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RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

(Copy of his portrait in Bristol Art Museum)

BIOGRAPHY OF A NEW FAITH

VOLUME ONE

BY

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PREFACE

This work endeavours to portray the spiritual background of the Freedom movement in India during the last century and a half. Freedom is taken not in the limited sense of political freedom only but in the fuller and larger sense—call it four-fold freedom or fourteen-fold, if you like—which aims at regenerating the spirit of man and securing for all mankind true liberty, equality and fraternity. It is beyond the scope and purpose of this work to present to the reader anything like an account of the political strifes and struggles in India ending with the achievement of Independence on the 15th of August 1947. Nor does it deal with the mighty war waged with the weapon of non-violent non-co-operation by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress during the last quarter of a century. There is abundant literature on those topics. What it seeks to do is to explore the deeper sources of the struggle for a larger life of freedom of which the political upheavals are but a manifestation. Long before the birth of the Indian National Congress, the movement which initiated and fought the battle for freedom on all fronts—social, moral, economic, educational, political and religious—was the Brahmo Samaj. It never had politics alone for its creed, or for its programme of activities. It believed in Truth and Freedom and acted on the principle that the Religion of Life demanded the active acceptance of truth in all things, and freedom in all spheres of thought and action. From the days of Raja Rammohun Roy, the father of modern Indian Renaissance and the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, all movements for freedom may be said to have radiated from or clustered round the Brahmo Samaj. And the Brahmo Samaj of the day welcomed them with open arms, whether they owed affiliation to it or not. Any new effort or

endeavour after freedom from pernicious custom, convention or superstition, from communalism and sectarianism, was sure to receive cordial sympathy and support from those who professed the broad-based faith of the Brahmo Samaj. The Prārthanā Samaj of Bombay, the Veda Samaj of Madras, the Ārya Samaj of Northern India and the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda movement of Bengal present instances of such cordial co-operation and fellowship extended by the Brahmo Samaj at different times.

In course of gradual evolution there came, after the Raja, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore who gave to the Samaj the Covenant and laid the foundation for the future communion which was to body forth the ideal. Later, in the era of Keshub Chunder Sen the Brahmo Samaj became an all-India movement and a power in the land. Political memory is proverbially short. In the dust and din of political controversy, India has well-nigh lost sight of her path-finders of the nineteenth century and the broad basis of universalism on which they had sought to build the entire fabric of life, individual as well as collective, of the nation and of humanity at large. The leaders and workers of the Brahmo Samaj sacrificed their all in the cause of Truth and Humanism, which they preached and practised. They suffered obloquy, ignominy and all manner of persecution. But their lives in a large measure leavened the whole of India. Their broad-based universalism for which they lived and which brooked no barriers of caste, creed, colour, custom or convention, is today no longer misunderstood. Intellectually, at any rate, it has established itself in the consciousness of the people of this country. Keshub's maxim 'All religions are true', so utterly misunderstood and misrepresented in the eighties of the last century, now comes back to us through the lips of Mahatma Gandhi, the latest martyr to the cause of universalism. If the significance of the maxim were truly realized, and if the characteristic message of each religion were recognized as true, having its place in the

universal economy of Divine Providence, there would be an end to sectarianism and communalism. Then would it be natural *to recognize in all prophets and saints a harmony, in all scriptures a unity, in all dispensations a continuity.* That is the New Faith, the Religion of Harmony—the crowning ideal of the Brahmo Samaj.

But, why new?—asks the critic. Is there anything new under the sun? Surely, the so-called new is rooted in the old, and the present firmly rooted in the past. Is not the past worth preserving? True, so it is. Yet it is equally true that there is a perennial quest after the new all over creation. Is not the poet, the thinker, the patriot and the philosopher ever after the new? It is even so with the artist, the scientist, the statesman, the philanthropist and the reformer. The Religion of Life comprehends all these phases of human aspiration and activity and it is but natural that true spiritual culture should thrive only on fresh fields and pastures new. To the man of faith every single day dawns with new aspirations, new resolves, new efforts; new harmonies yet unseen and unrealized. Does he attribute these to his own initiative? Far from it. The changing conditions in and around him, the environment offering opportunities to be embraced or obstacles to be got over—are these his own doing or of a purposeful Providence that shapes our ends? The man of faith, as the faith within him grows from more to more, cannot help seeing in every affair of life, individual and collective, the far-off divine event gradually unfolding itself and calling forth in man new aspirations, new dreams, new visions, new efforts, new disciplines, new dispensations. Indeed, throughout all these he witnesses the daily, hourly ministration or dispensation of Providence.

The Brahmo Samaj cannot afford to be blind to the hand of Providence in the history of its own growth and development. In proclaiming its ideal as the New Dispensation, it claims no credit for itself, nor does it forget the past or other dispensations yet to come. It

only owns its grateful acceptance of the ideal from the Divine Dispenser.

This does not mean that the Brahmo Samaj as a community has fully proved worthy of its ideal. There is a sad divergence between the ideal and the actual. It has had its successes and failures, its trials and tribulations, its doubts, disbeliefs and discords. But the author fervently trusts that the time is come when it must rise up to its full stature and fulfil its destiny. The world of today, torn with sectarian feuds and conflicting self-interests, calls upon those who profess the lofty faith of the Brahmo Samaj to deliver the goods. At the present juncture, the author hopes, a biography of this new faith indicating its gradual evolution, and its influence on thought and life, may be opportune and useful. Such a biography should of itself reveal to the reader what is new in the new faith, as also what is old.

The present volume brings the biography up to 1866, the year of foundation of the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Samaj

PROSANTO KUMAR SEN.

BAYLEY ROAD,
Patna, 1950.

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I cannot be too thankful to the Maharaja of Pithapuram for the great interest he has taken in the progress and publication of this work. With his well-known enthusiasm for undertakings of this kind he has been helping me with historical material which will be used for a later volume. He has also placed me under great obligation by making a handsome donation as a token of his sympathy and appreciation.

P. K. SEN.

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FOREWORD

Many and varied are the phases through which the faith of the Brahmo Samaj has passed in its rich and gradual unfolding. To the ordinary observer, eager to classify but loth to examine deep, every one of these particular phases may appear on the surface to furnish data enough for classification, or description, of the modern theistic movement as a whole. The worship of the *Ekamevādvitīam,* the One-without-a-Second; the brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God; the cultivation of quiet contemplative Upaniṣadic piety; the emphasis on an all-round life of thought, feeling and action, on harmony in life and harmony of religions; the insistence on social reform; or the spontaneous outburst of Bhakti and revivified ritualism—each of these may thus afford an apparently easy standard of labelling or classification. But truth is thus at best but half told and half understood. What is devoutly to be wished for is a close and careful study of the evolution of this new faith as an organic whole, as distinguished from partial phases of thought, discipline or activity that are but landmarks in its onward march. Nor is only the outside observer prone to take such a partial and one-sided view. Even one within the pale of the Brahmo Samaj may be so completely under the influence of a particular idea, doctrine or discipline that he is apt to look upon that as the soul and centre of the Brahmo faith. Hence it comes to pass that while one regards the Brahmo Samaj as a mere movement of protest or dissent from Hindu orthodoxy, another extols it as pre-eminently a movement of social reform; a third condemns it as merely a sublimated form of Christianity; a fourth welcomes it as modernized Vaiṣnavism; a fifth bewails the vanishing of Vedantic *jnānamārga;* and a sixth pours cold water on it as the religion of drought where there is naught that quenches thirst and the soul is left to

wander on the Sahara of negations. In fact, the truth, —the whole truth, is in none of these, and yet there is a particle of truth in each. To tell the roots from the outspreading branches, to distinguish its basic principles from the varying manifestations, to examine its philosophy and to see how well and truly the foundations of such philosophy are laid in the depths of human nature, to watch the march of progress from negation to affirmation, from meditation to devotion, from doing to being, from doctrines to disciplines, from the arid waste of rationalism to the fertile fields of revivified ritualism : above all, to discern the hand of Providence shaping the priceless gift of a New Dispensation is a reward worth the quest of every earnest seeker after Life and Light. The author has undertaken this quest with a full sense of his own shortcomings. A child of the Samaj, brought up and nurtured in its very bosom from infancy, may he not be pardoned for the endeavour, even if the task prove too great for him?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

It is the wonder of ages—the relation of Language to Thought, of the uttered Word to the Idea that makes it, fills it, animates it. The wonder deepens when one beholds the universe of Nature as the Word of God that bodies forth the Divine Idea. And when in all affairs human,—in the history of nations, in the growth and fulness of religious faiths and fraternities, of endless forms and rituals, of varying doctrines and disciplines—one reads the language of Providence and hears the message of His unfolding purpose, the wonder turns into awe and reverence. It then becomes a perception of the all-encompassing Presence.

The history of the Brahmo Samaj is nothing but the record of the unfolding of God's increasing purpose writ in letters of gold. From before its birth in the year 1830 through all the stages of its development it is a record of Divine grace—the Divine message unfolding itself in an increasingly larger and larger measure through the thoughts, emotions and strivings of the spirit. It has broken down all altars that stand between God and man, uprooted all barriers that separate men into fenced acreages, laid the axe at the root of so-called miracles and subordinated all authority to that of God alone. But the one outstanding miracle it cannot ignore,—the miracle of the spoken Word, spoken through the pages of Nature and History, spoken through the hearts of men, aye, spoken evermore in accents clear and unmistakable through God's own chosen message-bearers.

The first of such message-bearers in the history of modern Indian Renaissance was Raja Rammohun Roy. His message was the simple message of divine unity *Ekamevā-*

dvitīam and, as an inseparable corollary to it, the message of unity of all humanity on the common plane of the worship of one God without a second. But simple as it was, it was fraught with meaning for the future of theism. To appreciate the full significance of this message, and the call to full freedom of thought, life and action which went with it, we have to turn for a moment to the era in which he was born and the various forces that determined the sphere in which he was called to work.

Bengal in the Closing Years of the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century in its closing years was quivering with excitement at the trumpet call of liberty, fraternity and equality. In Europe the times were big with possibilities. Amid the clash of arms and the crumbling of kingdoms the call rose shrill and clear, and men and nations rallied round the banner of Freedom. The French Revolution and all that followed in its train were but an indication of the spirit of the times. In India, too, the latter half of the eighteenth century wrought an unconscious revolution in the political situation and the effect of it on the social, moral and religious outlook was far-reaching. Since the battle of Plassey in 1857 a series of unlooked-for events conspired to convert the East India Company from a body of monopolists, trading under the license of the British Crown, into a veritable band of intrepid Imperialists. Thenceforth, whatever happened was to be accounted for more or less by the vision of Empire which actuated them. In 1773 the British Parliament by means of the Act of Reconstruction recognised the political character of the Company making provision for parliamentary control over its activities which had avowedly now entered upon a much larger plane than had ever been dreamt of.[1]

[1] Later, in 1833, it ceased altogether to be a commercial body and was allowed to exist as the Agent of the British Government for the administration of India.

Up to the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century India became the battle ground for supremacy between the Moghuls and the Maharattas on the one hand, and the British and other European powers on the other, until the British power was finally established in the land. Bengal and, in particular, Calcutta by reason of its strategic position on the banks of the Ganges played a conspicuous part in the fight for supremacy. Nowhere did the impact of English influence on Indian ideals make itself felt so early and in such a pronounced manner as it did within easy radius of Fort William.

Conflict of Forces

For over six centuries Bengal had been under foreign yoke, and one Muslim power after another had claimed and exacted her allegiance till, on the eve of the nineteenth century, she became a veritable apple of discord among rival claimants including some of the greatest and most go-ahead European powers. The effect of these successive waves upon the social, moral and religious fabric of the Hindu community became exceedingly complex through the impact of English influence and incipient English education. Emerging from the sphere of operation of these conflicting forces, Bengal presented a piteous spectacle of a conflict of faiths and ideals, of a blind bigotry and equally blind scepticism, of rank atheism side by side with sanctimonious Brahmanism, and of an utter laxity of moral and religious discipline countenanced and supported by a pharisaic appeal to scriptural sanction in matters great and small. What applies to Bengal applies also to other parts of India at the time, only in varying measures. But everywhere the forces of disruption were fully in operation. Christianity had made no appreciable impression on Hindu life and culture,[2] and Muslim influence had left its mark on

[2] Dr. Farquhar advances an apologia and attributes this fact to the attitude of the British Government which at the outset vehemently opposed missions—See 'Modern Religious Movements in India,' pp. 8-10.

the outer fringe of Hindu society. For, the Hindu social structure being pre-eminently conservative, prevented any effective saturation with Christian or Islamic principles.

In fact, Islam was never at its best in Bengal.[3] It had been embraced largely by the lowlier classes in whom there was neither the culture nor the outlook that could enable them to accept and assimilate the best of what it could offer. It had spread among what might be called the depressed. or suppressed, classes and the actual religion which they professed and practised was a depressed form of Islam. It often verged upon idolatry and delighted in paying semi-divine honours to Pirs and Pygambars whose name was legion. In manners and customs and in the daily routine of religious duties the bulk of the Muslims in the villages followed pretty much the same lines as idolatrous Hindus with only this difference that certain other customary religious duties such as *namāz* and the like, assignable to the religion of Islam, were superposed to justify their existence as followers of the Prophet. The Hindus, on the other hand, followed their ordinary routine of social and religious duties, more or less mechanically, indulging in forms and rituals that had come down from their ancestors but had long ceased to convey any meaning except that they had come to be regarded as the hall-mark of Hinduism. They would never scruple to pay semi-divine honours to Mahomedan saints, thereby adding some more quasi-deities to the already overcrowded pantheon of the ignorant and

[3] See the observations of Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan on the failure of Hinduism to absorb what is best in Islam. "Hinduism has not sufficiently profited from her experience of Islam. It is quite true the reform movements such as those of Chaitanya, Kabir and Nanak were much influenced by the spirit of Islam. The monotheistic elements of Hinduism have become more emphasized after the spread of Islam in India. Yet Hinduism could easily have learnt more. Ignorance of others' faiths is the mother of injustice and error. Some of the practices of the uncultured Moslems blinded the eyes of the Hindus to the ideals of Islam. While there is much for Islam to learn from a sympathetic understanding of Hinduism, there is also much for Hinduism to learn from Islam. For one thing, Hinduism must learn to be less compromising and more emphatic in its denunciation of imperfect conceptions of God and cruder modes of worship."—'The Heart of Hinduism', pp. 87-88.

the unlettered. Here is a curious illustration of how extremes could meet in religion, for it was the extreme of ignorance and unreality that must answer for such an alliance between votaries of what are usually regarded as contrary faiths.

To take another illustration. Bengal is the common home of Vaiṣnavism and Śāktaism. No two sects can be more unlike each other in the doctrines and disciplines which they inculcate and the general outlook and attitude of life that they respectively induce. But the difference is appreciable only to the devotee eager to go into the heart of religion and bring his life into line with it. With a soulless religion, reduced to a set of conventions and customs, ceremonials and festivals, it matters little whether one professes Vaiṣnavism or Śāktaism, or even indifferentism or atheism. So was it in the days of Rammohun. Śākta or Śaiva, Vaiṣnava or Vedāntin, one had only to conform to the outward religion that went by the name of Hinduism to be counted as of the orthodox fold. With the large majority religion was but another name for convention, and the practice of it consisted in conforming to certain forms and rituals from which all spirit had departed and, what was worse, some of these rites and ceremonies were revolting to the moral sense of any but the most perverted mind.

LITERATURE

The literature of a country, though not always an unfailing index, often affords a safe clue to the trend of development of the popular mind. The literature of Bengal about the end of the eighteenth century presents an illustration of the fusion of popular Hinduism and Mahomedanism in their decadent phase, as also of the perverted moral taste of the times. There are recorded instances of Mussalmans well-known as recognised Vaiṣnav poets, and of a few others who attained their fame as Śākta poets, each class respectively singing the praises of Radha-Krishna, or of Kāli, without renouncing their faith or having to leave the

Muslim community to which they belonged. The chronicler of the times also makes honourable mention of a Portugese Christian who did not find it inconsistent with his faith to sing the praises of Kāli in verses that have come down to this day.[4]

One of the potent instruments for the diffusion of popular religion in those days was the system of extempore ministrelsy known as *Kabi* which took the form of versified disputation on religious and mythological topics such as scenes from the Mahabhārata, the Rāmāyana and the Purāṇas by two rival parties. It served the purpose both of entertainment and edification, and in proper hands would be a powerful means of diffusion of scriptural knowledge. In many cases the talent of the performers was undoubtedly of a high order. But the level of excellence came to be determined, as usual, not only by the talent of the artistes but also by the taste of the auditors they catered for. Thus it came to pass that the standard of *Kabi,* as also of *Pānchāli* and *Tarjā* which were performances of a kindred nature with some characteristic differences, had gone down so low that only poetasters of a very low order could take it upon themselves to conduct them for the delectation of the degenerate who revelled in them. The worst of the vices that characterized Bengali society at the time were unhesitatingly ascribed to the gods and goddesses and, as if to lend divine sanction to them, the deities were represented in these versified effusions as well as in other literary productions as libertines and profligates of the worst type. The courts of the time such as the court of Raja Krishna Chandra of Nadia and of the Mahomedan princes gave ample encouragement to these so-called artistic and intellectual pastimes. In fact, it was there that all these forces of mischief were focussed.[5]

[4] See 'History of Modern Bengali Literature' by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen for instances of Vaiṣnav and Śākta versifiers from amongst professed Mahomedans and Christians.

[5] See 'History of Modern Bengali Literature' by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen. There were other idle and cruel pastimes greatly in

Brahmin Priesthood

The people's extremity is the priest's opportunity. Threatened with moral bankruptcy, man casts about for a counterfeit that may pass for current coin in the realm of religion. When worship becomes a blind propitiation of the deity one may as well perform it by proxy: and who can act the proxy better than the priest? When the springs of prayer and piety are dead, wherewith can worship be performed? What easier substitute than the almighty penny? When righteousness withers, how can society be sustained but by the steel frame of caste? Thus, Bengal in the depths of her degradation presented a mournful spectacle, of a caste-ridden, convention-ridden, priest-ridden country. The situation is well portrayed in the following passage from the pen of an orthodox Hindu[6]: —

Among the Hindus of the time the Brahmins were all in all. In fact, Hindu society regarded and worshipped the Brahmins as the very gods. People thought that their path to heaven would be free if they could appease the Brahmins. One regarded with disfavour by the Brahmin was ostracised and had to live a life of abject misery. No one would accept water from his hands and even the services of the fuller and the barber would be denied him. It did not matter whether one had those virtues that alone would entitle one to be called a Brahmin, or whether one had the faith and the force of character befitting a Brahmin. To command the consideration, respect and even reverence of all people what was necessary was just to bear the sacred thread. 'He who knows Brahman is a Brahmin' is a saying which the Brahmins of the time had completely forgotten. They had nothing to do with religion or morality. It is the duty of the Brahmin to instruct the people in morals and religion, but they had forgotten and forsaken all these for their mess of pottage. They were content with the gold and silver which they earned by offering the dust of their feet to the Sudras.

vogue which showed the degeneration of the average man of the time such as cock fights, bulbul fights, ram fights, bull fights, etc.

[6] 'Life of Raja Ramnohun Roy' in Bengali by Upendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya published from *Basumati* Office.

