

# THE VISVA-BHARATI QUARTERLY



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# The Visva-Bharati Quarterly



यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनीडम् ॥

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# The Visva-Bharati Quarterly

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## Illustration

A study of Rabindranath Tagore ( etching )  
by Sir Muirhead Bone

## Frontispiece



Etching by Sir Muirhead Bone

THREE POEMS\*

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I

If the long night of my sorrow  
Has crossed over to the far shore  
From the Past :  
Then, in the midst of new wonder, on a morning,  
Let the new question of Life arise in me.  
The old questions, which finding no answer  
Ever mock the bewildered mind,  
May I find simple answers to them  
In simple faith.  
—That faith which remains content within,  
Never contends,  
Brings conviction of truth with the touch of  
blissfulness.

Jorasanko  
15th November, 1940  
Morning

\* These three poems have been translated by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty from  
*Rogshajya* ( Poems no. 10, 11, 18 )

## II

In the centre of this Universe  
 Age to age, there gathers  
 Terrible Unforgiveness.  
 If, unaware, a single line errs,  
 Through long passage of time  
 Suddenly it destroys itself ;  
 Where the foundation seemed true,  
 Earthquake heaves in chaotic dance.  
 Creatures came in hordes  
 To life's stage,  
 With ample reserves of power,  
 That power itself was illusion :  
 Intolerable grew its great burden  
 Leading to self-annihilation.  
 None knows, where in this world,  
 Moment by moment, there accumulates  
 Terrible Unforgiveness.  
 Piercing through errors beyond our ken  
 It reaches and rends firm threads of our relationships ;  
 Mistakes of a gesture or of a gleaming spark  
 For ever impede the path backward.  
 Utter destruction this, at the bidding of the Perfect :  
 What new creation will it reveal at last.  
 The disobedient clay crushed, all resistance removed,  
 Green sprout will come forth bearing new life.  
 Unforgiveness,  
 Supreme strength you are in creation's law ;  
 Thorns on the path of peace, trampled by your feet  
 Are laid low and defeated by insistent knocks.

Jorasanko  
 13th November, 1940

## III

My day's last shadow  
 You have blended with the evening melody\* :  
 Its tune will linger ever,  
 While its meaning be forgotten.  
 When, tired with work, the path-farer  
 Will rest beside the road,  
 Faint, this music will touch him  
 In tender strains.  
 Bending his head, in silence,  
 He will listen, and only know—

In a forgotten age, far in some rare moment  
 May be there lived some one  
 Who found, what we seek  
 And cannot find.

Jorasanko,  
 13th November, 1940  
 Morning

\* *Multan*, the Indian *ragini* specifically named here, is associated with the day's end.

## MEDIEVAL POET-SAINTS OF INDIA

By N. C. GHOSH

It is rather venturesome to launch on the subject of Medieval Poet-Saints of India with mere amateurish study of the subject. Pandit Kshitimohan Sen of Santiniketan has made valuable contributions towards the study and propagation of the writings of these saints and in my long journeys across India and over different parts of the country, I often carried with me booklets containing the songs and hymns of these great Poet-Saints, Bengali renderings of the original Hindi by the Pandit, and I would like to acknowledge at the outset my deep debt to him in preparing this little monograph and the inspiration that I have derived from his writings.

In simplicity of expression, in depth of devotional fervour, in richness of thought, these simple songs and hymns are unique in World's literature, and as they are so little known still, I thought of sharing my delight in them with my friends and provoke some interest in a most interesting period of the history of this country.

One may think also that there is a certain amount of incongruity in talking about Poets and Saints, when the demon of war has already intruded on to the fair field of Bengal and when destruction and rapine are stalking over the entire face of the earth and whole civilisations are on the verge of crumbling away. But in times like this, is it not refreshing, is it not heartening to turn back once in a way to things of eternal value and dwell for a moment on these noble thoughts and rich heritage left to us by the Poet-Saints and do they not help us to sustain our faith in humanity after all ?

Casting our eyes across the ages, we find the cultural history of India beginning with the coming of the Aryans in the early Vedic period and gradually developing in all its manifold richness through the inter-action of its different contributory

factors. Historical materials point to layer upon layer of cultural endeavours and how they all seemed to have worked on the principle of live and let live, though in later ages, much to our misfortune, the spirit of toleration was gradually vitiated by invidious distinctions in the social and spiritual life of the country, and in course of time, brought forth the cancerous growth of untouchability.

While the early Vedic culture was generally exclusive, later developments, inspired by the 'Upanishads' and characterised by the predominant influence of *Jnana*, *Yoga* and *Bhakti* were more inclusive and we find numerous instances of foreign cultures coming to India and getting quite easily assimilated into the Buddhist, Vaishnava or Saiva sects of those times. An age of spiritual disintegration followed, when the cultural life of India stagnated for a while and the great spiritual forces, which characterised the earlier stages dissipated in mere repetition of one or other of the forms. It was at this juncture in the middle ages that a new force in the shape of Moslem culture appeared on the horizon of India.

In spite of the political conquest of parts of India by Moslem invaders, and in spite of the spirit of proselytising that had characterised their culture, the invaders could not help being influenced by the ancient culture that existed in the country and the potency of the sword in proselytising and swallowing up entire races and communities that had happened in the West, met a definite check in India. With the Moslem invaders came a host of Moslem preachers and Saints to India and an interaction of living minds was set up in the country. The presence of rival faiths drove these mystics to an intenser life of search of truth behind appearances and this virtual challenge inspired at the same time the better minds of India to seek more earnestly the truths of their own faith and their own culture. Apart from the political conquest of India, the advent of Moslems in this country inaugurated a period of earnest spiritual consciousness both amongst the Hindus and the Moslems of those days.

Though there was nothing much common in the orthodox tenets of the two communities and hardly any points of contact between each other and their respective life flowed in two entirely separate streams, the free spirits and lovers of humanity from both groups, the Hindu Bhaktas and the Moslem Sufis, were able to perform the miracle and get the two streams to join and flow together.

This great band of free-thinking Poet-Saints headed by Ramananda and his twelve disciples virtually carried out a quiet reformation throughout the length and breadth of India and unlike the older spiritual leaders and exponents of the philosophy and culture of this country, such as Sayana and Kumarila, Sankara and Ramanuja, Hemadri and Rughunandana, who all wrote in Sanskrit, these Poet-Saints who wanted to stir and lead the masses took to the language of the masses and thus gave a literature of considerable value in the vernacular language of the country. The reformation, they carried out, modified the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness. It raised the Sudra classes to the position of spiritual power and social importance almost equal to that of the Brahmins. It gave sanctity to the family relations and raised the status of woman. It made the nation more humane, at the same time more prone to hold together by mutual toleration. It suggested and partly carried out, a plan of reconstruction with the Mahomedans. It subordinated the importance of rites and ceremonies, of pilgrimages and fasts, and of learning and contemplation to the higher excellence of worship by means of love and faith. It checked the excesses of Polytheism. It tended in all these ways to raise the nation generally to a higher level of capacity both of thought and action. From the time of Ramananda down to the eighteenth century or even later, we find a long and remarkable series of these Poet-Saints in North India, who handed on from one to another the lamp of an inward and a fervent faith.

Ramananda, born of an orthodox Vaishnava Brahmin family, towards the end of the thirteenth century, nurtured in

the traditional ideas of all the various schools of thought before his time, particularly of the Vaishnava school of Ramanuja of whom he was the fifth apostolic successor, vitalised these ideas and tenets with the love and devotion of his heart and founded a new path of spiritual realisation.

A spirit of sympathy for the lower castes and classes of Hindu society has been from the beginning a distinctive feature of Vaishnavism. To Ramananda belongs the honour of developing this ethical tendency to Vaishnava thought. With that genuinely spiritual touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, Ramananda admitted all, high and low alike, into the fold. By making itself accessible to the degraded castes his great message gave a new direction to the spiritual thought and culture of Hindusthan. This remarkable spiritual revival carried its influence far and wide and stirred the stagnant waters. It rendered the Hindu culture all-embracing in its sympathy, catholic in its outlook, a perennial fountain of delight and inspiration. Ramananda made light of caste pretensions and declared in eloquent terms :—

*Jati panti puchchai nabi koi,  
Hari ko bhaje, so Hari ko hoi,*

“Let no one ask a man’s caste or with whom he eats. If a man is devoted to God Almighty, he becomes God’s own.” He had twelve disciples and these included amongst others Ravidas the cobbler, Kabir the Moslem weaver, Dhanna the Jat peasant, Sena the barber, Pipa the Rajput. Two of these twelve were also women.

We do not come across many of Ramananda’s own sayings but the radiant personality of his disciples the men and women he created—constitute his living message. In the ‘Granth Sahib’ only a single hymn is ascribed to Ramananda but this single poem is a sufficient indication of his philosophy. This lyric poem records the reaction of his mind on an invitation to attend a religious festival :

“Where shall I go ? The music and the festivity are in my house, my heart does not wish to move, my mind has folded its wings and is still. One day my heart was filled to overflowing and I had an inclination to go with sandal and other perfumes to offer my worship to Brahma. But the Guru revealed that Brahma was in my own heart. Wherever I go I see only water and stones ( worshipped ); but it is Thou who hast filled them all with Thy presence. They all seek Thee in vain in Devas. If Thou art not to be found here, we must go and seek Thee there. My own true Guru, Thou hast put an end to all my failures and illusions. Blesset art Thou ! Ramananda is lost in his Master, Brahma, it is the word of the Guru that destroys all the million bonds of action.”

Of all the disciples of Ramananda, Kabir's name shines out the brightest. His is a remarkable character in many ways. His great courage and spirit of protestantism, his supreme love and kindness to all, his fearless yet humble advocacy of pure ennobling doctrines, above all his profound mystic poems and utterances, make him a most eminent figure in this medieval movement. His place in this movement is very aptly put in the popular verse to this effect :—

*“Bhakti Dravida upaji  
Laye Ramanand,  
Pragat kio Kabirne,  
Saptadwip naukhand.”*

“Bhakti arose first in the Dravida land, Ramananda brought it to the North ; and Kabir spread it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world.”

Kabir is very correctly regarded as the central personality in the religious history of Medieval India. During the middle ages, there was not in North India, a single movement of, freedom, whether spiritual or intellectual, that did not bear the stamp of Kabir's influence. There has been a great deal of

Says Kabir :

“When God was gracious unto me, I obtained Him the Perfect One.

“Turning away from the worlds I have forgotten both caste and lineage.

“My weaving is now in the Infinite Silence.

“I have now no quarrel with any one :

“I have given up both the Pundits and the Mollahs,

“I weave clothes and wear them myself.

“Where I see no pride, there I sing God's praises,

“What the Pundits and Mollahs prescribed for me,

“I have received no advantage from and have abandoned,

“My heart being pure, I have seen the Lord,

“Kabir having searched and searched himself hath found  
God within him”.

All India knows the beautiful legend of Kabir's death, how both Hindus and Mahomedans quarrelled for his corpse which the one wanted to cremate and the other to bury, how at last Kabir himself appeared before them in person and asked them to lift the shroud and look beneath. In the place of the corpse to their great astonishment, they found a heap of flowers half of which was buried by Mahomedans at Gorakhpur and half taken by the Hindus to Benares and burnt—“fitting conclusion to a life which had made fragrant the doctrines of the great creeds”.

The conception of God as the the One Great Love is the characteristic and most important feature of the Medieval religion and culture. Kabir, born poet as he was, realised and gave expression to this faith more vividly than any other medieval mystic and no wonder his influence can be traced in a considerable number of sects, of which the largest and most notable is that of the Sikhs founded by Kabir's most famous admirer Nanak. Guru Nanak ( born 1469 ) of the Sikhs, one of the gentlest and most mystical of Medieval Indian Teachers, established the worship of the ‘One Great and True Being’. The social and reforming effect of the purest of Protestant faiths that he preached



could not but be great. A rude and scattered community of peasants and hillmen became a strong and well-knit brotherhood united by a common and ennobling faith. A race of primitive and untutored men became a heroic nation possessed of a strong and individual religious faith and fired with ideals of moral courage and independence.

The other great follower of Kabir's ideals was Dadu. He was born in 1544 A. D. and died in 1603 in Rajputana where his followers, the Dadupanthis, even to this day have their chief centre. The great dream of his life was to unite all the divergent faiths in one bond of love and comradeship. Dadu, like his great Master Kabir, was also a poet and his prayers couched in simple language were full of depth and sweetness. He taught : "Be humble and free from egotism, Be compassionate and devoted in service ; Be a hero, fearless and energetic, free your mind from sectarianism, and from all the meaningless forms and semblances of religion ; be forgiving by nature and firm in your faith". Dadu held a religious discussion with Emperor Akbar for over 40 days when the latter tried to find a basis of a Universal Faith.

It is extremely difficult within the narrow compass of a short review like this, to do even bare justice to this great band of teachers, scattered throughout North India who followed the great Masters. I cannot, however, pass on from this group of Poet-Saints without mentioning Meera Bai ( born 1504 ) the Rajput Princess, who turned an ascetic. One of the most noted of Ramananda's followers was Ravidas, the Chamar. It was under his guidance that Meera Bai completed her spiritual discipleship. She popularised the Krishna cult in Western Hindusthan and sang in the Braj Bhasa dialect of Western Hindi—the dialect of the districts of Mathura and Brindaban which has come to be looked upon as the poetic dialect of Hindi par excellence. Her charming songs have been perennial fountains of delight to millions for the last few centuries and are bound to remain so through ages to come.

The influence of the Poet-Saints that I have referred to above gave rise to various sects that arose in medieval India, the Sikhs, the Dadupanthis. These were fully protestant in character and reacted on the orthodox sects and reformed Vaishnavite sects also arose side by side. I shall just mention the name of one of the latter group, whose name and fame as a poet of the highest order remain untarnished today—I mean Tulsi Das, the author of the Hindi Ramayana and Vinay Patrika. If the poems of Kabir form the high watermark of the more rational and protestant faith, the Ramayana of Tulsi Das is the greatest expression of the more orthodox Vaishnavism. The Ramayana is not, however, void of a power of appeal even to the protestant sects. Even as Dante summed up the thought and faith of medieval catholicism in his great Epic, so also Tulsi Das has summed up all the longing and philosophy of medieval Vaishnavite India. Out of all the spiritual rapture and yearning of Medieval India, represented by various sects, Vaishnavite and protestant, the Ramayana of Tulsi Das rises as some great piece of Divine Music.

Let me conclude by coming nearer home and mentioning how Vidyapati and Chandidas sang of the Krishna cult in Bengal about the same time as Kabir was flourishing in Central India. The devotion and emotional fervour of their writings are unparalleled in world's literature. Following these Poet Saints in Bengal, the Great Chaitanya taught of a merciful God and of the path of devotion and roused Bengal from its slumbers.

In the teachings of all these great-Saints in India, we find a basis of universal brotherhood which may yet have a message for the world after it emerges out of the present cataclysm and a new order in spirit and in substance replaces the present order based on greed and selfishness.

## THE RELIGIOUS POLICY OF ASOKA

By PRABODH-CHANDRA SEN

IN these days of acute communal strife it may be helpful to discuss certain facts of Indian history which are likely to throw light on the solution of our present problem. Asoka, the famous Maurya monarch, is regarded on all hands as one of the best rulers not only in India but in all history. In the present article an attempt is made to ascertain the exact character of the religious policy of this great ruler, as also the effects of that policy on the political and national life of India, which, I fear, have not yet been properly discussed by our historians. It is necessary to state at the outset that the legends about Asoka found in Buddhist literature are not regarded by thinking scholars as a safe basis for a reliable history of the great emperor. The only sound foundation for such a history is to be found in his numerous and most remarkable inscriptions, which, V. A. Smith rightly says, "constitute in large measure his autobiography written in terms manifestly dictated by himself." I shall, therefore, depend exclusively on these inscriptions in my attempt at a proper appreciation of Asoka's religious policy.

It is stated in one of the best text-books prescribed for our young students that ever since he became a Buddhist after the Kalinga War Asoka "made it the business of his life to propagate the new faith...He organised a powerful system of missions to carry the teaching of the Buddha not only to the distant corners of India, but also to the territories of his Ceylonese and Greek contemporaries...The propaganda in India was entrusted to imperial officials, and new functionaries called *Dharma-Mahāmātras* were specially created for the purpose" (*The Groundwork of Indian History* by Sen & Raychaudhuri). Similar statements are met with in most of such text-books. If it be true that Asoka was an ardent and

controversy around the question of his date, but most probably he was born in 1398 A. D. He was the son of a Moslem weaver. These weavers had formerly been Hindus, and their place was very low in the Hindu as well as in the Moslem society. Thus they were free from the burden of useless religious traditions and customs. In such a free and untrammelled family was this great soul born.

Though he led an intensely religious and spiritual life, he married and had a son by name Kamal who was also a thinker and a devotee. Kabir believed in simple and natural life. He himself wove cloth and sold it in the market like an ordinary weaver. He did not interpret religious life as a life of idleness, and held that all should toil and earn and help each other, but none should hoard money. There is no fear of corruption from wealth if it is kept constantly in circulation in the service of humanity.

How simply, how beautifully he gives expression to eternal truths. In one of his poems he says "Be truthful, be natural—Truth alone is natural. Seek this truth within your own heart, for there is no truth in the external religious observances, neither in the sects nor in holy vows, neither in religious garb, nor in pilgrimages. Truth resides within the heart and is revealed in love, in strength, in compassion. Conquer hatred and extend your love to all mankind, for God resides in all".

In these days when the question of union between the two great communities is so much in the forefront, it will be appropriate to recall some of Kabir's noble sayings on this subject :

"If Allaha is in the Masjid only, What of the World outside? If Ram is there in the temple image, who do you think pervades this earth?"

"The Lord of the Hindus dwells in the East, The Lord of the Moslems in the West, Why not O fool, search your own heart and find them there? Ram and Rahim are all there".

"All the men and women on this earth are Thy image,

O Lord. Kabir is as much the son of Ram as he is of Rahim. Is he not Thy son, O Lord ?”

