great success, for the settlement was honourable on both sides.

XIX

On the 18th April 1931 Lord Irwin left India and Lord Willingdon came in his place as Viceroy. Soon after the new Viceroy came, the Gāndhi-Irwin agreement became almost a dead letter. Gāndhijī complained to the provincial Governors and to the Viceroy that the conditions of the truce were not being observed in various places, but the replies were evasive and unsatisfactory, and were often accompanied by counter-complaints. Therefore, after a good deal of vexatious correspondence, he finally wired to the Viceroy on the 13th August that it would be impossible for him in those circumstances to attend the Round Table Conference. But the representation of the Congress at the Round Table Conference was the primary aim of the Agreement, and the Government was anxious that Gāndhijī should leave for England along with the representatives of the other political parties. Hence matters were patched up at the eleventh hour in a personal interview which Gāndhijī had with Lord Willingdon at Simla, and he left the place by a special train to catch the boat that was leaving Bombay on the 29th August, taking the last batch of delegates to the Round Table Conference.

Gāndhijī was accompanied by Śrīmatī Sarojinī Devī, Mīrā Ben (Miss Slade), Mahādev Desai, Pyarelāl

and Devīdās Gāndhi. The party reached London on the 12th September 1931. Gāndhijī stayed with the poor at East End in Kingsley Hall as the guest of Miss Muriel Lester. He attended the various Committee meetings and the full sessions of the Round Table Conference, and made about ten speeches on the whole, explaining the Congress view-point. From the very beginning he saw how futile his undertaking was. There was an unbridgeable gulf between him and the other members of the Conference. The latter were mostly Government nominees who had come to press sectional interests. The Indian National Congress of which he was the sole representative was, according to him, a truly national organization representing 85 or 95 per cent. of the population of India. It represented the people not only of British India, but also of Indian India. It was non-communal, non-sectional and non-sectarian. Its doors were open to all, without any distinction of caste or creed, race or sex. Europeans, Muslims, Parsis, Indian Christians and Hindus—men and women—had been either its Presidents or its leading members. And latterly the Congress had identified itself with the masses of India.[1] Its sessions were attended not by hundreds but by thousands of men and women. It was the oldest as well as the strongest political organization in the country. It represented the

[1] Professor Reginald Coupland, who cannot be accused of any partiality to the Congress or to Mahātmā Gāndhi, writes in his Nuffield Report (Part II, page 92) :—

"Mr. Gāndhi is not merely the most famous Indian of modern times; he is the maker of the Congress as it is today. For what gave the Congress its present strength was its conversion from a movement of the intelligentsia into a movement of the people; and that was Mr. Gandhi's doing, almost single-handed. No other Congressman could have won more than a fraction of the Mahātmā's hold on the popular imagination. If, then, 'he dominates to some extent the Congress'—to quote Pandit Nehru's words—it is because he 'dominates the masses . . . and he will retain the dominating place in the hearts of the people so long as he lives, and afterwards.'"

whole nation. And yet it was treated as only *one* of the political parties in India and ranked with avowedly communal organizations and other mushroom parties. Nevertheless Gāndhijī played his part boldly, spoke out his mind on the various questions that came up for discussion and expressed himself in the most fearless manner. His language at times must have startled the well-dressed gentlemen round the Table as much as his costume. For instance, commenting on the safeguards which were being pressed on every side, he said:—

"If all these safeguards are to be granted and all the talk here takes concrete shape and we are told that we are to get responsible government, it will be almost on a par with the responsible government that prisoners have in their jails. They too have complete independence immediately the cell door is locked and the jailor goes. The prisoners inside the cell about 10 ft. square or 7 ft. by 3 ft. have complete independence. I do not ask for that kind of complete independence, with the jailors safeguarding comfortably their own rights."

Earlier in the same speech, speaking about certain monopolies which were no doubt legitimately acquired, but which are against the best interests of the nation, he gave the following illustration:—

"Take this white elephant which is called New Delhi. Crores have been spent upon it. Suppose that the future Government comes to the conclusion that, seeing that we have got this white elephant, it ought to be turned to some use. Imagine that in old Delhi there is plague or cholera going on and we want hospitals for the poor people. What are we to do? Do you suppose the National Government will be able to build hospitals and so on? Nothing of the kind. We will take charge of those buildings and put these plague-stricken people in them and use them as hospitals, because I contend that those buildings are in conflict with the best interests of the nation. They do not represent the millions of India. They may be representative of the monied men who are sitting at this table. . . ..but they are not representative of those who lack even a place to sleep in and have not even a crust of bread to eat. If the National Government comes to the conclusion that that place is unnecessary, no matter what interests are concerned, they will be dispossessed and they will be dispossessed,

I may tell you, without any compunction, because if you want this Government to pay compensation it will have to rob Peter to pay Paul, and that would be impossible."

One can see the white heat of feeling behind these startling utterances. Gāndhijī's statesmanship is ever inseparable from his saintliness. The interests of the poor and the down-trodden form the primary consideration for him. His is true socialism, because he would secure the happiness of the peasant and the labourer, without resorting to violence of any kind or doing injustice to anybody and without ignoring the higher values of life. At the Round Table Conference he stood forth as the champion of the poor of India living in their 7,00,000 villages—ill-clad, ill-fed and ill-housed men and women with whom he had identified himself. In fifteen years he had converted the Indian National Congress into a true representative of these people, and he now stood in London as the sole representative of that Congress. It was for the poor that he wanted freedom from the exploitation of foreigners, it was for the poor that he wanted a National Government, having full control over the army, finance, foreign relations, etc., it was for the poor that he would abolish all monopolies and vested interests that drained away the wealth of the land, it was for the poor that he wanted adult suffrage that would right all wrongs in course of time, it was for the poor that he wanted severance from the British connection, if that connection could not be as between equals, and it was for the poor that he wanted Pūrṇa Swarāj. He declared that the minorities question, which was made so much of by interested parties at the Round Table Conference, would be the crown of Swarāj, not its foundation. He frankly said that that question would never be solved as long as there was foreign rule in India fomenting differences and unblushingly carrying out the imperial policy of 'divide and rule.' He would allow special representation only for Muslims,

Sikhs and Europeans, if they insisted on it. But it would be better for India to remain without the so-called responsible Government than that she should be cut up like a carcass into separate groups having separate representation. The unkindest cut of all was the proposal to make the untouchables a separate class with a separate electorate and separate reservation. It meant a perpetual bar sinister. Sikhs might remain Sikhs in perpetuity, Muslims might remain Muslims, and Europeans Europeans, but would the untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? He would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. This proposal for a separate representation for the untouchables would with a stroke of the pen nullify all the heroic efforts of the reformers to remove untouchability from Hindu society. "Therefore," he concluded, "I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that, if I was the only person to resist this thing, I will resist it with my life." Ominous words! For, as we shall see, Gāndhijī was put to the test in a short time.

He bade good-bye at last to the Round Table Conference on 1st December 1931 with these words:—

"I do not know in what direction my path will be, but it does not matter to me in what direction that path lies. Even then, although I may have to go in an exactly opposite direction, you are still entitled to a vote of thanks from the bottom of my heart."

Ominous words again!

XX

When Gāndhijī returned to India on the 28th of December, he found Ordinance rule in full swing again and saw that his path lay in a direction exactly opposite to that of co-operation. For three days he studied the situation. There had come friends from Bengal to complain of repression under the Bengal Ordinance. The U. P. friends came with tales of their own Ordinance. And the North-West-Frontier Province had its own

Ordinance. As Gāndhijī said in his speech to the Welfare of India League at that time, there were already thirteen ordinances to Lord Willingdon's credit, and they all outdid Lord Irwin's ordinances by their severity. There were also deputations from various provinces waiting to tell him how the truce conditions had never been observed and how the Gāndhi-Irwin pact had been a dead letter almost from the moment when the signatories signed it.

But Gāndhijī had his own tale of woe. Unwillingly he had gone to the Round Table Conference, and almost heart-broken he returned. He had known the mentality of the Muslim leaders, the moderate leaders, the untouchable leaders and other reactionaries in India. But he was not prepared for the part that some of them played at the Round Table Conference in London.[1] In the speeches he had to deliver on his return to India to his friends and followers, he first thought of giving an account of the sad scenes he had witnessed at the Conference, but the scenes enacted in India during his absence were more poignant and he turned his attention to these. Paṇḍit Jawaharlāl was again in jail and so was Khān Abdul Gaffar Khān known as "the Frontier Gāndhi" for his strict adherence to non-violence. What was the duty of the Congress now? Should it take a hint from the Government and launch a campaign of Satyāgraha again or try some other means? As usual, Gāndhijī wanted to know the intentions of the Government first, before reopening the campaign. On the 29th he sent a telegram to the Viceroy, complaining about the ordinances, and asked him whether friendly

1. The Right Hon'ble V. S. Śrīnivāsa Śāstrī, in a letter to Gāndhijī dated 16th July, 1940, writes —

"Whatever else I may forget, I shall never forget the utter humiliation and shame of the Indian party at the R.T.C. . . . Like the victims of Circe's witchery, we assumed brutish forms and degraded ourselves, alas, some of us were proud of our fate, while the others were the more miserable for consciousness of our shame." *Letters of Śāstrī*, p. 119.

relations between them were closed. On the 31st he received a lengthy reply from the Private Secretary, justifying the ordinances on the ground that the Congress activities in Bengal, U. P. and the Frontier Province were subversive of law and order and informing him that His Excellency would be prepared to see Gāndhijī and advise him as to how best he could exercise his influence, but that he would not allow any discussion of the measures that his Government had taken with the full approval of His Majesty's Government in England. After some more telegrams between Gāndhijī and the Government, negotiations were broken off. And on 4th January 1932, that is, on the eighth day of his landing in India, Gāndhijī was arrested and put in Yerrawāda jail. Lord Willingdon's Government had apparently made up their minds, even before Gāndhijī returned, that no threat of Civil Disobedience by the Congress would thereafter be permitted. So the weary fight went on again as in 1930-31.

XXI

While the struggle was thus going on in all its intensity outside the prison walls, an equally intense situation was developing inside the prison where Gāndhijī was confined. From the newspapers that he was permitted to read he learnt that any moment the Premier's 'award' about the grant of separate electorates to the depressed classes might be announced. Strictly speaking, it is not correct to call the Premier's decision an "award", for all the members of the Round Table Conference had not agreed to submit the question to the arbitration of the Premier. So it was simply a proposal like the other proposals made by His Majesty's Government. Gāndhijī had expressed himself strongly on the subject and said he would resist the proposal of a separate electorate for the depressed classes with his life,

if necessary. So now, when he saw that the decision of the Government on the subject was imminent, he wrote a letter to the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, on the 11th March 1932, informing the British Government that, in the event of their creating a separate electorate for the depressed classes, he would fast unto death. Sir Samuel sent a brief reply on the 13th April, saying that Lord Lothian's Committee, which was to determine the franchise and the electoral seats, had not yet finished its work and that, when the Committee made its recommendations, the Government would consider Gāndhijī's views along with the recommendations. Four months later, on the 17th August, the so-called 'award' of MacDonald was announced. According to this, the depressed classes would have the right to vote both in the general electorate and in separate electorates of their own for a period of twenty years. As soon as Gāndhijī read the decision, he made up his mind and wrote a letter to the Premier on the 18th August, informing him that he proposed to fast unto death from the noon of 20th September, unless the British Government, either of their own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revised their decision and withdrew their scheme of communal electorates for the depressed classes. The reply of the Premier on the 8th September was telegraphed to India. In this Ramsay MacDonald explained in detail the intentions of his Government and rather unfairly charged Gāndhijī with undertaking the fast solely to prevent the depressed classes from securing a limited number of seats for representatives of their own choosing in the Legislatures. Gāndhijī replied immediately repudiating the charge and repeating his opinion that, in the establishment of a separate electorate for the depressed classes, he sensed the injection of a poison that was calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the depressed classes.

This correspondence was released to the public on the 13th September, a week before the commencement of the fast.

Naturally the country was thrown into paroxysms of pain, sorrow and despair. And all eyes were soon turned to Poona where all classes of Hindus, including the depressed classes, congregated in great excitement, after a preliminary meeting at Bombay, to put their heads together and arrive at a common agreement, which might take the place of the Premier's 'award' and save the life of Gāndhijī. The first day of the fast was observed as a day of fasting and prayer throughout India. Many temples were thrown open to the depressed classes. And in many places there were meetings of emotional fraternization between the orthodox Hindus and men of the depressed class followed by common dinners. There is no doubt that more was done in the way of elevating this class in one week than in several decades. By the fifth day of the fast, the leaders had arrived at an agreement, which is now known as the Poona Pact or Yerrawāda Pact, by which the depressed class leaders agreed to forego their separate electorates in return for reservation of seats, about double the number proposed by the Government out of the general electorates, and the privilege of holding primary elections for these seats and sending up to the general constituency four candidates for each seat. The pact was accepted by the Government and Gāndhijī broke his fast on the 26th at 5-15 p. m. In the statement he issued on the occasion he said:—

"The hand of God has been visible in the glorious manifestation throughout the length and breadth of India during the past seven days. The cables received from many parts of the world blessing the fast have sustained me through the agony of body and soul that I passed through during the seven days, but the cause was worth going through that agony. The sacrificial fire once lit shall not be put out as long as there is the slightest trace of untouchability still left in Hinduism."

The penance of Gāndhijī released a flood of feeling in the country in favour of communal unity and the uplift of the depressed classes. Many who could not take part in the Civil Disobedience movement now threw themselves into the Harijan uplift work, and the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh was started, with Delhi as the centre. But the Government, as soon as the crisis was over, re-imposed the jail restrictions on Gāndhijī from the 29th, and no visitors were allowed to see him and consult him on the subject. Gāndhijī then entered into a protracted correspondence with the Government, the result of which was that from the 4th November 1932 they removed all restrictions regarding visitors, correspondence and publicity relating to matters connected with the removal of untouchability. Gāndhijī now began to direct the movement for the uplift of Harijans from behind the prison walls.[1]

During November 1932 Gāndhijī issued nine statements from his prison, discussing the various aspects of the question of untouchability and answering the objections of the orthodox to the removal of this blot on Hinduism. And in February 1933 the weekly *Harijan* was started at Poona. It was primarily devoted to the cause of Harijan uplift and was the organ of the Harijan Sevak Sangh under the guidance of Gāndhijī. It soon took the place of *Young India*. And after Gāndhijī came out of the prison it was eagerly read all over the

[1] By the way, the word Harijan was for the first time adopted by him to denote a member of the depressed class in a speech which he gave on the 2nd August, 1931, on the occasion of throwing open a private temple in Ahmedābād to that class. It was a word used by the great Vaiṣnava saint, Narasimha Mehta. Gandhiji said —

"I am delighted to adopt that word which is sanctified by having been used by such a great saint, but it has for me a deeper meaning than you may imagine. The "untouchable" to me is, compared to us, really a Harijan—a man of God, and we are Durjan, men of evil. For, whilst the untouchable has toiled and moiled and dirtied his hands, so that we may live in comfort and cleanliness, we have delighted in suppressing him"

country, for it contained his views on all questions of the day.

All the time, outside the prison walls, the Civil Disobedience movement was going on its weary way, accompanied by arrests and lāṭhī charges. In March 1933 the Congress, in spite of the ban, held its session at Calcutta amidst lāṭhī blows, like the session at Delhi during the preceding year. The Calcutta session was soon followed by an unexpected turn of events in Yerrawāda jail. On the 8th May, for the purpose of self-purification which would enable him and his associates to serve the Harijan cause in a proper spirit, Gāndhijī started a fast of twenty-one days. The Government sympathized with his object and released him at once. And, as civil resisters would be in a state of anxiety and suspense during the fast and even for some time after it, Gāndhijī recommended a suspension of Civil Disobedience for a period of six weeks. Mr. Aney, the then President of the Congress, carried out the recommendation.

The fast was observed at the residence of Lady Thackersey in Poona till its successful termination on the 29th May 1933. As soon as the after-effects of the fast were over, there was an informal conference of Congressmen at Poona on the 12th July to review the political situation. Gāndhijī was asked to seek an interview with the Viceroy and come to some settlement. But the Viceroy refused to give an interview, unless Civil Disobedience was definitely abandoned by the Congress. This the Congress was not prepared to do. So the leaders resolved to suspend indefinitely mass Civil Disobedience but to continue individual Civil Disobedience. And Gāndhijī inaugurated the new campaign by first of all disbanding his Sabarmatī Āśram, to which, true to his vow, he had not returned since the Dandi March, and offering the land, building and crops to the

Government. The Government declined the offer, and so they were made over to the Harijan movement. Then he called on the inmates of the Āśram to give up all activities and follow him in offering individual Civil Disobedience from 1st August. But the Government prevented his starting the campaign by arresting him along with thirty-four of his followers the preceding night and sentencing him to one year's imprisonment.

In the prison he was refused permission this time to carry on his Harijan work. And so he started a fast within a few days of his imprisonment. On the fifth day of the fast, his condition became so critical that he had to be removed to Sassoon Hospital. By 23rd August, he grew worse, and so the Government released him unconditionally on that date. He felt, however, greatly embarrassed by the situation and looked upon himself as a prisoner, though he was set at liberty, till the period of his sentence was over *i.e.*, till August 3, 1934.

XXII

During this period of nearly a year he would not take any part in the Civil Disobedience campaign, but would confine himself to Harijan uplift. In accordance with this decision, he undertook a country-wide tour addressing meetings on the removal of untouchability, collecting funds for the Harijan Sevak Sangh and studying the condition of the depressed classes in the various provinces. It was one of the most strenuous of his tours. In ten months he covered all the provinces and collected about eight lakhs of rupees. Hundreds of thousands of the poor had thus an opportunity of having his *darśan* and of touching his feet and giving away their valuables for the sacred cause.

It was during this period that a referendum was taken amongst the temple worshippers of Guruvāyūr in

Malabar on the question of opening the temple to Harijans. At the time of Gāndhijī's epic fast, which resulted in the Poona Pact, Mr. Kālappan had undertaken a similar fast unto death for opening the Guruvāyūr temple to all classes. But Gāndhijī had dissuaded him, as sufficient notice had not been given to the authorities of the temple, and promised to fast along with Kālappan the next time he found it necessary to fast for the purpose. So three months' notice was given to the temple authorities, and a decision had to be reached on 1st January, 1934. If the decision was unfavourable, it meant a fast unto death for both Kālappan and Gāndhijī. Hence it was resolved to take a referendum amongst the worshippers. About 20,000 people took part in the referendum and recorded their votes. Of these, 77 per cent. were in favour of opening the temple to Harijans, 13 per cent. were against and 10 per cent. were neutral. Of those who were in favour more than half were women. Thus the apprehended fast was averted. Here we have the clearest evidence of the moral influence of Gāndhijī in favour of reform even in the most conservative places in India.

Gāndhijī's Harijan tour was interfered with in the early part of 1934 by the terrible earthquake in Bihar, where there was destruction of life and property on a vast scale. The earthquake affected an area of 30,000 square miles, and 20,000 persons are estimated to have lost their lives. To meet this unprecedented catastrophe, over a crore of rupees was subscribed, and leaders and workers rushed to the place from many parts of India. Gāndhijī devoted a month to this work by visiting the afflicted villages and towns and by acquainting himself personally with the needs of the survivors.

While he was still touring in the afflicted area, he received intimation from Dr. Ansāri on 2nd April 1934 that a deputation of Congress leaders was going to wait

on him and discuss the question of reviving the Swarājya party in the Congress and permitting its members to enter the councils and fight the Government there. Gāndhijī rad independently come to the same conclusion, and so, when the deputation came to him, he gave his whole-hearted support to the policy of reviving the Swarājya party by those who could not offer Civil Disobedience, and contesting the elections to the Assembly, which was about to be dissolved. In fact, he even went further and said that, as the Satyāgraha movement for the attainment of Swarāj had become very much adulterated in the hands of many, it should for some time be confined to himself.[1]

The change of policy was endorsed by the All-India Congress Committee which met at Patna on the 18th May and so the Civil Disobedience movement stood suspended from the 20th May 1934. This was the end of Gāndhijī's ninth Satyāgraha campaign, which was a sequel to the " Salt Satyāgraha."

XXIII

Gāndhijī had come to this meeting from Orissa, where he had been travelling on foot from village to village, carrying on propaganda for the uplift of Harijans and making collections for the cause. After the meeting, he went back to U. P. and toured through that province. Meanwhile the time-limit which he had placed on himself with regard to his participation in any political programme was about to expire. There was much speculation about what he would do after 4th August 1934, the date on which he would feel free to take part in political action. The Patna decisions had eased the

[1] In the statement he issued on this occasion he said —

" I feel that the masses have not received the full message of Satyāgraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency, when their use is taught through non-spiritual medja."

situation in the country. When once the Civil Disobedience movement was called off, the Government lifted the ban on the Congress organizations. The Congress Committees once again began to reorganize themselves, in view of the elections to the Assembly to be held in November as well as the constructive programme. What would Gāndhijī do now? While speculation was rife about his future line of activity, Gāndhijī threw a bombshell in the midst of Congressmen by his statement on September 17th that he intended to go out of the Congress. His main reasons for taking such a step were that there seemed to be fundamental differences of opinion between him and the Congress intelligentsia on the importance of the spinning-wheel, the removal of untouchability, the policy to be adopted towards the Indian States, the council-entry programme and, above all, the creed of non-violence. In the statement he issued on that date he says:—

"Last of all, take non-violence. After fourteen years of trial, it still remains a policy with the majority of Congressmen, whereas it is a fundamental creed with me. .....For this experiment, to which my life is dedicated, I need complete detachment and absolute freedom of action. Satyāgraha, of which civil resistance is but a part, is to me the universal law of life. Satya, in truth, is my God. I can only search Him through non-violence, and in no other way. And the freedom of my country, as of the world, is surely included in the search for Truth. I cannot suspend this search for anything in this world or another."

In spite of such fundamental differences, Congressmen had been bowing to his will. So, in his opinion, the Congress, instead of being the most democratic and representative institution, was being dominated by his personality. There was no free play of reason. And programmes approved, not out of individual conviction but out of personal loyalty to him, were bound to be carried out in a half-hearted manner. This state of things had led to insincerity, hypocrisy and even corruption. Gāndhijī felt that, in these circumstances, he was

a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of the Congress. He was convinced he could serve the Congress better by being outside it than by being in it.

The final decision was, however, taken only after the session of the Congress at Bombay during the last week of October 1934. Gāndhijī attended this session, which was held after an interruption of three years and a half. He proposed a number of amendments to the constitution of the Congress. The Congress accepted them all with some modification, and he was satisfied. However, he decided to stand out of the Congress, as it was a matter of conscience with him. And the Congress leaders bowed to his decision, hoping that he would come back to them when they deserved, by their purity, sincerity and faithfulness to his standards of Truth and Non-violence, to have him in their midst. Gāndhijī on his part promised that, though he ceased to be even a four-anna member of the Congress, he would always be ready to advise and help the great national institution. Among the notable achievements of this Congress session, the last to be attended by Gāndhijī in an official capacity, may be mentioned the formation of the All-India Village Industries Association, which is to work under the guidance of Gāndhijī and apart from politics, on the same lines as the All-India Spinners' Association.