The Sudras were excluded from the study not only of the Vedas but of all scriptures. The Brahmins took every opportunity to impress and enjoin on the Sudras that they would be thrown into hell if they dared touch the Vedas and the Sudras with bowed head obeyed the injunction and acted accordingly.[7] In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that the Sudras of the time deprived of every social right lived a life of virtual serfdom.

The Place of Woman

Another index to the spiritual condition of a people is to be found in the place that it assigns to woman. Woman in ancient India had always occupied an honoured place. Though the modern western idea of equality of woman with man had never any analogue in ancient Indian civilization, woman had in the Vedic times been assigned a distinctive place—a place of co-ordinate authority with man in domestic and social economy. The names of Gargi, Maitreyi, Arundhati and a host of others are household words to represent intellectual and spiritual elevation attained by woman. Many a sacrament to this day is impossible of performance without the wife taking her distinctive part in it. But numerous circumstances, internal as well as external, had conspired to take away from woman the high position justly assigned to her. We find in Manu and various other works of authority quite a different view tending to reduce her to a subordinate position. Moreover, centuries of subjection and successive waves of foreign aggression had their inevitable effect on the social and domestic frame-work of Hindu India. And woman was the greatest sufferer of all.

In the midst of constant war and strife the protection of woman grew into a problem by itself. No wonder that

[7] This prejudice among the narrow-minded can scarcely be said to have died out even in later times. As late as 1920 there was the case of a Mahomedan student in a Calcutta College who had taken up one of the higher courses in Sanskrit. Every endeavour possible was made by the Professor in charge of Sanskrit, who was a Brahmin, to avert the catastrophe of teaching a *mleccha* the divine mystery of the Vedas.

she gradually came to be regarded almost as a piece of chattel difficult of protection and calling for the extremest of devices to be adopted on her behalf to save the sanctity of her person. The custom of *purdah*[8], the practice of women in a body immolating themselves in fire when a city lay beseiged, and the custom that grew up later of widows following their husbands to the funeral pyre have to a large extent a political origin. But social and political expedients have a knack of getting rooted down to the soil and thus continuing long after their *rationale* has become extinct. Whatever might have been the causes, the fact remains that the position of woman in Bengal at the close of the eighteenth century was little short of insufferable. The condition of the widow was particularly deplorable. If she clung to life, a life of enforced austerity, abstinence and subjection must be her portion. The harshness and contumely to which she was subjected often led her voluntarily to prefer the funeral pyre and thus to put an end to her miserable existence. The practice of suttee thus resting on the so-called sanction of the Śāstras secured for itself an additional sanction resting on the pain and suffering, the anguish and ignominy, to which the woman bereft of her husband was exposed. As for those widows who would cling to life despite the horrors of widowhood, there were not wanting men prepared to go the length of dragging them to the funeral pyre and thus compelling co-cremation[9]. When to all these is added the practice of Kulinism

[8] The practice of seclusion of women (*purdah*) is essentially Mahomedan. Its adoption by Hindus may be due partly to association with Mahomedans and partly as a measure of protection against invaders.

[9] "The extent to which human life was annually sacrificed may be estimated from the returns made by the police to the Bengal Government for a single year. Those returns show that in the year 1823, the number of widows who burned on the funeral piles of their husbands within the Bengal Presidency was, of the Brahman caste 234, of the Khatriya caste 35, of the Vaisya caste 14, of the Sudra caste 292, total 575. Of this total 340 widows thus perished within the limits of the Calcutta Court of Circuit which shows that the returns were given with accuracy only for the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta, and suggests the inference that the number sacrificed beyond that limit was much greater than that actually reported; besides that, the returns

which made it socially permissible for even a hundred women to be given in marriage to one Kulin Brahmin by reason of his *kul* (high status), and also the practice of child marriage, the picture of social tyranny and consequent degradation that presents itself defies all parallel[10].

Education

Such were the negative and positive forces of disruption at work. Add to all this the absence at that time of any regularized system of education calculated to foster a particular type of culture. The time-honoured *Tols,* the centres of learning and wisdom in the days of old, had suffered from the general degeneration all round, and had become hot-beds of cant, given to a system of so called education which merely consisted in memorising of texts. With the secular as well as the sacerdotal classes bread and butter had become the aim and object of education. The Brahmins supposed to be the repository of ancient religious lore were as a rule perfectly content if they could tell off

profess to extend only to the Bengal Presidency, leaving entirely out of view the too other Indian Presidencies where, although the practice was certainly not so prevalent as in Bengal, it was by no means wholly unknown. The ages of the different individuals are also included in the returns to which I have referred and they exhibit another feature of this horrible picture. Of these 575 victims of 1823, 109 were above sixty years of age, 226 were from forty to sixty; 208 were from twenty to forty, and 32 were under twenty years of age. Thus the tenderness and beauty of youth, the ripened years and affection of the venerable matron and the feebleness and decrepitude of old age alike fell victims. I have not in my possession at this time the official returns for any other year than that which I have quoted, but I have no reason to suppose that those of any other year, if they were within my reach, would exhibit a lesser number of victims. I believe that I speak strictly within the bounds of truth when I assert that at least from five to six hundred were annually sacrificed; and occurring as these atrocities did from day to day, and in the open face of day, there must have been on an average about two such murders perpetrated every day under the very eye of the British Government and its public functionaries, ever since the British obtained sovereign power in Bengal in 1765."—'A Lecture on the Life and Labours of Rammohun Roy' by W. Adam at Boston, U.S.A., 1838, printed and published at Calcutta in 1879 by G. P. Roy & Co., 21 Bowbazar Street for the Editor Rakhal Das Halder.

[10] For an authentic account of the origin and history of Kulinism see *Bānglār Sāmājic Itihās* (Social History of Bengal) compiled by Durga Charan Sanyal and edited by Fakir Chandra Dutt, pp. 25-27 and 35-36.

the few verses that were just necessary for performing the daily ministrations to their *jajmans* (disciples). The rest aspired after a bread-and-butter education suited only for wordly preferment. Urdu was still the court language and for those who required a further qualification for employment in public service, a smattering of Persian and Arabic was deemed a *sine qua non.* The *Maktabs* and *Madrasahs* were, therefore, in great request, but were not utilised for acquiring any but the most superficial knowledge. There were no doubt honourable exceptions in the case of those who went deep into the study of literature—Aryan or Semitic. But these exceptions only proved the rule.

English education had hardly made a beginning except at Serampore in the year 1800 under the auspices of the Danish Mission associated with the immortal names of Carey, Marshman and Ward. The methods adopted by these Danish Missionaries for the propagation of Christianity had the indirect effect of spreading English education in Bengal. The work of these pioneer missionaries conferred incalculable benefits on Bengal by introducing the printing press and an Indian type foundry and thus stimulating journalism.[11] David Hare, a Scotch watch-

[11] What reaction this had on the life and work of Rammohun Roy will presently appear as we proceed. Meanwhile, the following account of the Danish Mission will interest the reader :—

"William Carey an English Baptist arrived in Calcutta on the 11th November, 1793 and after many wanderings settled as an indigo planter near Maldah in North Bengal. Here he studied Bengali and Sanskrit, began the work of translating the Bible into Bengali, gained his experience and developed his methods. In 1800 he settled in Serampore under the Danish flag and in the same year he began to teach Sanskrit and Bengali in Lord Wellesly's College in Calcutta". Farquhar's 'Modern Religious Movements in India', p. 6.

"It was chiefly by the winning of actual converts from Hinduism by his schools, newspapers and literature that he was able to bring Christian thought effectively to bear on the Indian spirit. But it would have been impossible for him to make his work varied and effective had it not been for his two great colleagues—Marshman and Ward. Carey had been cobbler, Marshman a ragged-school teacher, and Ward a printer. They were all largely self-taught. They differed greatly from one another but differed in such a way as to supplement one another. Their methods of work were partly those which had been developed by Danish Missionaries in South India in the 18th century, partly new. The basis of all their work was preaching and

maker, started in right earnest in Calcutta the work of educating Indian boys in English. To him will Bengal be ever indebted for laying the first stones in the edifice of English education that soon rose up in the Province. At the time, however, when Rammohun was born and received his early education there was nothing of English education in Bengal worth mentioning, except in the shape of one or two schools conducted by Anglo-Indians to which Indian boys resorted for picking up a knowledge of spoken English, enough to qualify them as interpreters and for other like occupations.[12]

The Undying Essence of True Religion

Hitherto we have looked at the dark side of the picture, but every picture has its light as well as shade. Each of the diverse decadent faiths had its own peculiar excellence which could not fail to touch the soul of the true devotee. Behind the meaningless formulae and festivals that formed the crust, there was the kernel—the undying essence—that could not but tell. The nameless sacrifices and the gory worship of the grim goddess Kāli could not hide for ever behind the veil the Awful, the Invincible though Dark and Incomprehensible Spirit that in all ages and climes has appeared before the human soul as the Slayer of Sin and the Vanquisher of Evil—the veritable Śakti that throbs throughout creation. The worship of Śakti in spirit and in truth can never fail to inspire the true devotee with Śakti (power) from on High. Nor can true Vaiṣnavism ever die. The

translation of the Bible. To this they added the publication of literature of many types and very effective journalism. They had a printing press and in it Indian type was first founded and used. They laid great stress on education and opened numerous schools around them for both boys and girls. They opened boarding schools and orphanages. They even attempted medical work and did not neglect the lepers. They were most eager to send out native missionaries to preach throughout the country and with that in view built a great college in Serampore and received from the King of Denmark authority to confer degrees". *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

[12] There was a great demand for *do-bhashias* (literally bi-linguists, *i.e.*, interpreters) consequent upon the opening of the Supreme Court of Judicature and also due to the exigencies of trade and commerce.

wealth of love and Bhakti in the heart of the true Bhakta is undying and inexhaustible. Despite the overgrown outwardness of rituals and festivals, of beads and rosaries and sandal and *nāmāvali,* and what not, that engage the unregenerate, the supreme inwardness of Vaiṣnavism is unchangeable and cannot but live on as a leaven for all men. And the spirit of the great Mahādeva worshipped by the devoted Śaiva in the numerous temples with which the land is studded, the spirit of the self-forgetful Śiva,[13]—He that wanders about the outskirts of towns and hamlets, among the homeless and the hapless, the ill-omened the ill-visaged and the unredeemed, He that swallows up all the poison of the universe to make His creation poison-free, He that with one flash of fire from His eye consumes all carnality in an instant, He the primal Vairāgi,—can He fail to touch the heart of the true worshipper and detach it from the snares of the world? Thus, the forces of Śakti, Bhakti and Vairāgya-Mukti were all in silent operation as undercurrents of faith in the perturbed stream of religious life in India.

There were yet other forces. We have spoken above of the proverty of Islamic spirit, taken in its highest sense, in Bengal. But we have also to consider the unconscious influence of Islam—of its iconoclastic zeal and aggressive propaganda against the overgrown mythology and symbolism of Hinduism. Let us not forget that at the heels of the invaders came traders and men of learning and piety who lived side by side with the Hindus; in the wake of Mahomed's fiery faith there came also the sweet Bhakti of the Sufi mystics and the compact communal life of the followers of the Prophet. All these made a profound impression on Hindu India which was then at the cross-roads. Here and there among the many Hindu temples

[13] Many are the significant names by which Mahādeva or Śiva is known to the Śaiva worshipper—*Bholanath* (the Self-forgetful Lord), *Neela-Kantha* or the blue-necked (owing to Mahādeva having sucked up all the poison to make creation poison-free), *Bhūtnāth* (the Lord of the Unredeemed), etc.

there rose up Musjids. Mahomedan Pirs and Fakirs like Hindu sanyasins wandered over the land. Along with the conch and gong of the Mandir were heard the deep tones and solemn chant of the *āzān* (call to prayer). Beside the elaborate rituals of popular Hinduism, people saw the strange sight of Mussalmans pausing in their work for *namaz* on the road side, on the boat-top, in fact at any place where they happened to be at the time. Such simple prayers and praise of God made every spot, howsoever secular, hallowed, every ground holy. And no idol, no image or symbol was required. It was verily the inspired *upāsanā* of that Ekamevādvitīyam, the worship of that *nirākār* (Formless) Īśwar inculcated in the hoary Hindu scriptures. And then, the unique fellowship, the beautiful brotherhood, the perfect democracy of Islam! Sultans stood side by side with faquirs for worship, men from anywhere and everywhere came in to take their meal from one common plate, the coffin carrying the dead could be shouldered by any stranger from the passing crowd that might belong to the fraternity. It was indeed, as Sister Nivedita says, "a perfect democracy in which the stains of birth, of blood, of occupation are all blotted out by the utterance of the formula of fraternity *La Ilaha illella.* However low and degraded was a man's past he may now be and do whatever he desires and can."[14] Add to all this the effect of the festivals and the pilgrimages, the dress, manners and language of the newcomers on the Hindus and the picture is well nigh complete.

The silent forces of good and evil above indicated told upon the fabric of society and brought about a veritable *yugantar* (era of transition). The religious genius of Hinduism was not too slow to take advantage of the new atmosphere in the national environment. In Rammohun Roy we see the spiritual genius of Hinduism waking up to the beginnings of a new life under the silent but sure operation of the forces mentioned above—the Śakti and

[14] 'Web of Indian Life' by Sister Nivedita.

Vairāgya-mukti of Hinduism fired with the iconoclasm of Islam and manifesting itself in a fearless declaration of un-idolatrous Hinduism based on the Vedānta. While his early training in Arabic and Persian and his close study of Islamic scriptures had a great deal to do with that revolt against all forms of idolatry which characterized his life and work, the standpoint he took was essentially Hindu. Like the stream that issues from the mountain and yet lashes itself into fury against its mountanous home till it breaks down all barriers and finds an outlet for itself, the spirit of Rammohun, essentially Hindu, lashed itself into fury against the Hinduism of the day till, breaking down all bonds of idolatry and meaningless ritualism, it found its own bed in the contemplative Reason of the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras.

Vein of Monotheism in Hinduism

The quintessence of Hinduism is monotheism. Amid its various manifestations—the pantheism of the philosophic few, the polytheism of the ignorant and the ceremonialism of the many—the heart of Hinduism rests in the Unity of God. In the pre-Vedic times the ancestors of the Great Aryan family worshipped the One True God and Him alone. We find this simple faith in Divine Unity welling up from the deep founts of Vedic hymnal lore. Some of the hymns are essentially monotheistic, while others such as those addressed to Dawn, Sun, Moon, Air, Fire, Soma and the like are polytheistic or at best pantheistic in their tendency. Yet through all it is clear there runs one vein, namely, the recognition by the ancient Rishis of a Unity beneath all the various objects of adoration, the fundamental fact that God is the only reality or substance of the Universe. "There is but One though the poets call him by different names". The personality of the Divine Being, however, becomes lost in the Vedas in a vast and all-pervading Nature-Presence which clothes itself in innumerable elementary forms—a conception of Unity which is far from

being hostile to polytheism. When God is conceived as the substance of all things, He as such stands related to all; and the next step, in the popular mind, is the deification of the forces of Nature resulting in the birth of a mythology.[15] While all this and more may be said against the Vedas[16] and the Brāhmaṇs,[17] the Upaniṣads form a class of themselves clearly distinguishable from the rest.

This conception of Divine unity with its resultant, that of universal brotherhood, in a more or less pronounced form has again and again burst forth in the shape of reform movements which, despite bitter opposition on the part of the orthodoxy, have from time to time purged Hindu religion and society of impurities and re-established them on the basis of truth, love and purity. Between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries three such movements arose led by Chaitanya, Kabir and Nanak respectively. They all preached the Unity of the Godhead, they all abjured caste-distinctions and they all admitted Mahomedans into their folds.[18] The vicissitudes through which

[15] Hence it is that the Vedic faith has been called by other names such as Chrematheistic Physiolatry or Henotheism in which each divinity is in turn worshipped as if it were the greatest or the only god recognised. Says Max Muller in his 'Lectures on the Origin of Religion', "Henotheism is an imperfect kind of monotheism in which God is thought of as One only because others had not yet presented themselves to the mind, a monotheism of which polytheism is not the contradiction but the natural development".

[16] There are four Vedas Rig, Yaju, Sāma and Atharva of which the Rig-Veda is the most ancient and the most important. A Veda consists of two portions—the one poetical and the other prose. The poetical portion consists of hymns addressed to numerous deities, such as the sky, the air, the sun, the earth, fire, water, mountains, rivers. The prose portions, the so-called Brāhmaṇas contain dissertations on the various sacrifices, mixed up with a quantity of miscellaneous matter some of which is of little real value. At the end of some of the Brāhmaṇas come the Upaniṣads, which are a sort of appendix, and are also called 'Vedanta' (end of the Veda). These contain the essentials of that philosophy which goes by the name of Vedānta philosophy and which was reduced to a system in the Vedanta-sūtras.

[17] Thus it will appear that the Vedic hymns and the Brāhmaṇas may in one sense be said to teach a polytheistic or, to speak in Max Muller's phraseology a henotheistic and not a monotheistic religion. But it will be seen as we proceed that whenever Rammohun spoke of the Vedas he referred to the Upaniṣads and not to the hymnal or the ritualistic portion which formed the bulk of these ancient scriptures.

[18] The catholicity of Kabir was so great that to this day Mahomedans claim him as one of their persuasion. The thesis of one of Nanak's

these reforming movements passed and the diverse forms which they ultimately took are beyond the scope of this work. It is common knowledge that they finally lapsed back into orthodox Hinduism divested of many of their essentials, some unessentials taking the place of the essentials and serving to distinguish them into separate sects of Hindus. Yet it cannot be said that the spirit which underlay these reforms has been exhausted,—no more than the rich heritage received from the Rishi fathers of old.

Thus with the unclaimed heritage of divine unity coming down from the ancient Rishis, with the unseen impetus of the recent reform movements and with the unspeakable dynamic force of the early nineteenth century there dawned in India a new era of reform and Rammohun Roy was called to play the part of the pioneer in this new reform.

earliest sermons was 'There are neither Hindus nor Mahomedans'. The way in which Chaitanya, a highborn Brahmin converted a couple of murderously inclined ruffians and a Mahomedan Governor and a Kazi to his religion of love are among the most inspiring episodes of his exemplary life"—P. N. Bose's 'Hindu Muslim Amity', pp. 2, 3.

CHAPTER II

RAMMOHUN THE MAN

The real biography of Rammohun is to be read in his life-work—a life full of sustained strivings in various fields social, political and religious; full of courage, sincerity and singleness of purpose, of indomitable energy and fiery enthusiasm such as has seldom been equalled in any part of the world. Much of this is happily reflected in his prolific writings in the English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu languages, and thus remains as a heritage to generations unborn. For the purpose of this treatise it is more appropriate to dive into his mind than to deal with the events of his life, save in so far as it may be necessary to furnish a frame-work for the picture.[1]

Ancestry and Early Days

Rammohun was born in the village of Radhanagar near Krishnagar in the district of Hooghli on the 22nd May, 1772.[2] He came of a respectable Brahmin family. His

[1] For a fuller biography reference may be made to Nagendra Nath Chattopadhaya's 'Life of Raja Rammohun Roy' in Bengalee—Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad, fifth edition, 1928; and 'Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy' compiled and edited by Sophia Dobson Collet and completed by a friend who calls himself 'The Continuator'. The latter work has been re-edited by Hem Chandra Sarkar and printed and published at the B. M. Press, 211, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, 1913.