He sings in another of his songs :

“The difference among faiths is only due to difference in names ; everywhere there is yearning for the same God. Why do the Hindus and Mahomedans quarrel for nothing ? Keep at a distance all pride and vanity, insincerity and falsehood ; consider others the same as yourself, let your heart be filled with love and devotion. Then alone will your struggle be successful. Life is transitory, do not waste your time, but take refuge in God. He is within your own heart ; so why do you fruitlessly search him in holy places, in scriptures, in rites and ceremonials ?”

Kabir was not in favour of the useless mortification of flesh. He said “Be pure, live a natural simple life. The whole creation is within your own self, behold the Lord of creation there. There is no distinction of the outer and the inner, for all distinctions have been harmonised in Him who is beyond all distinctions. In this harmony are truth and realisation”.

May I just quote one more of his beautiful songs wherein the realisation attained by him is very vividly and beautifully described and his philosophy of life is summed up in a few lines :

“Though I have assumed many shapes, this is my last,

“The strings and wires of the musical instrument are all worn out : I am now in the power of God’s name.

“I shall not have again to dance to the tune of birth and death.

“Nor shall my heart accompany on the drum.

“I have taken and destroyed my bodily lust and anger ; Lust’s raiment hath grown old and all my doubts are dispelled.

“I recognise one God in all creatures ; vain wranglings on this subject are at an end”.

active patron of Buddhism and used his officials and state-resources for an extensive propaganda on behalf of Buddhism, his religious policy would not really deserve the praises that have been bestowed on it and he can never be extolled as a wise ruler or statesman. We know from contemporary Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain literature as well as from the inscriptions of Asoka himself (e. g., Rock Edict XII) that it was an age of intense religious unrest, “when religious feeling ran high,” the different communities attacking one another in very strong language. It would be highly impolitic, to say the least, on the part of Asoka to take sides in this religious strife and to extend his patronage to Buddhism to the exclusion of other religious systems ; and it would not also be in keeping with the noble tradition of a typically ideal Indian king who must remain impartial and hold the balance even among the different religious communities (V. A. Smith’s *Early History of India*, 4th ed., p. 188, footnote 1).

But did Asoka, like the great Mughal emperor, Aurangzib, whose aim was to convert his Indian empire into a “land of the faithful” (*dar-ul-Islam*), really use his imperial position as well as the state-machinery for promoting the cause of his personal religious faith and thus turn his own empire, if not also the dominions of his western *Yavana* neighbours, into something like a *dar-ul-Buddhism* ? Let us see if this very common notion about the missionary zeal of Asoka is borne out by the evidence of his excellent inscriptions.

The most important inscription throwing light on the religious policy of Asoka is his Rock Edict No. 12. It would, therefore, serve our purpose best if we reproduce here in full an English version of it and let it speak for itself. It is as follows :

“King Priyadarsin, Beloved of the gods (*devānām priyah*), honours (*pūjayati*) men of all sects (*pāṣaṇḍa*), ascetics and householders, with gifts and manifold honour. But the Beloved of the gods does not care so much for gifts and honour as that

there should be a growth of the essence (*sāra*) among (men of) all sects. The growth of the essence (of religion), however, is of various kinds. But the root of it is restraint of speech, to wit, a man must not honour (*i. e.*, praise) his own sect (*ātmapāśandapūjā*) or disparage that of another (*parapāśandagarhā*) without reason (or occasion)...because sects of other people all deserve to be honoured for one reason or another.

By thus acting one exalts one's own sect and (at the same time) does service to the sects of other people. By acting otherwise one hurts one's own sect and does harm to another sect. For he who honours his own sect, while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, in order to enhance the glory of his own sect, in reality by such conduct severely injures his own sect.

Concourse (*samavāya*, that is, meeting together, assembling) is therefore commendable in order that people may listen and desire to listen (further) to one another's *Dharma*. For this is the desire of the Beloved of the gods that all sects should be well-informed (about the doctrines of other communities and thus) be conducive of good.

Wherefore the adherents of all sects should be informed that the Beloved of the gods does not care so much for gifts or honour as that there should be a growth of the essence (of religion) among all sects and also mutual appreciation.

For this purpose are employed the *Dharma-Mahāmātras*... and other bodies (of officials). And this is its fruit, the growth of one's own sect and the illumination of *Dharma*."

It is clear from this inscription that in Asoka's time the various religious sects (the most important of them being those of the *Deva*-worshipping Brahmanists, the *Ājivikas*, *i. e.*, the followers of Gosāla Mankhaliputta, the Nirgranthas or Jainas, and the Buddhists, the only sects which find mention in the inscriptions) were far from regardful towards one another and restraint of speech seems to have been a rare thing in their

mutual criticism; and Asoka, far from espousing the cause of any one of these warring communities, declared in most unambiguous words his equal regards for, and bestowed his impartial patronage on, all of them. Not only this, in order to bring about peace and harmony among these communities, Asoka, on the one hand, discouraged the prevalent spirit of *ātmapāśandapūjā* (extolling one's own community) and that of *parapāśandagarhā* (disparaging that of others) and, on the other, stressed the necessity of *samavāya* or concourse, between people of different faiths for religious discussion but with requisite restraint of speech so that such discussion might lead to mutual appreciation, for, according to him, every sect deserved to be honoured for one reason or another. Above all he emphasised the necessity of caring only for the *sāra* or essential elements of religion rather than for their external or ceremonial aspects, because in their essence all religions are one and the same, their sectarian differences being manifest only in certain non-essential dogmas and practices. This *sāra* or essence common to all religions has been called *Dharma* by Asoka, and it is to the growth of this essential *Dharma* among his people that Asoka devoted his life, and *Dharma-Mahāmātras* and other officials were appointed for this purpose. After the Kalinga War, Asoka, as we all know, gave up for ever the traditional Magadhan policy of *Digvijaya*, *i. e.*, policy of acquiring new territories by military conquest, and replaced it by the noble ideal of winning people's hearts by the gift of *Dharma*, which he loved to call *Dharmavijya* or moral conquest. What, according to the imperial idealist, constituted *Dharma* has been repeatedly explained by him in the inscriptions. Briefly speaking it consisted of certain moral or social duties (*e. g.*, obedience to parents, teachers and elders, due respect and liberality towards Brāhmaṇas and Sramaṇas, courtesy towards friends and relatives, kind treatment of slaves and servants, toleration for and appreciation of creeds other than one's own, and kindness towards living creatures and consequent abstention from sacrificial slaughter of or physical violence to them)

as well as certain ethical virtues, such as truthfulness, compassion, liberality, gratefulness, mastery over the senses, and purity of mind. Dr. R. C. Majumdar has rightly remarked that "The aspect of *dharmā* which he (Asoka) emphasised, was a code of morality rather than a system of religion" (*Ancient Indian History and Civilization*, p. 210). These moral duties and virtues which formed the core of Asoka's *sāra-dharmā* cannot in any way be described as Buddhism, and V. A. Smith is no doubt right when he says that "the morality inculcated was, on the whole, common to all the Indian religions" (*Oxford History of India*, p. 108). As a matter of fact Asoka himself was quite aware of this character of his favourite *dharmā*, and this is why he has called it the *porāṇa pakiti* (Minor Rock Edict II), the ancient rule or standard of piety which has been explained by Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri as "the common heritage of Indians of all denominations" (*Political History*, 4th ed., p. 280).

Asoka not only asked his subjects to abstain from speaking evil of their neighbours' faith and to show toleration for and sympathy with the beliefs of others, but openly declared that he himself set the example by doing reverence to men of all sects by means of donations and in other ways. That he was sincere in his professions is believed by all modern historians. V. A. Smith says, "The Cave Inscriptions, which record costly gifts bestowed upon the Ājivikas, ... testify that Asoka, like many other ancient kings of India, really adopted the policy of *universal toleration*" (*Early History of India*, 4th Ed., p. 187-88). Now, the monarch, who not only professed the policy of universal toleration but practised it, who not only deprecated the spirit of *ātma-pāṣaṇḍapūjā* and *parapāṣaṇḍagarhā* but extolled the virtue of mutual appreciation in matters religious, and who not only stressed the necessity of concourse (*samavāya*) and consequent concord among the different communities but asked them to overlook the externals of religion and stick to the essentials which formed the common plank for all the sectarian faiths, cannot in any way be supposed to be a zealous propagandist in favour of any such

denominational religion. This conclusion based wholly on the evidence of a single inscription (*viz.*, Rock Edict XII) is fully justified by all the rest of Asoka's epigraphs. There is not a single hint in any of his numerous inscriptions which can be construed to show that Asoka ever deviated in the slightest degree from the traditional Indian policy of universal toleration and inclined to show special favour to any particular denomination. Later Buddhist traditions no doubt fondly describe Asoka as an imperial Buddhist missionary who placed his whole life and empire at the service of Buddhism, but they find no corroboration from the inscriptions and therefore must be discarded as mere fabrications of later monkish imagination. So it must be admitted that the current belief about Asoka's missionary zeal in favour of Buddhism so strongly held by many and so bluntly stated in the text-books has no basis whatsoever. This is why Dr. Raychaudhuri has admitted that though himself an ardent and devout Buddhist "Asoka probably never sought to impose his purely sectarian belief on others" (*ibid.*, p. 280).

This discussion, I hope, is enough to show that Asoka's religious policy was not only in keeping with the Indian tradition of impartiality on the part of an ideal king but also in conformity with all other known facts about him, his genuine benevolence and ceaseless efforts for the welfare of all his subjects irrespective of creed, caste and even race—his benevolent attitude towards the *Yavanas* is well-known. To sum up, though personally a sincere believer in the teachings of the Buddha Asoka as a king thought it his duty to extend his patronage equally to all the *pāṣaṇḍas* or religious sects of his time and strove his best to bring about real unity and harmony among them on the fundamental basis of the common elements or *sāra* of all religions.

As we have said before, Asoka was not unique in Indian history in his attitude of impartiality and equal patronage towards the various religious sects; indeed such an attitude was a common feature of the religious policy of most of the ancient rulers of India. To cite only a few cases, we may mention the

names of the Kushāna rulers, the great Gupta emperors, and Harshavardhana. Kanishka, the Kushāna Emperor (78-101 A. C.), as is well-known, is regarded as a second Asoka in Buddhist literature for his deep devotion to the teachings of the Sākyā Sage. But his coins conclusively prove that to the end of his reign he continued to show honour to Siva, Sun, Moon, Fire and such other Indian and non-Indian gods, who were worshipped in his far-flung empire. The great Gupta monarchs, viz. Chandragupta Vikramāditya, Kumāragupta, and Skandagupta, "although officially Brahmanical Hindus with a special devotion to Vishṇu, followed the *usual practice* of ancient India in looking with a favourable eye on all varieties of Indian religion including Buddhism and Jainism" ( V. A. Smith, *Early History of India*, 4th ed., p. 325 ). Harshavardhana ( 606-47 A. C. ) also, though primarily a worshipper of Siva, did not hesitate to bestow his devotions to the Buddha as well as the Sun.

This tradition of royal toleration of all creeds was so deeply ingrained in the Indian mind that, after a period of intense intolerance and persecution in the middle ages, that is, soon after the Turkish Muslim conquest of India, this spirit of impartiality and equal patronage showed itself even among Muslim kings with renewed vigour and with an effulgence which was all the more glorious because of the greater contrast between Hinduism and Islam than between the different sects of Hinduism. The most remarkable name among such tolerant and liberal Muslim kings is perhaps that of Zainu-l Abidin ( 1417-1467 ) of Kasmir who anticipated the wise religious policy of Akbar by more than one hundred years.

## MUNSHI PREMCHAND : AN ARTIST OF THE SOIL

By MADAN GOPAL

THE last half a decade has been very fateful in the history of Indian literature. At the dawn of 1936, India could boast of a galaxy of great writers. By the end of 1941, however, all of them had gone. The last to arrive and the first to go was Premchand, the supreme and undisputed master of Hindustani literature, ( both Persian and Devanagari scripts ), having to his credit over 225 short-stories many of which are first-rate work, and over a dozen stout volumes of novels, which, even with their slight faults, remain the best that Hindustani literature can boast of.

There is yet another reason which accounts for Premchand's unique position in Hindustani literature. He is not merely a landmark ; he is also the pioneer and the standard-bearer of the modern tendencies in Hindustani literature. For, at the time when he entered the literary arena, in 1901, it had absolutely no contact with real life,—living in a world, as it did, of medieval patriarchs and queens, courtiers and courtesans, all of whom belonged to a sort of fairy land. It was Premchand who brought it in gear with life.

The origins of Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, better known by his pen-name Premchand, were extremely modest. Born in August, 1881, at Mundhwa Lamhi, a small village on the outskirts of Benares, he belonged to a family of Kayasthas, the pen-and-ink-warrior caste of India. There, in the village school, conducted in the mosque by the Moulvie, a goldsmith by vocation, Premchand had his early schooling, acquiring an early and firm hold on life that he must have led in the village is reflected in such of Persian. The his stories as *Qazāki*, *Ghori*, *Ram-Lila*, wherein the familiar scenes of the life in the village are brought back to us, with much greater realism than the autobiographical touches in

such stories as *Shikwā O Shikāyat* or *Gītā, Adib Ki Izzat* or *Lekbak, Lāl Feetā, Shikast Ki Fateh* and many others.

Premchand's father, Ajaib Lal, inherited a small piece of land, which would not yield enough. He was forced to take up a job in the Posts and Telegraph Department, wherein he rose to be the post-master of a petty post office, getting, perhaps, in the evening of his life, less than Rs. 20/- a month. So far as can be ascertained, there was never any intimacy between the father and the son, who, however, followed him from place to place, where he had his schooling.

Premchand's real education, however, was in the school of life. The book that he read was the book of books, the *Book of Life*. Poverty and Adversity were his teachers.

His mother, who, as he himself says, "was as affectionate and tender as all mothers are, and, when occasion arose, as stern," died when he was only eight. Throughout his writings, one finds affectionate and touching tributes to motherly love.

On her death, however, Ajaib Lal re-married, only to leave to his young son, whom too he had got married at the age of fourteen, the burden of supporting a wife, a step-mother and a half-brother. Premchand was barely fifteen, reading in the 9th class. There was not a penny in the house and, therefore, Premchand was called upon not only to pay his way towards education, but also to feed four hungry mouths. Daily he trekked ten miles to earn some five rupees a month as a coach. Such were the trying circumstances in which he passed his Matriculation, to be refused admission to college for he had secured only a second division and was very weak at mathematics.

Premchand had pitched his ambitions high, too high, indeed, for his means. He wanted to take a Master's degree and also to qualify for Law. But poverty is a sin and, as he himself admits: "My feet were chained to the earth, while I wanted to climb the Everest."

Still leaner days were in store for Premchand. The clouds showed no signs of thinning. He shifted to Benares, where he

earned Rs. 5/- per month, half of which sum he sent home regularly. Many a time and for many a day he had to forego even his usual one meal a day. Once, when he had not had even one bite for three days, he took, as a last resort, his arithmetic book, perhaps his only valuable possession,—to the bazaar to sell it off. And there Fate met him, in the person of the headmaster of a school, who was in search of a teacher. Taking pity on this brilliant but starving lad, he employed him on Rs. 18/- p. m.

This trouble over, another one raised its head. His wife, who has been described as "unmannered and uncultured," did not prove a happy companion. "She was," says Premchand, "an unfortunate woman, not at all good looking and, although not satisfied with her, I pulled on uncomplainingly, just as all *traditional* husbands do" (italics mine). By leaving him, in face of all his protestations, she sealed her own fate. Some time later, he was prevailed upon to marry for the second time. It was not without great difficulty that he agreed. But ever of an independent mind—a trait that gained strength with the passage of years—he said he would marry none but a widow, preferably a child widow. And this he did, at great danger to his own life. This second marriage, however, proved very happy. Junior Mrs. Premchand, then an illiterate girl and now a writer of no mean merit, gave him four children, and has outlived her husband. Those who have come into contact with her speak volumes for the nobility of her temperament.

Soon after Premchand joined the teaching profession, he got a job in a Government school. In 1904, he passed the examination for Junior Teachers Certificate, qualifying both in Urdu and Hindi. Before long, he became a Sub-Deputy Inspector of Schools, and was posted in Bundhelkhund. Travelling, however, did not suit him; he contracted an acute form of dysentery, which ultimately proved fatal. He got himself transferred to Basti, where he passed his F. A. Examination, as a private candidate. It is significant that he could do so only in 1909 when Mathematics became an optional subject. It

may be mentioned here that in his 'Teachers' Certificate it was stated : "Not qualified to teach Mathematics." In Premchand's actual life, his business acumen proved very low and contributed not a little to his troubles.

His health, however, showed no signs of improvement at Basti, and he had to get himself transferred to the Government Normal School, Gorakhpur, as a second assistant, a post which he resigned in 1921, in sympathy with Gandhiji's Satyagraha movement. Here at Gorakhpur, in 1919, he took his Bachelor's degree.

Premchand was born at a time when the whole of India was in the throes of intellectual, social and religious ferment, brought about by such forces as the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society, Swami Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Yet another nascent force, which later inundated and eclipsed all others, was the Indian National Congress, founded only five years after Premchand's birth. All these influences had their share in the orientation of Premchand's mind. About 1905, when the Congress met at Benares and sanctioned a boycott of foreign goods, we find Premchand writing articles in the monthly *Zamānā*, Cawnpore, bearing on such problems as "How to encourage indigenous industries", "Obstacles in the way of India's national struggle" and various other constitutional and educational problems.

Premchand was a born writer. At the age of thirteen he dramatised the unsuccessful "affair" of a distant uncle of his, one of those "bachelors till late age" who are always landed in trouble. At eighteen, he wrote a serial novel bearing the significant name of *Honbar Birwan Ke Chikne Chikne Pat*, which was published in *Awāz-i-Khalq* of Benares. In 1901, he wrote another novel which, however, was never published. Shortly after, he jumped into the literary field in right earnest.