XXIV

Though Gāndhijī thus went out of the Congress and the ban on the Congress organizations had been lifted, the Government continued to distrust them. For, when on 31st May 1935 the disastrous earthquake at Quetta convulsed the whole country, neither Gāndhijī nor the Congress President was permitted to go to the afflicted area to organize help. But a change was at hand. The Government of India Act[1] sponsored by Sir

[1] The Right Hon'ble V. S. Śrīnivāsa Śāstrī expresses his feelings about

Samuel Hoare received the Royal Assent on the 2nd of July 1935, and during 1936 the necessary arrangements for elections were made, and when the polling began early in 1937, the Congress had a thumping success in a majority of the provinces. Then the question of office acceptance by the Congress began to be eagerly discussed everywhere.

Gāndhijī was at that time in Travancore. His campaign against untouchability had been crowned with a remarkable success in that Hindu State. For on the 12th November 1936—a red-letter day in the annals of Hinduism—the young Mahārājah of Travancore issued, amidst universal rejoicings, a Proclamation that there should be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion entering or worshipping at temples controlled by his Government. Gāndhijī therefore went on a pilgrimage, as it were, to Travancore early in 1937 to see with his own eyes the effects of the Proclamation.[1]

He spent ten days in Travancore (from 12th to 21st January) and visited nineteen public temples and five private ones, all of which had been thrown open to Harijans in accordance with the terms of the Proclamation. He rejoiced to see that the caste Hindus were as enthusiastic as Harijans themselves over the reform. Replying to the address of welcome by the Trivandrum municipality he said:—

"Every time I have come to Travancore, I have come almost as a crusader trying to wean Savarṇa Hindus from the curse of untouchability. . . . . This time, however, I have come as a humble pilgrim to tender my congratulations to H. H. the Mahārājah

the new constitution under the Act thus in a letter, dated 18th September, 1933 —

"So my dear *K.*, the d—d thing is coming. If you care, *i.e.*, if any persons care, let them try and amend this constitution. I don't care, because it is impossible, and I hate it. Nor am I going to welcome it and help Hoare. There is no need. He is strong enough with our minorities and obscurantists for the purpose."

[1] This was his fourth visit to the State. The first visit was in 1925, the second in 1927 and the third in 1934.

and his good mother, Her Highness the Mahārāṇi, and his able Dewān. With the co-operation of this trinity, if I might so describe the distinguished persons, the great Proclamation has been a settled fact and has now been working with success."

Soon after he returned from this pilgrimage he had to take part in the negotiations between the Congress and the Government on the subject of office acceptance by the former. He soon framed a formula that ministerships could be accepted only if the leader of the Congress party in the Assembly in each province was satisfied and was able to declare publicly that he had sufficient assurance from the Governor that his special powers would not be used as long as the ministry acted within the limits of the constitution. This formula was embodied in a resolution by the Congress Working Committee at its meeting on 15th March 1937. But the Governors refused to give these assurances, and the Congress leaders refused to form ministries, and there was a deadlock. Then there were several statements and counter-statements on the part of Gāndhijī and the Government. At last, on the 21st June the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow (who had succeeded Lord Willingdon on 18th April 1936) in a broadcast made the issues clear and said that the Governors were not entitled to interfere with the day-to-day administration of the provinces, that their special responsibilities were confined to the narrowest limits, that in the field of ministerial responsibilities it was mandatory on them to be guided by the advice of the ministers and that even in their own special responsibilities they would be concerned to carry their ministers with them. Thus the assurance demanded by Gāndhijī on behalf of the Congress was conceded, and the Working Committee of the Congress, at its meeting on July 7, permitted the Congress leaders to form ministries in Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa and Central Provinces.

Even after the Congress ministries were formed, whenever a crisis arose and Gāndhijī's advice was sought by the Working Committee or the ministers, it was unreservedly given by him, though he did not officially belong to the Congress. For instance, in February 1938, there was a ministerial crisis in U. P. and Bihar. The ministers resigned, because the Governors interfered with their discretion in releasing political prisoners. Gāndhijī gave his opinion on the subject in a statement issued on the 23rd. And on the 25th the differences were made up and, after a joint statement by the Governors and ministers, the ministries functioned again. A few months later, a crisis arose in Orissa, when the Governor took leave and it was proposed to make a civilian, who had been working under the ministers, the acting Governor. Gāndhijī condemned the arrangement in his *Harijan* and consequently the crisis was averted by the Governor cancelling his leave.

But normally Gāndhijī's activities, after his retirement from the Congress, were confined to the constructive programme. He had for some years made a village, about four miles from Wardha, his place of residence. After he disbanded the Sabarmatī Āśram, he was invited by his friend Jamnalāl Bajāj in 1933 to stay at Wardha. But after a few months' stay, he felt he should get away from the bustle of the town and settle down in a small village. The village of Segaon, the name of which was afterwards changed into Sevagrām, attracted him. It belonged to Jamnalāl Bajāj, who gladly placed its extensive grounds at the disposal of Gāndhijī. Here he settled down and lived in a hut. And, under his fostering care, there sprang up in the course of a few years a number of All-India Associations in and around Wardha, each specializing, like the All-India Spinners' Association, in a particular item of the constructive programme and working under his

guidance and taking no part in politics—the All-India Village Industries Association devoted to cottage industries, the Hinduism Tālimi Saṅgh devoted to a scheme of basic education centering round a craft, the Go-Sevā Saṅgh devoted to the protection of cows, the Rāṣṭra Bhāṣā Pracār Samiti devoted to the spreading of Hindustānī as the common language for all India, the Mahilāśram devoted to the training of women teachers and, lastly, the Gāndhi Sevā Saṅgh devoted to the study of non-violence in all its aspects.

In addition to all the activities and the tours in connection with these organizations, he used to write every week those life-giving articles in *Harijan* for which the whole country eagerly waited and which were at once reproduced in all the leading newspapers. These articles used to cover all sorts of subjects of topical interest—philosophy of non-violence, economics of khaddar, conditions of temple-entry for Harijans, Hindu-Muslim riots, corruption in Congress ranks, complaints against ministers, organization of peace brigades, violence on the part of picketeers, repression in Indian States, the non-violence of Pathāns in the Frontier Province, etc. It is curious, by the way, that during the first half of 1938, though outwardly he was at the height of his glory as the Father of his people and the unwearied champion of the poor and the down-trodden, Gāndhijī passed through what might be called the Dark Night of the Soul. In *Harijan* dated May 7, 1938 Mahādev Desai quotes the following words of Gāndhijī himself on his condition:—

"If anything, the darkness has deepened, the prayer has become intenser. Add to this the fact that for causes, some of which I know and some I do not, for the first time in my public and private life I seem to have lost self-confidence. I seem to have detected a flaw in me which is unworthy of a votary of truth and ahiṁsā. I am going through a process of self-introspection, the

results of which I cannot foresee. I find myself for the first time during the past fifty years in a slough of despond."

Even to his intimate companions he did not reveal the cause of this mental depression. To the many anxious inquiries of friends his secretary could only reply:—

"This certainly everyone around him knows that it is an unprecedented travail that he is passing through—some such travail as resulted in the Bardoli decision of 1921 and the Patna decision of 1934. Is the flaw he refers to a reflection of the flaws that are to be detected in us day in and day out? Who can tell?"

There is no doubt that, as Mīrāben remarks in one of her letters,[1] Gāndhijī's comfort expands or shrinks in exact proportion to the awakening or failing of those around him. "We can kill him with our moral faults," she says, "or serve him into a ripe old age by awakening to his word."

Though Gāndhijī did not take anybody into his confidence as to the cause of his suffering, we may guess what it was from a reply which he wrote to a question put to him on one of his days of silence during this period:—

"The violence that I see running through speeches and writings, the corruption and selfishness among Congressmen and the petty bickerings fill one with dismay. In the midst of this, we, who know, must be unyielding and apply the golden rule of non-co-operation."[2]

Thus, while the bulk of the Congressmen were rather elated with the prestige and power which they enjoyed in the provinces where the Congress ministries were functioning, their saintly leader was in a "slough of despond," because his great principles of non-violence and truth were being neglected by them. It is quite characteristic of Gāndhijī that, at the zenith of his power, he should humble himself before God and feel he is an unworthy votary, because of the lapses of some of his

[1] *Harijan*, April, 16 1938.
[2] *Harijan*, May, 21 1938.

followers. Nothing shows more clearly than this that to him politics is religion. He once wrote in his *Young India*:—

"My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh.....I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the kingdom of Heaven, which is *Mokṣa*. To attain my end it is not necessary for me to seek the shelter of a cave. I carry one about me, if I would but know it.....So my patriotism is for me a stage in my journey to the eternal land of freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap, because they kill the soul."[1]

XXV

A few months after he emerged out of this black cloud that lay upon his soul, he had to face a difficult and trying situation in Rājkot—the state where his father had served as Dewān and where he himself had been brought up. There was a conflict between the Thākore Sāhib of Rājkot and his subjects, who had a number of grievances. The people, led by Sirdār Vallabhbhāi Patel, started a Satyāgraha movement for the removal of their grievances and for a measure of responsible government. The Thākore Sāheb's government replied by repression of a rather brutal kind, but could not cow down the spirit of the people. At last the Thākore sent for Mr. Vallabhbhāi Patel and asked him for help in solving the problem. He agreed to appoint a committee of ten for the purpose of drawing up a scheme of reforms for the state. The understanding was that three of the members of the committee should be state officers and the other seven the subjects of the state, who would be nominated by the Thākore on the recommendation of Mr. Patel. But, later, when Mr. Patel sent up seven names, the Thākore Sāheb accepted only four of them and rejected the others. He also con-

[1] *Young India*, April 3, 1924.

tended that the Muslims and the Bhayats (a class of Zamindārs) of the state should also be represented on the Committee. When the Thākore Sāheb thus went back on his plighted word and said that he was not bound to accept all the names recommended by Mr. Patel, the struggle began again with greater intensity than before. Mrs. Gāndhi now joined the Satyāgrahīs and courted arrest and was imprisoned. And later Gāndhijī, whom even the Thākore Sāhib's father used to regard as his *guru,* also went to Rājkot, and finding the Thākore almost powerless in the hands of his advisers was sorely vexed. He had a claim on the love and respect of the Thākore and so he announced rather suddenly on the 2nd March 1939 that he would fast unto death from the next day, if the Thākore Sāhib persisted in going back on his solemn pledge. Those who are disposed to blame Gāndhijī for fasts of this kind, which they regard as coercive measures, should read all that was written in *Harijan* by Gāndhijī and his companions—Mahādev Desai and Pyarelāl—about the circumstances that led to this fast. Gāndhijī had no intention of fasting at all. But he was powerless before his inner voice. The urge was irresistible. He felt that it was a command from on high and brooked no delay. He writes:—

"The public should not laugh at my connecting God with the proposed step. Rightly or wrongly, I know that I have no other resource as a Satyāgrahī than the assistance of God in every conceivable difficulty, and I would like it to be believed that what may appear to be inexplicable actions of mine are really due to inner promptings."[1]

When Mrs. Gāndhi heard of this fast and addressed a pathetic note to her husband mildly reproaching him with not even consulting her before launching on it, he characteristically replied:—

"You are worrying for nothing. You ought to rejoice that God has sent me an opportunity to do His will. How could I

[1] *Harijan,* March 11, 1939.

consult you or anybody else before undertaking the fast, when I myself was not aware that it was coming? God gave the signal and what else could I do than obey? Will there be any stopping to consult you or anybody when the final peremptory summons comes, as some day it must come?"[1]

The fast threatened to become a first class political crisis. Rājkot may be a tiny spot on the map of India. But the struggle between the Prince and his subjects there was being watched by all India. There were stirrings also in other states like Jaipūr, Travancore and Limdi at that time, and, as Gāndhijī himself had intervened in the Rājkot affair, it become supremely important. There was every likelihood that, if the Paramount Power did not set the matter right, all the Congress ministries might resign in protest. In fact, the situation became so critical that the Viceroy cancelled his tour in Rājputāna and came to Delhi and suggested that the pledge given by the Thākore Sāhib to Mr. Patel might be referred to the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, for correct interpretation. Gāndhijī agreed and broke his fast on the fifth day (7th March). Sir Maurice Gwyer went into all the records and read the statements given by both parties and gave his award, *viz.*, that according to the agreement the Thākore Sāhib was bound to accept all the names recommended by Mr. Patel and that he had left himself no choice in the matter. Everybody thought that all the trouble would end with this clear decision. But it was only the beginning of a worse kind of trouble. The passions of the so-called minorities in the state—the Muslims, the Bhayats and the depressed classes—were now inflamed by the agents of the state against the recommendations of Patel and Gāndhijī, and, instead of the peace and harmony in the state, which Gāndhijī had hoped for, he had to face strife and confusion among the people whom

[1] *Harijan*, April 8, 1939

he had come to help. He was powerless before the unscrupulous agencies which fomented divisions and encouraged sectional claims and counter-claims. Rājkot became a miniature India, a fertile soil for the policy of 'divide and rule' to grow and flourish. Gāndhijī frankly accepted defeat and said that he would forgo the right of recommending names, so that the Thākore Sāhib might appoint a committee of his own to draw up the report and suggested that the report with the criticism of the Prajā Pariṣad on it might be submitted to the Chief Justice of India for his final decision. He hoped that this might remove the feeling from the mind of the Thākore that he was being subjected to external pressure and that the reforms decided on would carry with them his good will. But the chief Adviser of the prince, Darbār Śrī Vīrawāla, was too adroit to be captivated by the suggestion and at once replied:—

"You want to have the Report and the note of dissent scrutinized by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India. Do you call this 'removing the feeling of pressure'? Why not trust His Highness and his Adviser through and through? You may not get all you want, but whatever you get will be charged with his goodwill and will carry the promise of full delivery."

Gāndhijī thought that his argument showed the littleness of his own belief in *ahiṁsā*. He came to the conclusion that the people of Rājkot, instead of hating and fearing Darbār Vīrawāla, the Adviser of the Thākore, should try to convert him and evoke the good in him. So he asked the workers to confer with Vīrawāla and, forgetting Patel and Gāndhi, accept what they could get with goodwill from him. And he told Vīrawāla, "I am defeated. May you win! Placate the people by giving as much as possible and wire to me so as to revive the hope which I seem to have lost for the moment." He confessed that he had made a mistake in allowing the Paramount Power to intervene in the dispute and to see that the Thākore fulfilled the pro-

mise he had made. In doing so he had allowed his *ahiṁsā* to be tainted with *hiṁsā*. He should have been content to die, if by his fast he did not succeed in melting the hearts of the Thākore and his Adviser. So he now publicly declared that he renounced the advantages of the Gwyer award and apologized to the Viceroy and the Chief Justice for the trouble he had given them. Thus ended this strange episode of Rājkot as far as Gāndhijī was concerned. No wonder he wrote at the end of it:—

"Rājkot seems to have robbed me of my youth. I never knew that I was old. Now I am weighed down by the knowledge of decrepitude. I never knew what it was to lose hope. But it seems to have been cremated in Rājkot. My *ahiṁsā* has been put to a test such as it has never been subjected to before."[1]

Next to non-violence, Gāndhijī's trump card in all his Satyāgraha struggles had been the unity of the people on whose behalf he offered Satyāgraha. In South Africa, in Chāmparan, in Kaira and other places, where his Satyāgraha was most successful, the people stood solidly behind him. But in Rājkot, as in his struggle for Swarāj in British India, his opponents exploited the weaknesses of the people, created dissensions among them and roused the evil passions of the minorities against him by working upon their fears. Rājkot indeed, as he said, proved a laboratory for him. For there he made the discovery that the non-violence he had claimed for the Satyāgraha movement since 1920 was not unadulterated. That was why it had provoked only violent reaction in the minds of his opponents. Therefore he came to the conclusion that final Satyāgraha was inconceivable without an honourable peace between the several communities composing the Indian nation.

To complete his discomfiture in the Rājkot affair, the reforms that were finally announced by the Thākore

[1] *Harijan*. April 29, 1939.

Sāhib in November 1939, after all this muddle, were such that, in the opinion of Gāndhijī, far from transferring any powers to the people, they took away the powers they had already possessed, with the result that the Thākore Sāhib's will became the supreme law in Rājkot. This was the disastrous end of the tenth Satyāgraha struggle of Gāndhijī's in India.

XXVI

Hardly had he learnt the bitter lessons of the Rājkot Satyāgraha, when Gāndhijī was called upon to face the great national crisis created by the present war. On the 3rd September 1939, Great Britain declared war against Germany. On the same day, the Viceroy, without any reference to the Legislature, announced that India was also at war with Germany and appealed to all parties to co-operate in its prosecution. Then followed a number of events culminating in the present deadlock in Indian politics. But we stand too near these events to be in a position to take an unbiassed view of them. The declaration of war by the Viceroy without consulting the representatives of the people, the resignation of the Congress ministers, the Poona and the Bombay resolutions of the All-India Congress Committee, the reactions of the Government to these, Gāndhijī's "selective and symbolic Satyāgraha" for freedom of speech, the threat to India by the entry of Japan into the war, the failure of Cripps' Mission, Gāndhijī's "Quit India" movement, the August resolution of the A. I. C. C., the dramatic arrest of Gāndhijī and the Congress leaders, the consequent conflagration in the country, the twenty-one days' fast of Gāndhijī in protest, the unsuccessful appeals of the whole country for his release, the death of Mrs. Gāndhi in the detention camp and the release at last of Gāndhijī on 6th May 1944 on medical grounds—all these facts still belong to

the region of controversial politics, which we have no desire to enter. Therefore we propose to stop here in our account of Gāndhijī's career and proceed to give an outline of his teaching. Our purpose in giving such a long account of his life in this book is only to show the intimate connection between his life and his teaching. And, for this purpose, what we have said so far about his life is quite enough. It is our earnest hope that very soon the present deadlock would come to an end and that this phase of our politics would pass into history. And then it may be possible for us in a future edition of this book to make this part of our story complete and up-to-date.

XXVII

Gāndhijī is a world-figure. His teaching will form a land-mark in the history of humanity. When nations as well as individuals learn to give up violence, which is the mark of bestiality, he will be recognized as a benefactor of the species. His message is, therefore, not limited to India and Indians. It is addressed to the whole world and to the entire race of man. Indian politics was only the platform from which he delivered his message, which is really universal. He once wrote:—

"I believe my message to be universal, but as yet I feel that I can best deliver it through my work in my own country. If I can show visible success in India, the delivery of the message becomes complete."[1]

But in this book we are concerned more with Gāndhi, the leader of modern Hindu Renaissance, than with Gāndhi, the benefactor of the human race. Therefore in this section we shall try to estimate his contribution to Hinduism[2] proper.

In one of his Travancore speeches[3] Gāndhijī said

[1] *Young India*, April 26, 1928.

[2] Gāndhijī's considered opinion on the various aspects of Hinduism is given in a brief form in *Young India*, October 6, 1921.

[3] See *Harijan*, January 30, 1937.

that "if all the Upaniṣads and all other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes and if only the first verse in the Īśopaniṣad were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever." The verse to which he refers runs thus:—

"All this, whatsoever moves on earth, is pervaded by the Lord. When thou hast surrendered all this, then thou mayst enjoy. Do not covet the wealth of any man."

It will be remembered[1] that this verse had a tremendous influence on the mind of Maharṣi Debendranāth Tagore who says in his *Autobiography* that, when he first learnt the meaning of it, it seemed as if nectar streamed down upon him from Paradise, and a divine voice descended to him from heaven. Gāndhijī says in a similar manner that, in his search of the scriptures of the world, he found nothing to add to this verse and that everything good in all the scriptures could be derived from it. He finds in it his whole religion put, as it were, in a nut-shell. He finds in it (1) his absolute faith in God, (2) his perfect surrender to His will, (3) his belief in the brotherhood not only of all human beings but of all living beings, (4) his spirit of renunciation and (5) his ideal of continual service to his fellow creatures.

God is not a mere abstract idea to Gāndhijī, as He is to most of us. He is a living presence as well as an inner voice to him, as He has been to all the great saints and mystics of the world and to all founders of religions. In a passage which has become well-known through a gramophone record Gāndhijī says:—

"There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it."

In another passage,[2] which is not so well known, he expresses his faith in God in stronger terms:—

[1] *See* above p. 95.
[2] *Harijan*, May 14, 1938.

"But I can tell you this, that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. Then I can also testify that I may live without air and water, but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that cannot kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God and I am dead."

To this mysterious ever-abiding Presence, of which he is more sure than of the people sitting around him, Gāndhijī, following in the footsteps of the Vedic seers of old, gives the name Sat. Sat means absolute Being or Reality or Truth. According to Gāndhijī, Sat is the only correct and fully significant name for God. Hence his well-known saying, 'Truth is God', reversing the usual formula, 'God is Truth'. Though personally he is content to call God Sat or Satyam, that is, absolute Reality or Truth, Gāndhijī, like a true Hindu, says that He may be different to others according to their needs, He may be a personal God to those who need his personal presence, and He may be embodied to those who need His touch.[1] But what is most important is the fact that He Is, that He Is in us, around us and beyond us, and that it is our task here to know Him. To know Him is to become perfect like Him. To know Him is to attain self-realization.