The continuator has hitherto remained anonymous. The author is indebted to Miss Clara E. Collet, niece of the late Sophia Dobson Collet for removing the anonymity. Miss Collet's letter will be found in Appendix A.

[2] There is some uncertainty as to the year and date of his birth. The vear most frequently accepted is that given on his tombstone namely 1774. His biographer Miss S. D. Collet gives certain reasons for preferring the earlier date, which is accepted in this work. See Miss Collet's 'Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy', p. 1.

It may be noted that this earlier date agrees with the date given by Monier Monier Williams in R. A. S. Journal, January, 1881, p. 4. (See Encyclopoedia Britannica, 9th Edition, article 'The Brahmo Samaj'); with the date adopted by Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore in his Bengali address entitled 'My Twenty-five Years' Experience in the

great grand-father Krishna Chandra Banerji saw service under the Nawab of Bengal and was honoured with the title of 'Roy Roy', afterwards contracted into 'Roy', which has since been retained as the designation of the family in place of the caste name 'Banerji' (Bandopādhyāya).

Braja Benode, the third son of Krishna Chandra and the grandfather of Rammohun, served the Nawab Siraj-ud-Doula in a distinguished capacity; but, on account of some ill-treatment accorded to him, he quitted the employment and spent the rest of his life at home. He had five sons of whom Ramkanta, the fifth, was the father of Rammohun. Rammohun's paternal ancestors were Vaiṣnavas noted for their piety and devotion. His maternal ancestors were staunch Śāktas, though it appears that Rammohan's mother Tarini Debi (referred to as *Phul-Thakurani,* or wife of the fifth son) whole-heartedly conformed to the faith and practices of the Vaiṣnava family into which she was married. Both the parents were thus pious Hindus, and there can be no doubt that their piety left its impress on the life of Rammohun. "It is said", says his biographer, "that his reverence for Viṣnu was at one time so great that he would not even take a draught of water without first reciting a chapter of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa".[3] Very early in life Rammohun showed signs of conspicuous talent and Ramkanta spared no pains to give him an excellent education. He received his early instruction in the village school (*Pāthśālā*) where he made some progress in Bengali. But Bengali was not of much consequence in those days. Persian was still the Court language and a knowledge of it was indispensable. He received private tuition in Persian at home under a Maulvi and, later on, he was sent to Patna, then a great centre of Islamic learn-

Brahmo Samaj' published in 1864 and also with that given on the memorial tablet placed on the gate of his Maniktala house in Calcutta by the Government (Department of Preservation of Ancient Monuments).

[3] 'Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy, compiled and edited by the late Sophia Dobson Collet and completed by a friend'—London, Harold Collet, 20, Bucklesbury, 1900—Indian edition by H. C. Carkar, 1914.

ing for a proper study of Arabic and Persian. There he read Euclid and Aristotle in Arabic, and also made a study of the Qoran and Qoranic literature. The education in Arabic and Persian which he thus received at Patna for three or four years led to his initiation into the mystic poetry and philosophy of the ancient Sufis which exercised a fascination over him all his life. He was essentially of a religious and enquiring temperament. His friend William Adam wrote of him in 1826 "He seems to have been religiously disposed from his early youth having proposed to seclude himself from the world as a Sanyasi, or devotee, at the age of fourteen from which he was only dissuaded by the entreaties of his mother". While yet very young his father had had Rammohun married three times. This was in perfect conformity with the usuage of Kulin Brahmins.[1] Of these the first died at a very early age. The second was the mother of his two sons Radhaprasad and Ramaprasad, and died in 1824. The third survived him.

The three or four years at Patna during which Rammohun read with avidity all that was available to him of Islamic literature were calculated to exercise an unsettling effect on his orthodox Hindu predilections. Ramkanta then sent his son, aged about twelve, to Benares for the study of Sanskrit. In a short time Rammohun became well-versed in the literature, law and philosophy of his people, specially the Upaniṣads, and returned to Radhanagar. While this education made him an ardent admirer and advocate of the monotheistic religion inculcated in the Upaniṣads, it shook his faith in the popular Hindu religion of the day.

In Quest of Truth

On his return home he fearlessly attacked the meaningless ceremonialism and the priest-ridden idolatry which prevailed all round in the name of Hinduism. This led to an estrangement between him and his father, and made

[1] See Chap. I, p. 10 on Kulinism.

him leave his paternal roof. In search of truth he went out on travel which was not confined to India alone but extended to far-off Thibet. According to one version it is said, at or about this time, when he was aged about sixteen he published a work denouncing the idolatry of Hinduism which greatly incensed his father and led to his expulsion from home, that thus turned out of hearth and home, the boy took to wandering in quest of knowledge and experience. No such book is, however, extant and the testimony of Dr. Lant Carpenter who records quite a different account as having been given to him by the Raja himself in London and at Stapleton Grove, Bristol, seems to cast doubt on the story of expulsion. Dr. Carpenter observes:—"Without disputing the authority of his father, he often sought from him information as to the reasons of his faith; he obtained no satisfaction and he at last determined at the early age of fifteen to leave the paternal home and sojourn for a time in Thibet, that he might see another form of religious faith.

He spent two or three years in that country, and often excited the anger of the worshippers of the Lama by his rejection of their doctrine that this pretended deity—a living man—was the Creator and Preserver of the world. In these circumstances he experienced the soothing kindness of the female part of the family; and his gentle, feeling heart latterly dwelt with deep interest, at the distance of more than forty years, on the recollections of that period which, he said, had made him always feel respect and gratitude towards the female sex."

Return from Travels

After about three years of travel Rammohun returned to his father, when he was about twenty years old and on his return was taken back with great kindness and affection. It appears, however, that intellectually and spiritually the paternal roof proved inhospitable and we learn from his friend and contemporary William Adam, that Rammohun after relinquishing idolatry "was obliged to reside for ten

or twelve years at Benares at a distance from his friends and relatives who lived on the family estate at Burdwan, in Bengal." The death of his father in 1803 led him to remove from Benares and proceed in his own way unhampered by consideration of sentiment towards his father, with whom he appears to have been reconciled in the father's last moments.

'A Gift to Monotheists'

It was about this time that Rammohun moved to Murshidabad, the old Moghul Capital of Bengal. There he published his first work entitled Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin, or 'A gift to Monotheists'—a treatise in Persian with an Arabic preface. This work shows in a considerable measure the influence on Rammohun's mind and style of writing of his studies in Islamic scriptures at Patna. In matter, it is a deistic dissertation on the futility of all existing religions and the fatuities of religious leaders. In form, it is cast in a logical mould and abounds with logical and philosophical terms. It is an essay seeking to establish that the real root of all religions is faith in one Supreme Being, and that all the rest is mere excrescence. But the views expressed are somewhat too sweeping and immature, as will appear on a comparison with his later writings.

Service Under the East India Company

Rammohun now entered service under the East India Company as a clerk in the Collectorate under Mr. John Digby, the Collector of Rangpur. He appears to have worked under him at different stations where Mr. Digby was posted, namely, Ramgarh, Bhagalpur and Rangpur, but it is at the last-named station that Rammohun stayed the longest and hence, as his biographer says, tradition chiefly connects the name of Rammohun with Digby at Rangpur. He was subsequently promoted to the post of *Dewan* "the principal native officer in the collection of revenues", in Mr. Digby's own words, "in the district of which I was for

five years Collector in the East India Company's Civil Service".[5]

It appears from Mr. Digby's statement that Rammohun commenced the study of English in his twenty-fourth year (1796). In his twenty-ninth year 1801 he could speak it well enough to be understood "but could not write it with any degree of correctness". Mr. Digby was a lover of literature and coming to know Rammohun well, he began to entertain a great regard for him. A friendship sprang up between them which was of considerable help to Rammohun especially in his endeavour to attain case and mastery over the English language. During his stay at Rangpur Rammohun carried on religious controversies with the Pundits, wrote tracts in Persian, translated portions of the Vedānta, studied the Tantras with the help of Hariharānanda Tīrthaswāmī (a man of distinguished position and attainments in the Tantric world), and made a study of the Kalpa Sūtras and other Jaina scriptures. Thus it was a time of strenuous preparation for his future work. Besides these, he used to hold vigorous religious discussions every evening at his residence in which he used all the weapons of his armoury in exposing the absurdities of idolatry. As a result of these there arose a hostile party, under one Gourikanta Bhattacharya which organized counter-meetings and controversies in support of Hindu orthodoxy.

Retirement and Return Home

After about ten years Rammohun retired from service with a view to find more time for the work which lay nearer his heart. Leaving Government service he went home to stay with his mother awhile. But his controversies with the Pundits and his persistent attacks on the popular Hinduism of the day roused the animosity of his neighbours who subjected him to endless persecutions. Eventually, these

[5] Mr. Digby's introductory account of the Translation of Kena Upaniṣad and Abridgment of the Vedānta by Rammohun in the London Re-print, 1917. The district referred to in the above extract is Rangpur.

brought about the displeasure of his mother Tarini Debi who obliged Rammohun to quit the house. He then went to Raghunathpur, a neighbouring village, where he built a house on the site of an old burning ground and lived for a time with his family. There in front of his house he built a *Mancha* or altar, for the purpose of worship of God in spirit and in truth. On each side of the *Mancha* he inscribed *Om* (Or *Aum*) the sacred syllable denoting the Hindu Trinity—the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer—*Tat-sat* "That (or It) is", and *Ekamevādvitīyam,* One without a Second. Here he offered his prayers thrice a day; and it is said that, later, while he used on occasions to go to Calcutta or to return therefrom to Raghunathpur, he would first walk round (*pradakṣṣin*) this *Mancha* and there offer his prayers. Thus living in a society sunk in idolatry, superstition and nameless ritualism, this votary of the Spirit-God worshipped from day to day The One without a Second, in spirit and in truth, and in the grand solitude of his independence.

Vow to Abolish Suttee

There was one fateful event that happened during this period which left an indelible impress on Rammohun's mind and acted on him as a powerful impetus later in life, to the everlasting benefit of his country. Rammohun had an elder brother named Jaganmohan who died in 1811. His wife who was devotedly attached to him burnt herself on his funeral pyre. Rammohun had tried to dissuade her from it but had failed. When, however, she actually felt the flames on her person she made an attempt to get up and escape. But the orthodox relations dreading such escape as almost an act of heresy and sacrilege managed to keep her pinned down to the pyre by means of bamboo poles while, with the noise of tom-toms and other instruments, they drowned her frantic shrieks. Rammohun though a witness of this awful scene failing to help her out of such a tragic end was stricken with pity and remorse. He there and then

took the vow that he would never rest till the inhuman practice of *Suttee* was abolished. How faithfully he kept this vow and with what consummate energy and skill he accomplished his great object will appear later on. So great was the agitation engineered by the blind Hindu orthodoxy of the day, in favour of its retention that, but for Rammohun's indefatigable exertions and powerful moral support it would hardly have been possible for Lord William Bentick, the then Viceroy and Governor-General of India, actuated as he was by the most humane sentiments and the best of intentions, to abolish the Suttee. In 1829 the Suttee Act was passed and the inhuman practice put down for ever. In welcoming the Raja four years after on his arrival in London Rev. J. Fox, a noted Englishman of the day, rightly observed. "There is no doubt that it was greatly through his firmness, his enlightened reasonings, and his persevering efforts, that the Government of Bengal at last thought themselves enabled to interdict the immolation of widows. His arguments and his appeals to ancient authorities held sacred by the Brahmins, enlightened the minds of many of them; and made the merciful intervention of Lord William Bentinck and his Council no longer regarded by them, and by persons connected with the East India Company at home, as an interference with the religion of the Hindus."

ENTERING THE ARENA

The year 1814 saw Rammohun settled down at Calcutta where he had purchased a garden house at Maniktola, and there he soon began his life work in right earnest. There was in those days in and about Calcutta a galaxy of foreign intellectuals who have by their labours left their mark on the Indian social and educational history of the day,—men of the calibre of Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Horace Hayman Wilson, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Sir William Jones, Sir Hyde East, W. Adam and the like. The last mentioned of these played the part of an active comrade

and co-adjutor with Rammohan later on. Thus the atmosphere was congenial to Rammohun and favourable for his work. The trio of Baptist missionaries, Carey, Marshman and Ward, having been prohibited by the British Government from making their headquarters for their work of evangelization within British possessions, had settled down in Serampore, within easy distance of Calcutta, under the protection of the Danish Flag.[6] There they had set up a printing press and a foundry for the purpose of disseminating Christian doctrines through the medium of English as well as of the vernacular of the Province. Nothing could be more welcome to Rammohun and more akin to his active propaganda, for he had now set his heart on waging war against the current idolatry and superstition, and on reviving the unidolatrous Hindu monotheism of old.

Fight with Hindu Orthodoxy

With this object he first published at considerable expense the Sanskrit original with annotations of the Katha Upaniṣad, the Bajasaneya Samhitā Upaniṣad, the Talabakār Upaniṣad and the Mundak and Mandukya Upaniṣads, and distributed them free. In the year 1815 he published the Vedānta Sūtras in Bengali. In 1816 came the Abridgment of the Vedānta in Bengali, Urdu and English and also translations of the Kena and Īśa Upaniṣads into Bengali and English. In 1817 followed translations of the Katha and Mundaka Upaniṣads into Bengali and English and in 1818 a translation of the Mandukya Upaniṣad into Bengali. In 1817 there also appeared in English "A Defence of Hindu Theism" and 'A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas'. These publications appearing in quick succession one after another caused a great commotion in the orthodox camp. Criticisms and controversies followed. But Rammohun was not to be silenced. The next four or five years saw Rammohun vigorously engaged

[6] See *supra*, p. 11.

in refuting with consummate skill the arguments in support of Hindu symbolism and priestcraft. A Bhattacharya Brahman[7] published a criticism under the caption 'Vedānta Chandrikā' to which Rammohun replied in 1817. There appeared another publication from the pen of a Vaiṣnava Goswāmi advocating idol or image worship. Rammohun's counter publication appeared in 1818. In this year Rammohun also published the Vedānta Sūtras in original Sanskrit along with commentaries. In 1819 (Sak 1741) he published in Bengali a tract styled *Avataraṇika* or Introduction (to the worship of Brahman). In 1820 (Sak 1742) Rammohun published in Bengali his reply to a critic, who had charged him with having kept back and concealed the real purport of the Vedas. In 1821 were published Four Questions by one over the pseudonym "An Would-be-Founder of Religion" attacking Rammohun's views. In 1822 (Sak. 1744) Rammohun published his answers to those questions. These brought forth a treatise of 225 pages under the title *Pāshandapeeraṇa* or "Scourge for the wicked". Rammohun published a rejoinder under the title *Pathyapradāna* or 'Diet for the sick by one who laments his inability to perform all righteousness'. This silenced his opponent. Apart from this continual controversy through print he carried on disputations with Pandits learned in the Śāstras. The one held at Calcutta in 1819 with Subrahmanya Śāstri of Madras deserves special mention. It lasted the whole day and ended in the complete discomfiture of his opponent. Subrahmanya Śāstri had questioned the title of those unlearned in the Vedas, and those uninitiated in the prescribed ceremonials, to the knowledge of Brahman. Rammohun's answer to this contention was published by him in four languages—Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi and English. In 1826 (Sak. 1748) one Śaṅkar Śāstri of Madras raised another controversy and

[7] The head Pandit of the Government College at Calcutta, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, *Vide* B. Banerji's 'Dawn of India', p. 103 from which it appears that the Government College was in Fort William.

Rammohun was promptly at his post again fighting the opponent with a power of erudition and earnestness impossible to resist.

This was but one phase of his polemical activities.

Fight with Christian Orthodoxy

Another important phase was his controversy with Christian missionaries. In order to study the Christian scriptures in their original Rammohun began to learn Greek and Hebrew with the help of his friend Adam. In 1819 he met the Rev. Mr. Adam who had come out to India under the auspices of the Baptist Mission. A consumate scholar, linguist and literateur Adam was one of those men who combined in him great learning with sterling honesty and enthusiasm in the cause of truth. The friendship that sprang up between Rammohun and Adam remained unshaken even to the day that Rammohun drew his last breath. With the help of his friend and one Mr. Yates, another Christian Missionary, Rammohun commenced translating the four gospels into Bengali. This undertaking proved rather eventful. During the progress of the work, when they came to the fourth Gospel, differences arose in the matter of interpretation of essential passages, Rammohun upholding the Unitarian interpretation[8] and substantiating it by cogent and convincing arguments. This proved too trying for Yates who eventually withdrew from the undertaking. Adam, however, made a public avowal of his conversion from Trinitaranism to Unitarianism. This was sarcastically described by the scandalized critics of the day as the "fall of the second Adam"!

In 1820 Rammohun published 'The Precepts of Jesus. the Guide to Peace and Happiness', being a compilation from the four gospels of the essential teachings of Jesus, with all that savoured of dogmas and miracles studiously left out. This raised a storm of opposition from the Christian missionaries. Contrary to expectation, it was

[8] See Chapter V.

the Baptist missionaries of Serampore who attacked him most vehemently and showered invectives upon him. Far from proceeding on the principle 'He that is not against us is for us', they cast suspicion on his motives, held his method of compilation up to ridicule and roundly condemned him as a heathen, unfit to deliver himself on the Holy Bible. In fact, this opposition came as the greatest surprise of his life. Nothing daunted, Rammohun published in close succession three 'Appeals to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus.' In these he surpassed himself in the accuracy, clearness and perspicuity of his exposition, in the thoroughness and depth of his research, in the dignity of his self-restraint, and in his transparent sympathy and charity towards his opponents. Indeed, his writings on this subject will go down to posterity as a model for all controversialists. To complete the list of his religious and theological writings, may be mentioned the 'Meaning of Gayatri' in Bengali and English, his controversy with Tytler, a Christian divine, *Guru-pādukā* and various other tracts.

MANY-SIDED PUBLIC ACTIVITIES

While his main objective was religious reformation a life so true and devout, a genius so versatile could not but flow into other channels of activity. And so it came to pass that there was hardly any field of reform that Rammohun did not traverse, hardly any effort in which he was not the first and foremost in India's renaissance. Very truly does Prof. Max Muller speak of him as First, which is the German word for Prince and which in English means First—"he who is always to the fore, he who courts the place of danger, the first place in fight, the last place in flight. Such a First was Rammohun Roy a true Prince, a real Rajah, if Rajah also, like Rex, meant originally the Steersman, the man at the helm".[9]

[9] Max Müller's 'Biographical Essays', Vol. II, p. 30. He adds, "If however, I was wrong in calling Rammohun Roy a really great man,

In upholding the cause of education and social reform, in advocating the rights of women, in pressing for the inherent right of citizens to freedom of speech and to a free press, in claiming for the submerged castes the right to better treatment and for the agriculturists the right to freedom from rack-renting, in demanding equal treatment to the white and coloured races, Rammohun was always to the fore and brought to bear upon these questions his vast erudition, his logical acumen and his polemical skill.