Part of his zeal for writing must be traced to his early wide readings. While still a student in the 7th. class at Gorakhpur, we find him reading, rather surreptitiously, behind huge black

mounds of tobacco, and enveloping himself in clouds of tobacco smoke in a tobacco merchant's shop, the encyclopedic and interminable *Tilism-I-Hosh-E-Ruba* and translations of Reynold's novels and, when nothing could be had, translations of the *Purānas*. During his leaner days at Benares, he read *Chandra-Kāntā Santati* and *Fisānā-I-Āzād*, by themselves landmarks in Hindustani literature. Ever after, all his life, Premchand remained a voracious reader. He read indiscriminately, whatever fell into his hands, all sorts of books, books on history, philosophy, science, fiction, travel, books by Hugo, Anatole France, Dickens, Scott, Galsworthy, Hardy, Eliot, G. B. Shaw, Tagore, Romain Rolland and Tolstoy, to name only the important ones. Some years before his death, his friends say, he read extensively on the Great Experiment in Russia. He also translated such works as *Back to Methuselah*, *Silas Marner*, *Thais*, *Justice*, *Silver Box* and stories by Tolstoy.

Some of these books, like the "*Fisānā-I-Āzād*," endowed him with flow and spontaneity of language; others, like Reynold's novels and "*Tilism-Hosh-E-Ruba*," gave him a fertile imagination; still others widened his intellectual horizon.

Besides his articles in the *Zamānā*, which have been referred to above, he wrote the monthly column "*Raftār-e-Zamānā*" therein. Inspired by the example of great men, he wrote short biographical sketches of Indian and foreign great men. Some of these sketches have lately appeared under the significant name of *Qalam*, *Talwār* and *Tyāg* or *Ba Kamalon Ke Darshan*.

About this time, he was attracted to Tagore's stories, a form of literature not yet much attempted in India, particularly in Hindustani. He saw how, with a little imagination, this craft could be exploited with great advantage. A great vista lay before him. He studied Tolstoy, Tchekhov and later Guy de Maupassant, Pierre Loti, and others. He modelled his stories on the technique and styles of these great masters. In due course of time, he evolved his own technique. His stories include



those of all types and all schools. That his achievements were overwhelming can be seen by even a superficial comparison between one of his later stories, say *Kafan*, to his first story, *Duniyā Ka Sab Se Anmol Ratan*, which made its appearance in 1907, and was over-ridden with Persian words and similes, scenes transplanted from the Caucasus on to the Indian soil. Herein, like Sarshar, he plays with words; his characters lack depth.

But in those far off days, even this was considered to be a great and bold experiment. Enthusiasts saw that a new sun was rising. He was warmly hailed and soon, "Nawab Rai", the sobriquet under which he now wrote, became a house-hold word.

The unique thing about these stories was their theme. In those days of 1908, when the very utterance of the word Swaraj was enough to find one behind the bars, these stories smacked of battle and breathed a passion for independence. Naturally, therefore, when a collection of five such stories was published under the significant name of *Sauz-e-watan* by the *Zāmanā* press, efforts were made to find out the identity of the author. And naturally, again, when it was found that the real author of these stories was a teacher in Government employment, the British Collector of Hamirpur was wild with rage. Hundreds of copies of the book were burned publicly by him, and it was with great difficulty that Premchand extricated himself. "Nawab Rai" was instructed not to write *anything* on *any* subject, before getting the sanction of the Education Department. "Nawab Rai" preferred a "death" and soon Dhanpat Rai Srivastava became "Premchand". This was in 1912.

Now he took to writing historical fiction, depicting, through his stories, the bravery and chivalry of the Rajputs in Bundhelkhand, where he at this time worked. This was followed up by stories about the Mughal times and from Islamic history. Such stories appeared in *Sapta Saroj*, *Agni Samādhi* and *Prema Pūrnimā*, till he switched over to political stories, at the end of the Great War.

In 1914 appeared his *Sevāsadan* or *Bazaar-I-Husn*, the book with which Premchand's literary apprenticeship came to an end. This book, which was the first "modern" novel in Hindustani and dealt with men and women of flesh and blood, took the country by storm.

Previous to this, Premchand had written novels like *Premā* or *Pratigyā*, or *Ham Khurma O-Ham Sawab*, or still later, *Bewab*; *Kishna*, which was later enlarged into that stout volume of fiction, namely, *Ghaban*; *Jalwa-I-Isar* and *Vardān*. Another novel *Nirmalā*, which, from the point of view of unity of plot and construction, stands apart from all other novels of Premchand, has a theme which falls into this period. The language of all these novels, with the exception of *Nirmalā* and *Ghaban*, is very much Persianised or Sanskritised. There is little spontaneity, and the characters lack depth. All these defects disappear in his next novel, namely *Sevāsadan*, which, besides being an extremely realistic characterisation, has lyric qualities, which have not been surpassed save perhaps in *Godān*.

Although all that he wrote after 1920 can be traced in a nascent form in these novels, there are a few traits which Premchand outgrew in the next phase. The common thread that runs through all his works of the first phase, before the appearance of *Premāśram* or *Gosha-I-Aflat*, betrays Premchand's keen social consciousness. These are "social" novels, and deal primarily with the life of the bourgeoisie middle class residing in towns and constituted by the Babu class, clerks, Government servants, pleaders, police officials, teachers, etc.

This class leads a thoroughly artificial life, maintaining costly establishments which are outside its means and which force it to augment its income by illegal gratification, leading sometimes to fatal consequences, such as the ruin of Kishen Chand's family and the entry of Suman into the prostitutes' quarters, or landing into hopeless situations, as it leads Ramanath in *Ghaban*.

Genteel poverty and frustrations in life had sharpened Premchand's sense of justice. He thoroughly reflected over the

system of social organisation. He believed that the sheet-anchor of a stable and just social order was a happy domestic life, and the bed-rock of a happy domestic life was the position of woman in family life. This attitude, not materially different from the ancient Indian ideal, remained consistent from his first book *Premā* to his last *Godān*. Himself a chaste soul, he hated the very idea of lust. He thought of woman, but never of sex. One of his characters, Suman, a prostitute, remains only a dancing girl and does not sell away her body. She even cooks her own meals!

Premchand takes us through the Dal Mandi of Benares, but we emerge healthier. By contrast with nobler things he always eclipses the darker aspects of the human character. One fails to find a really dark or successful villainous character in Premchand's works. He believed that human nature was fundamentally noble. Most of his woman characters are essentially noble beings. Munni, that wonderful psychological study in *Maidan-E-Amal* or *Karmabbūmi*, is a clue to Premchand's ideal of chastity. His ideal woman must have the virtues of self-sacrifice, self-denial and self-control, a capacity to suffer and to rise to super-human heights. Because of her privileged position as a mother, he always placed woman far above man. The Western ideas of equality, vote and courtship, in his opinion, were nothing but attempts to side-track woman.

Nevertheless, he shed tears of blood at the miserable lot of the Indian woman, and the injustice being done to her, as a result of which there is not a single happy couple in Premchand's works. He cried with Masfield :

*Men triumph over women still,  
Men trample women's rights at will,  
And Man's lust roams the world untamed.*

Premchand cried hoarse against the marriage of young and innocent girls to aged wealthy men, and advocated that widowers should marry none but widows.

The present unjust system, he reflected, could lead women, the victims of this order, only to red light streets, as he has

actually shown in several of his novels. The only solution was the doing away with exploitation which made possible the existence of a very rich and a very poor class. He advocated a thorough shake-up, a vital over-hauling of the social and economic organisation.

We are on the threshold of the second phase of Premchand's career. For never again was Premchand to go back to the towns and cities for any length of time. Real India lives in the villages, in Lakhanpur and Pandepur, and, from now on his novels are centred round the village. The heroes and heroines are the rustic sons and daughters of Nature, or those who helped them. By themselves, these novels constitute the history of the modern Indian village.

The great agency that brought about this change was Gandhiji, who visited, in February 1921, Gorakhpur, in connection with his satyagraha campaign and addressed a meeting of three lakhs of people, an unheard-of thing in the history of Gorakhpur. There was already a halo round his name. His fame had travelled faster. It had a hypnotic influence on the people. Premchand says : "When I saw him, I felt myself as if a dead man had come to life again." Before the third day was out Premchand had submitted his resignation, not many years before retirement with pension ! What his feelings must have been can be guessed from his story *Jail* or *Ābuti*, wherein the hero says : "Some unknown force is dragging me along. I don't want to go, and yet I go, like the man who does not want to die but dies... . When all these people whom we honour are putting everything to stake, there is no way out for me. I can cheat myself no longer... My honour, too, is at stake. And honour knows no compromise." Shortly after he resigned he started a *charkha* shop, which proved a failure and Premchand was forced to seek service elsewhere. His ambition in life was the head-mastership of a non-Governmental school and the editorship of a paper which would espouse the cause of the peasants. In pursuance of these aims, he served in the Marwari High School at

Cawnpore. Differences of principle, however, arose and Premchand resigned, to become the editor of the *Mayada*, which place he changed for the Principalship of the Kashi Vidyapith, whence he resigned, because he felt that his pay of Rs. 125/- a month was proving a heavy burden on the institution.

Sometime before this, he committed the greatest blunder of his life, for which he and India paid dearly. Investing all his savings, as also the money of his friends, he bought and established the Saraswati Press—the name “Goddess of Knowledge” is significant. He had thought that the press would solve his financial worries, and free him to devote his energies to literary pursuits. But contrary proved to be the case. It turned out to be a great liability. There was no job work for the press and, to defray the incurring expenses, he had to sell his works in the open market, to serve as the editor of the *Mādburī* and in the Naval Kishore Press, writing at times primers for children.

To provide work for the press, as also to found a monthly which could bring about the synthesis of Urdu and Hindi and be a medium for the exchange of the best and representative literary works of all Indian languages, he founded the *Hans* in 1930. In passing, we might mention that Premchand was among those very few who did not lose his perspective in the Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani controversy. Really speaking, he had brought the two very near and served to exchange thousands of words between Hindi and Urdu.

Least biased of men, a Hindu by birth, a Muslim by education, Premchand was nothing but a human being by creed. Throughout his life, he worked to bring the conflicting elements in India's national life together.

In 1933 he brought out another weekly, the *Jāgaran*, for he thought that this would serve the cause and also provide work for the press. Of these two papers, the *Hans* and the *Jāgaran*, it must be said that they were landmarks in Hindi journalism. While their literary standard was very high, they were

priced very moderately, so as to be within the reach of the poor.

Premchand's business acumen was almost nil. By 1934 his losses had mounted to the huge figure of Rs. 15,000. To meet this difficulty he had to go to Bombay to serve the film producers, for whom he wrote scenarios. Getting disgusted with the aims and the means that the film producers employed—he refused to compromise on the point of principle—Premchand left them disappointed, and came back to Benares, shattered in health, to die a short time later, in 1936, the year of publication of his last novel *Godān*.

Premchand was a very conscientious worker. Punctual like the clock, he worked unceasingly. His life could vie with an ascetic's. Up to the age of fifty he could not afford to go to Bombay or Delhi, or indeed out of the United Provinces. The only three luxuries that he enjoyed were the *buqqā*, a carefree and child-like laughter and poverty. He wanted to live like the masses, with whom he sympathised.

With the passage of years, particularly after Gandhiji appeared in the political arena, Premchand's consciousness about the economic exploitation of the peasant by various agencies backed by the ruling class became keener and keener. Soft till now, his notes soon became louder and louder, even disturbing and challenging. If social consciousness was the keynote of the first phase, economic and political thoughts were that of the second. His passion for India's political liberation gathered strength day by day. Several of his stories were banned. There is many a story like *Jail* or *Ābuti*, *Lāl Feeta*, *Riyasat Ka Diwan*, *Holi Ka Uphar*, *Dāmūl Ka Qaidi* etc. wherein the satyagraha movement is portrayed in a very realistic and graphic manner. *Holi Kī Chhutti* is a sermon on pacifism by an ex-soldier. The mental conflict that harassed the intelligentsia in the past twenty-five years about the relative advantage of the use of violence and non-violence is reflected in *Qātil*. How young men were drawn into the orbit of revolutionary activities is demonstrated in *Bhne Ko Tattā*.

The second note, which is more important, is the disturbing lot of poverty of the peasants and the pitiable plight of the Harijans. They provide themes for some of the most touching stories by Premchand, as for instance *Pūs Kī Rāt*, *Kafan*, *Najat* or *Sadgati* and *Mandir*.

All the novels by Premchand, which appeared between the years 1921 and 1934, as also his last novel, are agrarian epics. Be it *Premāśram* or *Gosha-I-Afiat*, *Rangabhūmi* or *Changan-E-Hasti*, *Kāyākalpa* or *Parda-I-Majaz*, *Karmabhūmi* or *Maldan-E-Amal*, *Godān*, Premchand's sympathy for the peasant and the underdog, which, between them, constitute the great ocean of humanity, is reflected unmistakably.

The common trait of all these novels — a trait at once bold and unprecedented in Hindustani literature, and a trait exclusively Premchand's own—is that the background of all these novels is the Indian soil, the mother earth of the peasant.

Premchand is not only the master interpreter, but also the mouthpiece of the village population, whose life and aspirations he reveals in a panoramic form, with great psychological insight, an intensely realistic, pictorial skill and great narrative ability—but when he takes up the higher, or middle classes, as material for picture, he miserably fails. Besides passages of caustic wit, there are passages after passages of great emotional vigour and poetic beauty, cleverly interwoven with the rural customs and legends, and interjected with the astonishingly rich and colourful proverbs, idioms and metaphors, drawn mostly from rural life, a life with which Premchand was associated at an early age.

His style is very simple with musical touch about it. At times he is a dialect writer, the dialogue adding to the realism of narration and characterisation.

The passion for Nature also is an important thread. Unlike Hardy's or Meredith's, Nature in Premchand's works does not impede, or accelerate, the development of the characters; it is

always a sympathetic observer. It changes with the changing moods of the peasants.

Premchand was attracted to the Congress only for one reason, and that was because the Congress was the only organisation which supported the cause of the peasants and the down-trodden, besides, being a valiant fighter in the cause of India's freedom, its leader, Gandhiji, being the only one who had, and has, his hand on the pulse of the masses. It was Premchand's sincerest desire that the virtual cell of imprisonment in which the peasant lived must be broken. And success or failure in the achievement of that aim was the yard-stick of progress. He rejected the 1919 Reforms, not because this or that party rejected it, but because it did not materially affect the peasant. The cry of democracy, or dictatorship, of votes etc. were in the opinion of Premchand, all vain; they signified nothing. And so far as the capturing of power by Indians was concerned, Premchand made no secret that he would rather go without it than have merely a change from the "white" to the "black" master. Indeed, he recognised that the pseudo-Nationalist landlords, as the Rai Sahib in *Godān*, or industrialists like John Sewak in *Raṅgabhūmi*, who always keep their legs in both the camps, camouflage their real intention and take no time to change with the winds, like the weathercocks, constituted a real menace to the existence of the peasant.

Before he wrote *Godān* Premchand read extensively on the agricultural experiments in Russia, and it seems that he was enamoured of the collectivisation farming system. But he would not advocate, and was rather averse to, achieving that end by a violent upheaval to overthrow the present unjust system. He preferred the method of gradual evolution. The Gandhian stamp on Premchand's mind was imprinted too deeply. It is the most marked characteristic of this phase.

Another characteristic about these works lies in the fact that they constitute a picture gallery. Their themes advance with the movement of times, whose footsteps can be distinctly heard.

*Premāśram* ( 1922 ) portrays the Indian peasants' struggle against the Westernised and brutish Taluqdar, who is much more crooked and ingenious than his noble-hearted predecessor. The forerunner of the agrarian novels, it presents to us graphically the 1921 No-rent Campaign in the United Provinces.

In 1926 labour strikes loomed large in India and all over the world. Industrialisation threatened the existence of the peasant in a predominantly agricultural country like India. A disciple of Tolstoy and Gandhi, Premchand could not look upon this menace with composure, and it is reflected in that 1,000-page book, *Raṅgabhūmi* ( 1926 ). Its field is wider. For the problems touched upon are many and varied. The Indian society envelops, not only Hindus and Muslims, but also Christians. And this fact was recognised by Hindustani literature for the first time. Congressite reformers make inroads on the Indian States as well. The next novel, *Kāyakaḷpa*, brings back to us the Hindu-Muslim riots and the general political inactivity. As a throw-back, Premchand at this time reflected on the metaphysical theories he had come into contact with in the translations of the *Puranas* that he read at a very early age. In *Karmabhūmi*, Premchand again picks up the thread of satyagraha movements, so far neglected, save for the few contemporary touches about political dacoities in *Ghaban* ( 1930 ). Herein the struggle waged is triangular, for the vindication of the rights of Harijans, of the labourer class and the peasants. Jails, repression and imprisonment crowd the pages of these novels. They constitute the history of the times through which Premchand lived. He is a chronicler, standing to Gandhiji in the same relation as was Maxim Gorki to Lenin.

As a matter of fact, even the heroes and the heroines of Premchand's works are eminent personalities in India's social and political life, of course, clothed in fictitious garb. The author once himself admitted that, while chiselling the character of Sophia for *Raṅgabhūmi*, he had before his mind's eye the illustrious Annie Besant, to whom India owes not a little. Several of the important traits in Premshankar and Surdas may well be

found in Tolstoy and Gandhiji. Many have seen in Amarkant the prototype of Jawaharlal Nehru.

The heroes, be it Premshankar, Surdas, Chakradhar or Amarkant, are all pacifists, believing in Gandhian non-violence, inspired by selfless love and passion for justice, warriors against tyranny, seekers after Truth, always struggling and suffering to arrive at a new integration of moral and spiritual values. As opposed to characters in the first phase, here they fight neither for themselves, nor for particular individuals, but to impart strength, to give self-confidence to the down-trodden, tongue-tied masses. They always love to give battle, if the cause is just, no matter what the sacrifice they are called upon to make.