But the difficulty is we cannot know Him completely in this life. In other words, we cannot reach absolute Truth while we are in this body. Each of us sees Truth from his own angle of vision, and hence only in fragments. It is commonly said that, though God appears to different individuals in different aspects, He is still one. The same may be said of Truth, which is God. There is bound to be difference of opinion among us, finite beings, about Truth, which is infinite. For our individual notions of Truth are likely to be tainted by error. Therefore there should be no compulsion or vio-

[1] *Young India*, March 5, 1925.

lence on our part in making others accept what we regard as Truth. On the other hand, we should leave others free and bind only ourselves by our convictions. We should be prepared to suffer for what we consider to be truth without making others suffer. The depth of our conviction would be measured by the degree of suffering we are prepared to undergo for it without a trace of ill-will towards those who inflict the suffering on us. Even death would not be too high a price for what we consider to be divine Truth, to which we have surrendered ourselves by conviction. If we are right, our martyrdom will move the hearts of men and advance the cause of Truth. If we are wrong, our self-imposed suffering will purify us and will ultimately set us right. At any rate, no harm is done to the world by our action. Thus Gāndhijī arrives at the conclusion that perfect non-violence is necessary for us in our search for absolute Truth. He says:—

"Ahiṁsā and Truth are so intertwined that it is difficult to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse and which the reverse? Nevertheless Ahiṁsā is the means, Truth is the end."[1]

To Gāndhijī Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after Truth. If he were asked to define the Hindu creed, he would simply say, "Search after Truth through non-violent means." Non-violence again, according to him, does not mean mere non-killing, as it does in popular speech, any more than Truth means mere truth-speaking. He gives as wide a definition of non-violence as of Truth. Every act of giving pain to the mind or the body of any living creature directly or indirectly is, in his opinion, a breach of ahiṁsā. Hence harsh words, harsh judgments, ill-will, anger and spite, lust and cruelty should be looked upon as insidious forms of hiṁsā. And the slow torture of men and animals, the starvation and

[1] *From Yeravada Mandir*, p. 14.

exploitation to which they are subjected out of selfish greed, the wanton humiliation and suppression of the weak and the killing of their self-respect that we witness all around us—there is far more himsā in them than in the mere benevolent taking of life.[1] In fact, Gāndhijī's doctrine of non-violence is nothing but the Law of Love preached by all the saints and mystics of the world as the law of life. Only, just as the Vedic seers used a negative expression, Nirguṇa Brahman, for their experience of the transcendental Absolute, just as Buddha used a negative expression, Nirvāṇa, for his conception of ineffable Peace beyond the ills of life, so does Gāndhijī use a negative expression, non-violence, for his feeling of universal Love. He has written extensively on the subject of non-violence. Hundreds of beautiful passages[2] on the scope and implication and the myriad forms of non-violence—passages which can vie with the best prose in the literature of the world—could be culled from his writings in *Young India* and *Harijan*. They spring up spontaneously like flowers, while he is writing his comments on the current events of the week or giving his replies to the questions of his numerous correspondents. Take, for instance, the following passage, which occurs in an article he wrote commenting on the disturbance created at a public meeting in Madras:—

"Non-violence is a perfect state. It is a goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously. Man does not become divine when he personifies innocence in himself. Only then does he become truly man. In our present state we are partly men and partly beasts, and in our ignorance and even arrogance say that we truly fulfil the purpose of our species, when we deliver blow for blow and develop the measure of anger required for the purpose. We pretend to believe that retaliation is the law of our being. Whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is

[1] See *Young India*, October 4, 1928.

[2] Some of these are given in *Gāndhi Sūtras*, pp. 31-41.

obligatory. Retaliation is indulgence requiring elaborate regulating. Restraint is the law of our being. For highest perfection is unattainable without highest restraint. Suffering is thus the badge of the human tribe."[1]

In brief, Gāndhijī's gospel of truth and non-violence is based on his faith that God is Love as well as Truth. It is from his comprehensive conception of non-violence that Gāndhijī derives all the characteristic teachings with which he has enriched and strengthened Hinduism, *viz.*, his interpretation of Varnāśrama-dharma, his denunciation of untouchability, his advocacy of women's rights, his expansion of the doctrine of cow-protection, his explanation of the ideal of Brahmacarya, and, above all, his invention of the new technique of Satyāgraha.

Gāndhijī believes that the modern caste system in India is a travesty of the Varṇāśrama-dharma and is a breach of the doctrine of Ahiṁsā. Therefore, while denouncing the former, he is anxious that the eternal principles underlying the latter should not be lost sight of. The caste system is undoubtedly a drag upon progress with its over-emphasis on the regulations about inter-dining and inter-marriage, its bewildering divisions and sub-divisions, making any united effort impossible, and, above all, its intolerable notions of superiority and inferiority; whereas, according to Gāndhijī, the theory of Varṇa is based on (1) spiritual economy, (2) division of labour, (3) the principle of heredity and (4) the equality and oneness of all life. Of all animals created by God, man is the only animal that has the capacity to know his Maker. Therefore his chief aim in life is not to eat and drink, not to marry and beget, not to acquire wealth or power, but to come nearer to God by perfecting his spirit. If in a society based on the principle of heredity all men followed their hereditary occupations, much of the energy which is now

[1] *Young India*, March 9, 1920.

wasted in the choice of professions, in the acquisition of skill in new professions, and in cut-throat competition and unemployment would be set free for the higher pursuits of the spirit. Co-operation, love and harmony would take the place of competition, jealousy and struggle for existence. Such a society may not acquire unnecessary material wealth, but will be spiritually enriched. This is not political economy, but spiritual economy. But its success will depend upon one condition, namely, there should be no notion of superiority and inferiority. All life is absolutely equal and one. God is present in all. Therefore, according to Gāndhijī, all professions should be on an equal footing. Scavenging is as noble as teaching. Do not mothers do scavenging for their children? Do not doctors remove pus and mucus from the bodies of their patients? They do not lose caste by touching filth. Why? Because they are at other times clean, cultured and refined in their habits and manners. If all scavengers and others who do the dirty work of society are well-fed, educated and given all facilities for culture, they need not occupy a low position in society. That is Gāndhijī's dream. That is what he means when he says that Varṇāśrama, when rightly interpreted, is the greatest communism on earth. It is a communism based on love and co-operation, not upon violence and compulsion. When Gāndhijī insists on the dignity of manual labour and suggests a franchise based on hand-spinning, he wants to bring about a peaceful social revolution by which the submerged classes will be uplifted and placed on a footing of equality with the well-to-do classes. Moreover he has a horror of industrial civilization with its overcrowded cities containing slums and factories and depleted and pauperized villages.. He wants to rescue India with its seven hundred thousand villages from the fate of the industrialized West, which, in its

hunger for foreign markets, is forced to rule and kill weaker nations. His passionate plea for the revival of village industries, especially spinning and weaving, has for its object the preservation of the peaceful and the humanitarian character of our civilization. In a hundred different ways he points out how the principle of Swadeshi is a religious principle applicable to all nations.

He defines Swadeshi "as the spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote." He says that it is the first step in self-sacrifice, it is the love of one's neighbour, it is effective social service, it is a form of non-violence, it is Swadharma applied to one's immediate environment, it is a cure for beggary and unemployment, it is a constructive programme unlike boycott which is destructive, in its purest form it is the acme of universal service, it is, in fact, "an eternal principle whose neglect has brought untold grief to mankind." Thus does Gāndhijī seek to spiritualize economics as well as politics. And in doing so he is true to the spirit of Hinduism, which draws no hard and fast line between things sacred and things secular and insists on all activities of man being based on a religious principle.

Gāndhijī does not stop with the application of the principle of Swadeshi to economics. He extends it to education, to politics and to organized religion. In education, the principle of Swadeshi means the use of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in all stages, the introduction of a basic craft like spinning as the centre of instruction and the relegation of English and other foreign languages and cultures to a secondary place in the curriculum. In politics, it means the use of indigenous institutions, which best reflect the ethos of the people from whom they have sprung, and the introduction of reforms for curing them of their defects,

if any. In religion, it means that all people should retain their own ancestral religion and purge it of its defects or excrescences, if any, through a reverent study of other religions. Gāndhijī is emphatically against the proselytizing activities of Christian missions. His attitude on this question has been widely criticized and taken exception to, and many English and American missionaries have sought interviews with him. He has, as usual, explained his position in clear and unmistakable terms to all. Like every true Hindu, he believes that all religions are branches of one and the same tree—the Tree of Truth. The shape and size of the different branches may be different. But their leaf and flower and fruit are the same, for the same vital juice runs through them all. At the same time, all religions are imperfect, because Truth comes to us through human channels and men are imperfect. Therefore there is no point in tearing away a man from the natural surroundings of his own religion, which may be imperfect, and putting him in the hot-house of an alien religion which has its own imperfections. It is unfair for a foreign missionary to go to the illiterate villager, who has no more understanding of matters spiritual than a cow, and argue with him and convert him. And it is worse to offer the inducements of food, education and medical service as aids to conversion in a poor, conquered, down-trodden country. No man is blind to the value of the humanitarian service rendered by the Christian missions in this country, but it detracts from that value to have proselytization as the ultimate aim. Religion is best propagated by the noble lives led by its followers. No other propaganda is required. The rose stands in its own place and spreads its perfume. It does not employ agents and canvassers. So the proper procedure for a Christian missionary is to lead a Christ-like life, render what social service he can for its own sake

without any ulterior motive and, by his example, make Hindus better Hindus and Muslims better Muslims. It is wrong for any man to think that his own religion is perfect and that all other religions are forms of error. The correct attitude is one of firm adherence to one's own religion coupled with an equal reverence towards all other religions. It is not simply a question of tolerating other faiths, but of believing that all faiths lead to the same goal. Thus does Gāndhijī reiterate, in his own emphatic way, the immemorial Hindu attitude on the question—the attitude of the Bhagavad-Gītā and of the inscriptions of Aśoka.

Gāndhijī's own reverence to Christianity and Islam is so great that at one time Christians hoped he would become a Christian and Muslims hoped he would become a Muslim. But he remains a staunch Hindu. He even calls himself a Sanātanist Hindu and says that neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the Korān, which he has read and admired, can ever give him the solace that the Bhagavad-Gītā and Tulsī Dās's Rāmāyaṇa give him.

At the same time, he is adamant on the question of untouchability in Hinduism. No arguments by learned Paṇḍits, no quotations from ancient law-books can ever convince him that untouchability is a part of Hinduism. Untouchability is a canker and a disease. It is a blot on Hinduism. It is a negation of the Hindu doctrine of ahiṁsā. If it is allowed to remain, Hinduism will perish, and it will deserve to perish. Caste Hindus should at once expiate for their past sin and take the outcastes to their bosom by admitting them into their temples. They should not complain of their evil habits like drinking and eating carrion. The caste Hindus are themselves responsible for these in having segregated the depressed classes and denied them the ordinary decencies of life. It is their duty now to wean

their brethren from their evil habits and absorb them into Hindu society. It is a wonder that these depressed classes, who have been so inhumanly treated by their Hindu brethren, should still remain Hindus. When Hindus treat their own kith and kin as untouchables, they cannot complain that in South Africa they themselves are treated as untouchables by the white population. Gāndhijī's campaign against untouchability is the greatest service he has rendered to Hinduism. Already it has borne fruit. The demon is being exorcised from Hindu society. The Hindu State of Travancore has, as we have seen, led the way by throwing open its temples to Harijans, and everywhere there is an earnest attempt on the part of Hindus to undo the wrong of ages.

Gāndhijī denounces with equal vehemence the age-long injustice meted out to women in Hindu society. According to him, child-marriages, enforced widowhood and the Devadāsi system are as much blots on Hindu society as untouchability. If our society is to become a progressive unit in human evolution, woman should be treated as the equal of man. She should have all the privileges which man enjoys. Gāndhijī says, " I am uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion, she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equlity."[1] The difference in sex and physical form denotes only difference in function and not difference in status. Woman is the complement of man, and not his inferior. Gāndhijī objects even to the expression, " the weaker sex." He says:

" To call woman the weaker sex is a libel, it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power,

[1] *Young India*, October 17, 1929.

then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman."[1]

As in the case of untouchability, he rejects as obsolete or spurious all passages in our ancient Smṛtis which speak disparagingly of women and seek to restrict their freedom. He takes the sane view that the Smṛtis were always adjusting themselves to the changed conditions of society and never had the cast-iron character which is now attributed to them. He says:—

"In pre-British days there was no such thing as rigid Hindu Law governing the lives of millions. The body of regulations known as Smṛtis were indicative, rather than inflexible, codes of conduct. They never had the validity of law such as is known to modern lawyers. The observance of the restraints of the Smṛtis was enforced more by social than legal sanctions. The Smṛtis were, as is evident from the self-contradictory verses to be found in them, continuously passing, like ourselves, through evolutionary changes, and were adapted to the new discoveries that were being made in social science. Wise kings were free to procure new interpretations to suit new conditions. Hindu religion or Hindu Śāstras never had the changeless and unchanging character that is now being sought to be given to them."[2]

Gāndhijī agrees with Justice Rānaḍe in urging that social reform should go hand in hand with political and economic reform. "To postpone social reform", he says, "till after the attainment of Swarāj is not to know the meaning of Swarāj". According to him, political emancipation means the rise of mass consciousness. This cannot come without affecting all branches of national activity. A truly awakened nation will not be satisfied with reform in only one department of life. Therefore all movements for reform should proceed simultaneously. The struggle for Swarāj is an all-round

[1] *Young India*, April 10, 1930.
[2] *Young India*, October 13, 1927.

awakening—social, educational, moral, economic and political.

Gāndhijī's love is not confined to the world of men and women. It extends to the sub-human world also. Like St. Francis of Assisi, he speaks of the mother goat and the sister orange. With rare insight Gāndhijī saw the implications of the Hindu feeling for the cow. The cow represents for him the whole sub-human world. In her eyes he sees the dumb appeal of the entire animal creation to man. In unforgettable words, he says the cow is a poem on pity. In one place he exhorts us to realize that our dominion over the lower orders of creation is not for their slaughter, but for their benefit equally with ours, for Gāndhijī believes that they are endowed with a soul even as we are. In another place he exclaims, if only animals had the power of speech, what a terrible indictment would they bring up against man! Therefore for Gāndhijī cow-protection in India is "one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution." It is "the gift of Hinduism to the world." But his love of the cow, like his love of the poor and the depressed, is never a mere idle sentiment. It takes a practical shape and sternly faces realities. Therefore Gāndhijī gives detailed instructions how *Gośālas* and *Pinjrapoles* should be run as successful economic propositions.[1]

We now come to Gāndhijī's interpretation and exemplification of the cardinal Hindu virtues of Brahmacarya, Satyam, and Ahiṁsā. As we have seen, he regards Truth or Absolute Reality as God. The word Satyam is derived from Sat, which means pure being. Truth is the object of our search, the aim of all our endeavours. Brahmacarya and ahiṁsā are the means.[2]

[1] For a specimen, the curious reader may read his article on this subject in *Young India*, March 31, 1927.

[2] "Truth has been the very foundation of my life. Brahmacarya and ahiṁsā were born later out of truth." *Harijan*, April 24, 1937.

Brahmacarya means the course of conduct adapted to the search of Brahman, that is, Truth. It means complete control over all the senses. Much harm has been done by a narrow definition of Brahmacarya. Mere control of animal passion is not enough. It is like stopping one hole in a leaky boat and allowing other holes to remain. He who wants to save his boat must stop all the holes. Nor is brahmacarya mere physical control. Thought-control is more important. Where the mind wanders, the body must follow sooner or later. Therefore a constant endeavour must be made to bring the body and the mind under control.

Exception has been taken by many to Gāndhijī's extreme views of brahmacarya, especially to his saying "that marriage is a fall as birth is a fall"[1] and that Hinduism does not regard the married state as by any means essential to salvation. But Gāndhijī is only pointing to an ideal. If a man or a woman can completely overcome sexual desire and observe chastity of mind and body, marriage is unnecessary. Marriage is a concession to weakness. The sexual act is something of which the human spirit is rather ashamed. It is not like eating and drinking. For without eating and drinking one cannot live. But sexual activity is not necessary for the sustenance of one's life. Some may say that it is necessary for the perpetuation of the species and that, if all men and women observe brahmacarya, the species would become extinct. Gāndhijī is

[1] *Young India*, October 6, 1921. But his later opinion on the subject is less severe. For in *Harijan*, dated 22nd March, 1942, he writes —

"It is no doubt an excellent thing for girls to remain unmarried for the sake of service, but the fact is that only one in a million is able to do so. Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wholly wrong. When one imagines any act a fall, it is difficult, however hard one tries, to raise oneself. The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament and therefore to lead a life of self-restraint in the married state. Marriage in Hinduism is one of the four Āśramas. In fact the other three are based on it."

not scared by this argument. He says there is no likelihood of all people observing complete chastity, and even in the contingency of their doing so, the species would not become extinct, but would be transferred to a higher plane of existence. As a matter of fact, in the religious literature of the world persons who have reached a higher plane of existence are imagined to be mānasa-putras or the result of an immaculate conception, showing that the general sense of mankind regards a sexual act as something low, something unworthy of the spirit. It is a pity that love should express itself through lust. But Gāndhijī says that love, even conjugal love, need not express itself in this manner.

"Lustless love between husband and wife is not impossible. Man is not a brute. He has risen to a higher state after countless births in brute creation. He is born to stand, not to walk on all fours or crawl. Bestiality is as far removed from manhood, as matter from the spirit."[1]

While brahmacarya is the means to self-realization of the individual in isolation, ahiṁsā is the means of the individual in relation to society. Non-violence or the Law of Love is the law of human society, whereas violence is the law of the jungle. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law. Restraint is the law of our being, while retaliation is the law of the lower animals. Mankind is habitually non-violent. Else it would have destroyed itself long ago. The very existence of human society shows that non-violence is the rule and violence only the exception. History is nothing but a record of the occasional disturbances of the Law of Love. Love is the law of the family. Why should it not be the law of nations, who are all members of one family, the family of man? The scriptures of the world and all the great teachers of mankind have taught the Law of Love. In no scrip-

[1] *Young India*, April 29, 1926.

ture is retaliation made obligatory. It is only made permissible. Forgiveness is always held superior to retaliation. We wrong ourselves by thinking that non-violence is a law only for individuals and not for communities and nations. What is good for individuals is good also for communities and nations. The experiment must be tried. And India is best fitted to try it, as there is the requisite background in the national consciousness. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism have always regarded ahiṁsā as the highest dharma and they have extended it even to the sub-human world. So there is a long and well-established tradition of non-violence in this country. If only India makes the experiment and succeeds in gaining her lost freedom through purely non-violent means, she will be setting a great example to the world. Even if she fails, she will have attempted, in the interests of the human species, a noble task worthy of her spiritual traditions. At any rate, Gāndhijī has dedicated himself to this task. His originality consists in extending the law of ahiṁsā from individual action to corporate action, from domestic affairs to national and internationl affairs and in developing the necessary technique in which the highest non-violence is combined with the highest courage. He calls his new method of fighting tyranny and injustice Satyāgraha. He coined this word, as we have seen, in South Africa, when he led a mass movement of his countrymen to resist the injustice of the South African Government. To stand up against an armed tyrant with a heart free from anger and malice and calmly face his sword or gun rather than submit to his will requires extraordinary spiritual strength. It is no passive resistance. It is active, but non-violent, resistance. Only the resistance is offered by the unconquerable soul. Soul-force opposes physical force and tries to vindicate the truth for which it stands. The root-meaning of Gāndhijī's new word

Satyāgraha is 'holding on to Truth'. Hence the doctrine that goes by the name of Satyāgraha is explained by him as "vindication of Truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's own self." It goes without saying that one who offers Satyāgraha should have to qualify himself for the task. He should, according to Gāndhijī, qualify himself in the following manner:—

(1) He should have faith in God, he should believe that Providence rules this world and that truth will triumph in the end. (2) He should have faith in human nature. The whole object of Satyāgraha is to appeal by one's own suffering to the highest in one's opponent—to the divine spark in him which lies behind all his evil propensities and desires—and also to enlist public sympathy for a just cause. (3) A Satyāgrahī should have infinite patience. His suffering may be long and protracted and the struggle may end in death. But he should not be dismayed. He should meet death cheerfully, hoping that the righteous cause he represents is bound to triumph in the end, perhaps as a result of his death. (4) He should be capable of infinite sacrifice. He may have to lose his property, his family may be reduced to beggary, and he may be put to torture of various kinds. He must be prepared for all that. (5) He should be incapable of fear. He should fear only God and not any man, however high-placed or powerful he may be. (6) He should never use coercion of any kind or take unfair advantage over his opponent, otherwise his Satyāgraha becomes Durāgraha. (7) He should never swerve from truth and rectitude even by a hair's breadth throughout the struggle If he takes any wrong steps, he should retrace those steps and begin the struggle again. (8) He should inspire confidence in the opponent that he is pure in heart and has no trace of anger or ill-will in him and that he will under no circumstances resort to violence. He should make his opponent believe that the latter's life is safe in a Satyāgrahī's hands. (9) He should always be gentle and polite and charitable towards his opponent and never attribute motives to him or use harsh language against him. (10) He should always be ready to come to terms even if it means a personal triumph to his opponent and loss of prestige to himself.

Gāndhijī is never tired of pointing to Prahlāda as an ideal Satyāgrahī. If this high ideal is followed, every Satyāgraha movement, whether it immediately

succeeds in its object or not, becomes a self-purifying movement. Those who take part in it, whether they gain their immediate end or not, are bound to gain the ultimate end of man—the perfection of spirit. This is exactly the teaching of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Satyāgraha is, after all, only an application of the Gītā doctrine of Niṣkāma Karma or Karma Yoga.

Objection is frequently raised against Gāndhijī's teaching of non-violence on the ground that it is opposed to the teaching of the Gītā. No one knows his Gītā better than Gāndhijī. He has dived deep into its spirit, whereas his opponents scarcely get beyond the letter. The divine author of the Gītā, who advises a warrior to fight without any passion, without anger and ill-will, without any attachment or desire or trace of self and with his mind in unison with God, did all that he could in his day to undermine the position of violence. If the Gītā ideal is fully realized, violence would automatically stop, and Satyāgraha would be the only logical step that could be taken. Thus one of the innumerable merits of the great scripture—the Bhagavad-Gītā—is that it foreshadows the future ideal of Satyāgraha. Gāndhijī himself writes on this point thus:—

"That the central teaching of the Gītā is not hiṁsā but ahiṁsā is amply demonstrated by the subject begun in the second chapter and summarized in the concluding eighteenth chapter. The treatment in the other chapters also supports the position. Hiṁsā is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred, and the Gītā strives to carry us to the state beyond Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—a state that excludes anger, hatred, etc. But to say that the Gītā teaches violence or justifies war, because advice to kill was given on a particular occasion, is as wrong as to say that himsā is the law of life, because a certain amount of it is inevitable in daily life To one who reads the spirit of the Gītā, it teaches the secret of non-violence, the secret of realizing the self through the physical body."[1]

[1] *Young India*, November 12, 1925. See also *Young India*, August 6, 1931 for a fuller treatment of the Gītā.

According to Gāndhijī, Satyāgraha has many branches. Non-violent non-co-operation is one. Civil Disobedience is another. The method of the former is to refuse to associate oneself with wrong. Non-co-operation with evil is as much a man's duty as co-operation with good. If a father is sinful, it is the duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If a headmaster conducts his school on an immoral principle, it is the duty of the pupils to leave the institution. Similarly, if a ruler is wicked, his subjects should withdraw their co-operation from him and try to wean him from his wickedness. Every tyrant succeeds in his purpose only because his victims submit to his will. Even the most despotic government cannot stand without the willing or unwilling consent of the governed. The aim of non-co-operation is, therefore, to paralyse the government by withdrawing that consent.

The advanced stage of non-co-operation is civil disobedience. In non-co-operation no law is broken. All laws are obeyed. Only the citizens refuse to serve the evil State in any capacity, as it is repugnant to their conscience to do so. But in civil disobedience they go a step further. They refuse to obey the laws of the evil State and finally refuse to pay taxes. This is, of course, open rebellion, but rebellion on a non-violent basis. The rebels are non-violent in thought, word and deed and are prepared to undergo any penalty which the State might impose on them, including loss of property or even capital punishment, rather than submit to its wicked will.