The Suttee Agitation

One of the burning questions of the day was the custom of Suttee or the immolation of widows on their husband's funeral pyre,[10] then prevalent. In 1818 and in 1820 he published two dissertations directed against the practice.[11] He based his arguments on Śāstric authorities and made out such an irresistible case that it caused consternation in the orthodox circles. At this time (1821) Rammohun started a weekly periodical named *Samvāda Kaumudi* with the object of inculcating the principles of higher Hinduism and of promoting the cause of social, political and educational progress. As a counter move the prominent orthodox Hindus of Calcutta established an association called the Dharma Sabhā under the Chairmanship of Raja Rādhākānta Deb of Sobhabazar. Under its auspices they published a periodical named Chandrikā. There went on a heated controversy between Rammohun and the Dharma Sabhā in the columns of these two periodicals. They levelled nameless abuses at him and subjected him to all manner of persecutions. He had already made himself most obnoxious to the orthodox by his theological writings and controversies. The Suttee controversy added fuel to the fire. On more

I wish that those who seem so jealous of greatness would at least explain on what grounds they bestow that ancient title".

[10] See pp. 9-10, *supra*.

[11] 'Conference Between An Advocate For, and An Opponent Of The Practice Of Burning Widows Alive'—'English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, pp. 321 and 333.

occasions than one his life was in danger. But Rammohun remained steadfast to the last, and by his powerful advocacy and influence considerably strengthened the hands of the Government. Fortunately, the man at the helm of the Government was no other than Lord William Bentinck whose sense of justice and humanity has left an indelible impress on the minds of the people he governed. There was, therefore, no lack of sympathy and support from the Government for the suppression of that inhuman custom. What was wanted was influential moral support from the people. Rammohun supplied this need by demonstrating from the Hindu Śāstras that self-immolation of a widow was nowhere enjoined but that what the Śastras did inculcate as essential for a widow was a life of purity, piety and self-abnegation. At last in 1829 the Suttee Act was passed. But Rammohun's opponents were not to be so dismayed. They got up an agitation against the Act and submitted a memorial to Lord William Bentinck in January 1830, signed by numerous inhabitants of Calcutta, and supported by Pandits who declared that the practice was in consonance with the Hindu scriptures and, therefore, could not be put down by law without an unwarranted interference with the religion of the Hindus. Rammohun organised a counter agitation and published an 'Abstract of the Arguments Regarding the Burning of Widows, Considered as a Religious Rite',[12] again marshalling the arguments against the practice, based on authoritative texts of Hindu Scripture and proving conclusively that the ancient law-givers laid down that the widow should live a life of chastity and purity rather than put an end to her life. The matter did not end there. The advocates appealed against the action of the Governor-General to the higher authorities in England. One of the objects that Rammohun had in undertaking later on the arduous voyage to England was to influence public opinion there against the practice, and in favour of the Suttee Act, so as to frustrate the appeal of the advocates

[12] 'English Works', Panini Office edition, p. 365.

of Suttee. For this purpose he published reprints of some of the tracts and pamphlets on the subject in England and had the satisfaction of seeing the appeal dismissed.

Subjection of Women

But this was not all that Rammohun did for the women of India. He turned the public mind from its apathy and indifference to women and demanded on their behalf "a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity". The time had not yet come for actually initiating large measures for the education of women. The function of the pioneer everywhere is to kill prejudices, provoke thought, turn peoples' mind in the right direction and thus clear the path to reform and progress. This Rammohun did in ample measure for women. The high esteem and sympathy with which he regarded women is evident throughout his writings on the claims of the fair sex. The following[13] may well be taken to be an epitome of all the points that could be advanced against the subjection of women, as then prevalent, and in point of earnestness and frankness stands unsurpassed: —

Women are in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy; consequently, the male part of the community, taking advantage of their corporeal weakness, have denied to them those excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature, and afterwards they are apt to say that women are naturally incapable of acquiring those merits. But if we give the subject consideration, we may easily ascertain whether or not your accusation against them is consistent with justice. As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may con-

[13] 'English Works', pp. 360-363—A Second Conference Between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive (1820).

sider him as deficient ; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice, pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Lilavati, Bhanumati, the wife of the prince of Karnat, and that of Kalidas, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all Śāstras : moreover, in the Vrihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad of the Yajur Veda it is clearly stated that Yājnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyī, who was able to follow and completely attain it !

Secondly, you charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised : for we constantly perceive, in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with the corpse of her deceased husband ; and yet you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

Thirdly, with regard to their trustworthiness, let us look minutely into the conduct of both sexes, and we may be equally enabled to ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women, I presume, that the number of the deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. Men are, in general, able to read and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults as women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must be acknowledged, which is, by considering others equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily from which they suffer such misery, even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burnt to death.

In the fourth place, with respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes ; for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards ; while a woman who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic.

Fifthly, the accusation of their want of virtuous knowledge is an injustice. Observe what pain, what slighting, what con-

tempt, and what afflictions their virtue enables them to support! How many kulin Brahmins are there who marry ten or fifteen wives for the sake of money, that never see the greater number of them after the day of marriage, and visit others only three or four times in the course of their life. Still amongst those women, most, even without seeing or receiving any support from their husbands, living dependent on their fathers or brothers, and suffering much distress, continue to preserve their virtue.

It was believed that Rammohun had written a book on the desirability of introducing the remarriage of Hindu widows and had in his usual manner based it on the authority of Hindu Śāstras but no such book was found among his writings. Judging from his attitude towards women in general there can hardly be any doubt that had he been spared longer, this reform would in due course have engaged his attention.

In his 'Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females' published in 1822, Rammohun sought to elucidate "the interest and care which our ancient legislators took in the promotion of the comfort of the female part of the community; and to compare the laws of female inheritance which they enacted, and which afforded that sex the opportunity of enjoyment of life, with that which moderns and our contemporaries have gradually introduced and established, to their complete privation, directly or indirectly, of most of those objects that render life agreeable". After showing up the restraints and disabilities to which the woman had in later times been subjected by law, he opined that it was not from early impressions and religious prejudices only that Hindu widows burned themselves on their husbands' funeral pyre but in order to escape by self-inflicted death the insult and ignominy which they unhappily found to be the lot of all Hindu widows. He also attributed the prevalence of

polygamy in a large measure to the restraints on female inheritance:

It is not from religious prejudices and early impressions only, that Hindu widows burn themselves on the piles of their deceased husbands, but also from their witnessing the distress in which widows of the same rank in life are involved and the insults and slights to which they are daily subjected, that they become in a great measure regardless of their existence after the death of their husbands: and this indifference accompanied with the hope of future reward held out to them leads them to the horrible act of suicide. These restraints on female inheritance encourage, in a great degree, polygamy, a frequent source of the greatest misery in native families: a grand object of Hindus being to secure a provision for their male offspring, the law, which relieves them from the necessity of giving an equal portion to their wives, removes a principal restraint on the indulgence of their inclinations in respect to the number they marry. Some of them, especially Brahmans of higher birth, marry ten, twenty or thirty women, either for some small consideration, or merely to gratify their brutal inclinations, leaving a great many of them, both during their life time and after their death, to the mercy of their own paternal relations. The evil consequences arising from such polygamy the public may easily guess, from the nature of the fact itself, without my being reduced to the mortification of particularising those which are known by the native public to be of daily occurrence. To these women there are left only three modes of conduct to pursue after the death of their husbands. 1. To live a miserable life as entire slaves to others, without indulging any hope of support from another husband. 2. To walk in the paths of unrighteousness for their maintenance and independence. 3. To die on the funeral pile of their husbands, loaded with the applause and honour of their neighbours.

To explore the matter further, he directed his attention to the general Hindu Law of inheritance. His 'Essay on the Rights of Hindoos over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal' (1830) would do credit to any lawyer and jurist deeply versed in the history of Hindu Law.

Father of Modern Indian Education

Bengal is now studded all over with schools and colleges, a large proportion of which is due to private enterprise, in which the late Iśwar Chandra Vidyāsāgar took the most prominent part. It is interesting to contemplate how the beginnings of educational enthusiasm may be traced to Rammohun as the pioneer. To begin with, he personally conducted two journals—the "Samvāda Kaumudi" in Bengali, and the 'Mirat-ul-Akhbar' (Mirror of Intelligence) in Persian—for the dissemination of useful knowledge of a historical literary, and scientific character, politics not excluded. He turned the Bengali language into a powerful medium of expression for all purposes of national uplift. He wrote text books in Bengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy and Geometry. He lent his support to all movements and organizations which were calculated even indirectly to help forward the cause of education. It was through Rammohun's encouragement and approbation that Dr. Bryce, the Church of Scotland Chaplain in Calcutta, as the latter thankfully acknowledges, presented to the General Assembly of 1824 the memorial which "first directed the attention of the Church of Scotland to British India as a field for missionary exertions on the plan that it is now successfully following out and to which this eminently gifted scholar, himself a Brahmin of high caste, had specially annexed his sanction".[14] It did not matter to Rammohun whether the schools and colleges were to be started under Christian missionary enterprise or not. It was the diffusion of useful knowledge—scientific, literary and moral—that he cared for. Later on, when Dr. Duff, the great educationist arrived in India and found the forces of prejudice arrayed against him it was Rammohun who actively helped him to secure pupils and even attended the Bible classes himself in order to dissipate the fears of the guardians in

[14] Extract from letter written by Dr. Bryce, Church of Scotland Chaplain in Calcutta. See Collet's 'Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy', p. 58 (London, 1900, Harold Collet, 20 Bucklesbury).

regard to proselytism. 'Know all things and stand fast to that which is true' was the motto which he impressed on their minds in counteracting their prejudice. Besides this, he established and maintained at his own expense an English School, where Devendranath Tagore, the second leader of the Brahmo Samaj received his early instruction.

Rammohun's name will always be remembered with gratitude for the distinguished part he took in the famous controversy of the so-called Anglicists *versus* the Orientalists as to the pattern of education to be pursued in India.

As soon as Rammohun discovered that the policy of the Government leaned more towards shaping education on oriental lines and that such policy was receiving influential support from leading English oriental scholars, he took a decisive stand against it. Himself a profound oriental scholar he would yield to none in his regard and respect for oriental learning. But his eagle eye perceived its limitations and saw the future fraught with danger, if education were pursued after a purely oriental pattern. In a country where metaphysics and philosophy had almost been overdone and men had developed a morbid feeling that "we are such stuff as dreams are made of", what was wanted was a wholesome antidote of western methods of education in natural sciences, and a more practical view of life. In his 'Letter to Lord Amherst on English Education', he accordingly urged the desirability of imparting instruction in useful branches of knowledge, instead of exclusively promoting Sanskrit learning. He expressed himself on the subject in no uncertain language, and observed:

Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedānta—'In what manner is the soul absorbed in the Deity'? 'What relation does it bear to the Divine Essence?' Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedāntic doctrines which teach them to believe that all visible things have no existence, that as father, brother etc. have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore

the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better, Again,

If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with books, instruments and other apparatus.

At the same time he was not unconscious that the Vedānta rightly handled would help his countrymen to emerge from superstition and idolatry and embrace pure Theism. It was with this purpose that he founded the Vedānta College for the kind of instruction which the Vedānta alone could give.

The efforts of Rammohun for the introduction of English system of education did not fructify till two years after his death. In 1835 was passed the famous Education Decree inaugurating the present system of English education.

Father of Constitutional Political Agitation in India

Rammohun may well be called the Father of Indian Politics. But his political horizon was not confined to India. His politics was truly cosmopolitan and sprang out of a consuming love of freedom which brooked no barriers of race, creed, colour, or country. Hence whether it was the people of *Naples* that had failed to extort a constitution from their

despotic king, or the people of Ireland that had failed to get justice and fairness from the British Government, Rammohun's active sympathies were always with the oppressed. Similarly, when he saw the triumph of liberty in the success of the French Revolution of 1830, or in the establishment of constitutional Government in *Spain,* his heart rejoiced with them in sympathy which he did not fail publicly to express. Addressing an audience at Boston, U.S.A. in 1838 his friend and colleague Adam recalled a few incidents which bring out this significant trait of Rammohun's character. He observed:

I should be doing injustice to the memory of Rammohun Roy, if I were to conclude without adverting to the deep interest he took in the progress of good Government throughout the world. His inquiries respecting this country (*i.e.,* U.S.A.) were frequent, earnest and minute ; and as far as he knew or understood, he admired its institutions, and loved and respected its people. When information reached Calcutta of the insurrection of the Isle de Leon in 1821, and of the consequent establishment of constitutional Government in Spain, he gave a public dinner in the Town Hall of Calcutta, in honour of the auspicious event. Within the period of my own acquaintance with him I well recollect the enthusiasm with which he heard of the similar temporary establishment of constitutional Government in Portugal, and the fervent good wishes with which he watched the struggle of Greece against Turkish power. The French Revolution of 1830 was another of those events that gave him very high satisfaction. Connected as India is with England, it was natural that he should share in the anxieties of British politics, narrowly watch the fluctuations of British parties and endeavour to trace the causes and consequences, of the success or failure of great public questions. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the removal of Catholic disabilities, the accession of the Whigs to power in 1830, and the introduction and success of the Reform Bill which occurred whilst he was in England—all of these were subjects which attracted and fixed his most earnest attention, and called forth

his ardent wishes, and in the case of the Reform Bill, his most active exertions.[15]

Indeed, it was his intense love of freedom—freedom not only for himself but for all—that accounted for this cosmopolitanism in his politics. In the words of his lifelong friend Adam "He would be free or not be at all * * * Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul—freedom not of action merely but of thought * * * This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment of his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him in religion and politics and still more remarkably even of those whom the laws of nature and of society subjected to his undisputed control."[16]

Nearer home in matters that affected freedom he proved an intrepid fighter and an unfailing champion of liberty. In 1823 Mr. Buckingham, the Editor of the Calcutta Journal was deported from India for having adversely criticised an administrative measure of Government; and his assistant Mr. Standford Arnot was arrested and put on board an England going vessel. This was followed by a Press Ordinance which provided that thenceforth no one was to publish a newspaper without having first obtained a license from the Governor-General in Council, signed by the Chief Secretary. Rammohun took a fearless stand against this Ordinance curtailing the freedom of the Press, and presented a memorial signed by leading gentlemen of the town of Calcutta praying for its repeal.[17] This memorial has rightly been described by his biographer Miss Collett as "the Areopagitica of Indian history". The memorial did not succeed in its object, and Rammohun

[15] Lecture on the Life and Labours of Rammohun Roy by W. Adam in Boston, U. S. A., 1838—edited and republished by Rakhal Das Haldar at Calcutta, 1879.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] 'English Works', p. 435.

and his friends went up in appeal to the King in Council.[18] Miss Collet, his brographer, makes the following observation with reference to this Appeal: —

The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Rammohun put his hand. Its stately periods and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great orators of a century ago. In a language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British History.

Unfortunately, even this crowning effort of his did not succeed, and the Privy Council did not see its way to grant the petition.

In 1827 was passed a new Jury Act. The mischief of the Act lay in the fact that thereby there had been introduced "religious distinctions into the judicial system of the country" with the result that "any natives, either Hindu or Mohammedan are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial of Christians, either European or Native, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Musalman Juror, however high he may stand in the estimation of society". The Act also denied "to Hindus and Mohammedans the honour of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Musalmans". Rammohun was the first to protest against it. He sent petitions for presentation to both the Houses of Parliament signed by many leading Hindus and Mohammedans. In a striking passage in one of these petitions, while dealing with the main subjectmatter Rammohun incidentally acquaints us with his attitude towards British rule and his views as to India's partnership in the British Empire:

Supposing that some 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge as well as

[18] 'English Works', p. 445.

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

In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge.

In 1828, the Executive Government of India passed a Regulation authorising its revenue officers to dispossess the holders of rent-free lands at their own discretion, without any judicial decree having been sought or obtained against the validity of the title to such lands. Rammohun instantly placed himself at the head of the landholders of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and in a petition of protest addressed to Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General, condemned such arbitrary and despotic proceedings. The representation failed. The matter was carried to England where too it proved unsuccessful. But it shows the promptitude with which Rammohun exposed the black spots in the administration, of which he was as ardent a well-wisher as he was of his own people.

No less important were his answers to the numerous questions put to him during his sojourn in England by the

Select Committee of the House of Commons on a variety of subjects vitally affecting good Government. They show the breadth and accuracy of the Raja's knowledge of the administration of this country, and the unfailing sympathy for his people which breathed through them. In his answers on the Judicial and on the Revenue systems of India he had to touch upon a vast variety of topics, such as appointment of native assessors in the civil courts; the separation of judicial from revenue functions; the separation of judicial from executive functions; the codification of the criminal and other laws of India; the proportion of Indian revenues expended in England, in other words, the drain of Indian money to foreign countries without any hope of return—subjects which present problems still unsolved. It was only a Rammohun who could have dealt with all these questions with the same insight and authority as he did the Vedānta and the Precepts of Jesus.

Temple of Catholic Worship

Side by side with this incessant quest after knowledge, freedom, happiness for all, there was the insatiable hunger and thirst of his soul after the bringing together of people of all races and creeds in one catholic worship of the common Father of all. That was to be the crowning act of his life. To that end he had to go through much preparation, much thought and research, much estrangement from his near and dear ones, till in 1830 on the 23rd January (corresponding to the 11th of Magh 1751 Sak) he was able to throw open the doors of the First Temple of Universal Worship of The One without a Second—an epoch-making event. The Trust Deed dated January 8, 1830 is a unique document. It marked the advent of Universalism in actual worship in the Temple "to be used, occupied, enjoyed applied and appropriated as and for a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious and devout manner". The worship was to be so

conducted as would not only tend "to the promotion of the 'contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe", but also "to the promotion of charity morality, piety, benevolence and virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds". Thus the Trust Deed was not a mere legal document. It heralded the beginning of the Brahmo Samaj which in the fullness of time was to take its stand on universal brotherhood and universal worship of the common Father of all. Later, under Devendranath Tagore, the next leader of the Brahmo Samaj, was evolved a congregation with a covenant and a public declaration of faith. It was left to the genius of Keshub Chunder Sen, the third great leader, fifty years after, to form it into an organised Church "which recognises in all prophets and saints a harmony, in all scriptures a unity and through all dispensations a continuity".[19]

Visit to Europe

As far back as 1817 Rammohun had written to his friend Digby of his intention to visit England. But every year had its packed programme of activities. His work at home had first to be completed, and a suitable opportunity was still to come. Such an opportunity now presented itself. The titular Emperor of Delhi Akbar the Second, successor to the House of Timur, was aggrieved that the allowance granted to him by the Directors of the East India Company was not in consonance with the terms of his Treaty, nor with his growing needs and requirements. He was anxious to place this as well as other grievances of his before His Britannic Majesty for redress. And who could plead his case better than Rammohun? He accordingly appointed Rammohun as Imperial Envoy to the Court of Great Britain and invested him with the title of Raja as a mark of dignity and distinction attaching to the position of Envoy. On the 9th January 1830 Rammohun addressed a letter to the

[19] For a fuller treatment of the subject *see* Chapter VI, and subsequent chapters.