His characters gradually come by strength and confidence in themselves. Suman cannot proceed without the support of Vithaldas. Sadan Singh loves her, but has not the courage to admit it. Shraddā, in *Premāśram*, is a coward in the beginning. She knows that her husband is in the right. But she is afraid of the all-powerful rod of the society. Fear and conservatism, and not justice and love, triumph. In the end, however, she realises the truth and boldly defies the society. Vinaya, in *Raṅgabhūmi*, is very self-assertive, as also is Sophia. They leave their homes. For Sophia love is the deciding factor ; it is the only law she knows. And love knows no barriers, least of all, of religion. She makes no secret of her love, and is prepared to go to all lengths. Shraddhā is so independent-minded and assertive that Amarkant, her husband, is driven out of the house. Himself he is a very bold and independent soul. Duty is his only law. He goes to villages and organises people for a mass struggle, in which he ultimately succeeds. If one were to find a character as sublime as Mālati, in *Godān*, it would be a vain search. It is as noble as that of Grazia, in Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*.

Premchand's characters are not individuals, but representatives of the classes they spring from. If you know one character well, through him you also know the life, the aspirations, the virtues and failings of that entire class.

Usually, in Premchand's novels there are characters which represent several strata of the society. In *Premasram*, *Raṅgabhūmi*, *Kayākalpa* and *Karmabhūmi*, there are two or more themes running parallel to each other, and touching only at a few points and that too at the surface. The plots of the novels are very loosely constructed. Sometimes, they look more like the collection of two or more novels, carelessly pieced together. There is very little of continuity between two successive chapters. The technique is more like the nineteenth century Continental novels. This defect, however, is not exclusively Premchand's. Take, for instance, the novels of Aldous Huxley, say *After Many a Summer*. The chapters are very loosely pieced together. And if the chapter wherein Mr. Propter enunciates his theories about the Good and Evil and about the possible results of prolongation of life is taken out the main theme is not at all affected, as is also true of that chapter in *Godān*, wherein Prof. Mehta discourses on women's demand for votes and equality, etc. The element of suspense and drama is usually absent from Premchand's novels; the denouement is betrayed very early in the works. Besides, there are too many divagations, improbable happenings and coincidences. Also in the pre-1920 novels of Premchand, too many of the characters die unnatural or violent deaths, sometimes by drowning, and at others by epidemic, suicide, etc. Often these are the results of the inherent qualities in the characters themselves. Their author was a master-hand at the exposition of these characters, but he always landed them in hopeless situations, wherefrom there was no way out, except by violent death. Perhaps Premchand's idealism had some part to play in this phenomenon.

That Premchand was an idealist needs no repetition. He was a writer with a purpose, inspired by lofty aims for literature. His outlook was subjective. He wanted literature to be the criticism of life, and not merely for entertainment, or written on the ideal of "art for art's sake". He gave expression to his views on the place and function of literature in life, its ends and means,

in his presidential address delivered at the First Progressive Writers' Conference, held at Lucknow in April, 1936. That address still remains the only paper in Hindustani on this vital subject; it is a manifesto for the Hindustani and other writers. Therein, Premchand advocated not for Idealist or Realist schools of literature. He showed how a careful blend or fusion of the two was necessary. Both had an important part to play in life; while the one exposed the angularities, the other showed the way to improvement.

We have already seen how in the novels of the second phase the heroes launch satyagraha movements on a mass scale. These movements always succeed; it is the masses, through their leaders, who triumph. This is idealism taken too far, because in actual life a compromise is not a very common thing.

However, we find that in *Karmabhūmi* the gravitation is more and more towards realism. In *Godān*, idealism has almost fully given place to realism. It is a powerful criticism of life. No grimmer picture of the stark realities, and no more ruthless observation of the agonies undergone by the Indian peasant who is not only at the mercy of inclement forces of Nature, but is also being sucked by many agencies, the aristocracy, the bureaucracy and the theocracy having their share, and backed by the armed might of a mighty Empire, exists in Indian literature. If indulgence may be permitted, the book, in spite of its few faults surpasses Pearl Buck's *Good Earth*, in its realistic presentation of the peasant's life. Premchand's art is at its highest water-mark here. There are few coincidences or improbable happenings, no unnatural deaths, few mass movements ending in compromise. The lyric qualities of this book are overwhelming; the language is extremely simple, even poetic. Premchand is no longer an optimist. Herein he is a great pessimist.

*Godān* is the biography of Hori, the tragedy of whose life deepens at every successive stage till Hori is defeated in the battle of life and succumbs to the blows of Fate, in his endeavour to keep his head above the water, out of the clutches of the

moneylender. The novel ends a bit abruptly. Perhaps, Premchand was too moved to complete the novel. Be that as it may, the powerful climax of the epical story grips the attention of the reader.

Hori's life is symbolic of Premchand's own struggles, his own disappointments and frustrations. Like Hori's *Godān*, it proved to be the *Godān* of Premchand as well as was *Kafan*, the last collection of his short stories.

Nevertheless, Premchand's achievements were not a few. If he had created nothing but Hori's character, his place in the history of Indian literature, as also in that of world literature, would have been assured. What, however, gives him a unique place in Hindustani literature is the fact, that it was he who grasped the hand of literature, while it was still wallowing in medievalism, and by his single-handed efforts brought her to the threshold of a new and brilliant world, the world of Mikhel Sholokhov and Raymont. It was a great feat which would normally have taken many generations and many a masterly hand and mind. His life's harvest, surely then, was a rich one, sufficient to place him among the gallery of the best writers of the world.

## THE FOLK-LITERATURE OF GUJERAT.\*

By J. K. MEGHANI

I cannot begin this discourse better than by quoting a comrade from across the seas: "What poetry owes to the bread of sorrow has never been better told than by the Greek folksinger who condenses it into one brief sentence: Songs are the words spoken by those who suffer."<sup>1</sup>

The woman of Gujerat suffered, and she sang out her sorrow almost every night through her circular Garba dance-songs. She sang to sweeten her woe and to embellish her labour. Her poetry saved her from embitterment and from cynicism. She flavoured her grief with the spices of mirth. The tragic in her life was redeemed by the poetic justice in her folksongs. Here is a sample:—

### SONG.

Never wed your girl to the Vadhiar<sup>2</sup> land O father.  
Of Vadhiar land the mother-in-law is a tyrant.  
She sets me to grind by scorching daytime, and she puts me  
to the spinning-wheel at night. Alas! I cannot see  
the thread.

At early dawn she sends me off to the well for water.

While going a-bed at night, she puts the jar-cushion at my  
pillow, the rope at the foot of my bed and the pair  
of pitchers in my own bed room, lest I find excuses.

My rope is short, and cannot reach the water. From dawn  
to dusk I draw and draw in vain.

O birdie! flying birdie! go tell my father this last fare-  
well; tell him his darling daughter drowned herself.

\* Continued from Part I. Vol. IX, *V. B. Quarterly*, May-July, 1943

<sup>1</sup> 'Study of Folksongs' by The Countess Evelyn Martinengo Cesaresco.

<sup>2</sup> A district of Gujerat.

Tell it to father, but tell it not to mother, for my tender-hearted mother will weep her eyes out.

"Nor drown yourself nor take the deadly drug my child. I'll send for you on the eighth day of the bright fortnight."

On the eight day of the bright fortnight I awaited at the well; and lo and behold! there come my *Kaka*,<sup>1</sup> *Mama*,<sup>2</sup> and my brother; each one with a pair of choicest oxen.

"Stand aloof you silly one!" They said; "and let us see to this hated pair of pitchers."

Then my *Kaka* drew from the well, and *Mama* placed the pitchers on my head, we marched through the village to my husband's home, and my brother dashed the pitchers at my *Sasu's*<sup>3</sup> door.

Three choicest pairs of oxen carried me merrily back.

The folksong is seldom a propagandist one, and it hardly ever takes sides. A home-coming like the above is not always that of a persecuted girl; and a married daughter is more often an unwelcome guest not only to the human members of the parental home, but to the animals and the birds under the father's roof. Thrashed by the husband's brother, the lady comes back to her father's home uninvited. The reception is a mixed one:

#### SONG.

From the village-square her father spoke: "Here comes my baby-daughter of old who frolicked on my lap."

Seated on the stool her mother spoke: "There comes my naughty child."

1 Paternal uncle.

2 Maternal uncle.

3 Mother-in-law.

The brother's wife with her boy at her breast chafed:  
"There comes the wretch to pick quarrels with me."

Riding his horse the brother said: "There comes the claimant for garments new."

At the doorstep the dog barked out: "She will cudgel me now as of old."

The cat too purred and said: "Alas, now she will lick away the frying-pan of butter."

The mouse peeped out of the wall-hole and said "The wretch will plaster all my holes."

The dove was wrath at the top of the roof and said "The wretch will all day scare me away with her constant ho! ho! shouts."<sup>1</sup>

Very wide and full of variety is this realm of female garba-poetry. Hardly a phase of folk-life was left untouched and unadorned in these songs. Social sorrow and domestic mirth did not dominate the entire aesthetic life. The voice of valour ever arose out of the depth of a society that had no Penal Code, but a code of honour, no police, no magistracy, but a natural respect for chivalry. In vigorous tunes and virile words women sang the simple tales of men:

#### SONG.

On the balcony of a village-fortress Sonal was playing,  
Sonal the Rajput maid.

From there they kidnapped the charming Sonal.

"Never mind" said Sonal, "for yonder lies my father's town,  
and father will surely ransom me."

The father came out with a white herd<sup>2</sup> as ransom for  
fair Sonal.

1 The cooing of the dove on the house-top is considered ominous in folk-life of Gujerat.

2 A herd of choicest cows.



The Kidnappers scorned the white white herd, and onward  
marched with Sonal.

Never mind, for yonder lies my *Mama's* land, and *Mama*  
sure will ransom me.

Her *Mama* came out with his soot-black herd<sup>1</sup> and prayed  
for Sonal's release.

The robbers onward marched in scorn.  
Never mind, for yonder lies my brother's land and he will  
surely ransom me.

Brother did offer his stud of choicest white ponies.  
But Sonal was not freed.

Lastly they passed by her husband's land, and Sonal felt  
quite sure.

The husband came out with none of these gifts, he came  
with his sword, not caring for his head.

Instantly Sonal was rescued—Sonal, the lovely Rajput bride.

Distinctly typical among these, are the songs of sailors' wives. Their favourite themes are the farewell to the mates and sons, who are sailing away ; the wine that drowns their pangs of parting, the shipwreck, the watery grave, the endless waiting and pining at home and so on. Several of them strike a more poignant note. Of peculiar interest among them are those songs that relate to the seduction of sailors' lonely wives by the white settlers of early days along the coast of Kathiawar. One sweet song is included in the 20-25 sailor-songs collected by me in the year 1932 from the women of Katpar, a fishermen's village in the Gulf of Cambay near the town of Bhavnagar :

SONG.

“For want of bread you sailed for Malbar oh my mate ! and  
I am left to the mercy of my cousins. They harass  
and oppress me.”

1 A herd of choicest buffaloes.

She went to fetch water at the village-gate of Pithalpur, and  
the Topiwala<sup>1</sup> went after her ; Jangla prowled after  
her.

While she drew from the well, the gale blew away her scarf.  
Her limbs were laid bare before the Topiwala's  
lustful eyes.

“O Topiwala and O Jangla ! Let me first take my nuptial  
rounds around the sacred fire, let me first cast obla-  
tions unto the holy wedding-altar. Then I shall  
be wedded to you for ever. Let me go at present.

Alas ! alas ! the gale blew away her scarf, and she lay in the  
Topiwala's bed.

From the women's garba-songs, let us now turn to street-  
singer's ballad-lore. The street-singing mendicants fall into two  
classes : The Bharathari-Nath, or more popularly known as the  
Nath Bawa sect, and the ordinary Veragi group. The Nath Bawa  
sings to the accompaniment of his Ravanhatho<sup>2</sup> and the Veragi's  
instrument is simple Ektara. Ravanhatho has a strangely my-  
thological origin. Ravan the mighty demon-hero of the Ramayana,  
sat chanting his prayer and praise to the God Siva, in order to  
secure the boon of invincible prowess. One day when Ravan  
was almost on the point of propitiating the Deity, singing his  
hymns at the greatest epic heights, the string of his instrument  
snapped. It was a great calamity. The chanting of the hymn  
should not cease. If it ceased a hundred years of his prayer  
would go to naught. Not a moment was to be lost. No time  
was there to go and fetch a new string. The demon therefore  
instantly tore one of his arms, took out the living artery of his  
bleeding limb, and with that the instrument was re-stringed, the  
chanting of the hymn was soon resumed, and no wonder, the  
generous Deity pronounced his wished-for boon.

1 Topiwala and Jangla are the two nicknames for the westerner. Here they stand  
for the Firangi.

2 The hand of Ravana.

The Ravanhatho on which the Nath Bawa plays takes its name from the above episode. Though of a crude construction, it is wonderfully melodious. No bigger than a man's arm ; a half cocoanut-shell at its one end, a slim bamboo-piece fixed to it, and a couple of strings on the bamboo, and on them runs the bow. The bow is furnished with a bunch of tiny jingling brass-bells. The wielder of Ravanhatho goes from door to door and commands rapt attention of women and children. He goes to the hotel door and people flock around him. Remarkable is this personality. He claims to belong to the hoary Yogi cult of Bhartruhari and Gopichand. The ballads of these two royal saints are the Nath Bawa's monopoly. He sings them with a special, almost inimitable gusto of his own. Of Bhartruhari and Gopichand he knows not a bit more than these few ballads, and of the hoary sect from whom he derives his descent, he retains hardly any sign save a bunch of rosaries and a scarlet-hued turban. In spite of his being a mendicant he is a house-holder.

Does he sing of the two saints alone ? No, he is versatile. He picks up anything that is popular, from the lofty to the vulgar. ( At present he has taken to the craze of the cinema-songs ! ) But he was previously renowned for the outlaw-ballads. The province of Kathiawar, was notorious for its border-warfare, its freebooters, its political outlaws, its virile and death-challenging opponents of the new order sought to be established by the Native States with the assistance of the armies of the East India Company. The fearless Nath Bawa roamed over hills and dales chanting the glories of these dare-devil outlaws to the accompaniment of the Ravanhatho.

Remarkable among these outlaw-songs is a group devoted to the Wagher clan of Dwarika. Once the feudal rulers of the whole coastal tract called Okha Mandal of which Dwarika is the capital, these Waghers collected pilgrim-tax, and they claimed supremacy on the sea. Their turbulence and piracy was suppressed by the new power of the Gaekwar assisted by the company

Sarkar. This subjugation grew irksome to the Waghers. They were oppressed. They rose in open revolt, which was crushed, but the entire clan of Waghers, women, babes and cattle, with bag and baggage went into outlawry. In due course the superior forces of the Gaekwar reduced the Waghers to utter desolation, and chance was offered them by Major Barton, the political Chief Officer of the Sarkar, to surrender on alluring terms. This offer, though approved by the elders, was spurned by the young blood who carried on till honourable end on the field of battle. The above episode is put into the following ballad by a Nath Bawa called Nathu-Nath :

## SONG

Surrender not — surrender not your swords O Valiant  
Malubha.<sup>1</sup>

Death cometh once to all.

Surrender not your arms O Comrades mine ;  
I, Devobha,<sup>2</sup> say, surrender not your swords.

If swords and arms be not wielded into a fight like this,  
why wear them as false show !

Surrender not your swords O Comrades mine, we are to  
die but once.

Their first encounter was a Pipardi,<sup>3</sup> where not a soul was  
scratched.

O boys, surrender not your arms.

Their last encounter was at Machharda hills. The Waghers  
sat there entrenched.

The sahibs Hebat and Latur — they dashing rode, they  
sprang down from their horses, and they launched  
their forces on the Wagher foes.

1 The leader of the young Wagher party.

2 Another young Wagher leader.

3 A village.

Surrender not your swords.

A challenge rang from behind the trench : "O Hebat Sahib and O Latur Sahib, behold how manhood strikes."

Forthwith the Wagher lifts his double-barrelled gun to his chest, and misses not his deadly aim.

The Sahibs found their grave on Machharda Hill. The Waghers also fell to the Sahibs — shot.

Bear witness oh my soul, these are the words of poor Nathu-nath : Your names shall ring for ages.

Surrender not your swords.

With one hand twisting his moustache and another on the hilt of his sword, how can Malubha salam to the English ! For the third hand he has none.

"The reports of your wrath for the Sahibs reached the Karachi town ; the hushed up madams asked each other, "Really friend, 'it's true ?"

God Ranchhod<sup>1</sup> wept in his sacred shrine, and the Holy Gomti drew her mourning-veil, when the red red ruby, Mulu Manek<sup>2</sup> rolled in the Barda<sup>3</sup> mountain-dust.

1 The presiding deity of Dwarika. Gomati is the sacred stream.

2 Manek was the clan-name of the Wagher hero Mulu : originally Manek means the ruby gem.

3 The name of the hill where the Wagher hero fell.

## LOCHANA PANDITA'S RAGATARANGINI AND ITS HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE.

By KSHITIMOHAN SEN

THE culture and civilization of a particular nation depend ultimately on its intellectual wealth. While the life and history of a nation are the outward expressions of that wealth, its literature and music constitute an inner and fuller expression of the same.

In our Vedic literature we find numerous references to vocal and instrumental music and the art of dancing as well. Religious observances like the Yajnas in ancient India were usually accompanied by musical performances including dancing which were generally held around the sacrificial altar. Although we do not know all about the music of those times still we can form some idea of that music from the hymns of the Sāma Vedas.

Vedāngas afford us further evidences of the development of music. From the Purānas we learn how Vedic music subsequently came into clash with Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava music. In the Purānas we find a systematic treatment on the science of music. The study of the Rāgas and Rāgiṇīs had advanced considerably even in those early times. In Vedānga as well as in the Purānas we find mention of the sage Nārada.

Neither Jainism nor Buddhism assigned a place of importance to music in the initial stages. But subsequently for the propagation of their faiths they had to take recourse to the help of music. The development of musical literature is largely indebted to the Bhāgavatas. Modern Indian music owes its richness more to the Bhāgavata rather than to the Vedic music. There are numerous references to Bhāgavata music in the Purānas.