But neither non-co-operation nor civil disobedience should be launched with a light heart on the slightest pretext. The injustice should be very great and all other means should have been tried and found unsuccessful, before the masses are asked to non-co-operate. And, as for civil disobedience, it is only those

who habitually obey the State and are loyal to it that are qualified to offer civil disobedience in extraordinary circumstances. In any case, the people who have recourse to these varieties of Satyāgraha should be well-disciplined, should be capable of endless sacrifice and, above all, should have absolute faith in Truth and Non-violence.

This is the teaching of Mahātmā Gāndhi. And, as though God wanted to test his faith in non-violence, the generation which received this message is made to witness violence of the most savage type in four continents. One wonders whether Gāndhijī's gospel has any chance at a time when man seems to be receding into the ape and the tiger. But the Mahātmā is unshaken. On the contrary, his faith is growing stronger every day, and he does not mind being a lonely voice in the wilderness. And with his last breath he will declare his undying faith in the ultimate triumph of non-violence, even if all his followers desert him. When Christ died on the cross and his followers fled in terror, what were the prospects of Christianity?

In his Kamalā Lectures Professor Rādhākrishṇan says prophetically that "the world would look back to Mahātmā Gāndhi some day and salute him as one born out of his time, one who had seen the light in a dark and savage world"—a dark world, indeed, which could see in Gāndhi only a bamboozler and in Christ only a wine-bibber.

CHAPTER XII.

PROFESSOR RĀDHĀKRISHṆAN

I

Professor Rādhākrishṇan is not only the greatest modern exponent of Hinduism, but also a great world-champion of religion in general. It is not the Hindus alone who are grateful to him for his clear and convincing explanation of all the aspects of their faith. Religious men all over the world, whose faith is stronger than their reason, will be thankful to this eminent Hindu philosopher for having painted in such warm colours "to their intellect what already lay painted to their heart and imagination." For, possessing the true hospitality of the Hindu mind, he undertakes to defend not this religion or that religion, but the spirit which lies behind all religions. And he defends this most cherished possession of humanity against every kind of attack made against it in modern times. He courageously takes up the gauntlet thrown by the physicist, the biologist, the behaviourist, the psycho-analyst, the anthropologist, the socialist, the communist and the practical politician, and reaffirms in eloquent terms the indefeasible and inalienable claims of religious experience. He boldly proclaims that nothing but a spiritual revival can cure the present distempers of the world. The new world order which we hope to see after this war must have, according to him, a deep spiritual impulse behind it to give it unity and drive. There seems to be no doubt that his name will go down into history as that of the greatest religious philosopher of modern times. Already tributes of praise and gratitude have come to

him from all parts of the world, and his books have gone through several editions and are being translated into many languages. He is in the true line of descent from the ancient Hindu philosophers who have from time to time rescued the spirit of religion from the aberrations of secular thought and practice. The only difference is that, while the ancient philosophers took their stand on what they termed scriptural revelation, the modern philosopher takes his stand on the religious experience of the saints, sages and mystics belonging to various traditions all over the world.

It is but appropriate that the task of defending the religious faith of mankind should have fallen to the lot of a Hindu philosopher, because a Hindu alone looks upon all religions as one in essence, regards them as members of one and the same family or branches on a single tree, this being a truth which he imbibes along with his mother's milk. Moreover it is the habit of all Hindu philosophers to study the facts of the mind with as much care and attention as scientists study the facts of Nature. They build their systems on the psychological as well as the scientific knowledge of their times. In their view, phenomena of religious consciousness are as much facts to be taken into account as the phenomena of Nature. And, as we shall see, Professor Rādhākrishṇan is true to type and follows in the footsteps of his predecessors in his comprehensive philosophy of life.

II

Sarvepalli Rādhākrishṇan was born of Telugu Brāhman parents in Tiruttani, Chittoor District, Madras Presidency, on September 5, 1888. He had his education in the Voorhees College, Vellore and the Madras Christian College, Madras. He took his M.A. degree in Philosophy in 1909, and was, from 1909 to 1917, on the

staff of Presidency College, Madras, where he soon distinguished himself as a very clear expositor of even the most abstruse problems of philosophy. He was then transferred to the Arts College, Rājahmundry, as Lecturer in Philosophy. After serving there for a year, he was selected for the post of Professor of Philosophy in the University of Mysore. From 1918 to 1921 he remained in Mysore, where he wrote his first two important books—*The Philosophy of Rabīndranāth Tagore* in 1918 and the *Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* in 1920. The latter, which contains a very able criticism of the chief contemporary systems of Western Philosophy from the point of view of Absolute Idealism, made Rādhākrishṇan's name well known in the philosophical world.

The young philosopher now attracted the eye of the great educationist, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, who offered him the King George V Professorship of Philosophy in his University. Professor Rādhākrishṇan accepted the offer, went to Calcutta in 1921 and held the place for the next twenty years, with brief intervals during which, with the permission of the University authorities, he worked as Professor of Comparative Religion in Manchester College at Oxford, as the Vice-Chancellor of the Āndhra University at Waltair, and as Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics again at Oxford. Within three years of his going to the University of Calcutta he published the first volume of his monumental *Indian Philosophy,* in which he gives a lucid survey of the philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, the Theism of the Bhagavad-Gītā, the Pluralistic Realism of the Jainas, the Ethical Idealism of the Buddha and the later schools of Buddhistic philosophy. The first edition of this volume appeared in 1923, and the second revised edition in 1929. The se-

cond volume of *Indian Philosophy,* which gives an account of the six Brāhmanical systems of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta and also of the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta systems of Theism, was first published in 1927, and the second edition of it appeared in 1931. Chapters from these two volumes have also been reprinted as separate books.

Meanwhile Professor Rādhākrishṇan was invited to deliver the Upton Lectures for the year 1926 at Manchester College, Oxford. He accepted the invitation and went to England for the first time in 1926. The theme he chose for his lectures was 'The Hindu View of Life'. These lectures have since been published in book form. The first impression of the book appeared in 1927, and there have been so far five other impressions. *The Hindu View of Life,* which gives a clear and rational account of Hindu Dharma, is the most popular of Rādhākrishṇan's books and has been translated into several languages, Indian and European. After delivering the Upton lectures at Oxford, Professor Rādhākrishṇan went to the United States on a lecturing tour and delivered the Haskell Lectures at Chicago. If these lectures had also been published, they would have formed a companion volume to *The Hindu View of Life,* giving a complete account of Hinduism. For he says in his Preface to his Upton Lectures, "I have dealt with the whole subject of the Hindu philosophy of religion more fully in the Haskell Lectures which I had the honour to deliver in the University of Chicago this August (1926), and when they are published, I hope that some serious gaps in the present work will be filled." But, unfortunately, the Haskell Lectures have not so far been published.

The Western scholars who met the Indian Professor in 1926 were very much impressed by his scholarship and his clear exposition, in faultless and fluent

English, of many knotty points in Hindu Philosophy. They saw that he was not only a great writer but also a great speaker and that he could rouse the heart as well as enlighten the mind.

Here, for instance, is what Dr. C. E. M. Joad of the University of London writes about Rādhākrishṇan as a lecturer:—

"It is an arresting personality who takes his call—a spare slight figure, a keen alert face, and a pair of bright brown eyes. All these you will notice, but notice only to forget at the sound of the beautifully modulated voice conveying in a series of exquisitely turned phrases an equal mastery of the intricacies of the English language and of Hindu metaphysics. Much has been written of Rādhākrishnan the thinker, but of Rādhākrishnan the talker not enough. For his performances in this line are startling. He has so mastered the technique of lecturing as to turn what, as practised by most of us, is an effort of sweating exegesis, as painful for lecturer as for lecturees, into the apparently effortless performance of an art. He is extremely fluent and his lectures, delivered entirely without notes, flow in a stream of perfectly turned sentences which would put most English speakers to shame."[1]

So Rādhākrishṇan was invited to occupy the chair of Comparative Religion in Manchester College, Oxford, in 1929. Accordingly, at considerable inconvenience to himself and his family, he went to Oxford in 1929 and gave the first of a series of lectures on the 22nd October. This lecture, along with some others, was later published in book form in 1933, with the title *East and West in Religion*. While he was in England, he was also asked to give the Hibbert Lectures for 1929. The subject that he chose for these lectures was 'An Idealist View of Life.' Dr. Joad writes about these lectures thus:—

"I have attended a number of Rādhākrishnan's lectures, and they were always crowded to the doors. The Hibbert Lectures, delivered at University College, constituted an event even in the crowded life of London. The audience was notable not only because of its size but because of its quality Most of those

[1] *Counter Attack from the East*, p. 35.

attending were young! The lectures formed no part of a recognized University course and attendance was, therefore, optional. Nevertheless, young men and women, many of whom, to my knowledge, had been earning their living as clerks, teachers, salesmen and typists since half-past nine in the morning, while others had, I suppose, already attended a couple of lectures on the same day, were there in hundreds, listening to a profoundly religious man expounding to a generation which has largely lost its religion, a profoundly religious view of life."[1]

These lectures were published in book form in 1932. *An Idealist View of Life* is the most important of Rādhākrishṇan's books, for it is here that we have his original contribution to the religious thought of his time.

After he returned to India, he was elected Vice-chancellor of the Āndhra University in 1931. So he left Calcutta temporarily for Waltair and remained there from 1931 to 1936 as the head of the Āndhra University. In 1931 he was nominated to the League of Nations' Committee for Intellectual Co-operation along with other persons of renown from various countries. He served on this Committee from 1931 to 1939, and had to go to Geneva annually for its meetings.

In 1936, when he was offered the newly created Spalding Professorship of Eastern Religions and Ethics, he gave up the Vice-Chancellorship of the Āndhra University and went to Oxford. At the same time he reverted to his Professorship of Philosophy in Calcutta University. The arrangement was that he should divide his time between Oxford and Calcutta, lecturing for a term here and two terms there. This arrangement continued till the war broke out and prevented his annual voyage to England. So, though he still continues as Spalding Professor, he has been granted dispensation from his duties till normal conditions are restored.

Meanwhile he was induced by Pandit Madan

[1] *Counter Attack from the East*, p. 37.

Mohan Mālavīya in 1939 to accept the Vice-Chancellorship of the Benares Hindu University. A high salary was offered to him, but he refused it and consented to occupy the place only in an honorary capacity, retaining at the same time his Calcutta Professorship. It is but appropriate that a Hindu philosopher of Professor Rādhākrishṇan's eminence, who has done so much by his books and lectures to spread a correct knowledge of Hinduism in Europe and America, should be the head of the Hindu University in the sacred city of Benares. There was universal satisfaction, therefore, when Paṇdit Mālavīya was able to announce publicly that he was able to secure the services of Professor Rādhākrishṇan as Vice-Chancellor of the Hindu University in succession to himself.

In 1939 Professor Rādhākrishṇan was able to bring out two important books. One is a collection of his lectures as Spalding Professor at Oxford with the title —*Eastern Religions and Western Thought.* In this book he shows with an astonishing wealth of learning how the Upaniṣadic mysticism of India has been a continuous influence in Western thought from the times of Pythagoras and Plato down to the present day. Reviewing this book in *Philosophy,* Dr. W. R. Inge, the late Dean of St. Paul's, said:

"An important and beautiful book written with earnest conviction and conspicuous ability. . . . He makes his main point, that we in Europe have much to learn, and more to unlearn, from India. We have neglected our opportunities during our long association with a civilization much older and more mature than our own. It is not too late to remedy our fault."

While Rādhākrishṇan was at Oxford delivering these lectures, he was invited by the British Academy to give the annual lecture in the "Master Mind" series. He chose as his subject for this lecture 'Gautama Buddha', and his treatment of it was so masterly that

it was described as a lecture 'on a master mind by a master mind.' In an article in *The Times Literary Supplement,* dated 7th September, 1940, Sir Francis Younghusband wrote as follows about this lecture:—

"As an interpreter of the philosophy and religion of India to the West none excels Rādhākrishnan. Himself a philosopher and a man of deep religious feeling, he also possesses real eloquence. When he delivered his lecture on Buddha in the 'Master Mind' series to the British Academy, it was observed of him that he was himself a master mind. Before an audience of the leading men of letters and philosophers in this country, he was able, without a note and without a single hesitation, to deliver a discourse which enthralled the meeting and brought not only Buddhism but Hinduism right home to us in England. More than that, by his keen clear intellect, by his obvious spirituality and by his whole personality he was able to make a lasting impression upon those who are able to transmit it to those most fitted to receive it."

And next year Professor Rādhākrishṇan was elected Fellow of the British Academy. He is the first and only Indian to achieve this distinction.

The other book published by him in 1939 is a collection of essays and reflections by eminent persons in various walks of life all over the world on the life and work of Mahātmā Gāndhi. This collection was edited and provided with a long introduction by Rādhākrishṇan and presented to Gāndhijī on his seventieth birthday. Professor Rādhākrishṇan has thus rendered signal service to the two outstanding personalities of his time in India, namely, Rabīndranāth Tagore and Mahātmā Gāndhi. He had already written a book on the Philosophy of Tagore, and he now made the thinking world record its opinion of Mahātmā Gāndhi, who, according to him, is 'one of the outstanding personalities not only of our time, but of all time.' And it is a happy coincidence that, in the very year in which he published this symposium on Gāndhijī's life and work, Professor Rādhākrishṇan was invited to South Africa, the scene of Gāndhijī's early life and activities, to give lectures

on Indian Philosophy and Culture. The European colonists in South Africa had thus an opportunity within our generation to see and know at first hand how India could produce different types of great men—Gāndhi, Gokhale, Śrīnivāsa Śāstrī and Rādhākrishṇan. They honour these men, of course, but still continue to treat Indians as helots in the empire.

In 1941 Professor Rādhākrishṇan, while being the honorary Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, was requested to occupy the Sir Sayājī Rao Chair of Indian Culture and Civilization newly founded by His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda, in memory of his illustrious predecessor. He had accordingly to relinquish the King George V Chair of Philosophy in Calcutta University, which he had held for twenty years and become both Professor and Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University. These posts he now holds along with the Spalding Professorship at Oxford. But the bonds of love which connect Professor Rādhākrishṇan with the University of Calcutta can never be snapped. In 1942 he delivered the Kamalā Lectures at the Calcutta University, as he did the Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh Lectures in 1937. The delivery of the Kamalā Lectures first in Calcutta and then in Benares is one of the most outstanding successes of Professor Rādhākrishṇan in recent years. It is reported that his courageous and eloquent addresses and references to non-violence and Gāndhijī at the end of his lectures in Calcutta took the audience off their feet, and there was a wild outburst of enthusiasm in the hall.

Besides the important books mentioned above, Professor Rādhākrishṇan wrote in 1928 *The Religion We Need,* a booklet in the ' Affirmations ' series published by Ernest Benn, and in 1929 *Kalki or The Future of Civilization* in the ' Today and Tomorrow ' series published by Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner & Co., and edited

and contributed to *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* in 1934. The editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (14th edition) found place, for the first time, in the Encyclopaedia for an article on *Indian Philosophy* by him. And some of the learned articles, which he had contributed to various journals on Hinduism and other religions, were collected and published, with the title—*The Heart of Hindustan,* by G. A. Natesan & Co., of Madras. The same firm has also published some of his Convocation speeches delivered to the various Universities in India under the heading of *Freedom and Culture.*

In May 1944 Professor Rādhākrishṇan was invited by the Chinese Government to deliver a course of lectures in China and meet the leading academic people there. He went by plane from Calcutta to Chungking on the 6th and, after spending two weeks in China, returned to India on the 21st. During his stay he delivered twelve lectures on various subjects, besides informal talks at the dinner and tea parties held in his honour. The publication of these lectures in book form is awaited with great interest in both India and China.

III

There is a remarkable unity of thought in the works of Rādhākrishṇan from his earliest book—*The Philosophy of Rabīndranāth Tagore*—to his latest book—*Eastern Religions and Western thought.* But it is in his Hibbert Lectures on *An Idealist View of Life,* delivered in 1929 and published in 1932, that we find his thoughts on religion and philosophy in a complete form. It is here that we find the advance made by him from the position of his predecessors in the Hindu religious tradition. And it is here that he expounds in the clearest possible language the idealist view of life based primarily on the mystic experience of the Ṛsis of the Upaniṣads. No wonder that, when these lectures were

delivered in London, the Vice-Chancellor of the University observed at the close, "We have all wondered at the way in which you have spoken on this difficult subject. But we have also wondered at the mastery you have shown over the English language which is not your mother tongue. India has always been the home of religion and philosophy, and it has been a great pleasure to us to hear a great Indian teacher of these subjects."

"An idealist view," says Professor Rādhākrishṇan "finds that the universe has meaning, has value. Ideal values are the dynamic forces, the driving power of the universe. . . . Idealism in the sense indicated concerns the ultimate nature of reality, whatever may be its relation to the knowing mind. It is an answer to the problem of the idea, the meaning or the purpose of it all. It has nothing in common with the view that makes reality an irrational blind striving or an irremediably miserable blunder. It finds life significant and purposeful. It endows man with a destiny that is not limited to the sensible world."

Thus it is metaphysical or absolute idealism that he means and not subjective idealism. For him absolute idealism is the touchstone on which the worth of any philosophical system may be tested. It is from the point of view of absolute idealism that he examines in his *Reign of Religion* the philosophies of his Western contemporaries—James Ward, Bergson, William James, Rudolf Eucken, Bertrand Russell, Schiller, Howison, Rashadall and Balfour. And it is, again, from the same point of view that he examines, some six years later, the systems of Eddington, Jeans, Whitehead, Alexander and Lloyd Morgan and the psychological findings of the psycho-analysts and the behaviourists.[1] He applies the same standard in his two

[1] In a similar manner he subjects the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx to a searching analysis in his *Kamalā Lectures* delivered in 1942. Speaking of the gospel of Communism, he says —

"In its concern for the poor and lowly, in its demand for a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity, in its insistence on racial

volumes of *Indian Philosophy* to the various schools of Buddhist and Jain Philosophy and to the six Brāhmanical systems of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta, and finds that Absolute Idealism finds its highest expression in the schools of Vedānta, because they are based on the highest experience that man is capable of. Undoubtedly no scholar is better equipped than Professor Rādhākrishṇan to interpret the thought of the East to the Western nations, for he is well versed in the philosophical systems of both the East and the West. Thus equipped with the knowledge of all the systems of the world, he takes up the challenge of the modern age and examines the claims of all such substitutes for religion as naturalism, agnosticism, humanism and pragmatism. Incidentally, he also reviews the latest achievements of such sciences as Physics, Astronomy and Biology, and gives us his comprehensive philosophy of religion.

IV

He defines philosophy of religion as religion come to an understanding of itself. There can be no religious philosophy without religious experience. When religious thought tries to organize religious experience, it becomes as valid a science as any natural science which tries to organize sense material. For our spiritual intuitions are as much indicative of reality as our sense perceptions. To a religious seer, for instance, love of God is as much a fact, as the blue sky or the green leaf is to an ordinary man. It is absurd to admit the testimony of the senses and not to admit the testimony of the religious sense. True, the religious

equality, it gives us a social message with which all idealists are in agreement. But our sympathy for the social programme does not necessarily commit us to the Marxist philosophy of life, its atheistic conception of ultimate reality, its naturalistic view of man and its disregard of the sacredness of personality."

sense is not as much developed in some men as in others. But that only shows that they are defectives as far as religion is concerned, just as the deaf and dumb are defectives as far as sounds are concerned. The existence of a man without a sense of religion does not prove that religious experience is invalid any more than the existence of deaf-mutes proves that musical experience is invalid. Nor, again, does the existence of various religions, differing from one another in several respects, invalidate the experience that lies behind them any more than the existence of various theories of matter invalidates the phenomena of matter, or the existence of various languages in the world invalidates the desires and hopes of mankind which they seek to express, each group in its own way. Philosophy of religion, then, is an attempt to organize and unify the data of religious experience. It has to be carefully distinguished from mere speculative theology on the one hand and dogmatic theology on the other. Speculative theology proceeds from general principles and arrives, by means of dialectic, at the conclusion that God is a possibility, whereas the philosophy of religion proceeds from religious experience and tradition and asserts in terms of the logical understanding that God is a reality. Again, dogmatic theology restricts itself to the exposition of one set of experiences recorded in a particular age and country, whereas the philosophy of religion takes into account the different types of religious experience of all ages and countries. "Philosophy of religion," says Professor Rādhākrishṇan, "rejects the high *a priori* road of speculative theology and the apologetic method of dogmatic theology and adopts a scientific view of religious experience and examines with detachment and impartiality the spiritual inheritance of men of all creeds and of none. Such an examination of the claims and contents of religious consciousness, which has for its

background the whole spiritual history of man, has in it the promise of a spiritual idealism which is opposed to the disintegrating forces of scientific naturalism on the one hand and religious dogmatism on the other."[1]

What are the conclusions of such a science? What are the affirmations of the true philosophy of religion which has reverently studied the teachings of the Upaniṣads, the dialogues of Buddha, the parables of Christ, the utterances of Mohammed, the saying of Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa and the recorded experiences of great mystics like Plotinus and St. Paul? For, as Professor Rādhākrishṇan says, witnesses to the personal sense of the divine are not confined to the East.