Governor-General at the instance and on behalf of the Emperor, seeking to get the title recognised by the Paramount Power. "Not being anxious", he observed, "for titular distinction, I have hitherto refrained from availing myself of the honour conferred on me by His Majesty. His Majesty, however, being of opinion that it is essentially necessary for the dignity of his Royal House that I, as the representative thereof to the most powerful Monarch in Europe, and Agent for the settlement of His Majesty's affairs with the Honourable East India Company, should be invested with the title above mentioned, has graciously forwarded to me a seal engraved for the purpose at Delhi. I therefore take the liberty of laying the subject before your Lordship, etc., etc." "This measure", he added, "will, I believe, be found to be consistent with former usage as established by a resolution of Government on the subject in 1827 when at the recommendation of the then Resident Sir Charles Metcalfe in his report of 26th June of that year. His Majesty's power of conferring honorary titles on his own servants was fully recognised".[20] The attempt proved infructuous. It met with a rebuff from Secretary Stirling who in reply on the 15th January 1830 stated that "Government can neither recognise your appointment as Envoy on the part of the King of Delhi to the Court of Great Britain, nor acquiesce in His Majesty's grant of a title to you, on the occasion of that appointment".[21]

To Rammohun the visit to England was imperatively indicated for more reasons than one. The advocates of Suttee were going to appeal to the King in Council against the Suttee Act which according to them was an unwarranted interference with the religious practices of the Hindus. Rammohun felt that his presence in England would be necessary to vindicate the Government of Lord William

[20] Pol. Con. 22-1-1830, No. 51.
For full particulars as to the privilege of the King of Delhi to confer titles and addresses of honour Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerjee refers to Punjab Government Records, Delhi, Residency : 355-60—See his 'Raja Rammohun Roy's Mission to England'.
[21] Pol. Con. 22-1-1830, No. 42.

Bentinck and to show up the hollowness of the contention that the inhuman practice of Suttee had religious sanction behind it. There was also the Charter of the East India Company which was shortly to come up for renewal. Rammohun was anxious in that connection to do his part for safeguarding and enlarging the rights and privileges of his people. All these, added to his insatiate thirst for a study of the people and politics of the West, pointed to the time as specially opportune for carrying out his long cherished desire.

There had been serious difficulties in his way. Among others was a law suit which had been instituted against him by some of his relations with the direct object of disentitling him from inheritance on the ground that he had lost caste by reason of his heterodox beliefs and practices. It dragged on through its various stages. The very fact of taking a sea voyage would, according to strict orthodox notions, have involved loss of caste. Rammohun was particularly anxious not to give a fresh handle to his opponents. Even later on while in England he was habitually careful to avoid doing anything that could be construed into an act exposing him to loss of caste. Not that he had any sympathy whatever with the superstitious notions of his countrymen or with the caste system. His main object appears to have been to avoid doing anything which might be calculated to throw him outside the pale of the Hindu community and thus impair his usefulness for introducing reforms from within it. However, the litigation above referred to had ended in his success and Rammohun eagerly turned his mind to his long contemplated voyage. He sailed from Calcutta in the Albion on the 15th of November 1830 and landed in Liverpool on the 8th of April, 1831.

His fame had preceded him. As a God-fearing man of cosmopolitan sympathies, as an intrepid fighter and reformer, as a man of vast learning and erudition, as one who spoke and wrote with authority as the mouthpiece of India's aspirations, indeed as the herald of Indian renais-

sance, he was already known in the West. A letter written by Mr. J. Young then in India to Jeremy Bentham by way of introduction gives an idea of the unique importance which was attached to his mission to England:

If I were beside you, and could explain matters fully, you would comprehend the greatness of the undertaking—his going on board ship to a foreign and distant land, a thing hitherto not to be named among Hindoos, and least of all among Brahmins. His grand object, besides the natural one of satisfying his own laudable spirit of inquiry, has been to set a laudable example to his benighted countrymen: and every one of the slow and gradual moves that he has made preparatory to his actually quitting India, has been marked by the same discretion of judgment. . . . The good which this excellent and extraordinary man has already effected by his writings and example cannot be told. But for his exertions Suttee would be in full vigour at the present day, and the influence of the priesthood in all its ancient force: . . . . He is one of the most modest men I have ever met with. It is no small compliment to such a man that even a Governor-General like the present, who, though a man of the most honest intentions, suspects everyone and trusts nobody, and who knows that Rammohun Roy greatly disapproves of many of the acts of the Government, should have shown him so much respect as to furnish him with introductions to friends of rank and political influence in England.

The actual impressions of his visit on English minds and the relations it established between the East and the West far exceeded expectations and opened a new epoch. In the words of Prof. Max Muller: "For the sake of intellectual intercourse, for the sake of comparing notes, so to say, with his Aryan brothers, Rammohun Roy was the first who came from East to West, the first to join hands and to complete that world-wide circle through which henceforth, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West, and Western thought return to the East, making us feel once more that ancient brotherhood which unites the whole Aryan race, inspiring us with new hopes for a

common faith, purer and simpler than any of the ecclesiastical religions of the world, and invigorating us for acts of nobler daring in the conquest of truth than any that are inscribed in the chronicles of our divided past". Wide and varied as were his interests, the period of the Raja's sojourn in Europe coincided with some of the momentous events of British history. Apart from the mission from the King of Delhi to which he faithfully attended and in which he attained success in a large measure, he threw himself with all the earnestness of his soul into the great political movements of the day. He presented to the House of Commons the counter-petition, numerously signed from India, against the renewal of the Suttee atrocities and had the satisfaction of being present when the Suttee appeal preferred by the die-hards of India was rejected. As a recognised authority on Indian affairs he was invited to give evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the renewal of the East India Company's Charter. He did not personally appear before the Select Committee but by means of a series of "Communications to the Board of Control" gave his authoritative views on the Revenue and Judicial systems and the condition of the people in India which were duly embodied in the Blue-books. By the Statute that followed, embodying the last renewal of the Company's Charter, the East India Company was changed from a trading concern into a political organisation. He followed with intense interest the passage of the Reform Bill through all its stages and saw England passing from a practical oligarchy to a truer democracy. He saw the Act pass which abolished slavery throughout the British dominions. In fact, as his biographer puts it, he saw the New England being born out of the heart of Old England and "in him the New England first became acquainted with the New India". Before the intellectual aristocracy of the West, his dignity, suavity and oriental courtesy lent added charm to his outstanding talents. He made many friends among scientists and savants and was received into many

Original site in Stapleton Grove where Raja Rammohun's remains were first interred.

STAPLETON GROVE

an English home not only as a distinguished guest but as a friend. Public honours came thick and fast. The East India Company entertained him at a dinner attended by eighty distinguished guests, the Chairman presiding. At the Coronation of George IV he was honoured with a place amongst foreign ambassadors. The Raja was also introduced to an audience of the King (William IV) and was most graciously received. On his visit to France in autumn 1832 he was received with great royal consideration by Louis Phillippe with whom he had the honour of dining more than once. The Royal Asiatic Society and the British and Foreign Unitarian Society invited the Raja with great cordiality to take part in their annual functions.

Stapleton Grove, Bristol

But all this incessant strain told on the Raja's health. Early in September 1833 he arrived at Stapleton Grove near Bristol to rest and recoup his tired nerves at that retreat. Stapleton Grove, in the suburbs of Bristol, was the country residence of Mr. Michael Castle, a highly esteemed Bristol merchant upon whose death Miss Castle his only child, a ward of Dr. Carpenter, and her aunt Miss Kiddell were living in it. They esteemed it a high honour to receive the Raja and to do all that they could to render his stay there agreeable and comfortable. There, however, he was suddenly taken ill on the 18th and after a short illness passed to his eternal rest on the 27th September 1833. "He was prostrated on the bed of sickness and of death in a foreign land, he was surrounded with the most loving attention, tended with the most anxious solicitude, and finally laid on the grave surrounded with true mourners, who felt him akin to them in spirit, if not connected with him by the ties of earthly relationship".

His earthly remains were reverentially interred in a secluded shrubbery, on the grounds of Stapleton Grove, overshadowed by a cluster of tall elms. There they lay for some years till the Raja's friend, the celebrated Dwarkanath

Tagore[22] visited England. It was then felt that the public should have access to his grave and should see a befitting monument erected over it. On the 29th May 1943 his sacred remains were removed to Arno's Vale cemetry,[23] near Bristol, and in the following year a graceful Indian mausoleum was raised over them. The following inscription tells the pilgrim its own tale of the grateful remembrance in which the Raja is held by his loving countrymen:

"Beneath this stone rest the remains of Raja Rammohun Roy Bahadur.

A conscientious and steadfast believer in the Unity of the Godhead.

He consecrated his life with entire devotion to the worship of the Divine spirit alone.

To great natural talents he united thorough mastery of many languages and early distinguished himself as one of the greatest scholars of his day.

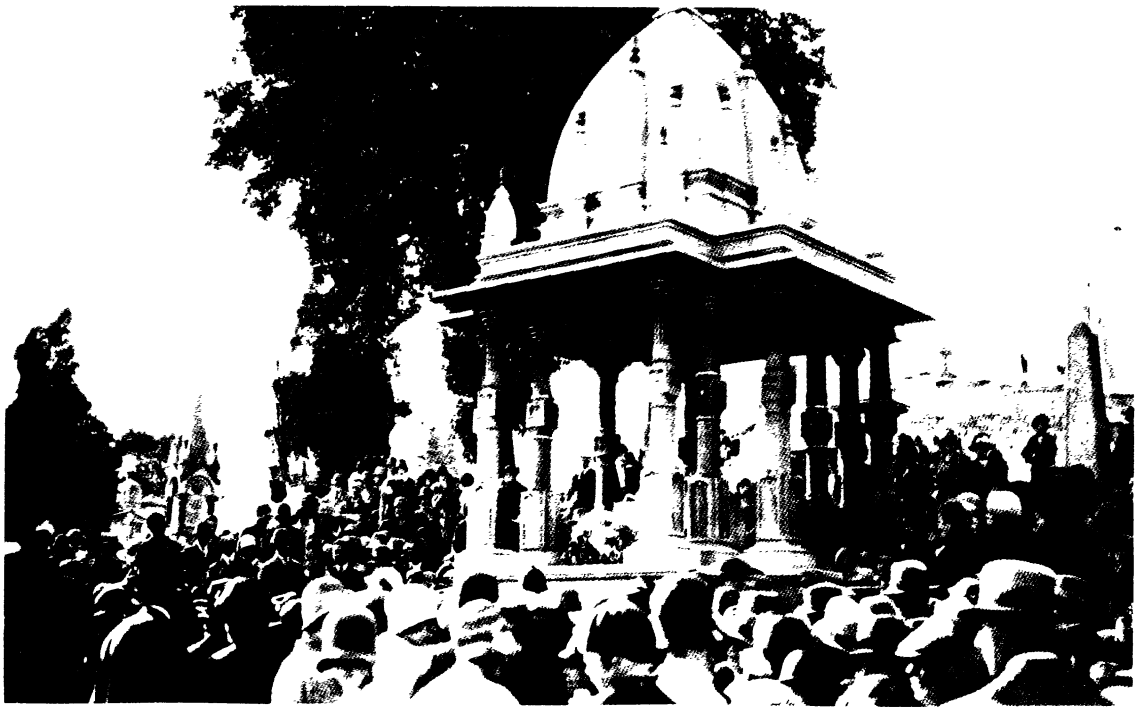
His unwearied labours to promote the social, moral and physical condition of the people of India, his earnest endeavours to suppress idolatry and the rite of Suttee and his constant zealous advocacy of whatever tended to the glory of God and the welfare of man live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen.

This tablet records the sorrow and pride with which his memory is cherished by his descendants.

He was born at Radhanagore, in Bengal, in 1774 and died at Bristol, September 27th, 1833.

[22] Father of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the next great leader of the Brahmo Samaj, and grandfather of Poet Rabindranath Tagore.

[23] When the present author visited Stapleton Grove last in 1900, it was the Rectory of Stapleton village. The spot under the elms where the Raja's remains had originally been interred was still marked by a pile of rude granite stones which the Rector described to him as the burial place of "some Indian Prince or celebrity".



MAUSOLEUM IN ARNO'S VALE CEMETERY

CHAPTER III

TUHFAT-UL-MUWAHHIDIN

An epigram of a great wit of modern fiction reduces all philosophers to two classes, utilitarian and futilitarian. Rammohun's standpoint in Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin (A Gift to Monotheists) may be said to be that all established religions are utilitarian and also futilitarian. In it he surveys all established faiths and finds in them a bundle of falsehoods, futilities and fatuities. He proceeds, with syllogism and induction and with the armoury of logic ransacked at Patna, to examine the validity of tradition, authority, miracles and supernaturalism, and to expose the credentials of ministers and doctors of religion— nay even of prophets and founders of religions.

Falsehood Common to all Religions

This is how he begins his Introduction to the treatise which may be called his Prolegomena to the study of established faiths: —

I travelled in the remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as hilly lands, and found the inhabitants thereof agreeing generally in believing in the personality of One Being Who is the source of all that exists and its Governor, and disagreeing in giving peculiar attributes to that Being and in holding different creeds consisting of the doctrines of religion and precepts of *haram* (forbidden), and *halal* (lawful). From this Induction it has been known to me that turning generally towards One Eternal Being is like a natural tendency in human beings and is common to all individuals generally. And the inclination of each sect of mankind to a particular God or Gods, holding certain special attributes, and to some peculiar forms of worship or devotion, is an excrescent quality grown (in mankind) by habit and training. What a vast difference is

there between nature and habit! Some of these sectarians are ready to confute the creeds of others owing to a disagreement with them, claiming the truth of the sayings of their predecessors; while these predecessors also like other men were liable to commit sins and mistakes. Hence it may not be improper if it be said that all of them are either right or wrong. In the former case two contradictions come together which is logically inadmissible. In the latter case, it may not be improper if it be said that either falsehood is to be attributed to some religions particularly or commonly to all: in the first case *tarjih bila murajjeh* i.e., giving preference without there being any reason for it (which is logically inadmissible) follows. Hence falsehood is common to all religions without distinction. I have explained this in Persian ,as it is more intelligible to the people of Ajam (i.e., Non-Arabians).[1]

Doctors of Religion

Having thus premised that falsehood is common to all religions he proceeds to expose the weak points in them. The futilities are manifold and include that of putting one's faith in leaders and doctors of religions:

Most of the leaders of different creeds, for perpetuating their names and enhancing their reputation, have declared some special beliefs in the form of pure truths resting on miracles, or the power of the tongue and devices suited to the condition of the congregation, and have in a way so attracted the majority of the people towards them, that these helpless (persons), bound in obedience and servitude, having wholly lost the eye and heart of perception, consider it sinful to distinguish between actual goodness and apparent sin in the execution of the orders of their leaders * * * * * They consider their pure faith in the leader,—notwithstanding their commission of the basest acts e.g., lying, misappropriation, robbery, adultery etc., which are sins in the next world (i.e., spiritual offences) and harmful to the public (in this world)—as a means of liberation from their sins. And they spend their

[1] The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, 1906—p. 943.

most invaluable time in reading stories and accounts which are difficult to believe in, which strengthen their faith in the ancient and modern leaders of the faith[2]. * * * * *

This attack appears to be indiscriminate and it is difficult to distinguish between the great masters and prophets on the one hand, and the self-seeking priests and ecclesiastics on the other, though here and there indications are not wanting that the attack is mainly directed against the latter:

The influence of these leaders over their followers and the extent of their submission to them have reached such a degree that some people having a firm belief in the sayings of their leaders, think some stones and vegetables and animals to be the real objects of their worship: and in opposing those who may attempt to destroy these objects of their worship or to insult them, they think shedding the blood of others or sacrificing their own lives an object of pride in this world, and a cause of salvation in the next.

It is more strange that the *mujtahids* or religious expounders of them also after the examples of other religions, putting aside justice and honesty, try to invent passages in the form of reasonable arguments in support of these articles of faith which are evidently nonsensical and absurd, and thereby try to give strength to the faith of the common people who are deprived of insight and direction.[3]

PROPHETS

There is, however, abundant evidence of a frontal attack on Prophets and Masters whose connection with the teaching of faiths is roundly condemned. The method employed in coming to the conclusion that the medium, or agency, of Prophets in the revelation of truths is inconsistent with Reason, is characteristic of Rammohun in this stage of his thought and investigation. The argument is

[2] The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, 1906—p. 945.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 946.

thrown into the form of a dilemma, and it is shown that the doctrine of prophetic agency, or intermediacy, is involved in either one, or the other, horn of the dilemma:

Some people argue in this way that the Almighty Creator has opened the way of guidance to mortal beings through the medium of prophets or leaders of religions. This is evidently futile, because the same people believe that all things in creation, whether good or bad, proceed from the Great Creator without any intermediate agency, and that the apparent causes are the means and conditions of that (i.e., their coming into existence). Hence it is to be seen whether the sending of prophets and revelation to them from God are immediately from God or through intermediate agency. In the first case, there is no necessity of an intermediate agency for guidance to salvation and there does not seem any necessity of the instrumentality of prophets or revelation. And in the second case there should be a series of intermediate agencies. Hence the advent of prophets and revelation like other external things have no reference to God, but depend upon the invention of an inventor. Prophets and others should not be particularly connected (or mixed up) with the teaching of a faith. Besides, what one nation calls a guide to a true faith, another calls a misleading to an erroneous way[4].

Then he proceeds to show up the discrepancies and contradictions between the precepts of different religions which drive the followers of those religions to indulge in nameless cruelties and persecutions towards each other and he asks:

Now, are these contradictory precepts or orders consistent with the wisdom and mercy of the great, generous and disinterested Creator, or are these the fabrications of the followers of religion? I think a sound mind will not hesitate to prefer the latter alternative[5].

[4] The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, 1906—pp. 953-54.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 954-55.

On the well-known doctrine of Islam that Muhammad is the last of the Prophets, Rammohun thus delivers himself: '

For instance, one party on the authority of their scripture say that prophetic mission has been closed with their leader, and another party claim that the prophetic mission is to end in the generation of David according to an authority from God. And these two sayings are in fact reports or foretellings and not precepts of law that they will be subject to repeal. Because in holding one to be true the falsehood of the other must follow, while the probability of change or pervision is equally applicable to both. It is strange to say that after the lapse of hundreds of years from the time of these religious leaders, with whom the prophetic mission is said to be closed, Nanak and others in India and other countries raised the flag of prophetic mission and induced a large number of people to become their followers, and were successful[6].

The climax is reached when Rammohun classifies mankind in general thus:

In short, the individuals of mankind with reference to those who are deceivers, and those who are deceived and those who are neither, are of four kinds: Firstly—A class of deceivers who in order to attract the people to themselves wilfully invent doctrines, creeds and faiths and put the people to troubles and cause disunion among them. Secondly—A class of deceived people who, without inquiring into the fact, adhere to others. Thirdly—A class of people who are deceivers and also deceived: they are those who having themselves faith in the sayings of another induce others to adhere to them. Fourthly—those who by the help of Almighty God are neither deceivers nor deceived[7].

Tradition and Supernaturalism

One of the engines which aid the Doctors of religion in imposing on the credulity of common people is Tradi-

[6] The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, 1906—p. 955.
[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 957-58.

tion, and the other is Supernaturalism. Rammohun hoists the banner of revolt against both forms of deception and unmistakeably takes his stand on Reason:

The doctors of different presuasions relying on the faith of their followers have made the idea of *tawatur* (traditions proved by a series of general reports) a means of proving such things ; while with a little consideration of the truth of a *tawatur* which produces positive belief and a *tawatur* assumed by the followers of religions, the veil of fallacy can be removed. Because according to the followers of religion *tawatur* is a report coming down from a certain class of people who cannot be suspected of falsehood. But whether such a class of people existed in ancient times is not known to the people of the present time through the medium of external senses or experience ; rather it is quite obscure and doubtful. Besides, great discrepancies in the traditions of by-gone leaders of each religion, indicate the falsehood of their assertions. If it is said that the truth of the statement of the first class of people who gave the report of the miracles of their leaders, by eye-witness, is to be proved by the next class who were their contemporaries, and so for proving the truth of the statement of the next or second class, the evidence of the third class (who were their contemporaries) must be added ; because belief in the truth of the statement of the second class also wants a proof, and likewise for the truth of the statement of the third class, the evidence of the fourth class ought to be added and so on, till it would reach the people who live in the present time, and so this link or series of evidence will come down gradually to posterity and continue in future ; it is clear that men of sound mind will hesitate to reckon that class of people who co-exist with them to be a truthful people to whom falsehood cannot be imputed especially in matters of religion. * * * * The fact is that a *tawatur* in the sense of receiving a report admissible to reason from a people whose statement is not contradicted by anyone is useful in giving positive belief. But this sort of *tawatur* is quite different from the discrepant reports contrary to reason[8].