Barring Nārada, we find special mention of three sages who made valuable contributions to our musical literature in the Post-Purānic days. They are still regarded as authorities in the field of music. They are Dattila, Bharata and Mataṅga. It was

during this period that two distinct schools of music rose up namely the classical and the popular. It is interesting to note that what passes for popular music in one age develops into the classical in the next. It then assumes an air of aristocracy and blocks the way for the popular music which has cropped up in the meantime. It is not my purpose here to discuss the music of those ages.

Next came the age of Sārṅgadeva, the author of Sangīta-ratnākara and other musical authorities. Although Sārṅgadeva belonged to Kashmere he was a protégé of Siṅghaṇa, king of Devagiri in South India. Siṅghaṇa reigned from 1210 to 1247. It is evident, therefore, that Saṅgīta-ratnākara must have been written round about this time.

A stone inscription of the 7th century which has been discovered in South India gives us a peep into the musical lore of that age. The inscription has been discovered at a place called Kundumia Mālaya within the state of Puddukotāh in Madras Presidency. Centuries intervene between this inscription of the 7th century and Saṅgīta-ratnākara of the 13th century. Many things happened in India in between these two centuries. One would naturally ask if there were no other musical authorities born during this intervening period or since the Purāṇas were written.

Jayadeva, the famous author of Gīta Govinda flourished during the time of King Lakshmaṇa Sena of Bengal. Lakshmaṇa Sena ascended the throne of Bengal in the year 1178. ( Pandit Chintāharan Chakravarty, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. III pp. 186 ) Gīta Govinda still stands as the best collection of songs in Sanskrit literature. Gīta Govinda affords us a comprehensive study in the Rāgas and Rāgiṇis and times ( তাল ). It appears, therefore, that music had reached a high stage of development in Bengal at that time. Gīta Govinda was written before Sārṅgadeva's book. It would not be unnatural to suppose, therefore, that prominent musical authorities must have flourished in Bengal during the period of Gīta Govinda. I was for a long time

searching for these missing musical masters. I was not far wrong in my supposition. We have recently come upon that authority in music. His name is Lochana Pandita and his work is named Rāga-Taraṅgini. This book was brought out in print in Poona in the year 1918. It was published by Pandit Dattātreyā Keshab Joshi. There is no mention of this book in the list given by S. J. Mangesā Telanga of extant Sanskrit works on Indian music either in printed or manuscript form in the appendix of his book Saṅgīta Makaranda published in 1920, although the book in question was published two years earlier by a Pundit belonging to their own group. The real reason was that the book failed to attract sufficient attention. The original manuscript of this book was found in Allahabad. Pundit Srikrishna Joshi made out a copy and sent it to Poona for publication.

They, however, failed to find out which province Lochana Pandita belonged to and also the period in which he lived and wrote. This book gives Vidyāpati's songs as specimens of popular song. Vidyāpati was the court poet of Śiva Sinhha ( 1399 ), King of Mithila. Besides that, in Rāga Taraṅgini we find mention of the Ragas like Iman ( pp. 5, 7, 10 ), Firodasta ( p. 9 ) etc. These Rāgas came to be known for the first time during the time of Amir Khusru. Khusru was a courtier of Sultan Alauddin ( 1295-1316 ). These facts led some people to believe that Lochana Pandita must have flourished in the 14th century. But the Puṣpika Sloka ( colophon ) would conclusively prove that the book dates back to a much earlier period.

Sārṅgadeva's Saṅgīta-ratnākara is a work of such importance that all later writers on music have invariably mentioned it in their books. Lochana makes no mention of Sārṅgadeva's name as one of the pioneers nor does Sārṅgadeva make any mention of Lochana. Of course Lochana's work was not important enough to attract general attention. Besides it was written at a remote part of the country and not very long ago either.

Even the date of Sārṅgadeva's Saṅgīta-ratnākara would give rise to a controversy since there is mention of Moslem Rāgas in

that book. It has already been mentioned that Śārṅgadeva flourished during the reign of the Yādava King Siṅghaṇa (1210-1247). It is evident, therefore, that his book could not have been written later than 1247. Curiously enough in the second chapter of Saṅgīta-ratnākara we find mention of Rāgas like Turaṣka Toḍi and Turaṣka Gauḍa. If these Rāgas had originated with Amir Khusru then the book must have been written some time between or after 1295-1316. How then are we to solve this problem ?

The real fact, however, is that a living science in constant use has to incorporate into its body all later necessary interpolations. Hence we find in many early works of medical science mention of diseases of later origin and also the process of their treatment. Music undoubtedly is a living and current science. It is not improbable, therefore, that songs and Rāgas of later origin might have been included at a subsequent date in the manuscript in order to make the book complete.

Lochana Pandita also classifies music into two classes viz. classical and popular. This goes to prove that these two distinct kinds of music existed in his time too.

मार्गदेशीविभेदेन गीतं तु द्विविधं मतम् ॥ ( p. 2 )

This statement was followed by specimen Maithila songs which S. J. Dattatreya Keshava Joshi has left out in the printed version of the Sanskrit book. He has published only the original Sanskrit portion.

Mention of some Moslem Rāgas or Rāgiṇis is to be found both in Lochana Pandita's Rāga-taraṅgiṇī and Śārṅgadeva's Saṅgīta-ratnākara. Now we must either admit that the book was written at a later date or these were later interpolations. A third alternative would be that these Moslem Rāgas and Rāgiṇis might have found their way into India before even the advent of the Moslems into those particular provinces. If in spite of the mention of Moslem rāgas we accept the date of Śārṅgadeva's Saṅgīta-ratnākara with reference to his patron mentioned above then we must naturally fix up Lochana's time with reference to

his patron king. I shall deal later on with the period of Lochana's patron as also the province to which he belonged.

Lochana had written several other books which have not yet been traced. There is a reference even in this book to another work of the name of "Rāga-saṅgīta-saṅgraha" written by him.

एतेषां प्रपञ्चस्तु मत्कृतरागसंगीतसंप्रदेशेऽन्वेष्टव्यः ॥ ( p. 2 )

I have not yet been able to trace this book. A large number of books on music was already in existence during the time of Lochana (p. 8). The chapter on स्वरसंज्ञा-संस्थानसंज्ञा is an exhaustive study of the subject which is of considerable interest to specialists in music. ( p. 2, 3 ).

During the time of Lochana the controversy regarding the particular hours of the day assigned for particular rāgas was already afoot. Hence in dealing with the orthodox idea he has given the timing from Tumburu Nāṭaka (p. 12). he has also mentioned the popular view current in his time (p. 13). There was such a wide gulf between these two view-points that even to Lochana they appeared to be irreconcilable.

Although Tumburu Nāṭaka is an old work its views are liberal enough. Possibly that is why Lochana has enthusiastically quoted its views. In Tumburu Nāṭaka we find that a language takes up numerous forms according to slight dialectical changes. Likewise the rāgas too, reveal protean forms with slight changes effected in course of time. One could hardly give an exhaustive list of rāgas.

देशभाषाविभेदाश्च रागसंख्या न विद्यते ।

न रागाणां न तालानामंतः कुत्रापि दृश्यते ॥ ( p. 13. )

Tumburu Nāṭaka appears to have been produced in the eastern provinces ; because there is mention in it of the festival of Durgā Pūjā. There is mention also of invocation songs to be sung in the morning during the fortnight preceding the festival.

इदृस्थानं समारभ्य यावद्दुर्गामहोत्सवम् ॥ ( p. 12. )

In the province of Gauḍa or Bengal the rigours of the Śāstras were not rigid enough. Hence academic scholars who clung strictly to the Śāstras could never tolerate the liberal attitude of this province. Tumburu Nāṭaka, too, fixes up the timing of different rāgas not according to śāstric injunction but according to the suitability of notes and tunes.

यथा काले समारब्धं गीतं भवति रंजकम् ॥ ( p.13. )

Of course on festive occasions songs for morning, evening or night have to be selected in conformity with the occasion. At court functions, too, it may depend mostly on the royal wish. Hence festivities and royal courts are exceptional cases where ordinary canons of timing cannot hold good.

रंगभूमौ नृपाज्ञायां कालदोषो न विद्यते ॥ ( p. 13. )

Lochana's book includes a discussion on "Janaka" (original) and "Janya" (derivative) rāgas. It would appear as if he is referring to South Indian views. But Dravidian culture is inseparably mixed up with that of Bengal. The Sena Kings of Bengal originally hailed from the Carnatic and Lochana was a protégé of the Sena Kings. Hence there is nothing unusual in finding South Indian views in his book. The Kīrtana Tālas of Bengal do not conform to those of Northern India.

Pundita Bhimrao Śāstri formerly Professor of Music at Santiniketan collected the notations of Jayadeva's songs from those families where it had been carefully preserved. On examining these Ācharya Bhatakhaṇḍe exclaimed, "How is that? These musical Tālas belong to Mālābāra".

A great master of music and dancing Jayadeva was rightly called, "Padmāvati-Chraṇa-Chāraṇa-Chakravartī." We find mention of the following rāgas in Gīta Govinda : Gurjarī, Vasanta, Mālavagaḍa, Devi-Barāḍi, Karnāṭa, Deśākha, Bhairavī, Rāma kitī, Barāḍi, Goṇḍa-kirī, Mālava, Deśa-Barāḍi and Vibhāsa etc. Tālas like Daśakuśī, Lofā etc. which were in vogue during

the time of Sri Chaitanya are not found in Gīta-Govinda. On the other hand Tālas like निःसर etc. found in Gīta Govinda are not in use in later ages. Tālas like Nihāsāra, Yati, Ekatāla, Rūpaka, Ekatāli, Astatāla are generally associated with Gītagovinda's music.

Books like Nārāyana tīrtha's 'Krishṇalilā taraṅgiṇī, Rāmdāsa Swāmi's Bhadrāchalīya Kīrtana, Bhakta Purandara Bithala's "Dever Nāmas" follow in the footsteps of Gītagovinda. But Jayadeva still remains the undisputed master in the field of Sanskrit Kīrtanas. Sri Chaitanya owes not a little to the Kīrtana songs of Jayadeva, Vidyāpati and Chandidās. These three persons are the main stays of the Vaishnavas in Bengal. The renown enjoyed by Jayadeva throughout India is really Bengal's pride. Jayadeva was the contemporary of Lakshmaṇa Sena, the King of Bengal. In the introduction of Gīta Govinda, Jayadeva had mentioned the names of Umāpati Dhara, Saraṇa, Āchārya Govardhana, Kavirāja Dhoyi, ( Śloka 4 ) as his contemporary luminaries. Lochana flourished during the reign of Lakshmaṇa Sen's father.

I am not aware of other famous Masters of music born in Bengal but Mangeśa Telanga had mentioned a book Nāda Dīpikā by Bhattacharya in the appendix of his work 'Sangītamakaranda.'

It is only because Lochana was a native of Bengal that he quoted with so much care the 'Āgamanī' tunes sung in Devi Paksha or the fortnight during which the Durgā Pūjā festival is held.

*Translated from the original Bengali by Hirendranath Dutta  
and Chandikaprasad Banerjee.*

## WALL-PAINTING IN ANCIENT CHINA

By Jibendra Kumar Guha

It is evident from the chronicles of the two Handynasties that the Imperial Palaces or the public buildings in China during the Han period were decorated with wall-paintings. Mons. Oswald Siren in his "History of Early Chinese Painting" ( pp. i-ii ) has ransacked the evidence of these 'Chronicles' and informs us that the "motives of the wall-paintings were of an allegorical or moralizing tenor, and they were executed for the edification of the rulers and their subjects or as records of important events and ancient personalities. Pictures of a similar kind may also have been executed in the tombs of important peoples which were arranged as dwellings for the terrestrial soul of the departed."

"The wall-paintings in the palaces of the earliest Han emperors as well as those executed for their predecessor Ch'in Shih Hung Ti, represented mainly mythological motives and similar subjects were also painted in the Ling-Kuang palace of Prince Linyu Shantung ( c. 154-129 B. C. )." ( Siren )

All these monumental evidences of wall-painting in ancient China have been destroyed or have been otherwise lost. "These have become known through versified description of the Poet Wang-yen-shou who mentioned Heaven and Earth, strange spirits of the Sea, gods of the hills, the five dragons with joined wings ..... etc., a highly fantastic picture chronicle based on the ancient mythological or quasi-historical traditions of the country."

The general arrangement of and the manner in which such motives were treated are also known to us through some of the reliefs which decorated the mortuary chambers of the Wu family at Chiahsiang in Shantūng.

"The later emperors of the Western Han dynasty ( c 207 B.C.-20 A.D. ) seem to have preferred portraits of demons, men, generals and historical characters such as Chao-chung-Kuo, Confucious and his several disciples, and this urge for historical

pictures increased in vogue during the reign of the Eastern Han dynasty ( c 25 A. D. -221 A. D. ) in Lo-yang. But they also had a moral importance and it is specially found of Emporer Shun Ti's ( 126-144 A. D. ) consort that she had pictures of dutiful wives arranged on either side of her room. Under the art loving Ming-Ti a large composition relating to the first introduction of Buddhism in China was executed in the White Horse Temple and under one of his later successors Ling-Ti ( 168-188 A. D. ) portraits of Confucius and his disciples were again executed in a hall at Loyang." ( Siren )

I have quoted extensively from Mons. O. Siren's "Early Chinese Painting" ( Vol. I ) only to convince the reader of the prevalence and importance of wall-painting in the cultural life of China during the two Han dynasties ( c 207 B. C. -221 A. D. ).

This period corresponds roughly with the reigns of the Maurya, Suṅga and Kusan emperors in Northern India and the Sātavāhana rulers in Deccan. It is also interesting to observe that under the emperors of Northern India, our country saw a great revival of her artistic traditions specially in sculpture and architecture. Of the condition of wall-painting in Northern India during this period, we know practically nothing. The earliest wall-paintings now extant in India are found in caves IX and X at Ajanta done probably under the Sātavāhanas. These are dated at c 100 B. C. ( the same as the Stupa at Sāñcī ). The treatment of these wall-paintings bespeaks of an established art—an art which had long ago forsaken its experimental stage. Under the circumstances I may not be wrong when I assume that wall-painting was known in Northern India during this period ; other evidences are also forthcoming.

The most important data for the history and chronological sequence of wall-paintings in Northern India are furnished by the finds of the Greco-Buddhist ( ? ) wall-paintings by the members of the French Archaeological Mission led by Messrs. Hackin, Goddard and other eminent archaeologists in Afghanistan. The archaeological explorations which they carried out at

Bamizan, and other Afgan sites have unearthed many reliable evidences about the prevalence of wall-painting in the then North-Western India ( Gāndhārā ). These paintings may be chronologically placed in some of the first six centuries of Christian era ( cf. Hiuen—Tsang's account ). The multi-coloured specimens of some of these wall-paintings are reproduced in the report published by this Mission ( vide coloured plates in *Memoires de la delegation Francaise en Afghanistan, Tome II* ). These wall-paintings help us to some extent in forming a faint idea about the condition and prevalence of wall-paintings in Northern India about the beginning of the Christian era. Aesthetically judged from these polychrome reproductions, these paintings in Afghanistan are very weak so far as the drawing of the figures, and the colour-scheme go. In other words, these paintings seem to be passing through an experimental stage. Here lies perhaps the main difference between the early South Indian and North Indian paintings. The former was an established art and had finished with experimentation but the latter was only passing through the experimental stage. So it appears that the tradition of wall-painting developed earlier in South India than in the North. But in the absence of any more solid evidence these are mere inferences and the absence of any early wall-paintings in Northern India still remains one of the major problems for the student of the history of wall-paintings in India.

Here a question may be raised. Why have the wall-paintings in China been completely destroyed? So far as I can guess, the reason is either

- (1) The surfaces of these wall-paintings were less permanently executed than those of Egypt or Southern India and so in course of two-thousand years they were gradually destroyed; or
- (2) The frequency of barbarian invasions.

These two factors perhaps contributed to the disappearance of wall-paintings in Northern India also.

Another interesting comparison between wall-paintings of China and India may be made. So far as we can gather from

the Han 'Chronicles' the subject matter of wall-paintings in China was mostly of the following three types, viz ;

- (a) Mythological,
- (b) Secular,
- or (c) Religious i. e. connected with Confucius.

It is only during the latter Hans that Buddhism entered China and we have Buddhistic subjects from the 2nd century A. D. onwards. But the subject-matter of the wall-paintings in caves IX and X at Ajanta (2nd. century B. C. 4) are without exception Buddhistic though not monotonous.

I wish here to remark in passing that Mons. O. Siren's theory that in the absence of wall-painting in China of the Han period, five brickslabs of this period, decorated on both faces with paintings on a white surface, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston could be taken as specimens of the style of ancient Chinese wall-paintings, seems to be misleading. My objection to this is based on the ground that the smallness of the area of the surface of the stone or brick slabs would surely restrict the freedom of artists who would surely be at home on larger surfaces. These slab-decorations were more or less miniature paintings but not wall-paintings in the proper sense of the term.

"From the scanty remains of literary records that are known to us, it may be concluded that Chinese painting passed through a rather important evolution during the four centuries (i. e. from the 3rd. cent. B. C. to the 3rd. cent. A. D.) of the two Han dynasties. At the beginning of this era pictorial art seems to have been mostly in the nature of large wall-paintings in the Imperial palaces, ancestral halls and similar other buildings and the purpose of it was more of a didactic than decorative kind. The step from such pictures to the representation of ceremonial meals and the like or other important events from the life of the departed ( e. g. in the Hall of Chu-wei ) may not have seemed very long. Yet it must have become an inducement for the painters to a closer observation of actual life and character, and a freer development of their power of



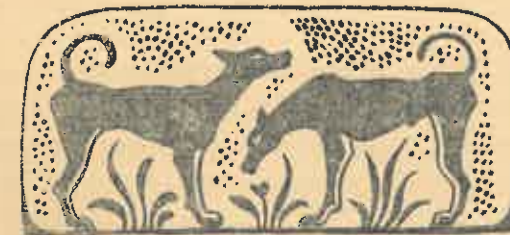
representation. And once this new road was found, it led to a rapid progress particularly in the direction of characterisation and the representation of space, plastic form and movement." ( Siren ).