"Socrates and Plato, Plotinus and Porphyry, Augustine and Dante, Bunyan and Wesley and numberless others testify to the felt reality of God. It is as old as humanity and is not confined to any one people. The evidence is too massive to run away from."[2]

The conclusions that we are led to from the evidence before us may, therefore, be briefly stated as follows:—

Firstly, spiritual experience is a reaction of the whole man to the Reality. It includes and transcends all intellectual, moral and emotional activity. It is knowledge through being. It is therefore concrete and individual, not abstract and general like conceptual knowledge. Nor is it communicable through logical terms. One can know the spirit only by experiencing it, as one knows love by being in love and not by reading about love. *Secondly,* it is an integral intuition carrying with it its own validity. It is sovereign in its own right, being self-established, self-evidencing and self-luminous. It requires no other evidence. *Thirdly,* it reveals to us a Being, absolute and eternal, beyond the categories of thought and expression. However, when we say that

[1] *An Idealist View of Life,* p. 87.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

the Absolute revealed by mystic experience is devoid of all qualities and could only be described in a negative way, what we mean is that its inexhaustible positivity bursts through all our thought-forms. We call it nothing, because it is nothing which we created beings can conceive with our finite minds, not because it is nothing absolutely. *Fourthly,* the mystic experience has the three characteristic features of reality, awareness and perfect bliss or sat, cit and ānanda, as the Hindu seers describe it. But even these qualities are distinguished by us, but not divided in God. We also attribute holiness, justice, love, mercy, etc. to God, because they are the highest qualities we humans know. But in attributing them we should not forget that they exist in the ultimate Reality in a different sense from their existence in us. Similarly, though the Absolute is beyond all conceptions of personality and impersonality, we attribute personality to it, as that is the highest category we know of. Personality of God is thus only a symbol. It represents what may be called a poetic view of the Absolute, not a scientific view. It represents God as He is to us, not what He is in Himself. *Fifthly,* spiritual experience not only reveals to us a transcendent reality, but also brings home to us the conviction of the unity of the world. Reality is perceived by the mystic to be not only transcendent but also immanent. For him all things live and move and have their being in one universal spirit. *Sixthly,* the most important affirmation perhaps of religious experience is the kinship that is felt between the soul and God. In moments of highest insight, we are told, the barriers between the individual self and the ultimate Reality drop away. The mystic feels that his self is only a focussing, as it were, of the one omnipresent Spirit. This is an ever-recurring note in all mystic traditions—in Hindu mysticism, in neo-Platonic mysticism, in

Sūfism and in Christian mysticism. The famous Upaniṣadic text 'That art thou' and the utterance of Jesus 'I and my Father are one' and the countless testimonies of mystics all over the world point to the same kind of experience. *Seventhly,* the very fact that this great experience of union with God is only intermittent even in the most religious souls that have lived in the world shows that there are many obstacles to self-realization. It is the avowed aim of all organized religions to help us to overcome these obstacles. The disciplines and purifications that they prescribe are mainly derived from the conditions under which the original founders saw their vision. The conquest of the flesh, the cultivation of internal righteousness, the habit of personal prayer, the love of contemplative life, the communion with kindred souls, etc. are the ways and means common to all religions. They are the paths in the jungle trodden by countless generations. In the early stages of our inward life, it is an advantage to have the help of a religious tradition and an organized church to guide us along these paths. *Eighthly,* different symbols are used by different mystics in describing the same flaming experience. Men who are never able to get beyond these symbols are idolaters who wrangle and quarrel and bring religion into contempt. But toleration is instinctive in those who try to convert the symbols of an established religion into the original experience of the founders. True religious souls always help their fellowmen to get back to the spirit and make the forms of the established religion more adequate and expressive of the mystic experience. *Ninthly,* the experience helps us to recognize and appreciate the highest values of spirit like virtue, beauty, truth and love, makes us understand the purpose of our existence here and beckons us to the further stages of our pilgrimage towards the Absolute, which is the perfection of all these values. Art and literature,

science and knowledge, love and service are excellent things in their own way, but they cannot take the place of religious experience. No, not even morality, inseparable as it is from religion, can ever be a substitute for religion. Religion is the sovereign, and these are only the attendant lords. Each of the lords has his own principality or dominion, but the queen rules over all. Thus the instinct of humanity is, after all, right in according to religion the highest place in its scheme of things.

It is on such affirmations of religious experience as these, common to all religions, as well as on the discoveries of modern science that Rādhākrishṇan bases his philosophy of religion. According to him, this universe of ours is the realization of the nature of the Absolute. The Absolute is pure consciousness, pure freedom and infinite possibility. Out of the infinite number of possibilities to choose from, one specific possibility has become actualized in the present cosmos. The Absolute is therefore not at all exhausted by the cosmic process. When we view the Absolute in relation to the cosmic process, we call it God. God is bound up with the world, while the Absolute is not, being pure freedom. The infinite Being thus limits itself in order to manifest itself. This self-limiting power of the Absolute is called *māyā* by Hindu philosophers. The Absolute and its *māyā* appear respectively as spirit and matter in our universe of space-time. The supreme Being, called God or Īśvara in relation to the universe, thus breaks into the inseparable two—subject and object, ātman and anātman. The conflict between the two has resulted in the various grades of beings we see in this world. At the lowest stage, we have inorganic matter in which spirit is dormant. At the next stage, we have the vegetable kingdom in which spirit manifests itself as life, which uses up matter for its own purpose.

Then we have the animal kingdom in which we have mind, in addition to life, as a further manifestation of spirit. Higher than the animals is man in whom we have emergence of reason and free will. After this stage is reached, the progress is due not to pressure from without, but to development from within. The more of spiritual values, like goodness, beauty and truth, an individual cultivates in himself and in others, the more god-like he becomes. For God is the perfection as well as the source of all spiritual values that come within the ken of man. The final stage of the evolution would be reached when all matter is absorbed by spirit and the dualism of object and subject disappears. Thus the history of the cosmic process consists in a return of the Absolute to its original wholeness. The process is not blind or aimless. On the contrary, the immanent spirit determines the continuous ascent from the lowest forms of life to the self-conscious man, and thence seeks his willing co-operation in reaching its end. By the evolution of the universe the abstract unity of the primal spirit becomes a concrete totality. The spirit, as it were, realizes itself. The whole process is thus summarized by Rādhākrishṇan in his *The Reign of Religion*[1]:—

"Thus absolute idealism distinguishes (1) the origin of the universe which is due to the dissociation of the whole into being and non-being, (2) the process of the universe which is the warfare of these two tendencies, where (3) the progress is measured by the supremacy of being over non-being, and (4) the goal or the destiny of the universe, which is the complete supremacy of being over non-being or spirit over matter, when the Absolute comes to its own. But the beginning and the end are merely ideal, and what we have is only the pathway between the two, called the universe, where we are all pilgrims."

It may be urged that absolutism, which makes the process of the world a mere revelation of the nature of

[1] P. 116.

the Absolute, operating throughout with the intention of returning to its starting point, deprives man of his freedom. If the end is already determined, the moral struggle is useless and the freedom of man is only an appearance. But, says Rādhākrishṇan, the analogy of logical inference suggests how it is possible for the whole to be realized in a real process without making the process lose its significance. For, though the conclusion is contained in a way in the premises, the exercise of the logical intellect is required to draw it out. In the same manner, though the essence of the world-process is contained in the Absolute, still the effort of man and the operations of Nature are required to draw out the essence and make it concrete. Or, again, take the case of a work of art. The original inspiration controls the whole process. But the purpose of the artist may undergo modifications in the process of creation. The abstract ideal acquires flesh and blood, colour and perfume, something rich and strange, in the process of realization. Or, again, just as human conduct is free activity, but is controlled by the entire past experience, so the cosmic process may also be viewed as free activity controlled by the purpose of God. The process is only an expression of the purpose. The two are the aspects of one whole. They evolve together. They are the twin expressions of concrete life.

V

From the idealist view of life set forth above, certain important inferences follow about the destiny of man, the world he lives in and the providence of God. Man is a self-conscious being. He is able to look before and after. He is able to dominate Nature and increase his knowledge. But, though he is self-conscious and self-determining, he is not absolutely individual. He is organically related to his environment. He grievously

errs when he thinks he is not, when he imagines he is a separate self absolutely independent of others. The difference between him and the sub-human creatures in this respect is that, while the harmony between them and their environment is instinctive and unconscious, the harmony between him and his environment has to be achieved voluntarily and consciously. He has the privilege of committing mistakes and rectifying them, of committing sin and suffering for it. When he imagines that the individuality conferred on him for willing co-operation entitles him to seek ends of his own, he goes wrong. When he tries to derive any benefit for himself by doing violence to the interests of others, he really does violence to himself and commits sin. His true progress lies in employing his own unique gifts for the benefit of all. He has to realize his destiny as a member of a spiritual fellowship through knowledge, art and morality.

Thus man is a free agent. He is free either to mend himself or to mar himself. But his freedom is to a certain extent limited by his connection with his own past. The life of every individual is an organic whole, each successive phase of it proceeding out of what has gone before. It is a continuous growth through deaths and births. This is what the Hindu Law of Karma affirms. This law is not so much a principle of retribution as of continuity. It should not be confused with either a hedonistic or a juridical theory of rewards and punishments, in the shape of pleasure and pain. The law is both prospective and retrospective. It asserts both the creative freedom of man and his continuity with his past. The universe will respond to the effort of the spirit in man. In fact, it is there for that purpose. But the past cannot be cancelled. Our free acts cannot negate continuity. The Law of Karma

bings out both the internal freedom and the external necessity present in human actions.

"Sheer necessity is not to be found in any aspect of Nature, complete freedom is divine and possible only when the self becomes co-extensive with the whole. Human freedom is a matter of degree "[1]

Rādhākrishṇan points out that the doctrine of rebirth has had a long history even outside India. Among the Greeks, it found a place in the Orphic religion, it was believed in by Pythagoras, Plato and Empedocles, and later by Plotinus and Neo-Platonists. Among the Hebrews, it is found in the writers of the Kabbāla, and among the Muslims, in the Sūfī writers. In ancient Britain the Druids taught it, as we see from Caesar's account of them. Within the Christian church, it was held by some Gnostic sects and the Manicheans. And as for individual writers who believed in the doctrine, mention may be made of Origen, Bruno, Von Helmont, Swedenborg, Lessing, Herder and MacTaggart. The Theosophists teach it now.

The doctrine of rebirth, says Rādhākrishṇan, is more reasonable than the denial of rebirth. The way of Nature is one of continuity. But continuity at the human stage is different from continuity in the lower stages. At the zoological level it is the perpetuation of the species. At the human level it is both the perpetuation of the species and the perpetuation of the individual. For, at this level, the organism has a greater unity, its parts are more closely knit and, above all, its character is more unique than at the sub-human level. For instance, one man is much more different in his inner life, character and personality from another man than one cow is from another. And for the full development of such a unique individuality the duration of life in a single body is not at all enough. The goal of perfec-

[1] *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 278.

tion cannot obviously be reached in one life. And the capacity of the self for endless improvement points to an unbroken future. Life in a particular body is, therefore, only an episode in the larger career of the individual soul. This argument in favour of rebirth has to be added to the usual arguments based on the inequalities of life, the existence of infant prodigies and unique individual gifts that cannot be explained by either heredity or education.

The objection to the theory of rebirth that we do not possess any memory of the past lives is not a serious one. We do not have a memory of all the facts of our infancy and childhood. We do not at all remember our existence in the mother's womb, and yet we do not deny it.

"Memory may be necessary," observes Rādhākrishṇan, "for a retributive theory of the universe, but not for moral continuity. Death may destroy memory of our deeds, but not their effect on us. The metaphysical question of the continuity of the self is not in any way affected by the discontinuity of memory."[1]

But, as a matter of fact, men *are* able in certain circumstances to remember their past lives. We not only read of such cases in our sacred books, but also hear of them in actual life even today. Rādhākrishṇan thinks that it is unlikely that the human self goes back into animal bodies, however degenerate it may become, for it cannot take birth in a body so entirely foreign to its evolved characteristics. If, as we have seen, every human organism is characterized by its unity and uniqueness, there should be a close bond between the self and the body. And so the body that the soul acquires after death cannot be entirely different in its capacities from the body it has left. Death cannot so profoundly alter the character of the self as to enable it to be at home in an animal body. Hindu scriptures, no doubt,

[1] *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 299.

affirm rebirth in animal bodies, but it may be only a figure of speech for rebirth with animal qualities. At any rate, cases of rebirth in animal forms must be very exceptional. Rādhākrishṇan observes in this connection:—

"The juridical theory associated in the popular mind with the doctrine of Karma is responsible for this mistaken view of rebirth in the form of animals, as also for the notions of heaven and hell as places of resort where we receive our rewards and punishments. . . . The theory of Saṁsāra is quite inconsistent with any permanent abodes of bliss or suffering"[1]

The ultimate destiny of human personality is something higher than mere survival. Mokṣa is higher than saṁsāra, as the spiritual plane is higher than the moral plane. For, at the human level, we have not only self-consciousness, but also the beginnings of a higher consciousness. When the latter is highly developed in a man, we call him a saint or a mystic or a Ṛṣi. A mystic is a new genus of man exhibiting a new quality of life. In him the evolving spirit shows new possibilities. As life emerged from matter, as mind emerged from life, and as a sense of values emerged from mind, so does God-consciousness emerge out of a sense of values. While the average man has only faith in values, the mystic is in contact with the source of all values. Salvation is nothing but the fullest development of the mystic consciousness. It is a rising from ethical individualism to spiritual universalism. It is an emerging from indefinite progress in time to final attainment in eternity. Hindu thinkers call it release from the wheel of births and deaths. There is meaning in their saying that mokṣa cannot be attained through karma or moral action, but only through bhakti which is self-forgetting love or jñāna which is self-transcending knowledge. For, while in karma the individual is still intact, pursuing the ethical ideal which ever recedes like the hori-

[1] *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 292.

zon, in bhakti and jñāna the individual is lost in a higher consciousness which knows no time nor place and which is the fulfilment of all the values we know. That is the destiny for which humanity is being prepared. We have a foretaste of it in the lives of the great mystics of the world. The very fact that humanity regards religious consciousness as its most priceless possession and that all religions are based on the mystic experience of one or more great Ṛṣis or seers and that all disciplines enjoined by these religions have for their object the realization of the experience of the original founders shows the real trend of progress in human history, in spite of all the errors, crimes and backslidings of man. In a word, the consciousness of a Yājñavalkya or a Buddha or a Christ in his best moments is the goal of all humanity.

On the question whether the self retains or loses its individuality after liberation Rādhākrishṇan offers some interesting suggestions. Though liberation means the attainment of the universality of spirit, the liberated self has to retain its individuality as the centre of action as long as the cosmic process lasts. For true liberation implies not only harmony within the self, but also harmony with the environment. And, as long as there are unredeemed elements in the environment, the self is bound to act from its individual centre to set right the defect.

"Perfect freedom is impossible in an imperfect world, and so those who have secured a vision of spirit work in the world so long as there is wrong to be set right, error to be corrected and ugliness to be banished from life. The individual who achieves unity within himself sets other men forward in desiring the same good. In a true sense, the ideal individual and the perfect community arise together."[1]

At last, when all are saved, the cosmic process

[1] *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 307.

comes to an end, and the Absolute will probably actualize some other of the many possibilities inherent in itself.

Thus, according to the idealist view, the ultimate Reality includes within itself the temporal order of events. Space-time and cosmic process are not ultimately real. They represent only a phase of Reality. Naturalism, on the other hand, asserts that time is ultimately real and that there is nothing deeper than the temporal process. For Rādhākrishṇan, time is only " a medium through which a higher purpose is working out its plans," and temporal series is only " a scheme through which eternal values unfold themselves". He thinks that Professor Alexander's theory of emergent evolution is right when it gives a picture of the growing universe, in which matter, life, consciousness and values emerge successively, but it is wrong when it makes God only the final result of the temporal process, when it describes the whole world as being engaged in the production of the Deity. For God is not simply a future possibility. He is the source and the creative spirit of the world present throughout the process as well as the final goal of it. The world-process is incapable of explanation from within itself, as naturalism would have us believe. The first chapter in a book, says Rādhākrishṇan, cannot account for the second chapter by simply coming before it. The real explanation is the author's mind expressing itself in a logical order. God must precede the world, if the values that emerge from it have any reality. And to the extent to which they appear in the world the world is real.

The world is a mixture of truth and illusion even as man is a complex of the eternal and the temporal. It is partly being and partly non-being. Its truth lies in its spiritual values which make for unity and permanence. Its falsity lies in its multiplicity and its dispersal in space and time. Therefore life in this world is

worth living only when it is directed by spiritual ideals. It is not worth living when it is directed to material ends. And, as we are free beings—free to follow truth or falsehood, free to press forward on the path of spirit or slink back into the paths of Nature—our co-operation is essential to the realization of the divine purpose. Rādhākrishṇan says:—

"Human co-operation is an essential condition of the progress of the world, and the freedom of man introduces an element of uncertainty. The struggle is not a parade, nor is history a mere pageant. Though God is ever ready to help us, our stupidity and selfishness erect barriers against the persistent operation of his love."[1]

Thus, according to him, there is an element of indetermination throughout the process, and God, though immanent in the process, is not identical with it until the very end. And when the end is reached, all is God or pure Being receding into the Absolute. But till then all individuals, even those who have attained spiritual perfection, retain their individuality, and God is to them a transcendent "other", full of love, wisdom and power.

"The love of God", says Rādhākrishnan "is more central than either His wisdom or His sovereignty. These latter may lead to predestination theories, which reduce the world-process to a sham, where the freedom of man and the love of God are both illusory."[2]

Again, "Love belongs to the very core of God's being. Utter and complete self-giving is the nature of divine activity, though the power to benefit by it depends on the capacity of the recipients."[3]

The lives of great mystics, through whose experience the love of God is revealed to us, are a guarantee that, in the long run, divine life will emerge out of human life, as human life emerged out of the sub-human life. The faith of Rādhākrishṇan on this point is eloquently

[1] *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 336.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 340.
[3] *Ibid.*, 337.

expressed in his Address to the World Congress of Faiths in London in 1936:—

"Whatever the individual has done the race too may and should eventually succeed in doing. When the incarnation of God is realized not only in a few individuals but in the whole of humanity, we will have new creation, the new race of men and women, mankind transformed, redeemed and reborn, and a world created anew. This is the destiny of the world, the supreme spiritual ideal. It alone can rouse our deepest creative energies, rescue us from cold reason, inspire us with constructive passion and unite us mentally, morally and spiritually in a world fellowship."

VI

By man's mechanical ingenuity the various parts of the world are being brought into intimate contact with one another today. The aeroplane, the radio and the motor car have practically annihilated distance and the world is fast becoming a small place. "Should we not give a spiritual basis to the world which is now being mechanically made to feel its oneness by modern scientific inventions?" asks Rādhākrishṇan. In his opinion, a world community, of which the various nations are the units, and a universal religion, of which the various historical religions are the branches, should arise as the social and spiritual counterparts of the scientific progress of this century. International contacts through improved means of communication, through trade and commerce and through travel and adventure are, after all, only the body of the new world which is coming into being before our eyes. A feeling of brotherhood among all nations, a spirit of co-operation in the pursuit of common peaceful aims, international fellowship and universal toleration—these should form the soul of that world. Rādhākrishnan deplores that this soul is yet unborn. The body is there, but it is not yet vivified by the spirit. 'The World's Unborn Soul' is the title of his Inaugural address as the Spalding Professor of Eastern

religions at Oxford. He concludes this address with these stirring words:—

"Mankind is still in the making. Human life as we have it is only the raw material for human life as it might be. There is a hitherto undreamt of fullness, freedom, and happiness within reach of our species, if only we can pull ourselves together and go forward with a high purpose and fine resolve. What we require is not professions and programmes, but the power of spirit in the hearts of men, a power which will help us to discipline our passions of greed and selfishness and organize the world which is at one with us in desire."

It is therefore the sacred duty of the intellectuals in all countries to work for this ideal of a world community possessing common spiritual aims as well as common mechanical contrivances. Just as the political ideal of the world today is not a single empire with one homogeneous civilization but a commonwealth of free nations, having their own institutions and cultures and existing side by side in peace and harmony, so the religious ideal should also be not a single world-religion which is the dream of the proselytizing religions but which is an impossibility, but a commonwealth of religions having their own creeds and organizations and living side by side with mutual toleration and respect as representing the one religious spirit of man.

"Like the nation states the great religions arose and developed in restricted areas of the world when intercourse with the rest of mankind was difficult. But now through the influence of science and trade a world-culture is shaping itself. All religions are now attempting to express themselves in a new idiom and so are approximating to one another. Untenable doctrines are not so much refuted as set aside and the universal elements of religions on which there is agreement are emphasized. This process will be speeded up in years to come and the gradual assimilation of religions will function as a world-faith."[1]

The British commonwealth of free nations is frequently held up as an object lesson to the world in the political sphere. Rādhākrishṇan passionately pleads for

[1] *Kamalā Lectures.*

the acceptance by the world of the Hindu solution of the religious problem as an object lesson in the sphere of religion. For Hinduism is just like the British commonwealth of nations, where every dominion has its own laws, its own parliament and its own political parties. Or, to give a better illustration, it is like a British university in which the same academic spirit is fostered by various colleges possessing different organizations and different traditions. Hinduism seeks unity not in a common creed, but in a common quest. It believes in unity of spirit and not in a unity of organization. If, as we have seen, the mystic experience of advanced souls is the very foundation of all established religions and if that experience is of several different types, no religion has been more loyal to it than Hinduism. For it has made realization of divine consciousness, and not the acceptance of this creed or that creed, or faith in this prophet or that prophet, the aim of religious life. Creeds and prophets and churches are only means, not ends in themselves. You may accept any creed, follow any prophet and belong to any organization, provided you are able by these means to reach your goal of realization of God.

Moreover, as Rādhākrishṇan has shown with great wealth of learning, mysticism originated in India during the Upaniṣadic period and, travelling westwards, entered into the Orphic religion, the Eleusinian mysteries, the philosophy of Pythagoras, the schools of Platonism and Neo-Platonism and finally found a place in Catholic theology. He points out that there are three main currents in the Western religious tradition—the Graeco-Roman, the Hebrew and the Indian. The first, that is, the Graeco-Roman, is responsible for the elements of rationalism and humanism and authoritarianism in that tradition; the second, that is, the Hebrew, for the elements of moral idealism, devotion to a personal God and

other worldliness; and the third, that is, the Indian, for the mystic elements of the sense of the indwelling God and the joy of union with the supreme, universal spirit. Thus mysticism is only one of the strands and a minor strand in Christian religious tradition. Whereas it is the main thing in the Hindu religious tradition, and all our philosophies of religion depend upon it. That is why toleration, in the positive sense of acceptance and appreciation, is one of the fundamental articles of faith in Hinduism and why no true Hindu ever tries to uproot another man's faith nor revile his gods nor boast of the superiority of his own religion. For him it is the spirit that matters and not the form, and for him the spirit behind all religions is the same. Unfortunately Christianity and Islam take a different view of the matter. They are propagandist world-religions. Each of them believes that it is in exclusive possession of truth and that all other religions are either imperfect or positively erroneous. Their zeal, as every student of history knows, has been responsible for many wars, much bloodshed and cruelties of various kinds. Their official creeds are responsible even today for much of what Rādhākrishṇan calls spiritual snobbishness, spiritual Bolshevism and spiritual vandalism. The dialectic of these runs thus—"My own religion is the best. It must therefore prevail throughout the world. It can prevail only through the extermination of all other faiths." "But," Rādhākrishṇan asks, "have we the right to destroy what we have not learnt to appreciate?" And he gives us a telling instance. Let us quote his own words:

"Among the inspiring treasures of the human spirit is the memory of Gautama the Buddha. Its hold over the imagination of millions of our fellow beings is immense; its inspiration to braver and nobler living for centuries is incalculable; its contribution to the refining of the spirit of man and the humanizing of his social relations is impressive. And yet attempts are made by

men fighting under other flags, earnest lovers of their kind, no doubt, to destroy the memory of that great soul, to terminate his influence. We can only attribute it to blind prejudice, to pitiful ignorance. A religion which can develop such hardness of heart, which can look with equanimity on such a racial calamity is hardly worth the name."[1]

VII

This rebuke applies to a certain extent to us also. For, consciously or unconsciously, the Hindu writers of the middle ages did everything that was calculated to obliterate the memory of that great soul in the land of his birth. It is only after the European orientalists and archaeologists published their discoveries in the last century that modern India came to realize how wide-spread and influential Buddhism once was in this country. Even now the thrilling story of Gautama's renunciation has not yet become one of the cradle tales of Hindustan, though Hindus, rather half-heartedly, raised Buddha to the rank of an Avatār. The Indian peasant knows practically nothing about this great Indian teacher. To our masses Hanumān is much more of a historical character than Buddha.