[8] The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, 1906—pp. 951-952.

On miracles, or any form of supernaturalism, his views later in life, as may be gathered from his maturer writings, were quite tolerant. But in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin he takes up an uncompromising attitude, and does not spare those to whom miraculous performances are attributed. Here is a typical passage:

The centres of the circles of faiths (or the originators of different faiths) have given an interpretation of a miracle attributing (or assuming) it to themselves as a passport (to the confidence of the people in them) and for increasing the faith of the common people. It is customary with common people overpowered by (prevalent) opinion that when they see any act or thing done or found, beyond their power of comprehension or of which they cannot find out any obvious cause, they ascribe it to supernatural power or miracle. The secret lies in this, that in this world the existence of each rests on apparent causes and different conditions and modes of genesis so that if we take fully into consideration the near and remote causes for and against a thing we may say that in the existence of that thing the whole universe is concerned. But when for want of experience and owing to narrowness (of views) the cause of a thing remains hidden to any one, another person having found it a good opportunity for achieving his object ascribes it to his own supernatural power and thereby attracts people to himself. In the present age in India, belief in supernatural and miraculous things has grown to such a degree that the people when they find any wonderful things, the origin of which they can ascribe to their by-gone heroes or the present saints immediately ascribe it to them, and although there be an obvious existence of its cause, they ignore it. * * * *In such cases we ought to have recourse to our own sound reason and ask ourselves whether it is compatible with reason to be convinced of our own inability to understand, or to attribute it to some impossible agency inconsistent with the laws of nature, I think our sound reason will prefer the first. Moreover, what necessity is there that we should find out the true cause of these things which are impossible and unreasonable, for instance raising the dead, ascending to heaven, etc., which are said to have occured many hundreds of years ago? * * * *

When inquiries are made about the mysteries of these things which are so wonderful that reason hesitates to believe in their truth, the leaders of religion sometimes explain for the satisfaction of their followers that in the affairs of religion and faith reason and its arguments have nothing to do, and that the affairs of religion depend upon faith and Divine help. How could a matter which has no proof and which is inconsistent with reason be received and admitted by men of reason?—Take admonition from this, O ye who have got eyes[9].

All this is avowedly negative or destructive. With the absurdities of established faiths thus exposed in their nakedness, does anything remain for religion to rest on? Yes. It is a simple faith he pleads for, the simple pristine faith of all mankind on which rest all moral precepts making for the orderly government of society:

As the foundation of faiths is based on the truth of the existence of the soul (which is defined as an essence regulating the body) and on the existence of the next world, which is held to be the place of receiving rewards and punishments for the good and evil deeds done in this world, after the separation of the soul from the body; they (mankind) are to be excused in admitting and teaching the doctrine of the existence of the soul and the next world (although the real nature of both is hidden) for the sake of the welfare of the people (society) as they simply, for the fear of punishment in the next world and of the penalties inflicted by the earthly authorities, refrain from the commission of illegal deeds.[10]

The Innate Faculty of Reason

Thus it comes to pass, says Rammohun, that religion has led man to frame social laws governing civil life and have attached sanctions to good and evil acts in this world and the next. The faith in the One Supreme Being is not

[9] An Arabic phrase from the Qoran—*Ibid.*, pp. 949-50.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 947.

derived from the teachings of ecclesiastics or doctors of religion but is based on Reason, the innate faculty of distinguishing truth from untruth:

O God! Notwithstanding implicit faith in the orders of the *mujtahids* or the doctors of religion there is always such an innate faculty existing in the nature of mankind that in case any person of sound mind, before or after assuming the doctrines of any religion makes an impartial and just inquiry into the nature of the principles of religious doctrines of different nations there is a strong hope that he will be able to distinguish the truth from untruth and true propositions from fallacious ones, and also he, becoming free from the useless restraints of religion which sometimes become sources of prejudice of one against another and causes of physical and mental troubles, will turn to the One Being who is the fountain of the harmonious organisation of the Universe, and will pay attention to the good of society.

Thus in the midst of much that is essentially deistic and rationalistic we find Rammohun safely anchored in a simple faith, which he distinguished from what he called "the invented revelation of mankind," and the essentials of this faith are: Belief in God, the One Supreme Being, the Author and Preserver of the Universe, belief in the existence and immortality of Soul and belief in Reason,—the intuitive faculty of the mind for discriminating truth from untruth. Here is one of those passages which give an indication of his positive belief:

For it is admitted by the seekers of truth that truth is to be followed, although it is against the majority of the people. * * * * belief in one Almighty God is the fundamental principle of every religion. Those who prefer the so-called invented revelation of mankind to the natural inspiration from God, which consists in attending to social life with their own species and having an *intuitive faculty* of discriminating good from evil, instead of gaining the union of hearts with mutual love and affection of all their fellow creatures without difference

in shape and colour or creeds and religions, which is a pure devotion acceptable to God, the Creator of nature, consider some special formulæ and bodily motions to be the cause of salvation and receiving bounty from Almighty God.[11]

While the raw materials of Rammohun's religious belief may thus be culled from the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin it can scarcely be gainsaid that the bulk of the work is of a negative, critical and destructive character; and the tone and trend of it is quite different from those of his later writings to be considered in the succeeding chapters. It proceeds by the method of elimination, so to speak, to show what religion is not: It is not a bundle of superstitions, prejudices, rituals and ceremonials. It does not consist in a blind adherence to tradition or in an unquestioning subservience to authority. It has no place for miracles as ordinarily understood, and gives no quarters to ministers or doctors of religion, nay, not even to "centres of the circles of faiths".

The only guide to true religion is Reason which he calls the innate or "intuitive faculty" of discriminating truth from untruth, good from evil.

An interesting estimate of the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin is to be found in the most appreciative address on Rammohun delivered by Prof. Max Muller at the Bristol Museum on September 27, 1883, the fiftieth anniversary of the Raja's death. In that address the Professor after specifically referring to the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin observes: "His real religious sentiments are embodied in a pamphlet written and printed in his lifetime but, according to his injunction, not published till after his death. This work discloses his belief in the unity of the Deity, His infinite power, His infinite goodness and in the immortality of the soul".[12]

[11] English Works, p. 957.

[12] In the footnote the Professor refers to Calcutta Review, Dec., 1845—pp. 387-89—"Biographical Essays', Vol. II, p. 34—Longmans Green & Co., 1898.

This estimate may be correct, in so far as those indicated as being the fundamentals of the Raja's creed are to be found in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin. But his general outlook on religion and his views on the efficacy and essentials of worship, on the founders of religion, on the seat of authority in religion, on the place of tradition in religious belief, and on the pursuit of universal well-being (*Lokaśreya*), underwent considerable modification and expansion with the progress of years so as to develop his faith from Deism to Theism. To take Rammohun's "real religious sentiments" as having been embodied in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin would hardly do full justice to the Raja's maturer thought and viewpoint. Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal in an article contributed by him to the *Queen*[13] traces his intellectual ancestry from among others, "the various schools and sects of Arabic Philosophy and Theology—Aristotle's logical moulds and forms of thought in which were cast the material of the Qoran and the Shariyat —especially the heterodox sects among whom may be mentioned the Motazalas, the Sufis, the Muwahedis and perhaps also the masonic body of Sincere Bretheren, the Encyclopedists of the tenth century". These indeed are more akin to the matter and form of the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin, than to his later writings.

[13] Special Commemoration Number of the *Queen*, dated September 28, 1896.

CHAPTER IV

RAMMOHUN THE INTERPRETER OF HINDU THEISM

The Dominant Idea

From the year 1814 to 1830 Rammohun's life was, as we have seen, a period of sustained activity, covering a wide field—social, political, educational, theological and institutional. In the midst of all this multitudinous work, his dominant passion was the extinction of idolatry and the establishment of the worship of the One-Without-A-Second. It first appeared in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin in rather an undeveloped form. With the progress of years it gained in strength and conviction, in vividness, precision and practicality. What was at first only negative, critical and destructive—a sweeping *jehad* (battle-cry) against every form of established faith, every founder or doctor of religion, all scriptures, all tradition and all authority—in course of time mellowed down to a devout endeavour to discover in those very scriptures, in those very religions, and in the ripened spiritual experiences of the sages and seers of old, the worship of the One-Without-A-Second. It thus became a search for the Supreme through the aid of scripture and tradition. The search was not confined to the Hindu Śāstras alone, but making them his starting point he travelled beyond them to other religions and other scriptures, notably Christian and Islamic, which testified to him of the same ultimate Reality and led to the same universal goal of worship. From this it did not follow that special national moulds of thought and spiritual discipline were to be disregarded, or that the concrete realities of traditional spiritual experience, which had become like food and drink to every son of India, must give place to a vague general appeal to all scriptures. For his own sake

and for the sake of his countrymen, he preferred to appeal to the time-honoured Hindu Śāstras as the scriptural basis of the new national faith.

How he gradually evolved this faith; what were its essentials; to what extent he yielded to the Śāstras the seat of authority; and how with the avowed object of awakening his countrymen from "their dream of error", he set to work in the light of this faith will best appear from his own writings published in profusion during this creative period of his life. In order that his ideas might easily be accessible to all classes of people he took care to publish most of them in English as well as in Bengali, and some of them also in Sanskrit and Urdu. The printing press had just been introduced in India and was yet in its very infancy. It may well be imagined what an immense expenditure of time and money it entailed on Rammohun. Yet he religiously circulated this literature free to all.

A Change of Viewpoint

A great portion of these publications consists of translations into English and Bengali of the Vedas,[1] or, rather, of the Upaniṣads which are a sort of Appendix to the Vedas and set forth the loftiest form of Vedāntic Monotheism. For Rammohun's own views, one has to look to the Preface or the Introduction to these treatises, as also to his running commentary on the texts which unmistakeably discloses his viewpoint. One noticeable feature is that there is no more of that repudiation of authority that formed the keynote of the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin. On the contrary, Rammohun now takes his stand in the Vedas as the authoritative basis of Hindu theism. How far he did actually acknowledge the sovereignty of the Vedas is a matter which will presently have to be considered in the light of his own writings. Meanwhile, it has to be remembered that the Vedas had hitherto been a sealed book to the non-Brahmins.

[1] See Chapter II.

Immemorial custom had confined the knowledge of the Vedas to the Brahmins alone, and for a non-Brahmin even to touch them was deemed to be sacrilege.[2] Rammohun felt it incumbent on him to bring the Vedas, the source and spring of authority in Hindu religion, within easy reach of all classes of people. Hence these publications coming in quick succession one after another. That the paramount object of these publications was to inculcate the worship of the *Ekamevādvitīyam,* The One without a second, based upon a direct appeal to scriptural authority, is discernible from the very titles which Rammohun gave to some of them. He entitled the Abridgment of the Vedanta in English (1816) as "Translation of an Abridgment of the Vedant, or the Resolution of all the Veds; the most celebrated and revered work of Brahmanical Theology; establishing the unity of the Supreme Being; and that He Alone is the object of propitiation and worship".[3]

Why he prefers the Vedanta to the Vedas, and what authority and sanctity attaches to it he explains thus in the Preface to the Abridgement which he devoutly addresses "to the believers of the Only True God": —

The whole body of the Hindu Theology, Law and Literature, is contained in the Vedas, which are affirmed to be co-eval with the creation! These works are extremely luminous, and being written in the most elevated and metaphorical style, are, as may be well supposed, in many passages seemingly

[2] See Max Mullers' 'Biographical Essays', Vol. II, p. 19.—
"Although there existed MSS of the Veda, these MSS were religiously guarded. Even at a much later time, when Professor Wilson by accident put his hand on some Vedic MSS in a native library, he told me, the people rushed at him with threatening and ominous gestures. Of course, the Veda had never been printed or published, and it existed in fact, as it had existed for three thousand years, chiefly in the memory of the priests. We can hardly form an idea of the power wielded by the priests when they were the only repositories of Vedas or Bibles and when there was no possible appeal from what they laid down as the catholic faith".

[3] Similarly, the Iśopaniṣad (1816): "Translation of the Iśopaniṣad, one of the Chapters of the Yajur Ved: according to the commentary of the celebrated Shankar-Acharya: establishing the Unity and incomprehensibility of the Supreme Being and that His worship alone can lead to eternal beautitude".

confused and contradictory. Upwards of two thousand years ago, the great Vyāsa, reflecting on the perpetual difficulty arising from these sources, composed with great discrimination a complete and compendious abstract of the whole, and also reconciled those texts which appeared to stand at variance. This work is termed The Vedanta which, compounded of two Sanskrit words, signifies 'The Rêsolution of all the Veds'. It has continued to be the most highly revered by all Hindoos, and in place of the more diffuse arguments of the Vedas is always referred to as equal authority. But from its being concealed within the dark curtain of the Sanskrit language, and the Brahmans permitting themselves alone to interpret, or even to touch any book of the kind, the Vedanta, although perpetually quoted is little known to the public and the practice of few Hindoos bears the least accordance with its precepts.

This appeal to the authority of the Vedas constantly recurs in his writings. Indeed, it is the weapon with which he attacks the Brahminical strongholds of convention, corruption and error:

What can justify a man who believes in the inspiration of his religious books in neglecting the direct authorities of the same works and subjecting himself entirely to custom and fashion which are liable to perpetual changes and depend upon popular whims:[4]

My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error, and by making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God.[5]

My reflection upon these solemn truths have been most painful for many years. I have never ceased to contemplate

[4] Preface to the English Translation of the Iśopaniṣad
[5] Introduction to the English Translation of the Abridgement.

with the strongest feelings of regret, the obstinate adherence of my countrymen to their fatal system of idolatry, inducing, for the sake of propitiating their supposed Deities, the violation of every humane and social feeling. And this in various instances, but more especially in the dreadful acts of self-destruction and the immolation of the nearest relations, under the delusion of conforming to sacred religious rites. I have never ceased, I repeat, to contemplate these practices with the strongest feelings of regret, and to view in them the moral debasement of a race who, I cannot help thinking, are capable of better things: whose susceptibility, patience and mildness of character render them worthy of a better destiny. Under these impressions, therefore, I have been impelled to lay before them genuine translations of parts of their scripture, which inculcates not only the enlightened worship of one God, but the purest principles of morality, accompanied with such notes as I deemed requisite to oppose the arguments employed by the Brahmans in defence of their beloved system. Most earnestly do I pray that the whole may, sooner or later, prove efficient in producing on the minds of the Hindus in general, a conviction of the rationality of believing in and adoring the Supreme Being only: together with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle—*Do unto others as you would be done by.*[6]

Here again is a most persuasive appeal to the scriptures, assigning at the same time to reason, and to reverence for the righteous, their respective values in spiritual life and experience: —

I may conclude this subject with an appeal to the good sense of my countrymen, by asking them, whose advice appears the most disinterested and most rational—that of those who, concealing your scriptures from you, continually teach you thus "Believe whatever we may say—don't examine or even touch your scriptures, neglect entirely your reasoning faculties —do not only consider us, whatever may be our principles, as gods on earth, but humbly adore and propitiate us by

[6] Introduction to the English Translation of the Iśopaniṣad.

sacrificing to us the greater part (if not the whole) of your property": or that of the man who lays your scriptures and their comments as well as their translations before you, and solicits you to examine their purport, *without neglecting the proper and moderate use of reason*; and to attend strictly to their direction by the rational performance of your duty to your sole Creator, and to your fellow creatures, and also to pay respect to those who think and act righteously.[7]

The low level to which Hindu religion and society had sunk and the lofty heights to which they might still rise, by means of a right understanding and observance of the scriptures and a proper exercise of reason on the part of his countrymen, formed the perennial theme of all these discourses. He thus portrayed the contrast between the present and the future he devoutly wished for: —

The advocates of idolatry and their misguided followers, over whose opinions prejudice and obstinacy prevail more than good sense and judgment, prefer custom and fashion to the authorities of their scriptures and therefore continue, under the form of religious devotion, to practice a system which destroys to the utmost degree the natural texture of society and prescribes crimes of the most heinous nature, which even the most savage nations would blush to commit, unless compelled by the most urgent necessity.[8] I am, however, not without a sanguine hope that, through Divine Providence and human exertions, they will sooner or later avail themselves of that true system of religion which leads its observers to a knowledge and love of God, and to a friendly inclination towards their fellow creatures, impressing their hearts with humility and charity, accompanied by independence of mind and pure sincerity.

If there be any doubt still left as to Rammohun's true position regarding the place of reason in relation to the

[7] Introduction to the English Translation of the Iśopaniṣad. The italics are mine.

[8] Cf. the latter end of the Introduction to the Mundaka Upaniṣad.

Śāstras, the reader may turn to some other typical passages in his writings:—

I hope it will not be presumed that I intend to establish the preference of my faith over that of other men. The result of controversy on such a subject, however multiplied, must be ever unsatisfactory, for the *reasoning faculty,* which leads men to certainty in things within its reach, produces no effect on questions beyond its comprehension. I do no more than assert, that if correct reasoning and the dictates of common sense induce the belief of a wise uncreated Being, who is the Supporter and Ruler of the boundless universe, we should also consider Him the most powerful and supreme existence, far surpassing our powers of comprehension or description.[9]

I have often lamented that in our general researches into theological truth we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations we find them at variance with each other ; and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is, alone, to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best method perhaps is, neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other ; but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties relying on the goodness of the Almighty Power, which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for.[10]

The above passages are typical of the rest. Thus we have it from him that the Vedas (by which he means the Vedanta and the Upaniṣads) are the authoritative basis of Hindu religion; that reason and tradition have their own value, though subject to their respective limitations; that

[9] Introduction to the Abridgement.

[10] Introduction to the English Translation of the Kena Upaniṣad. It is to be noted that this stands out in contrast with the high place assigned to reason in the earlier stages of his writings.

reverence for the righteous (in whose life and experiences we find attested the truth of the scriptures) is an important factor in religious life; that it is the goodness of the Almighty Power that alone avails for enabling a man to reach his goal; and, lastly, that mere belief in, and adoration of, the Supreme Being will not suffice, but that in order that it may be real it must react on his moral nature and bring forth endeavours after the well-being of his fellow creatures (*lokaśreya*).