An interesting question may now be raised. Why did the Chinese who achieved a fairly high standard in the art of painting walls, stop all on a sudden from exhibiting their skill in this particular branch of art ? We can only guess an answer. Even during the Han period when the art of wall-painting was at its pinnacle in China, a section of the public openly denounced it and instead began praising lavishly scroll-works and paintings on bamboo-tablets. The philosopher Wang-Chung (1st. cent. A.D.) most probably voiced this section of public opinion when he said, "When one looks at paintings of ancient people, one sees only the faces of the dead men, but one does not perceive their movements ; it is far better to read about their doctrines as written on bamboo tablets, and silk scrolls than to look at their pictures on walls." ( trans. Siren ). It is probable that in centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, a section of the Chinese people preferred portable paintings for their value as missionary propaganda. We should also bear in mind that Buddhism entered China sometime about this period following in the wake of Asoke's preachers whom the Emperor had sent to all parts of the then known globe. It follows that in time, this lamentation of the philosopher Wang Chung attracted sympathisers and the art of wall-painting in post-Han China came to be neglected by its adherents and has since been completely lost.

It is a great misfortune for art-lovers that the Chinese who were so skilful in the art of wall-painting gave it up on account of religious propaganda. At this point a contrast with India's pictorial tradition becomes evident. Almost all the great religions which have their origin in India e. g. Buddhism ( Ajanta ), Brahmanical Hinduism ( Ellora, Badami ) Jainism ( Sittannavasal ) sought to carry on their missionary

propaganda through the vehicle of wall-painting. In those days when cinematographic art was unknown, large scale wall-paintings perhaps were best suited to attract the masses. I am not, of course, dogmatizing on the point of wall-paintings as being the sole medium for this purpose ; there were miniature paintings, scroll-paintings, and theatres etc. also, but the artists of India unlike their Chinese brethren did not forsake the monumental art of wall-painting for other portable media.

As a result, we lose sight of Chinese painting for about a millennium ( from the Hans to the Sung ) ; though mingled with Indian art traditions they appear occasionally in China's borders ( not in China proper ) e. g. in the caves of 1000 Buddhas at Tun Huang in Chinese Turkestan and in the Horiyuji temple in Nara, Japan. Chinese scroll and banner paintings appear full fledged from the Sung dynasty downwards.



## REVIEWS

*RABINDRANATH THROUGH WESTERN EYES :*  
By Dr. A. ARONSON, M. A., ( Cantab ) WITH A  
PREFACE BY DR. AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY,  
( KITABISTAN, ALLAHABAD. )

Demy 16 : I-XV + 158 pages. Price Rs. 4-8-0 only.

Those who find a fundamental and absolutely irreconcilable difference between Western and Eastern culture are likely to consider Rabindranath's eminence in the West as a phenomenon that demands a special explanation. They would naturally attribute the Western reputation of an Indian poet to something more than the greatness of the poet himself. They would seek for the secret of this appreciation in the greatness or strangeness of the culture which the poet represents. Some Europeans, we know, have found in Rabindranath's reputation in the West a remarkable instance of a crazy passion for the strange and the exotic. Some Indians would, perhaps, suggest that a European's appreciation of his poetry involves a rejection, conscious or unconscious, of the Western culture ; to them it seems that to enjoy the verses of *Gitanjali* is to embrace a philosophy that is alien to the European mind. An earnest enquirer into these questions will have to discuss the nature of the dichotomy that may exist between the Eastern and the Western mind, and define the relation between aesthetic appreciation and cultural affiliations ; he will have to see, whether or no, poetry has a frontier. "The Common Reader, who dwells within each one of us" will, however, assume that the appeal of all great poetry is universal ; that a Christian's appreciation of Sophocles does not and necessarily imply any reversion to paganism ; that a Hindu does not become an Israelite when he delights in the Book of Psalms. All great poetry has a spiritual content, an appreciable substratum of philosophy which voices the aspirations of universal humanity. An Indian need not find in the poetry of Wordsworth anything that is exotic, anything that he may not easily appreciate for his not being an Englishman or a Christian. Similarly, an Englishman is not debarred from appreciating the poetry of Rabindranath by the fact of his not being an Indian and a Hindu. But a critic will have, nevertheless, to consider the relation of Rabindranath's poetry to the culture from which it has sprung and evaluate its significance to the West. Dr. Aronson has not, however, raised these issues in his book. He has strayed into other fields and has gathered his harvest from newspapers and periodicals. He has attempted, to quote his own words, "a study in values." And what are these "values"

according to Dr. Aronson ? They are "the response of people to a poet beyond all the standards of literary criticism and aesthetic." We are frankly unable to appreciate this conception of a people's evaluation of a poet. Nor do we appreciate his relying mainly on "cuttings from newspapers, periodicals and magazines" as "a test of the critical intelligence of the West" with regard to an Indian poet. Dr. Aronson's book would suggest that the reputation of Rabindranath in the Western countries has no basis in any sound literary taste, and that much of it is due to a craze for oriental mysticism. We demur. It has never occurred to us that the appreciation which Rabindranath has received from Europe and America may not be genuine. We have no doubt come upon some carping criticisms of the Poet in a section of the European and American Press, but they have never led us to question the genuineness of the appreciation of the Poet by the West ; nor has it appeared to us that Rabindranath's "sudden leap to fame in Europe was the most severe test of sensibility that the West had to pass through during the last twenty years."

The main thesis of Dr. Aronson, as we have understood it, is this :—

"Political considerations are so intricately bound up with Rabindranath's rise to fame in the West that it is sometimes difficult to separate even the most genuine literary appreciation ( or depreciation ) of his work from international politics, colonial policy, or the way the Indian market was captured by England or Germany, America or Japan. The literary critic who deals with Rabindranath's rise to fame in the West finds himself all the time in an altogether disconcerting position ; for he will have to refer almost all the statements made on Rabindranath in Europe to the then existing national rivalries ( and they changed a good deal during these thirty years ) to problems of colonial policy, and to the Stock Exchange" ( Chapter 1, page 5 ).

Now, this appears to be a rather curious contention. Who could ever believe that the West's appraisal of the Poet has been affected by international political rivalries ? And Dr. Aronson has not substantiated his thesis either. He has not given us any statistical returns to show that the appreciation of Rabindranath had reached the highest point in America or Japan when these countries had attained a favourable balance of trade with India. He has only served us with an amazing and an otherwise entertaining anthology of fatuous gossips and speculations in which some journals and individuals indulged when the poetry and message of Rabindranath were fast gaining ground in the West.

Dr. Aronson, as already pointed out, has placed too great a reliance on Press comments and Press criticisms. These, as he has used them, will

hardly be considered as the authentic verdict of the Western world on Tagore. The journalist has been described as "a gentleman in hurry"; and no hurried estimate of the Press — unilluminated by literary tastes, often prejudiced by racial bias, not unoften ignorant and nearly almost vitiated by the very essence of its ephemeral character — can be accepted as the reaction of the better minds of Europe or America to Rabindranath's literary creations or his message as revealed in his many public utterances in the West. Dr. Aronson has quoted a number of extracts from the English Press which are frankly contemptuous. We cannot, of course, expect every Englishman to be free from prejudice in his attitude towards an Indian poet. And we should not be surprised when a Church journal considers the eminence of Rabindranath as the fulfilment of British missionary efforts in India. No sound critic would take any serious notice of such prejudiced views. For these do not raise any significant literary issue. They may be interesting as examples of how religious bigotry and racial arrogance can vitiate an European's attitude towards a poet of Asia. It is strange that Dr. Aronson should choose some of these views in support of his thesis on the Western estimate of Rabindranath. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, who had travelled extensively with the Poet in the West, has not failed to point this out in his preface to the book under review. He says: "The author's selection of material has not always convinced me — this personal reference will be excused — on the basis of my experience of tours with the Poet: I could have selected other scripts and impressions to set up a different hypothesis." So could we. He has not for once, strangely enough, referred to "The Golden Book of Tagore" in which some of the finest minds of the Western world have paid their tributes to the Poet. It has not even found a place in his otherwise excellent Tagore Bibliography forming Appendix A of his book. He has quoted a casual and apparently disparaging reference to Rabindranath in Raleigh's essay on Dryden, but he has not referred, for instance, to Edmund Blunden's memoir of Wilfred Owen, which describes the soldier-poet as quoting the lines of *Gitanjali* in farewell to his mother. He has not chosen to tell his readers how Comtesse de Noailles and Clemenceau instinctively turned to *Gitanjali* when the news of the declaration of war by Germany in 1914 was brought to them. He has honoured many literary hacks with copious extracts from their effusions but he has not chosen to remember J. A. Spender, who said: "As an Englishman I like to remember that Rabindranath is within our fold. We too take pride in him. We have need of him."

But this is not all. Dr. Aronson has brought to bear upon his study statements or observations which have no substance in fact. He speaks of

"a poet's name being used in the warfare of political gangsters and upstarts", "the hysterical acclamations of frustrated millions", but nowhere does he elucidate his assertions, or substantiate his statements. Speaking of the award of the Nobel Prize to the Poet in 1913 he writes: "People tried to explain the award by the fact that this was an otherwise uneventful year and that the reading public was ready to welcome any kind of exotic literary adventure." Dr. Aronson has not told us though who these "people" were. He has lumped them up into the vague appellation — "The man in the street." The poor "man in the street" has always been a scapegoat with us journalists. But Dr. Aronson, we thought, was a scholar. Dr. Aronson says that "there is certainly some truth in the assertion that the intelligentsia, not only in England, but all over Europe, were open to any kind of Eastern influence at that time." We wish Dr. Aronson could elucidate this point further.

Dr. Aronson's observations on the German appreciation of Rabindranath do not bear scrutiny. "We must understand", he says, "that his sensational fame in that country was part of an evolution, of a tendency towards the irrational and the pseudo-mystic that started long before 1921 and reached its crisis in the disaster of democratic failure in 1932". Dr. Aronson is almost furiously impatient with the German admiration for Rabindranath. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty in his preface pointedly observes that "Dr. Aronson has, in my opinion, been unfair to pre-1930 Germany and used involved political and racial logic to *explain away* genuine popular enthusiasm for Tagore." (The italics are ours). Dr. Aronson is, we think, particularly unfair to Count Keyserling in whose admiration for Rabindranath we have failed to discover anything that may arouse any suspicion either about its depth or its sincerity.

Dr. Aronson says that there were "political machinations" behind the great reception Rabindranath had in Germany in 1921. He maintains that "there were deliberate attempts to make use of Rabindranath whenever the occasion demanded it and wherever Fascist propaganda thought it fit to introduce his name." The lines which immediately follow these words—"that is how the mind of a people is poisoned and that is how anti-human forces spread their dominion until the whole of a continent is engulfed by the crude psychological method of infantile Fascist regression"—may be a spirited and welcome condemnation of Fascism; but has it any direct bearing on Rabindranath's literary reputation in Europe? Is there anything to show that Rabindranath's reception in Germany was mainly or even partly motivated by political factors? Dr. Aronson suggests that Rabindranath unconsciously acted as a tool in the hands of crafty politicians who

exploited his name in Germany for their political ends ; he says, "unaware of the political machinations behind the stage, Rabindranath was genuinely moved by all the friendship and honour bestowed upon him in Germany ;" he has not, however, adduced a single fact to prove his allegation. One would, perhaps, credit the compatriots of Goethe and Heine with some literary taste to enable them to appreciate the poetry of Rabindranath. The only evidence which Dr. Aronson places before us for proving his case—is the startling and scandalising fact that the songs with which the Poet was greeted at Keyserling's School of Wisdom at Darmstadt were *rehearsed* before they were sung ! Did Rabindranath know, asks Dr. Aronson in righteous indignation, "that most of these songs were of a narrow nationalistic kind, that the rather nauseating sentimentality of the summer morning on the mountain at Darmstadt, was not in the least spontaneous but was very well rehearsed beforehand, specially the singing of the German National Anthem ?" Only a deeply prejudiced mind can have recourse to such fatuities.

Dr. Aronson has quoted scribes who find nothing in Rabindranath's poetry for which the Poet is not directly indebted to "The English Raj" and Christianity ; who insinuate that it was the intervention of an anti-British Swedish Prince which secured him the Nobel Prize ; who believe that Rabindranath was a Jew ( whose real name was Rabbi Nathan and that he married a rich Jewess, the daughter of a bamboo-seller ) ; and who describe him as a "literary imposter." And if Dr. Aronson has set himself the task of exposing the absurdity and silliness of these statements, which would be something far less than what the title of his book indicates, he should not have seen in Rabindranath's reputation in the West almost only "ignorance", "contempt" and "lack of humility". All the same, he has left uncontradicted many a canard potentially mischievous that he has honoured with a place in his study.

Dr. Aronson, we hope, will pardon us if we confess to our disappointment with his book. We are afraid that his work will do more harm than good. It will create misconceptions and misunderstandings that his partially redeeming chapter on "The Test of Sensibility" will hardly succeed in removing. And even then the way in which he explains the reaction of Yeats and Ezra Pound\* to Tagore leaves us puzzled. We are told that their appreciation of Rabindranath's poetry "meant an intense critical effort", and that "their sensibility had to undergo certain changes first,

\* Writes W. Rothenstein in his *Men And Memories* ( 1900-1922 ) :—"The young poets came to sit at Tagore's feet—Ezra Pound the most assiduously." This refers to Rabindranath's *Gitanjali*-visit to Europe on 1912.

before they could reach that intellectual detachment which alone would enable them beyond the 'reality' of appearances, beyond even 'the real Eastern note' into the very essence of Rabindranath's poetry". Dr. Aronson does not, of course, tell us why this should be so. He takes for granted the existence of an altogether separate Eastern and Western sensibility, though nowhere he offers a definition of or differentiation between the two. Ezra Pound's appreciation of Tagore's poetry as revealed in his article in the *Fortnightly Review* ( reproduced in the Tagore 80th Birthday Number of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* ), should, we think, be looked upon as one of the soundest literary approaches to Rabindranath's poetry by an English man of letters. There is no 'effort' in it, no testing of sensibility, no straining for reaching intellectual detachment, that an unprejudiced mind could see. But we forget that Dr. Aronson is out to prove his thesis.

Dr. Aronson has been praised as having "written with eloquence" (p. viii). We wish there was a little less eloquence and a little more freedom from bias and preconceived notions. He himself admits that he has "chosen only a few relevant quotations out of the large material that was at our disposal" ( page 117, the italics are ours ). He has "deliberately left out the comment made by Sanskrit scholars or Indologists" for, as he says, "theirs is an exclusive esoteric attitude." And among them, strangely enough, he has included Edward Thompson—the English biographer of the Poet. Dr. Thompson would, we believe, be the first to protest against his being dubbed an "Indologist" and described as a "Sanskrit scholar." But the omission to take note of Edward Thompson's fine estimate of Rabindranath *as a poet* is strange to account for. So is the omission of any reference to Prof. Lesny's study of Tagore. They have been excluded by Dr. Aronson as they were, according to him, "preoccupied with a purely academic interpretation of Rabindranath's work" ! Dr. Aronson is, of course, differently preoccupied,—with the self-imposed task of "elucidating the causes that led to the rapid decline of Rabindranath's fame in the West," of course, against the background of "the insane enthusiasm of a whole people driven to hysterical acclamation" and the "subtle and cunning methods of political gangsters and upstarts." The *thesis* is always there ! But we must thank Dr. Aronson for his peroration though it is hardly relevant in the context of his production and is certainly not borne out by what has gone before. He speaks of "the great ones in this declining civilisation, those who still carry their head erect and are not prepared to bow down to the evil forces in man bowing down to Rabindranath ; artists and scholars, scientists and politicians shaking hands with him across

oceans and continents, across the man-made frontiers that still separate them, across century which is always one and indivisible." But nowhere we have met them in Dr. Aronson's pages. Of the hundreds of letters from them to Rabindranath preserved in his son's collection at Santiniketan he has quoted only two. We have no reasons to believe that the rest were inaccessible to Dr. Aronson.

AMAL HOME

*THE ĀGAMAŚĀSTRA OF GAUḌAPĀDA* : Edited with  
English Translation and Annotation by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit  
Vidhushekara Bhattacharya, Asutosh Professor of Sanskrit of the  
University of Calcutta, and included in the publications of the  
University.

It is a delightful surprise to find that such a learned work of inestimable value has been presented in print, under the difficult situation of the day affecting publications, to the Oriental scholars interested in critical studies of Indian Thought and Religion. The Editor himself has given in his own Preface a brief account of the circumstances which weighed with him to bring out the volume and the previous preparations he had been making continuously for years to the purpose. The contents of the work cover various matters connected with the main treatise of which the lengthy Introduction is most valuable. It gives ample evidence of the scholarly earnestness and a sound critical spirit which runs throughout this Introduction. The discussions he has undertaken on several important disputed points clearly evince what extensive studies he has made for the purpose and what labour he has persistently spent for years to collect and elaborate the materials on which he bases the conclusions he has come to ultimately. Yet he is far from being dogmatic, as will appear from the scholarly diffidence with which he offers them in the Preface and the Introductions not to speak of the main body of the text.