Here, again Rādhākrishṇan has done yeoman's service to both Hinduism and Buddhism by the reorientation he has given to the teaching of Buddha in the light of Upaniṣadic thought. As we stated in the introductory chapter, he has shown in his *Indian Philosophy* that Buddha, far from being an innovator, was a teacher who took his stand on the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and tried to popularize their teaching. And more recently, in his British Academy address on Buddha, he explains the implications of the great Teacher's silence on the ultimate questions of God and Nirvāṇa. He points out that, without a positive experience of the immutable, absolute Being, Buddha

[1] *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 330.

could not have had his fundamental feeling of the mutability of all things in the world. Without a background of the eternal, unchangeable perfection, it would be impossible to apprehend the transient and changeable as such. It is only when we reach a higher truth that we feel the inadequacy of a lower truth and discard it. It is because Buddha had attained to the Real that he perceived the fleeting as fleeting and discarded it. He saw that there is a Reality beyond the empirical succession of this universe that responds to the confidence of those who trust it. To this Reality he gave the name Dharma. For him Dharma is the staying-power of the Universe. It is the reality underlying the sensible world and determining it. According to him, insight into Dharma is enlightenment and the object of his eight-fold path is the winning of this enlightenment. Buddha had thus an experience of the Absolute and he emphasized the ethical aspect of it. Rādhākrishṇan writes:—

"Those who tell us that, for Buddha, there is religious experience but there is no religious object, are violating the texts and needlessly convicting Buddha of self-contradiction. He implies the reality of what the Upaniṣads call Brahman, though he takes the liberty of giving it another name, *dharma,* to indicate its essentially ethical value for us on the empirical plane. The way of the *dharma* is the way of Brahman. To dwell in *dharma* is to dwell in Brahman."[1]

If Buddha declined to define further the nature of the real to which he had attained, it was because the real is beyond all logical concepts and definitions, it was because the real is, in the language of the Upaniṣads, "Not this, not that." If he sometimes contented himself with giving negative definitions of the Absolute, he was doing exactly what some of the Upaniṣadic seers did. And, like them, again, he taught that the Absolute can be known only by one's own personal experience

[1] *Gautama The Buddha,* p. 39

through ethical striving and not through metaphysical discussions or knowledge of scriptures. Moreover Buddha's mission was to teach the common people to live the higher life of the spirit and not to take part in the metaphysical controversies of his time. His aim was severely practical. Therefore he refused to be drawn into discussions about things which are above the logical understanding of common men. But that does not mean that he had no experience of such things. On the other hand, once when he was staying in a grove he took a few leaves in his hand and, comparing their number with the number of leaves on the trees, he said:

"Just so, brethren, these things that I know by my super-knowledge, but have not revealed, are greater by far in number than those things that I have revealed. And why, brethren, have I not revealed them? Because, brethren, they do not conduce to profit, are not concerned with the holy life, they do not tend to repulsion, to cessation, to calm, to the super-knowledge, to the perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna. That is why I have not revealed them."[1]

Rādhākrishṇan points out that there is support in the Upaniṣads for Buddha's austerity of silence and his negative descriptions of the Absolute. For instance, the Kena Upaniṣad says, "There the eye goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind. We know not, we cannot understand, how one can teach it. It is above the known, and it is above the unknown. Thus have we heard from the ancient sages who explained this truth to us." Rādhākrishṇan's interpretation of the relation of Gautama the Buddha to the seers of the Upaniṣads is now generally accepted not only by scholars but also by the educated public in India.

Thus the re-affiliation of Buddhism to Hinduism, resulting in the enthronement once again of Gautama the Buddha in the hearts of all enlightened Hindus, is

[1] *"Some Sayings of the Buddha,"* p. 39, translated by F. L. Woodward (The World's Classics).

one of the great achievements of the present Renaissance. During his recent visit to China, Rādhākrishṇan has rightly stressed this point. He said to his Chinese audience:—

"We are now having a revival of interest in Buddhism. In the present spiritual awakening of India, Gautama the Buddha and his message have come to their own. It is increasingly admitted that Buddha was a reformer of Hinduism and not its opponent. His fundamental principles have their roots in the Upaniṣads. New Buddhist temples are springing up in all parts of the country. There is every reason to hope that India will once again play a great part in stimulating the spiritual life of the East."

VIII

Rādhākrishṇan has not only shown us the relation between the teaching of the Upaniṣads and the teaching of Buddha, but also cleared some of the misconceptions prevailing in the West about the mysticism of the Upaniṣads and the Indian Philosophy based on them. In one[1] of the chapters of his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* he discusses in detail the criticism of the eminent theologian, Dr. Schweitzer, found in his book, *Indian Thought and its Development*. Dr. Schweitzer tries to establish a contrast between what he calls the attitude of "world and life negation," which, in his opinion, is characteristic of Hindu thought, and the attitude of "world and life affirmation," which, he thinks, is characteristic of Christianity. The latter, according to him, affirms the reality of the world and the value of life, gives rise to ethical seriousness and an enthusiasm for social service and is therefore dynamic and creative; whereas the former denies the reality of the world and the value of life, gives rise to ethical indifference, paralyses the will and fosters a spirit of inaction. Indian religion is predominently other-worldly -and life-deny-

[1] Chapter III, entitled "Mysticism and Ethics in Hindu Thought."

ing, while Christianity is predominantly humanistic and life-asserting.

It will be seen at once that the contrast which the German theologian points out is not so much between Hinduism and Christianity as between the temper of the East and the temper of the West. For, apart from all other considerations like those of Christian monasticism, the doctrine of the Cross, the attitude of the early Christians and what has been called the 'interim ethic' of the gospels, there is, standing in stark contradiction to one half of Dr. Schweitzer's thesis, the well-known assertion of the Founder of Christianity himself that His kingdom is not of this world. We will now briefly summarize in successive paragraphs the arguments of Dr. Schweitzer in support of the other half of his thesis and the replies given by Rādhākrishṇan.[1]

(*i*) According to Hindu thought, man does not attain to union with God by any achievement of his natural power of gaining knowledge, but solely by quitting this world of ordinary experience in a state of ecstasy.

Ecstasy is a word which is used to denote experiences of various kinds from alcoholic intoxication to the rapture of the saints. A sense of rapture does not imply a disintegration of the self. To be rapt is not to pass beyond self-consciousness, but to be intensely and widely conscious. However, according to Hindu thought, a state of rapture is not the final stage of mystic consciousness. It is preliminary to the stage of union with God. Ecstasies and visions experienced in this preliminary stage are the results of an imperfect adaptation on the part of the mystic to the new inner world revealed to him. He should get over these and reach the final stage. The final stage is called in Sanskrit *Samyakdarśana,* which means perfect insight. The other words

[1] See *Eastern Religions and Western Thought,* pp. 76-110.

which are used, *viz., jñāna, vidyā,* also indicate a perfect spiritual possession of the divine Reality. Ecstasy is thus a preliminary stage, but it is not at all a necessary preliminary. All mystics do not pass through that stage. Ecstasy is more a perversion of true mysticism than an illustration of it. Ecstatic phenomena are common all over the world, they are not confined to Hindu mystics. Not a few of the Christian mystics exhibit them. St. Paul, St. Theresa, St. Catherine had visions and trances. Therefore any criticism based on ecstasy applies to all regions. In Hinduism, however, the scriptures warn the spiritual aspirant against ecstatic phenomena. Our Yoga-śāstra clearly lays down that a Yogin should by-pass them and reach the final stage of Yoga.

(*ii*) Hindu thought is essentially other-worldly and therefore incompatible with humanist ethics.

Humanist ethics is not the highest system of ethics. It looks upon man as a purely natural phenomenon whose outlook is confined by space and time. It attempts to perfect human life by purely nature means. It encourages a rather cynical subservience to Nature and an acquiescence in the purely pragmatical. But man is not simply a natural being. He is a spiritual being as well. He belongs to two worlds. He cannot live by bread alone. Mere material civilization or even unending progress can never satisfy him. So, if our ethical thought is to be profound, it must give a transcendental motive to morality. The human spirit cannot remain permanently within the boundaries of the finite and empirical reality. Hindu philosophy is ever insistent on the fact that every human being is a potential spirit, that he has in the depth of his soul something uncreated, deathless and absolutely real, and that therefore the meaning of his life is to be found not in this world but in something which is higher than historical

reality. In fact, his highest aim should be to transcend this historical succession in space and time and realize his true self. So long as he is lost in the historical process, without realizing a super-historical goal, he is subject to change and sorrow. Therefore, if we make our ethics purely humanistic, it is bound to be limited, untrue and unsatisfactory. "If goodwill, pure love and disinterestedness are our ideals, then our ethics must be rooted in other-worldliness. This is the great classical tradition of spiritual wisdom."

(*iii*) The Hindu doctrine of Māyā, which declares that life is an illusion, renders Hindu thought non-ethical.

First of all, the doctrine of Māyā is not characteristic of all Hindu thought. In Hinduism there are many schools of theism which do not accept this doctrine. It is only Śaṁkara's school of Advaita that puts forward the doctrine. Secondly, it is a mistake to say that Śaṁkara's doctrine of Māyā means that the world is an illusion. Far from saying that the world is an illusion, Śaṁkara condemns the Buddhist school of Vijñānavāda, which says so, as a species of heresy. What Śaṁkara means by his Mayāvāda is that the world belongs to a lower order of reality than God, who is perfect Reality. And it is obvious that what is imperfectly or incompletely real is not illusory. Śaṁkara uses three different words to denote three kinds of experience—Prātibhāsika, Vyāvahārika and Pāramārthika which respectively mean illusory, empirical and real. We have already explained in the first chapter of this book Śaṁkara's teaching about these. So it is not necessary to explain them further. To Śaṁkara life is emphatically not an empty dream or an illusion, where morality has no place.

(*iv*) The Hindu concept of divine *Līlā*, which explains the creation of the world as a game played by God, robs morality of all its importance.

The analogy of Līlā or play in Hindu religious literature is not intended to suggest that the world is a mere stage play or a meaningless show made in a jest. The figure is employed to indicate the overflow of the divine into the universe. The world is created by God out of the abundance of His joy, as a work of art is produced by an artist. That does not mean that moral law has no place in it any more than that metrical law has no place in an inspired poem. The question of the creation of the world leads us to the difficult problem of the relation between the unchanging Real and the changing universe. Why should an imperfect becoming arise out of a perfect Being? Why does God create the world? All that we can say is that it is the very nature of God to be a creator, just as it is the very nature of a poet to make poems. And Hindu thought takes care to add that the creation of the universe does not in any way affect the integrity or perfection of the Absolute. It cannot, therefore, approve of the ideas of organic relationship between God and the world held by some modern philosophers in the West. William James, Bergson and Alexander, by trying to establish an organic relationship between God and the world, have made God something less of a God. But, according to the highest Hindu thought, evolution and change belong only to the cosmic side of the picture and not to the divine side. God, without undergoing any change in Himself, gives rise to the changing universe by his mysterious power, Māyā. If we look at Brahman or the Absolute from the cosmic end, that is, not as it is in itself but as it is in relation to the universe, it is envisaged as Īśvara or personal God directing the whole cosmic process by His Providence. The eternal values implicit in Brahman are realized in human history on the plane of space-time-cause.. Thus the world is the profoundest expression of the divine nature. It is en-

tirely dependent on God, but God does not depend on it. It is His nature to express Himself thus. It is His Līlā.

(*v*) According to Hindu philosophy, jñāna or the right knowledge of the self and not moral development is the means to salvation. Therefore Hinduism is non-ethical.

Jñāna in Hindu religious literature does not mean mere intellectual knowledge unconnected with moral development. It is spiritual vision that comes to a man as a result of moral development. Jñāna is, of course, something more than ethical goodness, but it cannot be achieved without the essential pre-requisite of a virtuous character. It is not a mere improvement of human nature, but a divine re-orientation of it. It is the inward change by which the soul becomes fit for eternal life. Just as in Christian thought salvation is said to be the result not merely of good works but of faith, so in Hindu thought *mokṣa* is said to be result of *bhakti* or *jñāna* and not of mere *karma*. For mere morality, however advanced, cannot overcome the dualism between the self and its ideal. We cannot reach perfection by means of moral progress any more than we can reach the horizon by running towards it. The receding ideal will ever mock at our efforts to reach it. It is only by identifying ourselves with the ideal perfection either through self-forgetting love or through self-transcending vision, in either case abandoning our notion of the self, that we can reach it. And this is possible only when our souls are first purified through moral action. Morality is like a boat which takes us to the other side of the stream, but we have to abandon the boat to step on to the other shore.

(*vi*) According to Hindu thought, the goal of human endeavour is to escape from life. Mokṣa is deliverance from the bonds of finitude and not the conver-

sion of the finite into the organ of the infinite.

The goal of human endeavour, according to Hindu scriptures, is not to escape from life but to escape from the self-centred view of life. Mokṣa, on its negative side, means freedom from blinding egoism, but on its positive side it means identification with a fuller life and a wider consciousness. The emancipated soul is roused to a sense of its universality. No longer has it a private will of its own. It becomes united with the spirit of the universe and says, "Not my will, but Thy will be done!" Hence the jñānī or the liberated man does not abstain from work, but does his work with his eyes fixed on the Eternal. According to the Bhagavad-Gītā, a man of wisdom is ever intent on promoting the welfare of all creatures.[1] This scripture clearly lays down that man cannot reach perfection by shunning the world. It teaches that what is required for mokṣa is detachment of spirit and not renunciation of the world. In Hindu religious literature a perfected man is often called a jīvanmukta,[2] that is, one who is free from the bonds of finitude and yet lives in the world to co-operate with God and to help others also to become free. So he is exactly the man who converts the finite into the organ of the infinite.

(*vii*) The ideal man, according to Hinduism, is one who is beyond the ethical distinctions of good and evil. So ethical considerations are not of supreme importance to Hindus.

When it is said that the ideal or liberated man, transcends the distinctions of good and evil, it does not mean that he can do evil with impunity, but that it is impossible for him to do evil and that he does good naturally and spontaneously. For him there is no dualism calling forth moral effort. For him virtue loses its

[1] Sarva-bhūta-hite-ratāh, (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, V. 25).
[2] See *Bhagavad-Gītā*, III. 4.

meaning, as the opposition of vice is absent. As St. John says, " Whosoever is begotten of God cannot sin." Again, according to Hinduism, God is superior to the moral categories of the world. We cannot speak of Him as doing right or wrong any more than we can speak of Him as being high or low. Moral distinctions belong to the human world and not to the eternal, universal Being. This does not mean that moral distinctions are arbitrary or conventional, it only means that they are fundamentally the categories belonging to a process of becoming. They reflect darkly, as in a mirror, the nature of the ultimate Reality. They are symbols, not shadows. And the problem for man is to get hold of the symbols and pass from them to the Reality which they symbolize. When he succeeds in his attempt, he is beyond good and evil. In the life of the spirit all symbolism is transcended. It is inevitable, therefore, that the more we approach God the less are we troubled by notions of good and evil. The ethically good is at last absorbed in the spiritually perfect.

(*viii*) Hinduism prefers the inactive ethic of perfecting one's own self to the active ethic of loving one's neighbour as oneself. It therefore tends to world-negation.

There is no reason why we should regard the process of perfecting the inner self as a species of inactivity. To control our senses, to subdue our passions and to concentrate our minds we have to be as active and be as much on the alert as to do good to others. There are, of course, anchorites and hermits who cultivate the inner life of contemplation to the exclusion of all social activity. But they are not confined to Hinduism. There is a monastic tradition in Christianity as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism. Christianity, like all Eastern religions, teaches renunciation, and withdrawal from the busy concerns of life to those who want to

perfect their spirit. To the young man who said that he had kept all the commandments, including loving one's neighbour as oneself, and enquired what more he should do to gain eternal life, Jesus said that he should sell and give away all that he had and follow him. In fact, all the great teachers of the world have taught that the soul of man is more precious than the immensity of the world. So, even granting that Hinduism exalts the inner perfection of spirit above external social activity, it errs in good company. But, as a matter of fact, Hinduism sees no antagonism between the two. On the other hand, it teaches that, in the early stages of man's religious career, social activity is the only means to the purification of the soul. Withdrawal from life and contemplation are prescribed only for advanced souls who have discharged their obligations to society and acquired the necessary qualifications for renunciation. The Hindu arrangement of *āśramas* or stages of life is eloquent testimony to the wisdom of the Indian sages who gave both social activity and contemplation in retirement their due place in a well-ordered religious life.

It will be seen from this account what misconceptions are current in the West about the Hindu teaching on such subjects as *Yoga, Māyā, Līlā Jñāna, Mokṣa, Tyāga* and *Dharma*. Therefore a teacher who, by his books and lectures and talks, is engaged in clearing these misconceptions and removing the prejudices against Hinduism from the minds of Western thinkers, is entitled to the gratitude and respect of all Hindus. Rādhākrishṇan moreover points out that over-emphasis on 'world and life affirmation' in Europe has resulted in many creeds which have proved disastrous to the world—Fascism, Nazism, Bolshevism and Neo-paganism. We hope that, at least after this great world-war, which can have only one end, German thinkers

will revise their notions of "world-affirmation" and "world-negation" and return to the true teaching of Christianity, which, in the matter of renunciation, other-worldliness and inner perfection, is not different from that of Hinduism.

IX

Besides clearing these misconceptions regarding Hinduism prevailing in the West, Professor Rādhākrishṇan has given in his recent Kamalā Lectures some suggestions to his own countrymen in applying the spirit of Hinduism to their present day problems. In the course of these lectures he formulates certain general principles which should guide us in making changes in our social and religious life in accordance with our spiritual traditions.

Firstly, we should never forget that Hindu civilization continues to flourish, in spite of all our political vicissitudes during the last forty or fifty centuries, because it has a clear conception of the goal of life and puts spiritual values higher than all other values. Our Vedic Ṛṣis have taught us that the cosmic process is a gradual ascent from the inconscience of matter to the universal consciousness (ānanda) of the absolute spirit. The universe in which we live is not aimless. It is working out a great possibility, *viz.*, that of attaining spiritual perfection through human freedom, with all its attendant risks and dangers. Therefore all our ideals and institutions, rites and ceremonies, customs and laws should have an implicit reference to this God-ward trend, to the spiritual freedom of the Absolute.

Secondly, the Hindu view of Dharma permits of essential changes in our social life. It should be remembered that Dharma is not any specific set of institutions. It is simply the application of the spirit of religion to the conditions of life and must necessarily

change as life changes. Sanātana Dharma does not mean constantly standing still, but constantly applying religion to life. In fact, social flexibility is one of the chief characteristics of Hindu Dharma. It is well known that, in the course of our long history, our society has undergone many changes without ceasing to be Hindu society. It is said that in Kṛta-yuga, Tretā-yuga, Dvāpara-yuga and Kali-yuga the ordinances of Manu, Gautama, Śaṅkhalikhita and Parāśara respectively are of the highest authority. Thus Dharma changes from age to age. In other words, dogmas and institutions, customs and rules which have lost their validity have to be scrapped and replaced by new ones. Otherwise the march of the spirit would be impeded.

Thirdly, we should at the same time remember that we cannot start *de novo,* as if our nation had no history of its own. Nations as well as individuals cannot borrow experience from others. Other nations may furnish us with light, but our own history must determine the line of advance for us. We cannot return to the past, nor can we cut ourselves entirely away from the past. Revolutions that have no roots in the past can never endure. So what we have to do is this:—

"From a study of the imperishable principles that have been evolved in our past history we must develop new institutional safeguards for the protection of human dignity, freedom and justice The genuine forces of the new must be woven with the valid principles of the past into a new unity."

Fourthly, the Hindu view of Dharma does not sternly uphold a distant ideal and condemn all compromises. A distant ideal is different from a practical programme. The Hindu legislators were not mere visionaries any more than they were mere realists. They had ideals, but not impracticable ones. There is, of course, a contradiction between the desire for perfect good and the need for being satisfied for a time with what is imperfect. But this contradiction is the only way by

which we can go forward. We have to mediate between the supreme ideal and the actual conditions amidst which it has to be realized. It is by the interaction of the ideal and the existing real that the proper evolution of society can be secured. Therefore we should not lose ourselves in the pursuit of an impossible perfection, but should strive perpetually to overcome imperfection and advance steadily towards the ideal.

Fifthly, Rādhākrishṇan points out that real life is far wider and far more complex than all our artificial codes and that many aspirations are often crushed and many lives destroyed on account of our rigid rules and regulations. He therefore pleads for abundant charity in the application of any code, old or new, to the various problems arising out of the growing spirit of man. He wisely observes:—

"By trying to play the puritan we often act in inhuman ways. There are two kinds of morality—the absolute one of right and the relative one of social convention, which each society construes in its own way. Through the observance of the moral rules we must approximate to the ideal which is the holy more than the moral, the beautiful more than the correct, the perfect more than the adequate, love more than law."

It is in the light of these general principles that Rādhākrishṇan makes his suggestions for improvement in our social and religious life. As usual with him, he brings his wide scholarship to bear on the questions he discusses—Hindu rituals and sacraments, marriage laws, social arrangements, the emancipation of women and the removal of untouchability. And he devotes one entire lecture to the burning question of war and non-violence.

He speaks with true insight and sympathy of image worship, temples and pilgrimages, but pleads that animal sacrifices which still linger in some places should be given up, that the Devadāsī system should be abolished, that the temple priests should be properly trained

and that temples and images should be so improved as to satisfy our sense of beauty as well as of holiness. The recognition of the spirit in man is the essential feature of Hinduism and spiritually all men are equal. The Hindu caste system was originally an attempt to make a heterogeneous population of various races, tribes and classes into an organic whole by the adoption of the fourfold classification. And the goal of life was considered to be a transcendence of caste by disinterested service. The caste scheme was meant to apply to all mankind, for in the Mahābhārata the Greeks, the Parthians, and the Scythians, the Chinese and several other non-Hindu peoples are said to belong to one or other of the four classes. But, as the present day caste divisions are a bar to the development of homogeneity among Hindus, we have " to get rid of the innumerable castes and outcastes with their spirit of exclusiveness, jealousy, greed and fear." As for untouchability, it is a degrading sin, and should be removed. It is not a question of justice or charity here, but of atonement. The sacred rite of Upanayana should be extended to all Hindus without distinction of class, creed or sex. The Gāyatrī prayer is coeval with India's cultural history and must be taught to all men and women, high and low. Our spiritual heritage should be open to all Hindus, irrespective of caste or status. And Brāhmanhood should be looked upon not as an order but as a temperament. Any one might have it, though many born in the Brāhman caste may be without it. Brāhmanhood is a state " where inward grace and outward beauty fuse " and is therefore independent of birth or breeding, sex or profession.

Rādhākrishṇan pleads for the liberalizing of our marriage laws in accordance with the spirit of the times. He points out that adult marriages and widow marriages have the sanction of Vedic tradition and practice.