Speaking of the Raja's views on the authority of the Veda, Prof. Max Muller observes:

> It was then that Rammohun Roy took his stand on the Veda as the true Bible of India. The Veda, he declared, sanctioned no idolatry, taught monotheism, ignored caste, prohibited the burning of widows, contained in fact a religion as true, as pure and as perfect as Christianity itself, nay, free from some of the blemishes which offended him and many of his countrymen in the teaching of the missionaries. * * * Now it may sound strange but I feel convinced that Rammohun Roy himself, when, in his controversies with his English friends, he fortified himself behind the ramparts of the Veda, had no idea of what the Veda really was. Vedic learning was then at a low ebb in Bengal, and Rammohun Roy had never passed through a regular training in Sanskrit.[11]

Anything coming from Prof. Max Muller is entitled to great weight. But with all due respect to the Professor, this view of the Raja's knowledge of the Veda, or of his true position regarding its authority is not borne out by a careful study of his writings. It is true he did take his stand on the Veda as the authoritative basis of Hindu monotheism. But he was fully conscious that the Veda in its hymnal and ceremonial portions did not provide a direct support for pure monotheism. It was for this reason, as will have appeared from the foregoing pages of this chapter,

[11] Address on Raja Rammohun Roy delivered in the Bristol Museum on September 27, 1883. *See* 'Biographical Essays' Vol. II, pp. 18-19.

that he laid stress on "the Vedānt, the Resolution of all the Veds"—the Upaniṣads. But while he recognised the authority of the Veda, it was in a sense materially different from that in which the Bible is accepted by the Christian theologians. The Bible in Christian theology is regarded as the sole scripture for all the world. It allows no quarters to any other scripture, it must be accepted in its entirety and in every letter of it, and it affords no room for reason. In fact, exercise of the reasoning faculty in the matter of acceptance of the Bible would in itself amount to heresy. This is not the sense in which Rammohun accepted the Veda as authority. On the contrary, beginning from the *Tuhfat*, and pervading all his writings, is the thought that the authority of the scriptures must always depend on their consonance with reason "the innate faculty of distinguishing truth from untruth".[12] The analogy with the Bible, if it was meant by Prof. Max Muller to be taken strictly, does not therefore hold. As regards Rammohun's attitude, however, towards the ethical aspect of Christianity, without anticipating what is to follow in its proper place, it will suffice to refer here only to one or two of his avowals:

As no other religion can produce anything that may stand competition with the precepts of Jesus, much less that can be superior to them, the Compiler deemed it incumbent upon him to introduce those among his countrymen as a Guide to Peace and Happiness.[13]

Nevertheless, I presume to think that Christianity, properly inculcated, has a greater tendency to improve the moral and political state of mankind than any other known religious system.[14]

[12] See *Supra*.

[13] Concluding sentence of the Second Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the 'Precepts of Jesus'—See 'English Works', Panini office edition, p. 615.

[14] 'A letter on the prospects of Christianity and the means of promoting its reception in India', 'English Works', Panini Office edition, p. 875.

Again:

I fully agree with you that there is nothing so sublime as the precepts taught by Jesus and that there is nothing equal to the simple doctrines he inculcated.[15]

Thus while he had the greatest reverence for the precepts of Jesus and a high regard for the lofty ethics of the true Christianity, when it came to meeting the sweeping contention of the Christian missionaries that the Hindu scriptures were all full of polytheism and man-worship, Rammohun felt it was right for him to expose the doctrines of popular Christianity which in his estimation made for idolatry and man-worship—only in a different form.

In the Thick of the Controversy

To return to Rammohun's Hindu Theism. Before controversy could begin, the Raja shrewdly anticipated certain questions from critics on points, which might be regarded by them as vulnerable, in the Vedas. It is a notorious fact that in the Vedas there are many minor deities—the sun, the air, the sky, etc. What rational explanation could be given of the definition of material things—even the lowliest of them having often been elevated into deities? Would not this militate against the so-called monotheism taught by the Vedas.[16] Rammohun foresaw this difficulty which might arise in the understanding of the Vedas, and proceeded to deal with it in his Abridgement thus:—

In like manner none of the celestial gods can be inferred, from the various assertions of the Veda respecting their deities

[15] 'A letter on the prospects of Christianity and the means of promoting its reception in India', 'English Works', Panini Office edition, p. 930.

[16] *See* Chapter I, *supra*. Prof. Max Muller, therefore, prefers to call it Henotheism.

respectively, to be independent cause of the Universe ; because the Veda repeatedly affirms that "All the Vedas prove nothing but the Unity of the Supreme Being". By allowing the divinity of more than one Being, the following positive affirmations of the Veda relative to the Unity of God, become false and absurd : "God is indeed one and has no second". (Katha) "There is none but the Supreme Being possessed of universal knowledge" (Brihadāraṇyaka). "He who is without any figure, and beyond the limit of description, is the Supreme Being". (Chhāndogya). "Appellations and figures of all kinds are innovations". And from the authority of many other texts it is evident that any being that bears figure, and is subject to description, cannot be eternal, independent cause of the universe. * * * *

The Veda has allegorically represented God in the figure of the Universe viz., Fire is his head, the Sun and the Moon are his "two eyes" (38th text, 2nd sec.). And also the Veda calls God the void space of the heart and declares him to be smaller than the grain of barley, but from the foregoing quotations neither any of the celestial gods, nor, any existing creature, should be considered the Lord of the Universe because the third Chapter of the Vedanta explains the reason for these secondary assertions thus : "By these appellations of the Veda which denote the diffusive spirit of the Supreme Being equally over all creatures, by means of extension, his omnipresence is established". So the Veda says, "All that exists is indeed God", i.e., nothing bears true existence excepting God and "whatever we taste, and smell is the Supreme Being", i.e., the existence of whatever thing that appears to us relies on the existence of God". * * * It is indisputably evident that none of these metaphorical representations, which arise from the elevated style in which all the Vedas are written were designed to be viewed in any other light than mere allegory[17]

The following passages of the Veda affirm that God is the sole object of worship viz., "Adore God alone ; give up all other discourse". And the Vedanta says that "It is found in the Vedas that none but the Supreme Being is to be worshipped, nothing excepting Him should be adored by a wise man."[18]

[17] Abridgement. *Ibid.* p. 10.
[18] Abridgement. *Ibid.* p. 13.

Mode of Worship

What is to be the mode of worship? Rammohun himself quotes the Mundaka Upaniṣad which says, "The Supreme Being is not comprehensible by vision, or by any other of the organs of sense, nor can he be conceived by means of devotion, or virtuous practices".[19] So also the Brihadāraṇyaka and Kathavalli Upaniṣads quoted by Rammohun himself: "He sees every thing, though never seen; hears every thing, though never directly heard of. He is neither short, nor is he long; inaccessible to the reasoning faculty; not to be compassed by description; beyond the limits of the explanation of the Veda, or of human conception".[20] Does not this reduce all worship to a snare, a chimera? Rammohun again characteristically answers this question by appeal to the directions obtainable in the Veda:

The Veda now illustrates the mode in which we should worship the Supreme Being, viz., "To God we should approach, of him we should hear, of him we should think, and to him we should attempt to approximate". The Vedānta also elucidates the subject thus: "The three latter directions in the above quoted text are conducive to the first viz., approaching to God". These three are in reality included in the first (as the direction for collecting fire in the worship of fire) for we cannot approach to God without hearing and thinking of him, nor without attempting to make our approximation; and the last, viz., attempting to approximate to God, is not required until we have approached him. By hearing of God is meant hearing his declarations, which establish his unity; and by thinking of him is meant thinking of the contents of his law; and by attempting to approximate to him is meant attempting to apply our minds to that True Being on which the diffusive existence of the universe relies, in order that, by the constant practice of this attempt, we may approach to him. The Vedānta states that "constant practice of devotion is necessary, it being represented

[19] Abridgement. *Ibid.* p. 8.
[20] *Ibid* p. 8.

so by the Veda" ; and also adds that "we should adore God till we approach to him, and even then not forsake his adoration, such authority being found in the Veda". The Vedānta shows that moral principle is a part of the adoration of God, viz., "A command over our passions and over the external senses of the body and good acts, are declared by the Veda to be indispensable in the mind's approximation to God, they should, therefore, be strictly taken care of and attended to, both previously and subsequently to such approximation to the Supreme Being", i.e., we should not indulge our evil propensities, but should endeavour to have entire control over them. *Reliance on, and self-resignation to, the only true Being, with an aversion to worldly considerations, are included in the good acts above alluded to.*[21]

This confident appeal to Śāstric injunction did not have its desired effect. It did not carry conviction as to the real nature of the worship prescribed. Again and again the question was asked 'How was approximation to the Deity possible when avowedly the Deity was indefinable, indescribable and incomprehensible?

In his Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas, directed against the attack of Pandit Mrityunjaya Vidyālankār, he answers the question thus: —

The learned Brahman attempts to prove the impossibility of an adoration of the Deity, saying: 'That which cannot be conceived cannot be worshipped'? Should the learned Brahman consider a full conception of the nature, essence or qualities of the Supreme Being, or a physical picture, truly representing the Almighty Power, with offerings of flowers, leaves and viands as essential to adoration? I agree with the learned Brahman with respect to the impossibility of the worship of God. But should adoration imply only the elevation of the mind to the conviction of the existence of the Omnipresent Deity, as testified by His wise and wonderful works, and continual contemplation of His power as so displayed, together with a constant

[21] See Abridgement, p. 14. English Works of Rammohun Roy—Panini Office edition, 1906.

sense of the gratitude which we naturally owe Him, for our existence, sensation, and comfort—I never will hesitate to assert that His adoration is not only possible, and practicable, but even incumbent upon every rational creature. For further explanation I refer the learned Brahman to the text 47, Sect. 4, Chap. 3 of the Vedanta.[22]

Later in 1829-30, in the tract which he published entitled "The Universal Religion—Religious Instructions Founded On Sacred Authorities",[23] he elaborated the idea of worship in the form of questions and answers thus:

9th—Ques: In what manner is this to be performed?

Ans: By bearing in mind that the Author and Governor of this visible Universe is the Supreme Being, and comparing this idea with the sacred writings and with reason. In this worship it is indispensably necessary to use exertions to subdue the senses, and to read such passages as direct attention to the Supreme Spirit. Exertion to subdue the senses, signifies an endeavour to direct the will and the senses and to conduct in such a manner as not only to prevent our own or others' ill but to secure our own and others' good ; in fact, what is considered injurious to ourselves should be avoided. It is obvious that as we are so constituted that without the help of sound we can conceive no idea ; therefore, by means of the texts treating of the Supreme Being, we should contemplate him. The benefits which we continually receive from fire, from air and from the sun, likewise from the various productions of the earth, such as the different kinds of

[22] See English Works of Rammohun Roy, pp. 122-123—Panini Office edition, 1906.

[23] Published in Sak. 1751 (1829-30 A.D.).

> grain, drugs, fruits and vegetables, all are dependent on him ; and by considering and reasoning on the terms expressive of such ideas, the meaning itself is firmly fixed in the mind. It is repeatedly said in the sacred writings, that theological knowledge is dependent upon truth ; consequently, the attainment of truth will enable us to worship the Supreme Being, who is Truth itself.[24]

In the same pamphlet, the sixth question and answer reconciled the apparent conflict in the sacred writings regarding the Supreme Being, who though imperceptible and inexpressible is yet knowable: —

> Where it is written that he is imperceptible and undefinable, it is meant that his likeness cannot be conceived ; and where it is said that he is capable of being known, his mere existence is referred to, that is, that there is a God, as the indescribable creation and government of this universe clearly demonstrate : in the same manner as by the action of a body we ascertain the existence of a spirit therein called the sentient soul, but the form or likeness of that spirit which pervades every limb and guides the body we know not.[25]

In his controversy with Bhattacharya (*Bhattāchāryer sahit vichār*), the above processes of study and contemplation of God as the moral Governor of the universe is characterised by Rammohun as *paramparā upāsanā* (common or traditional modes of worship). He adds, however, that one can rise higher, using these as stepping stones, and reach the plane of *Ātma-Sāksātkāra* or direct vision

[24] *Ibid* p 137. See also 'Sanskrit and Bengali Works of Rammohun Roy—Panini Office edition, p. 418—9th question and answer; and pp. 526-27.

[25] English Works of Rammohun, Panini Office edition, 1906, p. 136. See also Sanskrit and Bengali Works, Panini Office edition, p. 417 and p. 589. The last mentioned passage occurs on p. 1 of Rammohun's Bengali edition of Mandukyopanişad.

in which the Oversoul is beheld as our very self. He thus describes it:

In contemplating on the Supreme Being as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe we follow the traditional method of worship—paramparā upāsanā but when through practice the belief in the phenomenal universe disappears and the existence of the Brahman alone is manifest —this I call Ātma-sāksātkāra. (the direct vision of the self in the Supreme Self).[26]

Again—

By believing in the certitude of the Supreme Being through creation, preservation and destruction ; (by believing) that the soul alone is true and the universe of names and forms untrue, by the study and contemplation of Śāstras inculcating these, by long and intensive discipline one should attain *Ātma-sāksātkarā* (vision of self in the Supreme Self). This view accords with the Vedānta—this is the true upāsanā of the soul through knowledge.[27]

Rammohun's philosophy of life and worship may well be gathered from some of the hymns composed by him which have now found an abiding place in Bengali hymnal literature. They set forth the nothingness and evanescence of the phenomenal world and the Reality that is immanent in it and yet transcends it. They inculcate worship in the shape of meditation, firm adherence to truth and abjuring of all forms of untruth and, withal, kindness and com-

[26] "বিশ্বের সৃষ্টি স্থিতি লয়ের দ্বারা যে আমরা পরমেশ্বরের আলোচনা করি সেই পরম্পরা উপাসনা হয় আর যখন অভ্যাস বশতঃ প্রপঞ্চময় বিশ্বের প্রতীতি নাশ হইয়া কেবল ব্রহ্ম সত্তা মাত্রের স্ফূর্ত্তি থাকে তাহাকেই আত্মসাক্ষাৎকার কহি।"

—*Bhattāchāryer Sahit Vichār*, Bengali Works, Panini Office edition, p. 705.

[27] জগতের সৃষ্টি স্থিতি লয়ের দ্বারা পরমাত্মার সত্তাতে নিশ্চয় করিয়া আত্মাই সত্য হয়েন, নামরূপময় জগৎ মিথ্যা হয়, ইহার অনুকূল শাস্ত্রের শ্রবণ মননের দ্বারা বহুকালে বহুযত্নে আত্মার সাক্ষাৎকার কর্ত্তব্য এই মত বেদান্তসিদ্ধ যথার্থ জ্ঞানরূপ আত্মোপাসনা।"

passion towards fellow-creatures. Two of such hymns may be taken by way of illustration: —

1. Meditate on the One
He dwelleth uniformly in land and water and air
He hath created this Universe
He hath no beginning nor end
He knoweth, but no one knoweth Him.[28]
2. Since Death must overtake thee one day
Why lettest thou thy hopes heave high,
thy quarrels multiply?
This thy shining body of which thou art so fond
From head to foot shall be reduced to dust.
Much care can preserve grass or a log of wood
But no care can keep thy body from decay.
Therefore contemplate on thy origin and end
Have compassion on thy fellow creatures
And take shelter in Truth.[29]

But what place then is to be assigned to the ceremonies such as sacrifices, alms, penances, etc., prescribed in the first part of the Veda? Are they not affirmed by the Vedas to be "mental exercises and mental purifica-

[28] ভাব সেই একে
জলে স্থলে শূন্যে যে সমান ভাবে থাকে।
যে রচিল এ সংসার, আদি অন্ত নাহি যার
সে জানে সকল, কেহ নাহি জানে তাকে।
তমীশ্বরানাং পরমং মহেশ্বরম্।
তন্দেবতানাং পরমঞ্চ দৈবতম্॥
পতিস্পতীনাং পরমং পরস্তাৎ।
বিদামদেবং ভুবনেশমীড্যম্॥

[29] একদিন হবে অবশ্য মরণ
এত আশা বৃদ্ধি কেন, এত দ্বন্দ্ব কি কারণ।
এই যে মার্জ্জিত দেহ যাতে কর এত স্নেহ
ধূলী সার হবে তার মস্তক চরণ।
যত্নে তৃণ কাষ্ঠখান, রহে যুগ পরিমাণ
কিন্তু যত্নে দেহ নাশ না হবে বারণ।
অতএব আদি অন্ত, আপনার সদা চিন্ত
দয়াকর জীবে, লও সত্যের শরণ।

tions necessary to obtain the knowledge of the divine nature"? Rammohun answers:

I in common with the Vedas and the Vedanta and Manu (the first and best of Hindu lawgivers) as well as with the most celebrated Śankarāchārya, deny these ceremonies being necessary to obtain the knowledge of the divine nature, as the Vedanta positively declares, in text 36, section 4th, chapter 3rd.

Man may acquire the true knowledge of God, even without observing the rules and rites prescribed by the Veda for each class, as it is found in the Veda that many persons, who neglected the performance of the rites and ceremonies, owing to their perpetual attention to the adoration of the Supreme Being acquired the true knowledge respecting the Supreme Spirit. The Veda says "Many learned true believers never worshipped fire or any celestial gods through fire". And also the Vedānta asserts in the 1st text of the 3rd section of the third chapter: "The worship authorized by all the Vedas is one, as the directions for the worship of the only Supreme Being are invariably found in the Veda, and the epithets of the Supreme and Omnipresent Being etc., commonly imply God alone". Manu, as I have elsewhere quoted, thus declares on the same point, chapter 12th text 92nd. "Thus must the chief of the twice-born, though he neglect the ceremonial rites mentioned in the Śāstras, be diligent in attaining a knowledge of God, in controlling his organs of sense and in repeating the Veda". Again chap. 4th text 23rd: "Some constantly sacrifice their breath in their speech, when they instruct others of God aloud, and their speech in their breath, when they meditate in silence: perceiving in their speech and breath thus employed, the imperishable fruit of a sacrificial offering". 24th: "Other Brahmins incessantly perform those sacrifices only, seeing with the eye of divine learning, that the scriptural knowledge is the root of every ceremonial observance". And also the same author declares in chapter 2nd, text 84th: "All rites ordained in the Vedas, oblations to fire and solemn sacrifices, pass away: but that which passes not away is declared to be the syllable Om. thence called Akṣara since it is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings".[30]

[30] *'English* Works,' Panini Office edition, pp. 93-94.

Another formidable question raised in the course of the controversy with the Pandits is as to whether idol-worship has not been prescribed by the Śāstras, as being absolutely essential. To this Rammohun replies:

I cannot admit that the worship of these attributes under various representations, by means of consecrated objects, has been prescribed by the Veda to the human race ; as this kind of worship of consecrated objects is enjoined by the Śāstra to those only who are incapable of raising their minds to the notion of an invisible Supreme Being. * * * Permit me in this instance to ask whether every Mussalman in Turkey and Arabia from the highest to the lowest, every Protestant Christian at least of Europe, and many followers of Kabir and Nanak do worship God without the assistance of consecrated objects. If so, how can we suppose that the human race is not capable of adoring the Supreme Being without the puerile practice of having recourse to visible objects.[31]

Elsewhere he deals with the other Śāstras:

Should it be asked whether the assertions found in the Purāṇas and Tantras etc., respecting the worship of the several gods and goddesses, are false, or whether the Purāṇas and Tantras are not included in the Śāstra, the answer is this :— The Purāṇa and the Tantra etc., are of course to be considered as Śāstra, for they repeatedly declare God to be one and above the apprehension of external and internal senses ; they indeed expressly declare the divinity of many gods and goddesses, and the modes of their worship ; but they reconcile these contradictory assertions by affirming frequently that the directions to worship any figured beings are only applicable to those who are incapable of elevating their minds to the idea of an invisible Supreme Being, in order that such persons, by fixing their attention on these invented figures, may be able to restrain themselves from vicious temptations and that those that are competent for the worship of the invisible God should disregard the worship of idols.[32]

[30] Preface to English Translation of the Iśopanishad *ibid* p. 63.
[31] 'A Defence of Hindu Theism'—*ibid* p. 96.