This Introduction by itself sets rather a model of what any research in ancient literature should be to make it worthy of the name. Research-scholars in the field would do well to imitate him here to be able to contribute anything new and valuable on subjects undertaken by them. One may not be entirely in agreement with the learned writer. But no one can help admiring the scholarly efforts he has made to present honestly what he has

attempted to establish as his standpoint. This standpoint is well-known to those who have followed up his writings on the subject contributed hitherto to Bengali and English Journals and Periodicals. Now we have in this Introduction and the Annotations, offered on the Texts of the main work, the *Āgamaśāstra* comprising the *Kārikās* attributed to an ancient author named Gauḍapāda. These *Kārikās* were hitherto regarded by most scholars, old and new, as a commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. This position has not, however, been unanimously adopted by even all ancient scholars and writers, as the present author has shewn by quotations at the very beginning of the Introduction. The standpoint adopted by him, on various reasonable grounds, is that the *Kārikās* form the earlier basis of the text of the 12 prose passages forming the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. Their relationship is rather the reverse of the usual view. It is of no use here going into the intricate discussions on the point. They have to be carefully followed up by a student of the subject. The elaborate discussions undertaken here as to the name and time of the author of the *Kārikās* and his actual relationship to Śaṅkara—the celebrated author of the masterly commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*, are both interesting and enlightening. The tradition generally accepted on the matter places the author Gauḍapāda—as the teacher of the *Guru* of Śaṅkara through whom the latter was influenced in his Vedantic position. This influence is supposed to relate particularly to his *Māyāvāda*, though not entirely as is pointed out by the present author in his Introduction. Śaṅkara, as is well-known to the students of the other main schools of Vedānta, has been 'stigmatised' for his position of *Māyāvāda* as a 'disguised' Buddhist ("Prachhanna-Bauddha"). The question is how far this sweeping way of 'stigmatisation' of Śaṅkara can be justified. The *Māyāvāda* may be supposed to have come down directly to Śaṅkara through the teachings of Gauḍapāda as presented in the *Āgamaśāstra* particularly in the parts III & IV (*Prakarāṇas*) of the *Kārikās*. The present author's own position on the question is, however, found to be put very cautiously in the Introduction, as the following lines will show :

"It is, however, to be noted that Gauḍapāda, though much influenced by the Buddhist thoughts, maintains his position as a Vedantist. It is true that he advocates the *Vijñānavāda*, but certainly it is originally adopted by him from the Upaniṣadic source, i. e. BU, IV. 3. 14 on which is based his fundamental statement ( II. 5 ) that the two states, dream and waking, are one. This Upaniṣadic seed of Idealism being influenced by its elaborate system in Buddhism and the vast literature on it by the Buddhist teachers flourished before Gauḍapāda, has developed into what we now find in the *Āgamaśāstra*. But when there are the above and the similar germs of ideal-

ism in the Upaniṣads, it must be accepted that it did not first originate with the Buddhists, though it has much developed in their system later on.' ( Introduction pages 51-2 ).

In his Annotations on the *Kārikās*, particularly on those of Part IV, the author has shewn by a number of quotations from Buddhistic works of *Vijñānavādins* and *Mādhyamikas*, who are supposed to have preceded Gauḍapāda. Now the latter's mode of arguments and the standpoint based thereon are so similar in many respects that it is no wonder that the latter's position, even as a Vedantist, should be considered as influenced by the Buddhists concerned, and that Śaṅkara following Gauḍapāda in his fundamental position be regarded as a 'disguised' Buddhist. But the mere fact of similarity ( or even of identity ) of passages between those of the *Kārikās* and of the Buddhistic works quoted does not by itself establish infallibly any direct influence. The author himself too, it is to be noted, does not appear to endorse this position entirely from what he states in the last sentence of the passages quoted above.

From this statement it appears that the present author does not deny the possibility of the earlier schools of Buddhism and these school and Gauḍapāda's similar Vedantic position might both have been influenced by an earlier school of thought to which Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna on the one hand and Gauḍapāda on the other belonged, only the former using the influence to promote their position of Buddhism and the latter his own position of Vedānta. This might be a possible interpretation, and I am glad to find that the present author does not virtually object to this supposition. The question that remains to consider now in this connection is the *Ajativāda* ( the doctrine of Non-origination ) which appears to be a unique position of the *Vijñānavāda* school of Buddhism. Gauḍapāda certainly accepts this position, as his elaborate discussions in Part IV of the *Kārikās* in support of the doctrine discloses. Here no doubt the influence of the Buddhistic position is apparent. But it could not be surmised that this very doctrine might have come down to the Buddhists themselves from a still earlier school of *Upaniṣadic* thought started, say, by Yājñavalkya, whose place in the *Vṛihadāranyaka* Vedantic teachings appears to be very prominent. This is but a possible suggestion, which might be utilised for further research on the subject. And the only person who may be credited to be able to undertake this task is our assiduous learned Pandit who has already worked as much in the field, the valuable results of which we find in the present publication of the *Āgamaśāstra*.

This publication does not, we are glad to find, confine itself merely to the *Āgamaśāstra* with the Introduction, English translation of and critical annotations on the *Kārikās*. It comprises also, in the Appendices, the

*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* with an original English translation of its texts, and other matters so indispensable to earnest students undertaking proper study of the main work. In fact, the learned editor has left out nothing which is important for the purpose. And our hearty thanks are also due to him for all this scholarly labour.

P. B. Adhikari.

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF MUSICAL SCALES :

By Alain Danielou. The India Society. London 1943.

pp. 279. Price, Rs. 15/-.

This is a very remarkable book. As the title implies, the author is concerned with an analysis of the various musical scales as they exist in the musical traditions of either East or West. The problems raised must necessarily be of an extremely complex kind. For, as the author remarks at the very beginning of his book "there remain in the West no data on the nature of music". Feelings or emotions evoked by sounds or combinations of sounds are simply taken for granted and no attempt is made to search for the causes. The result of such an attitude are fragmentary experiments which by their very nature exclude the possibility of formulating those general musical laws which are of universal value and which would establish a logical connection between the various traditional musical scales in existence.

Traditional metaphysics, therefore, provide the author with the data of what he calls musical symbolism. Such an approach to the study of musical scales must lead him to a rejection of commonly accepted western standards of harmony and the "natural scale". Much of what we have been used to take for granted in western music is of an arbitrary origin and not in accordance with the traditional theories of music. For, according to the theorists of Hindu music "the subtle correspondence between the laws of nature and the laws of harmony, between the modes of music and the modes of our sentiments, can be experimentally discovered", but, furthermore, "they can be completely and logically explained only by traditional metaphysics whose source is in the Veda".

The scope of M. Danielou's work is, therefore, necessarily large. Beginning with a short discussion of "metaphysical correspondences" ( which some might like to be elaborated even further in any subsequent

edition of the book ); the second and the third part deal with The Conflict of Musical Systems and The Measure of Intervals and Harmonic Sounds respectively. These parts, as also the following, are necessarily very technical and a layman may not always be able to follow the argument. But then, this is obviously not a book written for laymen. Follow detailed discussions of Chinese, Hindu, and Greek musical systems as well as an analysis of the western scale and the "equal temperament". An exhaustive bibliography at the end completes the volume.

It is hardly possible within the limited space at our disposal to enter into a discussion on those points which may seem controversial. Suffice it to say that this is a book which should not be missed by anyone interested in the study of musical systems and their relation with one another. The author has, in his short Foreword, summarised his main argument and we cannot do better than to let him speak for himself: "... It is in music only that this connection between physical reality and metaphysical principles is evident. Music was, therefore, justly considered by the ancients as the key to all sciences and arts, the link between metaphysics and physics, through which the universal laws and their multiple applications could be understood. In the present book we try to give some idea of these universal laws which the numbers represent, and to make a rapid survey of their application to music in the different traditions."

A. A.

*THE DISCIPLES OF RAMAKRISHNA :*

Published by Swami Pavitranaṇḍa. Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati,  
Almora, Himalayas. pp. 476 ; Price Rs. 4/-.

MAHATMA GANDHI presiding over a celebration of the Ramkrishna Sevashrama at Rangoon paid a tribute to the Ramakrishna Mission in these words : "Wherever I go, the followers of Ramakrishna invite me to meet with them ; I feel that their blessings go with me. Their relief works are spread over India. There is no point where they are not established on a large or a small scale. I pray God that they will grow, and that to them will be united all who are pure and love India." This was in 1929. Since then of course its activities have covered still wider fields, and, as pointed out by Romain Rolland, the spiritual harvest of Ramakrishna was

garnered by Vivekananda's own hands and placed under the protection of wise and laborious farmers who knew how to keep it pure and to bring it to fruition.' The book under review deals with the life-stories of "those wise and laborious farmers" who succeeded in bringing to fruition the great ideals of Ramakrishna—Vivekananda through their devoted and self-effacing work in connection with the manifold activities of the Mission.

The majority of these disciples, again in the language of Romain Rolland, "belonged to the literal professions, to the Brahmin aristocracy or to the rich middle class of Bengal and several had been fashioned by the Brahmo Samaj." and Ramakrishna showed himself very strict in the choice of his disciples "for they were the way whereon the feet of humanity was to march." It is natural, therefore to desire to know something of the lives of these disciples who are now no more. They have left worthy successors however, some of whom have paid their tribute to their masters in recounting their lives in the pages of this book. These "lives", although they are from the pen of different writers are written in an uniformly lucid style and they make very interesting reading indeed. The reader is made acquainted with the early struggles of these youthful disciples of Ramakrishna to attain perfection, their wanderings through the length and breadth of India their *tapasyas* in the depths of the Himalayas. Their austere life, their catholicity, their faith in the mission of their Master and their ultimate surrender—though not without a struggle in the case of some—to the call of their leader Vivekananda to give up the life of spiritual seclusion and take up instead humanitarian work on an organized basis—all these will appear to have an instructive value too all their own.

The book contains the lives of fifteen monastic disciples, three lay and four women disciples of Ramakrishna. This however leaves incomplete the list of all those whom Ramakrishna acknowledged as his own and whose names will be found carefully enumerated in Romain Rolland's book on Ramakrishna—Vivekananda. We hope in the second edition or in a second volume, the defect will be made good.

The general get-up and printing of the book leave nothing to be desired. They are on a par with all the other publications of the Ramakrishna Mission. The book is properly illustrated and the colour-scheme of the jacket-cover is quite appropriate.

Kanti Ghosh.

*THE CRISIS OF THE MODERN WORLD RENE GUENON :**Publishers : Luzac & Co. 1942.*

THIS is a remarkable book, remarkable alike for its diagnosis of the disease from which the present-day world is suffering, and for the remedy which it suggests. Unlike other books dealing with the subject, it does not find the cause of the present crisis of the world in political or economic or social factors, but these factors are in its opinion only outward manifestations of more deep-rooted causes. The ultimate ground of all these factors is to be sought in the outlook of an age. Consequently, if there is anything fundamentally wrong about any age, the cause of it is to be sought in the wrong outlook of that age.

Keeping in mind this fundamental truth, our problem reduces itself to this : What is the outlook of the present-day world, and wherein is it defective ? The character of this outlook our author expresses in one word, *Profane*, which absolves him from the duty of showing wherein it is found defective, for what is profane stands self-condemned, and it does not require any elaborate argument to prove that it is wrong. All outlooks he classes under two heads : Sacred and Profane. These are in fact his Ormuzd and Ahriman. Profane is the outlook that relies solely upon reason, which believes only in human powers, which shows contempt for everything super-human, as well as for authority and tradition, and which sets up the individual judgment as the arbiter of everything. The opposite of 'profane' is 'sacred'. Sacred is the outlook that dethrones reason and sets up intuition, which has faith in superhuman powers, as well as in authority and tradition, and which shows contempt for the individual judgment. A synonym for 'sacred' is 'traditional', and the latter word is generally used by our author to indicate the outlook which he considers right.

He diagnoses the malady of the modern world as the substitution of the profane for the traditional outlook. The remedy, consequently, is very simple : Replace the profane by the traditional outlook, and the world will be set right again. There is another pair of opposites in his vocabulary which serves the same purpose as the words 'sacred' and 'profane'. These are East and West. They are not with him mere geographical distinctions, but they express two fundamental differences of outlook. The East, according to him, has throughout its long history been loyal to the traditional outlook, whereas the West has departed from it. Not that the West never had faith in it. It did have it in abundant measure in very ancient times and again in the Middle Ages, but it has lost it ever since the beginning of the Renaissance. The opposition between the East and the West, therefore, is

of recent origin, but although recent, it is now a fundamental one. The salvation of the West, in our author's view, lies in its return to tradition, which means the same as coming to an understanding with the East, for it is in the East that tradition is still living. To quote his own words : "If the West should somehow or other return to tradition, its opposition to the East would thereby be resolved and cease to exist, as it has its roots only in the Western deviation and is in reality merely the opposition between the traditional and the anti-traditional outlooks. Therefore, contrary to the opinion of those to whom we have been alluding, one of the first results of a return to tradition would be to make an understanding with the East immediately feasible, such as is possible between all civilizations that possess comparable or equivalent elements, and only between such, since these elements form the only ground on which an effective understanding can be based" ( pp. 43-44 ). In another place ( pp. 42-43 ) he says, "The lost tradition ( of the West ) can be restored and brought to life again only by contact with the living traditional spirit, and, as we have already said, it is only in the East that this spirit is still fully alive".

Although the picture he draws of the modern world is extremely gloomy, yet he asks us to derive consolation from the thought that just as it is darkest before dawn, so the very gloominess of the present age is a sure sign that a New Age is not far off. This Kali Yuga, he says, in which we are living is about to end, and the Satya Yuga, is coming. Here he comes somewhat near Sri Aurobindo, who also triumphantly proclaims ( though for totally different reasons ) the advent of a New Age as a thing decreed and destined to occur.

Our author believes that the traditional outlook in Greece was lost when the 'philosophers' came into the field. The main work of these 'philosophers' was to destroy whatever traces there were left of the traditional outlook. Pythagoras partially restored this outlook, but the general trend of Greek thought was anti-traditional. It leaned more and more upon reason, and consequently drifted further and further away from the traditional outlook. Our author, in fact, has a very poor opinion of philosophy, whether Greek or modern. Thus at p. 42 he says, "A philosophy, though it be all that it should be, has no right to this designation ( traditional ), since it is entirely of the rational order even when it does not deny all that goes beyond this order. It is no more than a structure raised by human individuals without revelation or inspiration of any sort, which means, to condense all into a single word, that it is essentially "profane." This prejudice against philosophy is one of the features of this book.

The Renaissance, which prided itself upon its success in reviving the



culture of the Greeks, really completed, according to our author, the process of decadence which had started with the advent of the Milesian philosophers in Greece. It gave currency to a point of view called Humanism, of which the modern seem to be extremely proud. But when closely examined, this humanism shows itself to be one of the most decadent types of culture that it has been the misfortune of human history to exhibit. For humanism means contempt for everything superhuman, for everything which transcends the purely human point of view. It for ever shuts man within the limits of his narrow interests and thus permanently blocks the path of his further progress. Due to its following the lead of humanism, the author thinks, "modern civilization has gone downwards step by step until it has ended by sinking to the level of the lowest elements in man and aiming at little more than the satisfaction of the needs inherent in the material side of his nature, an aim which is, in any case, quite illusory, as it constantly creates more artificial needs than it can satisfy" ( p. 26 ).

So far so good. But it should be borne in mind that if to-day a return to the traditional outlook is needed, it is because of the exaggerations of the rational or scientific outlook. If the rationalism of the present day had not gone to the extreme of shutting out all other approaches to truth, the cry 'Back to tradition' would not have been so insistent or so significant. It is because of the excesses of the rationalistic movement that the need of a counter-movement is so keenly felt. Rationalism by itself is nothing objectionable. Reason undoubtedly has played, and will play a civilizing mission. In our enthusiasm for tradition we should not forget that it is sometimes necessary to go against tradition, and that it is by doing so that man has acquired the position which he has done to-day. Tagore in his *Religion of Man* has pointed this out very clearly. He shows how man in the early stages of his evolution broke with tradition by adopting an erect gait, instead of crawling. "And it is significant," says Tagore, "that Man should persist in his foolhardiness, in spite of the penalty he pays for opposing the orthodox rule of animal locomotion. He reduces by half the easy balance of his muscles. He is ready to pass his infancy tottering through perilous experiments in making progress upon insufficient support, and followed all through his life by liability to sudden downfalls resulting in tragic or ludicrous consequences from which law-abiding quadrupeds are free. This was his great venture, his relinquishment of a secure position of his limbs, which he would comfortably have retained in return for humbly salaaming the all-powerful dust at every step" ( *Religion of Man*, pp. 52-53 ).

Similarly, reason also is a faculty with which man is endowed, and the employment of it not only has helped him in his evolution, but very often the

conditions have been such as to render it almost indispensable. If intuition in man had been perfectly steady, instead of being of the flashy character that it is, it might have been possible to dispense with reason. But unfortunately, it is never so. Human intuitions are fragmentary and flashy, and therefore they require to be supplemented by reason, for in man, constituted as he at present is, it is only reason that can supply the necessary basis for systematized knowledge. As Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, ( Vide *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 103 ), "intuition by the very nature of its action in man, working as it does from behind the veil, in the narrow light which is our waking consciousness, only by instruments that are unable fully to assimilate its message—intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which nature demands." It is here that the help of reason is indispensable. Sri Aurobindo further says that this explains why in the history of human culture an intuitive age has generally been followed by an age of reason. For example, in our country the great intuitive age of the Upanishads was followed by an age of philosophy, of rational interpretation of experience.

It is quite in keeping with the author's faith in authority and tradition that he regards the Middle Ages in Europe as a most glorious epoch. He is very sorry and extremely surprised that mediaeval civilization was quickly forgotten. Already in the seventeenth century, he says, "men had not the slightest idea of what it had been, and the movements that survived from it no longer stood for anything in their eyes, intellectually or even aesthetically" ( p. 24 ). Does it never strike him that there must have been very cogent reasons for this? Why is it that civilizations which are much older are still remembered, while that of the Middle Ages is completely forgotten? If the Middle Ages had really been as glorious as he thinks, would this have been possible?