Also, if some women choose to remain unmarried, they should be allowed to do so as in Vedic times. And divorce should be permitted in exceptional cases. On this question he says:—

"A law establishing monogamy among Hindus is long overdue. Such a statute can be equitable only if permissive legislation for obtaining dissolution of marriage under certain conditions is adopted. Desertion, habitual cruelty, adultery, insanity and incurable disease should be the only grounds for the dissolution of marriage at the option of either party. Such a law will help to establish, as far as laws can do, a clean, healthy and happy life and it will not be inconsistent with the general spirit of Hindu tradition"

Finally, on the question of non-violence he makes some helpful observations. Quoting one of Patañjali's Yoga-sūtras (II. 35) he says that non-violence is not a physical condition, but a mental attitude consisting in love or absence of hate. And, as a mental state, it is not the same as non-resistence. On the contrary, it may sometimes be the same as resistance, but resistance with inward peace and with a mind full of love. Force is neither good nor evil when considered in isolation. Everything depends on the use to which it is put. A knife in itself is neither good nor bad. It all depends upon whether it is used by a surgeon or an assassin. In civilized society, force is not the law-giver, but the servant of law. In the former case it is hiṁsā (violence, in the latter it is daṇḍa (punishment). In Satya-yuga, when the cow of dharma walked on four legs, there may have been no need of force, but in Kali-yuga, when it walks on one leg only, force is necessary. We must, of course, arm the judge, not the litigant. This principle should be applied to international affairs as well. We should steadily move on to the goal of a warless world, especially because modern wars with their unspeakable horrors are a menace to civilization. The ideal of non-violence will be unattainable, if we try to

reach it at one rush. But we may be able to reach it some day, if we are prepared to go by stages, strengthening international law, establishing arbitration courts and disarming national States. First of all, nations should cease to look upon the State as an end in itself. Hindu thinkers have always looked upon Dharma as the end, and the State as only the means. There is a wider community than the State to which our deepest loyalty is due. In every State there should be some persons—like the order of Saṁnyāsins in India—who are, as it were, the embodied conscience of mankind and "who live in and for a world of absolute values of which neither life nor comfort is one." Such a person is Mahātmā Gāndhi.

"India is better today because there has come into its life a personality that is a flame from God. His suffering embodies the wounded pride of India, and in his Satyāgraha is reflected the eternal patience of her wisdom. . . . More than all, he is the voice of the new world, the voice of a fuller life, of a wider, more comprehensive consciousness. He has firm faith that we can build a world without poverty and unemployment, without wars and bloodshed, on the basis of religion."

X

Thus the services of Professor Rādhākrishṇan to Hinduism, Buddhism and Indian Philosophy and, above all, to the cause of religion in general have been immense. While his interpretations and criticisms of Indian and European systems of thought are fresh, distinctive and stimulating, his views on (1) the nature of the Absolute, (2) the relation between the Absolute and the God of religions, (3) the status and function of the cosmic process, (4) the difference between intellect and intuition, (5) the problems of karma and rebirth and (6) the scope of human freedom and perfection may be said to overcome the difficulties which many have found in the solutions offered in the past to these problems.

At any rate, eminent thinkers look upon Rādhākrishṇan's exposition of these subjects an an original and important contribution to the philosophy of religion. *The Times Literary Supplement,* dated May 3, 1934 writes:—

"The metaphysic of Rādhākrishṇan's Absolute Idealism represents a real fusion of East and West in so far as it boldly confronts the problem which haunted Bradley—that of the relation between the Absolute and the God of religious experience—and answers it in the form of an eschatology at which Bradley may have hinted in his denial of ultimate reality to the finite self, but which he never made fully explicit. Rādhākrishnan suggests a solution of the problem which is, in essentials, derived from Indian Idealism, endorsing the hypotheses of pre-existence and palingenesis, and envisaging a consummation wherein, all spirits being perfected at last and set free from the cycle of Karma, the purpose of God will be achieved and God Himself will relapse into the Absolute, creation being thus at once ransomed and annulled by the cessation of the impulse to individuate. This is no place to discuss the case for and against a subtle and elevated philosophical system; but it at least behoves every inquirer to ask himself whether the gulf between this eschatology and that which asserts the "value and destiny of the individual" is or is not one which is ultimately bridgeable. Those who feel able to reply in the affirmative may well accept Rādhākrishnan not merely as the distinguished exponent of a lofty spiritual philosophy (as he assuredly is), but as the initiator of a new synthesis."

As far as the exposition of Hinduism is concerned, no teacher since the appearance of Swāmī Vivekānanda on the platform of the World Congress of Religions at Chicago in 1893 has attracted so much attention in America and Europe as Professor Rādhākrishṇan. And his influence is likely to be permanent, because it depends not on mere popular lectures but on scholarly works written in a charming style which it is a pleasure to read. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures of the Modern Hindu Renaissance. Along with Gāndhi and Tagore he has raised the prestige of our nation among the nations of the world. He is now only in the middle of

his career. He has still many more years of work before him. It is therefore too early to take a final stock of his services to our country and our religion. But he has already done enough to occupy an honoured place in the front rank of India's teachers.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

I

We have finished our survey of the chief religious movements and the activities of the prominent religious leaders of the present Renaissance of Hinduism. It has been possible to include in this survey only those movements and those personages whose influence has been felt all over India. There are, of course, many minor religious movements and many advanced souls[1] that have influenced the minds of the people in the various parts of the country. But their influence has been too limited to alter materially the character of our Renaissance. It now remains in this chapter to make an estimate of the progress which Hinduism has so far made as a result of this Renaissance and to point out what further action is necessary on our part to ensure that the movement meets all the demands that modern times make on us.

First of all, it is obvious that the prophets of this period have, by their teachings and actions, raised the status of India among the countries of the world. India may have been conquered, the Indian masses may be ground down by poverty and Hindu society may be fettered by many an evil custom. But that, even under these conditions, the country could throw up a man of vision like Rām Mohun Roy, a mystic like Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa, a poet like Rabīndranāth Tagore, an ideal

[1] There is, for instance, Śrī Ramana Maharsi of Tiruvannāmalai in South India. All accounts agree that he is a great mystic with profound religious experience. But he does not claim to teach anything beyond Śamkara's Advaita. There have been and there are many such saints and teachers in various parts of India.

Karma-yogin like Mahātmā Gāndhi and a scholar and teacher like Professor Rādhākrishṇan—not to speak of the eminent administrators, mathematicians, scientists and artists of the age—is a positive proof that her ancient spiritual fire is still burning within. If the world in its present distracted state is in need of a spiritual message, if it looks for a light to guide its footsteps in the darkness that has enveloped its path, renascent India is in a position to give it through the greatest of her prophets now living.

As is naturally to be expected, the prophets of renascent India have reasserted in most emphatic terms the fundamental faith of Hinduism that all religions are branches of the same tree, that the same sap flows in all of them and that, therefore, mutual toleration is of the utmost importance in all matters affecting religious belief and practice. At the same time, this survey has demonstrated that any attempt to establish a universal religion by the eclectic method of choosing the best part of each of the historical religions of the world is bound to fail. No religion can flourish which has not its roots in an authoritative canon and which is not properly protected by appropriate ritual as a tree by its bark. The canon should, of course, be liberally interpreted, the spirit never being sacrificed to the letter, and the ritual should ever be in vital connection with the faith. But to do away with all canon and with all ritual is to tear up the tree by its roots and to remove its bark. What remains would only be a lifeless stick fit to be thrown into the fire.

However, the leaders of this Renaissance, for the first time perhaps in the history of Hinduism, have been able to view their religion apart from the mythological, ritualistic and sociological forms in which it was embedded. The success of Swāmī Vivekānanda and Professor Rādhākrishṇan in carrying the message of

Hinduism to the Western nations was due primarily to their ability to interpret the Vedānta as a religious philosophy independent of the Indian caste system or mythology or rites and ceremonies. And the failure of the early Christian missionaries in India to appreciate the worth of Hinduism was due to their inability to penetrate its outer covering which had grown thick in the middle ages. To many Hindus themselves, it was an eye-opener in this period to be taught that what really matters in religion is its philosophy based on spiritual experience, and not the particular social arrangements or the beliefs in particular deities in which it embodied itself in the past. To know that the soul of a religion is different from its body, that the former is imperishable, while the latter is perishable, and that our myths and rites and castes belong to the latter and not to the former is a great education in itself, and it has made the path of social reform easy.

Accordingly, social reform formed a large part of the present Renaissance. In fact, the movement started with social reform. It started with Rām Mohun Roy's agitation for the abolition of Satī. The chief objective of the Brāhmo Samāj and the Prārthanā Samāj was social reform, and when that was achieved, they lost their momentum to a large extent. To understand the achievements of the present Renaissance in the field of social reform, we have only to compare the state of Hindu society today with what it was about a hundred years ago. Today Satī has become an incredible thing of the past. Women are being educated. Child-marriages have become illegal. Widow-marriages have been made possible. Polygamy has become extremely rare. Foreign travel has become very common. The ban against inter-dining has been lifted. The caste system has become less rigid. And, thanks to Mahātmā Gāndhi, the demon of untouchability has been overthrown.

Of course, all that has been done so far is very little compared with what has yet to be done, especially in the way of communal unity. We are as yet only at the beginning of things. But in every direction the ice has been broken, and water has begun to flow. Further progress is only a matter of time. Hereafter there can be no going back to the evil customs and the harmful restrictions of our ages of decadence. The pace of events has hitherto been slow all over the world. But in future the pace is bound to be much more rapid, as a result of the radio, the aeroplane, the motor-bus and other mechanical inventions which are becoming perfect in the course of this war. When the poisonous war-clouds that have blotted out the light of heaven in all the continents have rolled away, we hope that Hindu society will march more rapidly to its destined goal, with the strength it has derived from the movement for social reform during this period.

Thus the present Renaissance has made India pay more attention to life on earth and to the well-being of society and has rescued Indians from a philosophy of listless inaction, which had taken hold of them in the preceding period of decadence. It may be said by some that this is not a new turn in our religion, that Hinduism always insisted that life on earth should not be neglected and that the Bhagavad Gītā taught that men should strive for spiritual freedom, while living in society and discharging all their duties faithfully. But it cannot be denied that in every period of decadence, especially after we lost our political independence, we sought refuge in asceticism and other-worldliness and preferred a life of renunciation to a life of healthy action. The very revival of interest in the teaching of the Gītā—as indicated by the commentaries of Tilak, Śrī Aurobindo and Mahātmā Gāndhi and the popularity of numerous English translations of the scripture—is symptomatic

of the changed outlook. The example of Western nations, which has been a potent factor in the whole movement, is largely responsible for the change. And it must be confessed that the emphasis which our religious leaders, especially those belonging to the Samāj movement and the Rāmakrishṇa Mission, have laid on social service is due to the object-lessons provided by the Christian missions. Hinduism never held it wrong to learn from other religions and to assimilate the good things in them. Therefore our leaders are not ashamed to point out how remiss we have been in the matter of social service, how wrong we have been in interpreting the Law of Karma, so as to provide ourselves with a cloak for covering our neglect of our duties to our neighbours and our indifference to the cries of the poor and the down-trodden. They are never tired of pointing out how slow we are when compared with the followers of other religions in working for social amelioration, in spite of our boasted spirituality. Swāmī Vivekānanda, Tagore and Gāndhi are never tired of pointing out that spirituality does not consist in turning our back on poverty, ignorance and misery in the world in a vain attempt to save our souls, but that it consists in fully facing them and fighting against them till they are vanquished. There is no doubt that, as a result of their teaching, a large fund of religious feeling has been released for social work in the country. Thousands of men and women are today working in a religious spirit not only in the Rāmakrishṇa Mission, but also in the various fields of social service—temperance, promotion of hand-spinning and weaving and other village industries and Harijan uplift—inaugurated by Mahātmā Gāndhi. Such a thing was practically unknown before this Renaissance.

One of the tasks of the Renaissance was to adjust the teaching of Hinduism to the scientific thought and

the political and social philosophies of the West. When our notions of geography and history, our ideas of the stellar universe and planetary movements, our theories of Government and social polity were all revolutionized by our contact with the West, our religious philosophy alone could not stand still. The truths of religion endure, of course, for all time. But these truths have to be correlated, from time to time, to the growing scientific, political and social thought of the ages and re-interpreted and worked up into systems of philosophy. Our own Darśanas were systems of this kind. But they have had their day. The contemporary scientific knowledge which in their time they incorporated is now largely obsolete, and so also are the political and social notions embedded in them. Our knowledge of the world has since tremendously increased, our society has grown infinitely more complex and our ideas of the rights and duties of men have undergone a thorough change. So our religion in the twentieth century had to be re-interpreted to us in terms of our new knowledge. It had to be re-interpreted in the light of modern ideas regarding earth and heaven, the individual and the State and authority and freedom. This work was undertaken, among other things, by Professor Rādhākrishṇan. In his *The Reign of Religion* and *An Idealist View of Life,* as we have seen, he reviews all the contemporary scientific and philosophical systems of the West in the light of Vēdantic idealism and also interprets the latter in relation to them. So interpreted, the philosophy of the Upaniṣads comes home to us today with a new meaning and a fresh application to our own special problems. The fact that Rādhākrishṇan's books have become popular and are going through several editions is a happy augury for the future of Hinduism.

Again, as during this Renaissance the Hindus had to contend in the early stages against Christian mission-

aries in the field of religion, and latterly against some misguided Muslim separatists in the field of politics, a feeling that the whole of Hindu society in all provinces is one community, with common temporal and spiritual interests, has begun to grip their minds. The first manifestation of this feeling on a large scale was witnessed when Swāmī Vivekānanda returned to India, after attending the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Hindu Society throughout the country then rose as one man to honour the great patriot-monk. The Saṁnyāsins of the Rāmakrishṇa Mission, which knows no caste distinctions, are everywhere fostering this feeling of unity by their teachings. The Ārya Samāj, working with great zeal in the various provinces, is also heroically strengthening this feeling. And, in recent years, the sessions of the Hindu Mahāsabhā, attended by large multitudes of Hindus, are again serving to bring all sections of the community together and make them capable of taking joint action. Even the members of the Brāhmo Samāj are now feeling that they form part of Hindu Society, and their leaders are even presiding over the deliberations of the Hindu Mahāsabhā. But, as we have already said, there is still very large scope for improvement in this direction. Harijans are, no doubt, now feeling that they belong to Hindu Society and that they should fight for their rights without seceding from it. And under the leadership of Mahātmā Gāndhi many caste Hindus are dedicating themselves to the cause of Harijan uplift. But, even after the famous Travancore Proclamation, this beneficent movement may be said to be still only at its starting point. Years of hard labour and probably of many disappointments have to pass, before untouchability, which is a blot on Hindu society, is completely wiped out and all Harijan classes find an honourable place in our society.

Lastly, the bonds between Hinduism and Buddhism

have been strengthened in recent years by the activities of Tagore, Jawaharlāl Nehru and Rādhākrishṇan and by their visits to China. The contacts established by these eminent men are full of promise for the future of the Orient. The other day[1] at Chungking the Honourable Minister Shen Li-Fu, in welcoming Professor Rādhākrishṇan to China, said:—

"We firmly believe that both the Indians and the Chinese are great peoples in the Orient and have a long history and a high culture. On the basis of mutual understanding and co-operation they will no doubt contribute equally to the stability and the progress of the Orient and of the world. We believe that the close co-operation between the educational and academic people of the two countries will serve to intensify and augment this mutual understanding and co-operation. We further believe that Sir S. Rādhākrishṇan, who is well versed in both the Oriental and Occidental philosophy and religion, is most fitted for this task."

India and China have been drawn together in the present war. The two countries have understood each other's difficulties and, let us hope, they will help each other in solving the thousand problems of post-war reconstruction which will confront them in a few years. But apart from all secular advantages which may be derived from the close association of the two great peoples of the Orient, let us hope, in the words of Professor Rādhākrishṇan, " that India will once again play a great part in stimulating the spiritual life of the East."

To sum up, the present Renaissance has raised the status of India in the eyes of the world, it has reasserted the faith of Hinduism that all religions are true, it has enabled us to view Hinduism apart from its old mythological and ritualistic forms, it has initiated a large number of beneficent social reforms, it has made us pay more attention to life on earth and the well-being of society, it has reinterpreted Hinduism in the light of modern scientific thought, it has fostered a feeling of

[1] 9th May, 1944.

unity in Hindu society and it has strengthened the bonds between Hinduism and Buddhism.

II

Let us next consider the future of the movement. What are the problems it has immediately to tackle? First of all, what is to be the attitude of thoughtful Hindus towards Islam and Christianity, which have come to stay in India, and what should they do to prevent internal dissensions among the various sects and castes of Hinduism? It is obvious that we cannot absorb Islam or Christianity, as we once absorbed Buddhism. Our Kabīrs and Keshubs must remain isolated phenomena and, at best, could give rise only to small sects. Therefore our policy should be not one of absorption, but of fraternization. In this great country all of us have to live in peace, each community following its own dharma. Islam and Christianity will, no doubt, insist on their rights of propaganda and conversion. We cannot quarrel with them on that ground, so long as they do not employ force or unfair means to compass their object. We must, of course, claim the same rights and freely take into our fold not only all those who once belonged to it and want to come back to it, but also those who are born in other faiths, but want to embrace Hinduism. Hinduism has latterly been content to remain only an ethnic religion. But, in future, it should become a creedal religion also, as it once was, when it took into its bosom unnumbered hordes of foreign invaders who came from the north-western passes into India. Only the creed to be enforced should be as flexible as possible. There is no reason, for instance, why all those who want to come into our fold should be confined to the creed of the Ārya Samāj. Some might prefer the later developments in Hinduism, like Vaiṣṇavism or Śaivism or Śrī Vidyā or the philosophy of

Śaṁkara. Therefore there should be absolute freedom for any stranger to come into any room of our spacious mansion and make himself comfortable there. Only the person who comes in must conform to the rituals, usages and formulas of the sect he chooses. He must be made to fall into line with others of the same persuasion and not merely hang loose on the sect. For Hinduism, in spite of the freedom it allows in religious speculation, is a severely practical religion. Its sādhana is designed for the purpose of actually taking the man who chooses a particular path to his goal and making him see and realize God under some form or other at first and then ultimately attain to the Formless.

As regards internal dissensions, Mahātmā Gāndhi has shown us the way out of them by his interpretation of Varṇāśrama dharma. According to him, there should be no question of superiority or inferiority among the castes of Hinduism. All castes and sects should be considered equal, though possessing different characteristics and using different symbols and following different professions. It is futile to try to abolish all distinctions and establish a uniform belief and practice. The whole history of Hinduism, which we have sketched in the introductory chapter, would stand in the way of any such attempt. Castes and sub-castes, sects and subsects we are bound to have for a long time to come in this country, whether we like it or not. It is impossible, nor is it desirable, to have a dull, dead uniformity of belief and practice throughout the vast Hindu community occupying this sub-continent. But it is possible for us, following the lead of Mahātmā Gāndhi, to treat one another as equals having a common aim, following a common tradition and inheriting a common ethos. It is possible in the interests of peace and solidarity for some castes to give up their notions of superiority and for other castes to get over their inferiority complex. It is possible for us to see that no community has any

exclusive privileges and that every community has access to all stores of knowledge, all places of worship and all positions of power. It is again possible for us to see that a greater correlation is maintained between our sectarian forms of worship and the central faith of Hinduism. Worship in our religion is bound to be sectarian, but it is not bound to be exclusive. There is a common philosophy behind all the various forms of our institutional religion. Only the vital fibres that connect the external form with the internal spirit should be well maintained and prominently shown to the worshippers by those who conduct the worship, so that all sects may realize the unity of Hinduism.

Unity is indeed the crying need of the hour. We cannot repeat this too often. Lack of unity among Hindus has been the cause of all their misfortunes from time immemorial. Even in the face of a common danger, which threatens to deprive them of their elementary rights, our people are unable to present a united front. It is admitted on all hands that it is on account of our notorious divisions that the advent of Swarāj is being delayed. Swarāj in India, when it comes, will obviously be neither a Hindu Rāj, nor a Muslim Rāj, nor a Christian Rāj, but an Indian Rāj in which all communities will have equal rights and all minorities will have their interests safeguarded. Only the minorities who press for their rights should not forget that the majority community also has certain rights and that all should live in peace and harmony. As for the Hindus themselves, they should realize that not even a thousand Renaissances of Hinduism would help them, if they did not learn to unite and act as one unit, that not even a thousand triumphs of their Vivekānandas and Tagores in foreign countries would be of any use to them, if they did not act in concert in their own country. We all know why Mahātmā Gāndhi refused to go to

America, though he was invited there several times. He felt that, if his message fell flat in his own country and among his own people, it would be of no interest to other countries and other nations. He felt that his first duty was to his own countrymen. Ovations to our great men in foreign countries would not carry us very far in our own. They are only flourishes and decorations, but the main structure consists in our unity and strength here. The Hindu community is, by tradition and habit, a pacific community. It means no harm to any one. On the other hand, it has proved itself to be tolerant, hospitable and generous. The Parsis, the Jews, the Syrian Christians have found an asylum in its bosom and have flourished. But it is notoriously divided on account of its multitudinous castes and sects. The feeling of unity that has been generated by this Renaissance is still very weak. Most Hindus have yet to learn that it is only a strong and united Hindu Society that can maintain the spiritual ideals of Hinduism.

One of the most deplorable features of Hindu society is that while, here and there, we have individuals who possess religious culture of a very high degree, the average level of culture is very low. It is sad to see that not even one man in a hundred of the so-called educated class has any adequate knowledge of the religion to which he belongs. It is most depressing to find that even the graduates of our Universities are satisfied with a low type of religion with which only the masses could be satisfied. Most of them do not even know what the authoritative scriptures of Hinduism are. Many of them would be at sea, if a Christian missionary were to ask them whether they believed in one God or many gods, whether they believed in fate or free-will and whether they believed in the existence of a heaven and a hell. And, what is worse, they cannot go to their family priest or their temple priest for having their doubts cleared, as these priests generally do not know anything beyond the

round of ritual they mechanically conduct. In other communities, priests are generally centres of light and leading, at least in religious matters. It is only in the Hindu community that priests who officiate in religious ceremonies and worship are more ignorant than the cultured laity. It is an astonishing fact that among Hindus, who are said to form an eminently religious community, no religious instruction is regularly imparted to the youth of the community, that boys and girls have to pick up their religion incidentally for themselves from the ceremonies they witness or the sacred stories they chance to hear. In these circumstances, it is remarkable that religion has still a hold on the people. This is probably due to the deep foundations laid by our seers and nation-builders of old. But the religion that comes to the people untaught, through mere ritual, story, song and drama, is generally of the vaguest kind and cannot stand its ground, when challenged. Our duty, therefore, is to take advantage of the present revival of interest in Hinduism and devise suitable schemes of religious education for the young and of proper training for the priests. The Rāmakrishṇa Mission and the Theosophical Society have already shown the way. And many Hindu schools have made provision for religious instruction, though, it must be confessed, some are half-hearted in carrying out their schemes. But it must be possible to introduce religious instruction in all institutions, even in schools and colleges where there are students belonging to various religions. As we Hindus believe in the truth of all religions, it is our duty to strengthen the faith of each student in his own religion. For this purpose, institutions having Hindu, Muslim and Christian students should be urged to employ Hindu, Muslim and Christian teachers to teach their respective religions, just as they employ teachers to teach their respective languages. When schools and colleges thus take up the teach-

ing of religion in right earnest, the young students are likely to imbibe a more liberal type of religion there than they do at home or in their sectarian seminaries. To teach young men and women in India an obscurantist and bigoted type of religion, which looks upon all other religions as its enemies, is fraught with great danger. We want to teach our young men—whether they are Hindus, Muslims or Christians—their own religion in a liberal and enlightened manner, so that they may all love one another, in spite of their different religions, and feel that they are all children of Mother India.

No less important than the religious education of the youth is the training of the priesthood. All Hindu sects should see that their officiating priests are properly trained for the purpose, that they are given adequate remuneration and are treated with respect by the community. A qualified priest should be a man of general culture and should be able to explain the significance of the ritual he conducts and point out its vital connection with the philosophy of Hinduism. If we have a body of highly educated temple-priests, we can make our temples not only places of religious worship, but also places of religious instruction. If there are regular religious discourses in the temple premises by competent teachers, in addition to the usual worship of the Deity, the people who go to the temple will be greatly benefited. Some temples have made a beginning in this direction, but are unable to get suitable lecturers and teachers. The pandits who are now available are unfortunately too bigoted, too caste-ridden, too narrow-minded to impart instruction of the right type. There is no reason why in future some of our University men should not undergo special training and become priests, as they now become teachers. Of course, to make the priestly profession attractive the status of the priestly order should be raised and decent and fixed salaries should be offered. We know that in England some of the most brilliant

men who pass out of the Universities enter the church and become leaders of religious thought. No wonder, therefore, that the English clergy are a power in their country. There is no reason why we should not follow their example. When once highly educated and properly qualified men join the priestly orders, we can imagine what a cleansing of our temples and chapels there would be, how many cobwebs of superstition would be removed from the minds of our people and what a fruitful contact would be established between the philosophy and the rituals of Hinduism. It is only when we carry out the necessary reforms for the training of our priests and for the religious education of our boys and girls that the results of this Renaissance would be placed on a secure foundation.

Lastly, we cannot exclude politics from religion—religion in the highest sense. The greatest figure in our Renaissance, Mahātmā Gāndhi, has made politics into a religion by insisting on absolute purity of thought, word and deed on the part of those who wish to take part in it. His greatest gift to us, apart from his own saintly character, is the gospel of Truth and Non-violence —Satyam and Ahiṁsā—which he has been teaching us for over thirty years, both by precept and by example. Future generations will judge us by what we make of this priceless gift. That this gospel should come to us with all its implications in the interval between two world-wars of primitive savagery is highly significant. It may be looked upon as India's reaction to one side of Western civilization. The gospel of Truth and Non-violence is indeed a gospel intended for all the nations of the earth. But the inscrutable Grace of God has chosen this land of ours for its revelation and a man of our race as its prophet. Is it not therefore our sacred duty to write it in letters of gold on our national banner, and faithfully work out all its implications? No other nation in the world, perhaps is qualified at present to make this

gospel the basis of all its policies. Ahiṁsā is in our very blood. Buddhism, Jainism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism have prepared us for receiving this supreme message. The originality of Mahātmā Gāndhi's teaching about non-violence consists in his showing how we can combine the highest non-violence with the highest courage. Probably Western nations with their undoubted courage, spirit of self-sacrifice and power of endurance would be able to make much more of this gospel than we can, when once they learned to renounce violence. It is a consummation to be devoutly wished for by all of us. This Renaissance began as a result of the impact of Western civilization on our own. It should not end without a reconciliation of the two civilizations.

During the nineteenth century we in the East had unbounded admiration for everything European. Today we stand disillusioned. Japan, in her admiration for European civilization, imitated its worst aspects and committed spiritual hara-kiri. China has refrained from imitating them in the name of her domestic sanctities. We in India have also to refrain in the name of the divine spirit in man and of the evolution of humanity on earth. Mahātmā Gāndhi is showing us the way that we should go. If the evolution of life on this planet has any meaning and purpose, the future of the civilization of man lies with Gāndhijī and those of his way of thinking, and not with those monsters of violence and greed whom Europe has thrown up in such large numbers in recent years. For, unless the principle of non-violence, whose positive aspect is love, is made the basis of all human progress, and war and exploitation and racial domination are tabooed for ever from the affairs of men, our life on earth is in danger of going back to the sub-human level. Also, unless we cultivate a spirit of detachment from the world and learn to despise all desire for material possessions, we can

never grow into spiritual manhood. Here, again, Mahātmā Gāndhi, clad only in a loin-cloth, possessing nothing which he can call his own, renouncing all power, except the power of love, and frankly declaring that he prefers Truth to Swarāj, is an embodiment of that flaming spirituality which is India's most cherished possession.

It may be admitted that, situated as we are, we cannot all at once put into practice the entire teaching of Mahātmā Gāndhi. But we have to set it before us as the goal to be reached, and we should measure our progress as a nation, not in terms of the weapons of destruction we can forge or of the factories of production we can erect, but in terms of the degree of non-violence and spirituality that we can put into practice. If it is not possible in the present condition of the world to establish a national State on the basis of non-violence, we should at least do our best for the disarmament of all nations. The united nations are now engaged in overthrowing the inhuman militarism of Germany and Japan. We are, of course, in profound sympathy with that objective. Every political party in India has said so, and the help which India is rendering to the Allies has been acknowledged by all. But the enthronement of the principle of non-violence means the abolition not only of militarism, but also of exploitation of one nation by another nation or of one class by another class. As long as one nation thinks that it has a right to rule over other nations and look upon their countries as its possessions, or as long as one class monopolizes all the sources of wealth in a country and utilizes them for its own selfish ends and not for the good of the whole community, or, again, as long as any nation thinks it has a right to propagate its beliefs by employing force, it is idle to expect peace and happiness on earth even after Germany and Japan are overthrown. We hope, therefore, that, in the world-order which will arise after this

war, there will be no quarter given either to militarism or to exploitation of the weak by the strong. We earnestly hope that the employment of force will be in the hands of an international body and that every nation will have freedom to live its own life in peace and security. We do not know what India's position will be in the new world-order, we do not know what her future relations with England will be. But this we know—that almost all the prophets of the Renaissance whose work has been surveyed in the preceding pages—Rām Mohun Roy, Justice Rānaḍe, Swāmī Vivekānanda, Rabīndranāth Tagore, Mahātmā Gāndhi and Professor Rādhākrishṇan—have been friends of England as well as lovers of India. Their cherished desire has been to see their beloved country rise again with the help and co-operation of England and be a light to the world in its march to a spiritual goal. Would England help India to fulfil her mission? Would she acknowledge India's right for Swarāj and give her an honoured place in her commonwealth of nations as an equal? Or, would she continue her policy of breaking to the heart, on some pretext or other, the promises made to the ear? Would she listen to the voice of her own higher self or yield once again to her baser instincts? It is her higher self that spoke through Lord Wavell, the present Viceroy, when he referred to India, which he was going to govern, in the following terms:—

"I am sure that we all wish to see her united and great and powerful and that, in her partnership with our commonwealth, she may solve her own problems and may make a contribution to the peace and prosperity of the world, to which her size, geographical position, history and traditions entitle her."[1]

Well, let us wait and see.

[1] Speech at the reception given by the Royal Empire Society in London on 23rd September, 1943.

CHAPTER XIV.

Reading List

Chapter I.

Sections i and ii: General:—

Vincent Smith—Oxford History of India, Second Edition, 1923

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Hiriyanna—Outlines of Indian Philosophy, London, 1932.

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D. S. Śarmā—The Bhagavad Gītā (Student's Edition) Madras, 1930, 1936.

„ —Lectures on the Bhagavad Gītā, Madras, 1937, 1939.

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Section vi

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Thibaut—The Vedānta Sūtras with Śaṁkara's Commentary, (Sacred Books of the East), 1896.

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Kennedy—The Chaitanya Movement, Calcutta, 1925.
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Payne—The Śāktas of Bengal, 1933.

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Chirol, Valentine—Indian Unrest, London, 1910.
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Keay—Indian Education in Ancient and Later Times, Oxford, 1938.
L. S. S. O'Malley—Modern India and the West, Oxford University Press, 1941.

Chapter II.

The Father of Modern India (The Commemoration Volume of Rām Mohun Roy Centenary), Calcutta, 1933.

Śivanātha Śāstrī—History of the Brāhmo Samāj, 2 Vols. Calcutta, 1911-12

Miss Collet—Life and Letters of Rām Mohun Roy, Calcutta, 1911.

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G. A. Nateśan & Co.—Leaders of the Brāhmo Samāj, Madras, 1926.

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Chapter III

Śivanāth Śāstrī—History of the Brāhmo Samaj (Vol II, Pp. 411-456) Calcutta, 1912.

Kārve—Rānade, the Prophet of Liberated India, Poona, 1942.

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„ —Landmarks in Lokamānya's Life, 1924
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Bawa Chhajjn Singh—The Life and Teachings of Swāmī Dayānand Saraswatī, Lahore, 1903.
Bawa Chhajjn Singh—The Teachings of the Ārya Samāj, Lahore, 1908.
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Śrī Aurobindo—Bankim, Tilak and Dayānanda, Calcutta, 1940.
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Chapter V.

N.B—In the following list all publications, except those marked with an asterisk, are the publications of T.P H, Adyar.

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II. *Mrs Besant's Speeches and Writings—A Selection*

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*Speeches and Writings of Dr Annie Besant—G A. Nateśan & Co., Madras, Third Edition, 1921.

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Shrī Rāmachandra, the Ideal King—Third Edition, 1928.
The Story of the Great War—Third Edition, 1927.
Advanced Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics (along with Bhagavān Dās), 1940
India, a Nation, Fourth Edition, 1930
Indian Ideals, Kamalā Lectures for 1924-25
Wake Up India, 1913

III *Expository and Critical*

*G. A. Nateśan & Co.—Mrs Annie Besant, A Sketch of Her Life and her Services to India, 1908.
B. C Pāl—Mrs. Annie Besant, a Psychological Study, 1917.
Bhagavān Dās—Annie Besant and the Changing World, 1934.
Theodore Besterman—The Mind of Annie Besant, 1927
(*N B*—This book contains a reprint of Annie Besant's excellent account of Theosophy in the Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.)
Śrī Prakāśā—Annie Besant as Woman and Leader, 1941.
*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, IX & XXIV, London, 1885 and 1893
*Judge—Isis Very much Unveiled, London, 1894
*Solovyoff—A Modern Priestess of Isis, Translated by Walter Leaf, London, 1895.
*Veritas—Mrs Besant and the Alcyone Case, Madras, 1913.
*Farquhar—Modern Religious Movements in India (Pages 208—291), New York, 1918.
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Life of Śrī Rāmakrishṇa, Fifth Edition, Advaita Āshrama, Almora, 1943.

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A Short Life of the Holy Mother, Almora, 1942.

The Disciples of Śrī Rāmakrishna, Almora, 1943

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A Short Life of Swāmī Vivekānanda, Almora, 1940.

The Master as I saw Him—An intimate study of Swāmī Vivekānanda by Sister Niveditā, Fifth Edition, 1939.

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(1) Karma-Yoga, (2) Bhakti-Yoga, (3) Rāja-Yoga, (4) Jñāna-Yoga, (5) Letters of Swāmī Vivekānanda, (6) Lectures from Colombo to Almora, (7) Swāmī Vivekānanda's Message to India—Lectures and replies to Addresses of Welcome in India from 1897 to 1901, (8) Essentials of Hinduism, (9) Thoughts on Vedānta, (10) Practical Vedānta, (11) Vedanta Philosophy, (12) Religion and Philosophy, (13) Realization and its Methods, (14) A Study of Religion, (15) The Science and Philosophy of Religion, (16) Swāmī Vivekānanda on India and Her Problems, (17) Talks with Swāmī Vivekānanda, (18) Inspired Talks.

Chapter VIII

(*N.B*—Unless otherwise stated, the following books are issued by the Ārya Publishing House, Calcutta).

I. *Works of Śrī Aurobindo*

The Life Divine, 2 Vols., 1939-40.
Collected Poems and Plays, 2 Vols.
Essays on the Gītā, first and second series, 1921-'28.
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The Riddle of the World.
The Ideal of Karma Yogin
The Mother.
Ideal and Progress.
The Yoga and Its Objects.
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A System of National Education.
Bases of Yoga.
Lights on Yoga.
Evolution.
Īsha-Upanishad.
The Superman.
Thoughts and Glimpses.
The Renaissance in India.
Uttaraparā Speech
Bankim, Tilak, Dayānanda and Dutt.

II. *Biographical*

Śrī Aurobindo—A Life Sketch, 1937.
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III. *Expository*

Nolinīkānta Gupta—The Yoga of Śrī Aurobindo, 1939.

S K. Maitra—An Introduction to the Philosophy of Śrī Aurobindo, 1941.
V. Chandrasekharan—Śrī Aurobindo's *Life Divine*, A brief study, 1941.
Śrī Aurobindo Mandir—Annual Jayanti Numbers of 1942 and 1943.

Chapter IX

N.B.—In the Viśvabhāratī Quarterly Vol. VII (Parts I & II of May—October, 1941) we have an authoritative and valuable account of:—

(1) A Tagore Chronicle, 1861-1941.
(2) Chronology of Tagore's Beṅgālī works.
(3) Tagore's English Works.
(4) Tagore's Writings in the *Viśvabhāratī Quarterly.*
(5) Tagore's Writings in the *Modern Review* (1910-41).
(6) Books written on Tagore in Bengālī, Hindī, English and other European languages.

The following is a list of Tagore's English Works arranged in chronological order. Unless otherwise stated, the publishers are Messrs. Macmillan & Co.

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1913—The Gardener, translated by the author.
„ The Crescent Moon, translated by the author.
„ Chitrā, a drama, translated by the author, first published by the India Society, London.
1914—The King of the Dark Chamber translated by K. C. Sen.
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GLOSSARY.

ācārya, religious teacher.
ādeśa, message.
adhikāra, spiritual competence.
advaita, monism.
advaitin, monist.
ādyaśakti, primal power.
agnihotra, offering oblations in fire.

ahiṁsā, non-violence.
ajīva, lifeless object.
akṣara, the imperishable.
āmalaka, Indian gooseberry.

ānanda, bliss.
anartha, misfortune.
anātmā, not-self.
anīśā dependent.
anitya, transitory.
antaryāmin, He who pervades everything.
aṇuvrata, lesser vow.
aparigraha, without possessions.
apūrva, the remote consequence of an act
ārati, waving lights before an image.

artha, wealth.
āsana, posture.
asat, that which is not real.
āśrama, hermitage; stage of life.
āśrama-dharma, duties relating to a stage of life.

asteya, not stealing.
asura, demon.
aśvamedha, horse-sacrifice.
ātman, the self.
ātma-samarpaṇa, self-dedication.
ātma-vidyā, knowledge of the self.
aum, the sacred syllable indicating the Absolute.
avatāra, incarnation.
avidyā, nescience.
baddha, a soul subject to births and deaths.
bhāi (Hindī), brother
bhakta, devotee.
bhakti, devotion.
bhakti-śāstra, devotional scripture.
bhakti-yoga. union with God through devotion.
bhedābheda, identity in difference.
bīja-akṣara. the first syllable in a *mantra*.

bodhisattva, a Buddhist saint.
brahmacāriṇī, a woman observing the vow of chastity.
brahmacarya, life of celibacy.
brahma-loka, kingdom of God.
brahman, the Absolute.
brāhmaṇa, a ritualistic treatise.

brāhmaṇī. a Brāhman woman.
brahma-sākṣātkāra, God-realization.
brahma-vidyā, science of the Absolute.
caitya, a Buddhist sanctuary.
chela, (Hindī) a novice in esoteric Buddhism; disciple.
cit, intelligence, consciousness.
darśana, a school of philosophy.
darśan (Hindī) privilege of seeing an august personage.

deva, a god.
dewān (Hindī), Prime Minister of an Indian State.
devadāsī, a danseuse in a temple.
devapūja, worship of a deity.
devī, mother-goddess.
dharma, law, duty, righteousness, nature.
dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa, a formula indicating the four ends of life - virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation.
dharma-Śāstra, code of ethics.
dharma-sūtra, aphorisms of law or Ethics.
durjan, a wicked man.
dvaitā, dualistic philosophy.
dvaitādvaitā, dualistic monism.
ekam sat, there is one Reality
gātha, a sacred song.
gośāla, a cow-stall.
gṛhya-sūtra, aphorisms dealing with domestic rituals.
harijan, a man of God, the name given by Gāndhijī to the Depressed Class in Hindu society.
hatha-yoga, a mode of meditation involving physical strain.
hiṁsā, violence.
homa, a burnt offering
īśa, Lord.
iṣṭa-devatā, one's chosen deity.
īśvara, personal God.
īśvara-śakti, the power of God.
itihāsa, historical tradition.
jala, water.
jīva, a living entity.
jīvanmukta, one who is liberated while still living.
jīvātman, individual soul.
jñāna, divine wisdom.
jñānī, one who possesses jñāna.
jñāna-kāṇda, sections of the Veda dealing with jñāna.
jñāna-yoga, union with God through jñāna.
kālī, the Mother-Goddess.
kali-yuga, the iron age.
kalpa, an æon.
kāma, desire.
kānta-bhāva, devotion in terms of conjugal love.
kārikā, a commentary in verse.
karma, action, ritual
karma-kāṇda, sections of the Veda dealing with sacrifices.
karma-yoga, union with God through action.
kṣara, the impermanent.
kṣatriya, one belonging to the warrior caste.
līlā, sport.
liṅgam, the emblem of Śiva.
madhura-bhāva, devotion to God in terms of lovers' feelings.
maharṣi, a great seer.
mahātmā, a great soul.
mahāvratā, a great vow.
mānasa-putra, spiritual son.
mantra, a mystic formula.
maṭh, a monastery.
māyā, illusion, mystery, creative power of God.
mīmāṁsaka, one versed in the philosophy of ritualism and the interpretation of the Veda.
mokṣa, liberation.
mṛdaṅga, a kind of drum.
mukta, one who is liberated.
mukti, liberation.
naraka, hell.
nirguṇa, without qualities.
nirvāna, beatitude.
nirvikalpa, without distinction.
nirvikalpa samādhi, mystic experience in which there is no

distinction between subject and object.

nitya, eternal.

nivṛtti, abstaining from work.

pañcaśīla, formal acceptance of the five chief precepts of Buddha.

pāpā-puruṣa, the sinning self.

parā-bhakti, highest devotion.

pāramārthika, transcendental.

paramātman, supreme Self.

paratantra, dependent entity.

piśāca, devil.

pitṛ, the ancestral spirit.

prabandha, an elaborate composition, especially a poetical composition.

prakṛti, nature.

pramāṇa, means of correct knowledge.

prapatti, self-surrender.

prārthanā, prayer.

prasthāna, a system.

prasthāna-traya, a term denoting the Upaniṣads, the Gīta and the Brahma-sūtras.

prātibhaṣika, illusory.

pravṛtti, active life.

purāna, an ancient legend.

purohit, a family priest.

puṣṭi, Grace of God in Vallabha's system.

rajas, passion, energy—one of the three qualities of Nature.

rākṣasa, a demon.

rāma nāma, repeating the holy name of Rāma.

ratna-traya; the three jewels (according to Jainism).

ṛṣi, a seer.

ṛta, cosmic order.

sabhā, assembly, society.

sādhaka, one who undergoes a system of discipline.

sādhana, a process of discipline.

sādhu, a saint, an ascetic.

saguṇa, possessing qualities.

saguṇa-upāsana, meditation on a personal God.

sakhya-sādhana, devotion to God in terms of friendship.

śākta, one who worships Śakti.

śakti, the power of God, personified as Mother.

sama-bhāva, sense of equality.

samādhi, mystic trance.

saṁhitā, collection.

samiti, society, association.

saṁnyāsa, renunciation.

saṁnyāsin, one who has renounced the world.

saṁnyasinī, a female ascetic.

saṁskāra, a purificatory ceremony.

samyak-carita, good conduct.

samyak-darśana, perfect insight.

samyak-jñāna, perfect knowledge.

saṁrāt, emperor.

sanātana-dharma, eternal law or religion.

saṅgha, assembly, society, church.

saṅghaṭan, union.

śāstra, a scripture, a science.

sat, Reality.

sat-cit-ānanda, a formula denoting the Absolute, consisting of reality, consciousness and bliss.

satī, suttee (in English).

sattva, purity, goodness—one of the three qualities of Nature.

satya, truth.

satyāgraha, firmness in the cause of truth, a formula coined by Mahātmā Gāndhi for his technique of fighting evil.

sevaka, a servant.
smṛti, a secondary scripture, a code of law.
sohamasmi, I am He.
śrauta-sūtra, aphorisms relating to sacrifices.
śrī vidyā, the purer worship of Śakti.
stotra, praise of God.
stūpa, a Buddhist mound.
stuti, praise, glorification.
śuddhādvaita, pure monism (Vallabha's system.)
sūtra, aphorism.
svabhāva, one's own nature.
svadharma, one's own duty.
svarāt, lord of himself.
svarga, heaven.
svatantra, independent entity.
swarāj, self-government.
tamas, dullness, ignorance.—one of the three qualities of Nature.
tantra, a treatise on the worship of Śakti.
tāntric-sādhana, a system of discipline prescribed for worshippers of Śakti.
tapas, austerity, penance.
tapasyā, same as *tapas*.
tat-tvam-asi, Thou art That.
tīrtha, a place of pilgrimage.
tīrthaṁkara, a Jain saint.
trimūrti, the Hindu Trinity—Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva.
tyāga, renunciation.
upanayana, initiation ceremony among Hindus.
upānga, a supplementary work.
upaniṣad, a mystical treatise at the end of the Veda.
upāsana, meditation.
upavēda, a class of works subordinate to the Veda.
uttama, the highest person.
vaikuntha, the heavenly abode of Viṣnu.
vairāgī, one who has renounced the world.
vairāgya, renunciation.
vaiṣṇava-sādhana, system of discipline prescribed for worshippers of Viṣnu.
vānaprastha, the third stage in the Hindu scheme of *āśramas*, involving retirement to a forest.
varṇa, caste.
varnāśramadharma, rules relating to Hindu castes and stages of life.
vātsalya-sādhana, practising devotion to God in terms of parental affection.
vedāṅga, auxiliaries to the Veda.
vedānta, a system of philosophy based on the Upaniṣads.
vedi, an altar.
vidyā, right knowledge.
viveka, discrimination.
yajamāna, sacrificer.
yajña, sacrifice.
yoga, a system of discipline leading to union with God.
yogābhyāsa, practice of yoga..
yoga-śāstra, the science of yoga.
yoga-siddhi, occult powers gained through practice of yoga.
yogin, one who practises yoga.
yoginī, a female yogin.
yuga, an aeon.
N.B - The four recognized yugas are *kṛta*, *tretā*, *dvāpara* and *kali*. See P. 638.

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