His faith in Papacy and his condemnation of Protestantism follow as a deduction from his fondness for the Middle Ages. In no other way can we understand the following statement: "Protestantism, like the modern world, is built upon mere negation, the same negation of principles which is the very essence of individualism; and one can see in it one more example, and a most striking one, of anarchy and dissolution that has arisen from this negation" ( p. 38 ). There can be no doubt that the world owes a great deal to Protestantism which by its criticism of some of the forms which had crept into religion, paved the way for a reorientation of religious thought. Such periodical revision and reorientation is extremely necessary if religion is to retain its vigour. In our country also the impact of Buddhism and Jainism upon the traditional religion was on the whole very healthy, for

without it there was great danger of stagnation. And what shall we say of the impact of the West? Has it been an unmixed evil? Certainly not. As the lifework of Raja Rammohan Roy so amply proves, it has led to a revitalization of traditional religion which, but for it, would never have been possible.

We should not, however, dwell too long upon the shortcomings of the book, lest we forget its merits which, as we have already said, are really great. There can be no doubt that it has given a true diagnosis of the malady of the modern world. And this diagnosis agrees also in all essentials with that of Tagore. As we all know, Tagore in his plays *The Waterfall* and *The Red Oleanders* has given us a graphic picture of the havoc which modern civilization has done and is still doing in reducing man to a mere machine. As he has put it, Jack must be saved from being crushed by the Giant, which is only another name for the soulless mechanical civilization of the present day.

The only hope of the world lies—I would not say in going back to the traditional outlook, for that is neither possible nor desirable, but—in adapting that traditional outlook to the requirements of a growing and changing world, so as to give intuition and faith their due place, without, of course, discarding reason. This would give the world a chance to know its soul which, as Sri Aurobindo regrets, it lacks at present.

S. K. Maitra

*LAND AND ITS PROBLEMS— Vol. 1.*

By Dr. Sudhir Sen, B. Sc. (Econ.) Ph. D.

(Visva-Bharati Economic Research Publication No. 3)

THE recent controversy over the food question has made it clear that agricultural statistics in this country are very unsatisfactory. The method that is adopted for the collection of data is so haphazard that no reliance can be placed on the figures published by the authorities. And yet before any attempt is made to ameliorate the condition of the rural people correct informations relating to their economic condition should be available. It is precisely because of this that the publication of 'Land And Its Problems' by the Visva-Bharati Economic Research Board is so welcome. This gives the results of a regional study carried on during the last three or four years. Fif-

teen villages were selected in the neighbourhood of Sriniketan—Visva-Bharati Institute of Rural Reconstruction, and 1,731 families were studied. The number of families about which informations were collected, may be considered to be quite large and although the villages selected were not distributed over the district yet one may safely say that conclusions drawn from this study will equally apply to the district of Birbhum, if not to the major portion of Western Bengal. The rural economic problems over the whole of Bengal are similar in spite of the local variations in soil fertility, rainfall, pressure of population etc., and the detailed study of a particular region gives one an insight into the conditions prevailing in other parts of the province.

The book has been divided into four sections. The first section deals with general topics. There is a discussion of the importance of regional studies and agricultural statistics. The physical characteristics of the district of Birbhum are described in some detail. The pressure of population in the area covered by the survey was 500 per square mile and there were 70 acres of arable land per 100 of population. There is one interesting chapter devoted to the size of holdings. Figures are given to show that the majority of the holdings are very small and that land is concentrated in the hands of a few well-to-do persons. "The figures throw into bold relief" says the author "the over-whelming preponderance of small holdings. Thus about a fourth of the total cultivating families have five bighas or less each and together they own hardly one twenty-fifth of the entire cultivated area; about 57 per cent own 15 bighas or less each and together account for slightly over a fifth of the total area. At the other end we have 5.2 per cent families owning no less than 23.2 per cent. of which, again, 1.2 per cent or 9 families together own 8.2 per cent of the land. Thus one twentieth of the families with holding above 20 acres own more land than about three-fifths of the families with holdings of 3 acres or less." It is further added "that of the 1,731 families living within our area only 814 or 46 per cent owned land in some form or other."

The paddy is the main crop in the area under survey, the actual average acreage being 14,477 acres out of total cultivated area of 15,005 acres. The cultural practices in paddy cultivation are described in great detail. Figures are given of the costs of production. The yields are shewn to be very low as compared not only to yields in other countries but also to other districts within the province. The factors responsible for such low yields are brought out. It seems that the lowest limit of fertility has been reached. Manuring is hardly done, facilities for irrigation are very inadequate and the crop has to depend entirely on the monsoon.

The methods by which the yields can be increased are suggested. A more liberal use of farm yard manure instead of using it as fuel, use of artificial farm yard manure prepared by the Indore process, utilization of nightsoil as poudrette, green manuring with leguminous crops and use of improved varieties etc. have been mentioned.

There is a great deal of fresh material relating to rural economics and one cannot but be grateful for the mass of data which have been so laboriously and skilfully collected. The suggestions for improvement have also been thoughtfully made but one wonders how far they can be taken up by the agriculturists. At the outset the author begins by making it clear "that the immediate object of these studies is to explore the possibilities of raising the standard of living of the rural population within the framework of the present social and economic structure." It is this limitation that makes the work lose so much of its value. The standard of living cannot be very well raised if the present socio-economic structure is left as it is. Even the Floud Commission which cannot be accused of being a body consisting of men with radical views, saw the necessity of a change in the land system by means of abolition of the Permanent Settlement and state acquisition of land interests. The improvements suggested cannot be applied, except to a limited extent, unless the whole economic structure is altered. Where the holdings are so small and where the majority live on the verge of starvation scientific improvements cannot be expected to be taken up in the same way as in a country where the farms are large and the farmers relatively prosperous. Scientific and improved methods can only be effectively employed in the large farms and the obvious remedy, though not an easy one, is to take measures which will lead to the establishment of big compact holdings in place of the small ones.

The present book is the first of a series that is being published by the Visva-Bharati and we look forward to the publication of further volumes which will be extremely useful to the students of rural economics.

Santipriya Bose

*THE PHILOSOPHY OF VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA :*

P. N. Srinivasachari.

The Adyar Library Series. No. 39. Price Rs. 10/-.

THE philosophy of Rāmānuja is a curious combination of dogmatic religion and acute logical analysis. The student of Śrībhāṣya is thus legitimately lost in the long and numerous quotations from the Scriptures on the one hand and the baffling maze of argumentations on the other. There is then his love for ornamental Sanskrit and the manner of imagining the opponent's opponent, refuting him in favour of the opponent and refuting the opponent in favour of himself. Other difficulties in reading the text of Rāmānuja may perhaps be mentioned. The traditional *tole-teaching* is waning and the literal translation of the text ( I mean that of Thibaut, with which I am acquainted and which is obscure where literal ) do not help much. One therefore feels enthusiastic over the publication of the volume of S. N. Srinivasachari. Such an exhaustive exposition of the philosophy of Rāmānuja, systematically arranged and lucidly written, is obviously of immense help to the student of Indian Philosophy. The different aspects of Śariravāda—one can see that all the aspects of this system—theology, epistemology, ethics, psychology and so on, are lucidly expounded, clearly set forth, without any substantial sacrifice of details in favour of apparent simplicity. Certain stray suggestions of Viśiṣṭādvaita Philosophy are coherently worked out by the author: discussion of the theory of Judgment and the chapter on Aesthetics may be mentioned as examples. Two chapters—viz. XX & XXI—are devoted to historical treatment. They give us the history of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vaiṣṇavism as well as the influence of Rāmānuja on other systems of Indian Philosophy. And here, within a few pages, one gets informations which can otherwise be acquired by an intimate acquaintance with a very wide range of Indian speculation. More points can surely be mentioned in favour of the book. It is superb in so far as it is expository.

The difficulty begins where the author enters the realm of interpretation. There we have to deal with the attitude of the author which is religious rather than philosophical. To rationalize Rāmānuja—that is his supreme interest; he wants to rationalize Rāmānuja, moreover, because of a religious devotion for him. The author proposes to be critical, but the "ethical inspiration" ( Russell ) is more easily evidenced. It is announced that the book "was placed at the feet of Śrī Rāmānuja at the shrine dedicated to Him in His birthplace" ( one cannot fail to notice the "H"s in capital ) and still it is claimed in the preface that "the main purpose of this work is to give a *critical* and comprehensive exposition of the central features of

Viśiṣṭādvaita and its relation to other schools of Vedānta". 'Critical' in the above quotation sounds incongruous. The scholarship of S. Srinivasachari is surely scattered all over the 642 pages; his grasp of the central features of Rāmānuja is clear; his power of systematisation is obvious. But then, he starts with the idea of proving that the Viśiṣṭādvaitic philosophy is capable of satisfying the demands of science and philosophy on the one hand and of ethics and religion on the other. This claim, it need not be said, is neither valid, nor could it possibly be substantiated. The author has attempted to prove his assumption at the end of each chapter, but the effort itself has led him away from his scholarly detachment and made him a captive of his own fixed ideas. He seems to have ignored the fact that responsible thinkers in the East and West hold contrary views. He hardly mentions them at all—not to speak of doing justice to their representations. The concluding chapter is full of over-simplifications and generalizations which minimise the scholarly claims of the book.

I should try to prove my case. It is better perhaps to take the instance of Śaṅkara, rather than any Western Philosopher.

Being identified with the narrowly religious approach to the problems of philosophy, S. Srinivasachari makes light of the logical issues. Criticisms levelled against Śaṅkara, the great rival of Rāmānuja, are accepted by the author without much logical analysis or examination. Advaita has been criticised by the school of Bhāskara; Rāmānuja criticises the Bhāskara-school; and so Rāmānuja is final. Or, again, Dhyānaniogyavāda refutes Śaṅkara, Bhāskara refutes the former, Rāmānuja refutes Bhāskara and so Rāmānuja comes out triumphant. And so on. There is some confusion made here between history and philosophy. Chronological sequence is not enough to establish logical validity. The intrinsic logical worth of Bhāskara over Śaṅkara—whether it is really there or not—is surely to be enquired into. It is a simple point, but unfortunately the fixed religious approach is oblivious even of this.

The logical basis of Śaṅkara is as simple as his literary style. He is moreover as consistent as he is graceful. He starts with the law of contradiction as the criterion of ultimate reality and finds that the world is full of contradiction and naturally rejects it as unreal. He does not offer any difficult dialectic like Zeno, Bradley or Nāgārjuna to exhibit contradictions in this world; it is a curious mixture of the Ego and the Non-Ego. The causal relation, so fundamental in the world, shows that factually the effect *must be* a new beginning but logically it *cannot be* one. We are generally inclined to believe it to be real on the strength of our ordinary waking experience. But then this experience has no ultimate worth as it is successive-

ly negated by the different dimensions of our awareness — *svapna*, *susupti* and *turiya*. Is the world, then, a hollow abstraction? Perhaps not; for an empty abstraction like the son of a barren woman is never positively perceived. It is then neither real nor unreal, — somewhat like the snake you wrongly perceive in a rope, — we should rather call it indescribable. These arguments lead to a dangerous consequence: it makes practice — in whatever form it may be, religious, ethical or economic — meaningless in the standard of the ultimate truth. But Śaṅkara is not afraid of such a consequence: he would make absolutely no compromise and thus sharply distinguishes between the practical and the speculative order. Rāmānuja felt a distaste for these arguments, for he had the typical Indian mind immersed in the Vedas with all the rituals. A system which declares practice to be meaningless has got to be refuted. There is surely no objection to such a reaction, provided it is carried out consistently. But Rāmānuja really misses the mark. He goes on attacking Śaṅkara at random, often vulgarises Śaṅkara and offers easy caricature. (I have unfortunately no space to illustrate this in detail.) But the real strength of Śaṅkara, his clinging to the law of contradiction, is hardly ever challenged. Śaṅkara stands or falls with it. More side-attacks may prolong the controversy but cannot bring any conclusion. To save the reality of the external world and the relevance of practice, one has to start with a new logic, the logic of synthesis. Contradiction can be, and in fact are continually reconciled in reality: that is what has to be proved. Far from realising this, Rāmānuja rejects the very suggestion of it offered by the Jainas. His random attacks on Śaṅkara do not therefore mean very much.

I have spoken of the logical basis of the two philosophers in a general manner. It may fail to convince the reader. But the space we have here is strictly limited. Besides, I have but given one illustration. The point of the present criticism is that the author in spite of his scholarship, has a bias for the religious approach to philosophy, he is indifferent to the logical issue. An illustration has been given of what to mean by the real logical issue.

The writer, and therefore the reader, of any book on Ancient Indian Culture has to traverse a slender path with dangers on both sides. On the one hand there is the tendency to represent whatever is Indian and whatever is ancient as final. As if, final and completely satisfactory solutions of the great problems of mankind were revealed to our forefathers alone. We are familiar with the claim that whatever is sane in contemporary science was apparent to our forefathers. In the realm of the concrete and the empirical, however, this is continually challenged and, very often, disproved.

But philosophy, even after Kant, often loves the free flight of imagination and looks at the empirical with contempt. Thus most Indian writers on philosophy still start with the idea of rationalising the past systems. This is unfortunate, for it is not philosophical even in the standard of our old masters. They repeatedly told us that detachment is the first essential condition of philosophising.

The danger on the other side can be described thus : Whatever is past is dead. This is the attitude of some modernist critics. To relegate the past to oblivion is the prime of motive of such critics. They try to live in the present which is merely present. And this is absurd. For tradition is too important a factor in the cultural life of nation. Here, more than elsewhere, 'the past lives in the present and gnaws into the future.' Culture, which tries to negate the tradition is but an aberration.

So neither the blind worship of the past nor ignoring the past as dead and therefore dumb, would, we should claim, betray to the true scholarly mind. Mr. Srinivasachari, unfortunately, does not satisfy this double demand. In spite of his scholarship, his grasp of the central features of Rāmānuja, his power of systematisation and his lucid style, one has, therefore, to accept his book with some hesitation.

Debiprosad Chattopadhyaya.

## OF TEA

The first cup moistens my lips and throat ;  
 The second cup breaks my loneliness ;  
 The third cup searches my barren entrail but  
 to find therein some five thousand volumes  
 of odd ideographs ;  
 The fourth cup raises a slight perspiration —  
 all the wrongs of life pass out through my  
 pores ;  
 At the fifth cup I am purified ;  
 The sixth cup calls me to the realms of the im-  
 mortals ;  
 The seventh cup — ah, but I could take no  
 more ! I only feel the breath of the cool  
 wind that raises in my sleeves.  
 Where is Elysium ? Let me ride on this sweet  
 breeze and waft away thither.

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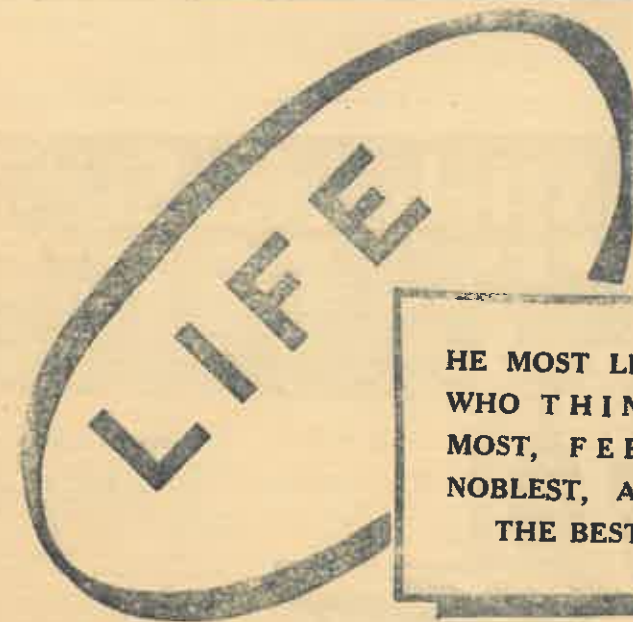
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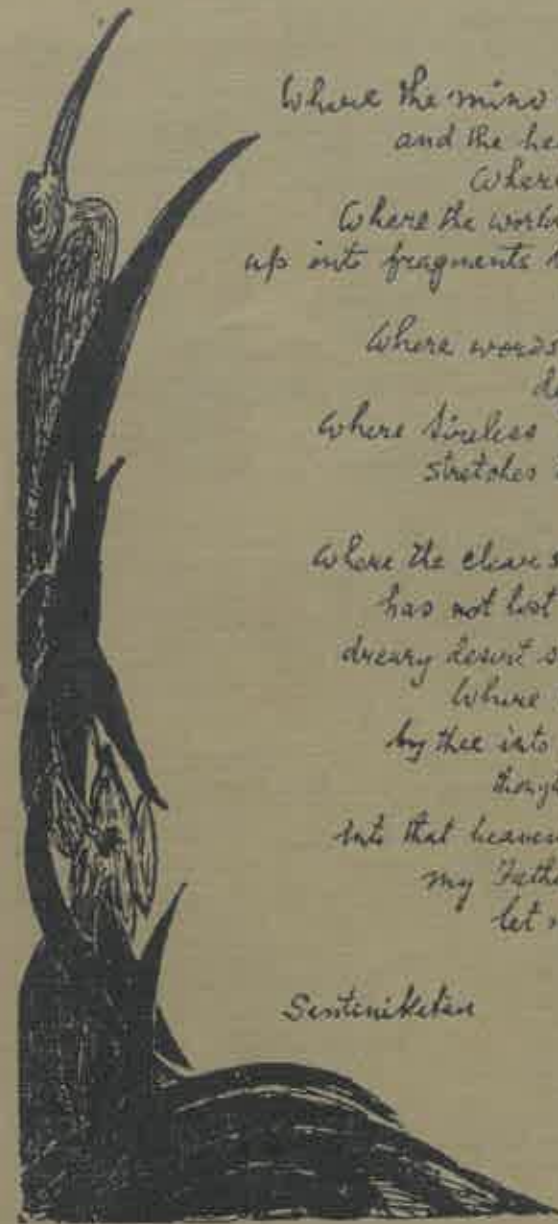


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and the head is held high,  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken  
up into fragments by narrow domestic  
walls;  
Where words come out from the  
depth of truth;  
Where soulless striving  
stretches its arms towards  
perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason  
has not lost its way into the  
dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward  
by thee into ever widening  
thought and action —  
Into that heaven of freedom,  
my Father,  
let my country awake.

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