While thus in a manner conceding that for a certain section of people on a lower level of culture and morals, idol-worship may have to be tolerated as a necessary evil, Rammohun in the course of these controversies never once stooped to condone it. On the contrary, day in and day out he proclaimed from the house-top the manifold evils of idolatry. It was in his opinion eating into the vitals of the body politic, morally, intellectually and even politically, as the following passages will show:

. . . . . the inconvenient or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindu idolatry, which more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society.[33]

. . . . . I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions amongst them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. . . . . It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort.[34]

* * * * *

The present Hindu idolatry being made to consist in following certain modes and restraints of diet . . . . has subjected its unfortunate votaries to entire separation from the rest of the world, and also from each other, and to constant inconvenience and distress.[35]

* * * * *

For the chief part of the theory and practice of Hinduism, is made to consist in the adoption of a peculiar mode of diet ; the least aberration from which (even though the conduct of the offender may in other respects be pure and blameless) is not only visited with the severest censure, but actually punished

[33] Introd. Abridg. Vedanta, p. 5, (1816) *Ibid.*

[34] A private letter of Rammohun, dated Jany. 18, 1828. 'English Works', p. 929.

[35] See Second Defence of the Monotheistical system of the Vedas (1817). *Ibid* p. 119.

by exclusion from the society of his family and friends. In a word he is doomed to undergo what is commonly called loss of caste.

On the contrary, the rigid observance of this grand article of Hindu faith is considered in so high a light as to compensate for every moral defect. Even the most atrocious crimes weigh little or nothing in the balance against the supposed guilt of its violation.

Murder, theft or perjury though brought home to the party by a judicial sentence, so far from inducing loss of caste, is visited in their society with no peculiar mark of infamy or disgrace.

A trifling present to the Brahmans commonly called *prayaschit* with the performance of a few idle ceremonies are held as a sufficient atonement for all those crimes ; and the delinquent is at once freed from all temporal inconvenience, as well as all dread of future retribution.[36]

This vivid picture, so true to reality, of the topsy-turvy relation of all moral values which idolatry, caste and all their attendant evils bring about, answers to the present conditions as well as it did in Rammohun's time. The more his adversaries endeavoured to palliate the evils of idolatry and conventional Hinduism, the more outspoken became his answers. At times he was obliged to be brutally frank in the interests of truth although it brought down upon him the wrath of his people and terrible persecution at their hands.

In the thick of the controversy that ensued, a critic petulantly advised Rammohun to possess his soul in patience when others, happy in their own faith in idol-worship, were pursuing the even tenor of their lives. Rammohun's dignified reply was as follows:

In thanking him for his offering me this counsel, I must, however, beg the learned Brahman to excuse me while I acknowledge myself unable to follow it ; and that for several reasons. First, a feeling for the misery and distress of his fellow-

[36] Introduction to the English Translation of the Iśopanishad (1816) *Ibid* pp. 73-74.

creatures is, to every one not overpowered by selfish motives, I presume, rather natural than optional. Secondly, I, as one of their countrymen, and ranked in the most religious sect, of course participate in the disgrace and ridicule to which they have subjected themselves, in defiance of their spiritual authority, by the worship of idols, very often under the most shameful forms, accompanied with the foulest language, and most indecent hymns and gestures. Thirdly, a sense of duty which one man owes to another compels me to exert my utmost endeavours to rescue them from imposition and servitude, and promote their comfort and happiness.[37]

THE PATH-FINDER

And in words at once prophetic, burning with the courage of conviction and with faith in the future, he declared:

By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahman, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches of my relations, whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice—perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation: my motives are acceptable to that Being who beholds in secret and compensates openly.[38]

The day that Rammohun saw with prophetic vision has now arrived. It is now being recognised that he was the path-finder—the path to truer and fuller life through catholic worship, the path open to all irrespective of creed, caste or colour. Amongst all other kinds of freedom he fought for, this *par excellence* was his message of religious freedom—freedom from the shackles of hide-bound forms and ceremonials. Moreover, this way of true worship was open to the householder. Rammohun levelled the whole

[37] 'Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Vedas'—English Works p. 116.
[38] Introduction to the Abridgment.

artillery of the Śāstras to establish that on the plane of worship there was to be no distinction between the householder and the *sanyasin*:—

Neither can it be alleged that the Vedas, Purāṇas, etc., teach both the adoration of the Supreme Being and that of celestial gods and goddesses, but that the former is intended for Yatis, or those that are bound by their profession to forsake all worldly considerations, and the latter for laymen ; for it is evident from the 48th text of the 3rd Chapter of the Vedānta that a householder also is required to perform the worship of the Supreme Being.[39]

A pious householder is entitled to the adoration of God equally with a Yati * * * And the Vedas declare that "celestial gods and householders of strong faith, and professional Yatis are alike.[40]

Equally vigorous was his attack on the fetish of pilgrimage.

Devotion to the Supreme Being is not limited to any holy place or sacred country, as the Vedanta says, "In any place wherein the mind feels itself undisturbed, men should worship God ; because no specific authority for the choice of any particular place of worship is found in the Veda" which declares, "In any place which renders the mind easy, man should adore God."

This idea has found expression in one of the hymns composed by him:

Where roamest thou always in search of the Spotless
Thou rejoicest in thine heart thinking that this
will bear fruit
Omnipresent is His name, so the Vedas declare
Yet thou wouldst deny Him by going far afield on
pilgrimage.[41]

[39] Preface to Iśopanishad—'English Works' p. 65.
[40] Abridgment of the Vedant—'English Works' p. 15.
[41] কোথায় গমন কর, সেই নিরঞ্জন অন্বেষণে।
ফলশ্রুতি বাণী, হৃদয়তে মানি, প্রফুল্ল আপনি আপন মনে
সর্ব্বব্যাপী তাঁর আখ্যা, এই যে বেদের ব্যাখ্যা
অন্যথা করিতে চাহ তীর্থ দরশনে।

CHAPTER V

RAMMOHUN

The Exponent of Christian Theism

Rammohun Roy is usually known as the champion of Hindu Theism. His unique position as interpreter of the Theism of Christ, as also of Christian Theism, has for some unaccountable reason been almost lost sight of. Not that his 'Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness', or his three successive 'Appeals to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus' are unknown, or unheard of. They find mention in almost every biography, history, or appreciation that has since appeared. But more often than not, they are taken in blanket fashion to be all polemics —the Hindu theist's onslaughts on orthodox Christianity. In fact, they are much more than that. They reveal in Rammohun a stage of thought and realisation which took him beyond what may be called his merely Vedic, or Vedāntic, stage. They leave a legacy to the Christian and the non-Christian too precious to be slighted, or thrown away. Moreover, they bequeath to the Brahmo Samaj a conception of Christ and Christianity which, in the economy of Providence, was only an earnest of what was to come later in ampler measure through Keshub Chunder Sen. We would rather let Rammohun speak for himself, than interpret what he meant. But before his writings on the subject of Christianity are explored, it would be well to try and enter into his mind to see what changes were being gradually wrought therein. In the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin he began in the spirit of Mohamed as a thorough iconoclast bent on idol-breaking,—on demolishing all the *idola,* in Bacon's phraseology, patricularly the so-called scriptures, the *idola* of corrupt mediaeval theology and superstitions, the *idola* of popular religion, theology and tradition. His

weapon of warfare was reason and commonsense—the "intuitive faculty of discriminating good from evil", and of distinguishing "the truth from untruth and true propositions from fallacious ones". In the second stage, when he stood up for Vedantic Theism he had emerged from this intellectual arrogance. He did not part with reason and commonsense, but he now knew their limitations. Nor would he blindly follow the authority of all scriptures, whose name was legion. He took his stand on the Veda or, more correctly, the Vedānta and the Upaniṣads. These he felt had the sanction of authority and the support of reason. As for the 'doctors of religion' far from being irreverent towards them he spoke reverently of Manu and Yājñavalkya, of Vyāsa and Śankarāchārya, as though he felt that the scriptures they expounded were but the record of God's dealings with man—the concentrated essence of the spiritual experience of the *Rishi* fathers. And thus he came to speak of "the goodness of the Almighty Power which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for".

Yet in the second stage he was more or less on the intellectual plane. There is nothing so devastating as this arid search after impersonal Truth. Rammohun's temperament led him as early as his Rangpur days to gather together about him friends and fellow-seekers for interchange of thoughts and for religious discussion and discourse; and, later, in 1815, to establish the Ātmiya Sabhā, where scriptures were read and hymns were sung. Later still, he made more than one attempt to form a society in quest of spiritual fellowship. With this temperament it was natural for him to look for kindred spirits. Is there anything so cheering and comforting as to find companionship, fellowship with kindred souls, in one's search after light, more light? And what unspeakable solace and courage flows from contact with one who has already entered the region of Light and Love! The change in Rammohun's outlook seems to have been wrought by such an one. From the 'Precepts' to the person

of Jesus was but one step—for Rammohun's spirit never could remain in the vestibule but always sought the inner chambers. And then slowly, but surely, Jesus grew into Rammohun and Rammohun grew into him. Presently, there was no more of that cold, calculating rationalism that had characterized his earlier writings. Reading the literature of what may be called his third stage, on the subject of Christ and Christianity, one cannot help feeling, as it were, the breath of a different atmosphere. We have still before us, no doubt, the redoubtable Brahmin heretic who has ruthlessly cast asunder the ties of affection and thrown off the trammels of tradition—all in the cause of truth; the controversialist and the hero of many a theological battle—righteously indignant at the very mention of man-God or God-man, with his back set on Trinitarianism and with his arm uplifted against any manner of deification of man which he detested even as he did blasphemy. But this apart, whenever in his writings he is face to face with Christ, Rammohun melts in love and homage. Hence the ease and freedom with which he calls Jesus "the saviour", "the redeemer", "our gracious saviour", "the mediator", "the intercessor", "the greatest of all prophets who was sent to call sinners to repentance", "the spiritual Lord and King of Jews and gentiles", "whom God graciously sent to deliver those precepts of religion and morality whose tendency is to promote universal peace and harmony". It is to be noted, however, that the expressions "saviour", "redeemer", "mediator", "intercessor" and the like, used by Rammohun regarding Christ, bear a meaning far different from that derived from the well-known Christian doctrine of vicarious suffering, and quite in keeping with the liberal viewpoint of the Brahmo Samaj of the present day.

The 'Precepts' published in 1820 are a compilation from the four Gospels of all the teachings of Jesus including the parables and anecdotes; the miracles, with the crucifixion, the resurrection and the like, purposely excluded.

'Precepts of Jesus'

This is how Rámmohun in the Introduction sets forth the aim and object of the publication: —

A conviction in the mind of its total ignorance of the nature and of the specific attributes of the Godhead, and a sense of doubt respecting the real essence of the soul, give rise to feelings of great dis-satisfaction with our limited powers, as well as with all human acquirements which fail to inform us on these interesting points. On the other hand, a notion of the existence of a supreme superintending power, the Author and Preserver of this harmonious system, who has organized and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind. The former of these sources of satisfaction, viz., a belief in God, prevails generally, being derived either from tradition and instruction, or from an attentive survey of the wonderful skill and contrivance displayed in the works of nature. The latter, although it is partially taught also in every system of religion with which I am acquainted, is principally inculcated by Christianity. This essential characteristic of the Christian religion I was for a long time unable to distinguish as such, amidst the various doctrines I found insisted upon in the writings of the Christian authors, and in the conversation of those teachers of Christianity with whom I have had the honour of holding communication. Amongst these opinions, the most prevalent seems to be that no one is justly entitled to the appellation of Christian who does not believe in the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost as well as in the divine nature of God, the Father of all created beings.

* * * * *

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

some other passages are liable to the disputes and doubts of free thinkers and anti-Christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt, at best, to carry little weight with them. On the contrary, moral doctrines, tending evidently to the maintenance of the peace and harmony of mankind at large, are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion, and intelligible alike to the learned and to the unlearned.

This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God, who has equally submitted all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature, and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in its present form.

The 'Precepts' called forth a vehement reply from the Serampore missionaries in the 'Friend of India' over the name of 'A Christian Missionary'. Their objection was mainly twofold: First, they regarded Rammohun's mode of compilation as utterly unwarranted. The gospels were not thus to be mutilated, as they thought, beyond recognition. Either the whole, or none of it, must be presented to the world. To take the texts which would suit the purpose of the compiler and to discard others which could not, or should not, be separated from the rest, was in itself an outrage on Christian faith and sentiment. Secondly, the presentation of the gospels denuded of the portions relating to immaculate conception, crucifixion and resurrection; and of the fourth gospel devoid of the texts on which are based the doctrine of the Trinity, of the unity of Christ with the Godhead and similar other doctrines, was in their opinion calculated to make them meaningless, or to put a meaning on them which was never intended. At the present day

it may be difficult, especially for one outside the pale of Christianity, to appreciate this standpoint. For there are many today even in Christendom who may be indicted for the same offence and nobody ever cares to raise his little finger against them. Far from being opposed they are gladly tolerated, perhaps on the principle "He that is not against us is on our part". And Rammohun bitterly complained in his 'First Appeal' that his action was not tolerated by Christian divines in the same spirit.[1] But what is easy to contemplate with equanimity at the present day might not have been possible a century ago. Particularly, for the Serampore missionaries, who had embarked on an extensive propagandist programme for the spread of the Gospels,[2] it was difficult to hold their souls in patience and allow Rammohun to make short shrift of their work. They completely lost their balance and did not scruple to hurl abuses on Rammohun.

In the same year Rammohun published his reply entitled 'An Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus, by a Friend to Truth'. He protested against the term 'heathen' having been applied to him by the reviewer. "The Editor, by making use of the team *heathen* has, I presume, violated truth, charity and liberality which are essential to Christianity in every sense of the term".[3] He recalled the Introduction to the

[1] The Rev. C. H. A. Dall speaking in 1871 on the Raja thus referred to the 'Precepts of Jesus': "What our great Rammohun calls 'The Precepts of Jesus' is really the bulk of the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke with six selected portions of the gospel of John including, of course, the Lord's Prayer and the Parable of the Prodigal son with the ten commandments of Moses simplified by 'the Saviour' into two, in the uttermost love of God and man. In the first century a single gospel, say that of Mark alone, was all that that portion of the Christian world possessed. What Rammohun Roy therefore publishes to his countrymen as 'the Precepts of Jesus' comprises a much fuller life of Jesus than many Christian converts of the first century were privileged to see'—'Rammohun Roy, the Founder of Brahmoism. A lecture delivered by a Brahmo follower of Christ, C. H. A. Dall, M.A., at the Useful Arts Rooms, Calcutta, Nov. 19, 1871.

[2] They produced first editions of the New Testament in more than thirty oriental languages and dialects—'Centenary Report of the Serampore College'.

[3] 'English Works', p. 547.

'Precepts' where the expressions used he declared, "are calculated, in my humble opinion, to convince every mind, not biassed by prejudice, that the compiler believed not only in God, whose nature and essence is beyond comprehension, but in the truths revealed in the Christian system".[4]

He then goes on to make a touching allusion to his having abjured idolatrous practices and "accepted the Precepts of Jesus as his principal guide in matters of religion and civil duties":

> Although he was born a Brahman, not only renounced idolatry at a very early period of his life, but published at that time a treatise in Arabic and Persian against that system ; and no sooner acquired a tolerable knowledge of English, than he made his desertion of idol-worship known to the Christian world by his English publication—a renunciation that, I am sorry to say, brought severe difficulties upon him, by exciting the displeasure of his parents, and by subjecting him to the dislike of his near as well as distant relations, and to the hatred of nearly all his countrymen for several years. I therefore presume that among his declared enemies, who are aware of these facts, no one who has the least pretension to truth would venture to apply the designation of heathen to him.[5]

* * * *

The Editor perhaps may consider himself justified by numerous precedents amongst the several partisans of different Christian sects in applying the name of Heathen to one who takes the Precepts of Jesus as his principal guide in matters of religion and civil duties ; as Roman Catholics bestow the application of heretics or infidels on all classes of Protestants, and Protestants do not spare the title of idolators to Roman Catholics ; Trinitarians deny the name of Christians to Unitarians, while the latter retort by stigmatizing the worshippers of the Son of man as Pagans who adore a created

[4] 'English Works', p. 548.
[5] *Ibid*, pp. 548-549.

and dependent Being. Very different conduct is inculcated in the Precepts of Jesus to John, when complaining of one who performed cures in the name of Jesus yet refused to follow the Apostles: he gave a rebuke, saying "He that is not against us, is on our part.[6]

Rammohun does not mince matters. Having declared that "he believes in the truths revealed in the Christian system" and that "he takes the precepts of Jesus as his principal guide in matters of religion and civil duties," he goes on to make further avowals:

The Compiler, finding these commandments given as including all the revealed Law, and the whole system of religion adopted by the Prophets and re-established and fulfilled by Jesus himself, as the means to acquire Peace and Happiness, was desirous of giving more full publicity in this country to them, and to the subsidiary moral doctrines that are introduced by the Saviour in detail. Placing also implicit confidence in the truth of his sacred commandment, to the observance of which we are directed by the same teacher (John Ch. xiv. Ver. 15. "If ye love me keep my commandments" ; Ver. 24. "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my saying", the Compiler never hesitated in declaring a belief in God and a due regard to that law "Do unto others as you would be done by", render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to mankind.[7]

But had he not described the 'Precepts' as 'moral' sayings which, independent of the dogmas, were sufficient for salvation? This, the reviewer urged, was radically false. Rammohun's answer was clear and straightforward. 'Moral' in the context in which it had been used could not bear the restricted meaning which was being put upon it by the reviewer. "This simple code is well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of

[6] 'English Works', p. 549.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 551.

their various duties to God, to themselves, and to society".[8] Surely, said Rammohun, that was wide enough to cover religion: "They alone were a sufficient guide to secure peace and happiness to mankind at large—a position that is entirely founded on and supported by the express authority of Jesus of Nazareth—a denial of which would imply a total disavowal of Christanity." He supports this by quoting texts,[9] and then observes:

What then are those sayings, the obedience to which is so absolutely commanded as indispensable and all-sufficient to those who desire to inherit eternal life? They are not other than the blessed and benign doctrines taught in the sermon on the Mount (contained in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of Matthew) which indeed include, therefore, every duty of man and all that is necessary to salvation; and they expressly exclude mere profession or belief, from those circumstances which God graciously admits as giving a title to eternal happiness.[10]

These precepts separated from the mysterious dogmas and historical records appear, on the contrary, to the Compiler to contain not only the essence of all that is necessary to instruct mankind in their civil duties, but also the best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments. I, therefore, extract from the same compilation a few passages of that greatest of all Prophets who was sent to call sinners to repentence.[11]

It is the dogmas that have caused endless disputes among the followers of Christ. Have not Christian missions failed one after another, by reason of their laying undue stress on matters of doctrine?

But he has seen with regret that they have completely counteracted their benevolent efforts by introducing all the

[8] 'English Works', p. 550.
[9] *Ibid*, pp. 550-54.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 555.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 552.

dogmas and mysteries taught in Christian Churches to people by no means prepared to receive them and that they have been so incautious and inconsiderate in their attempts to enlighten the natives of India, as to address the instructions to them in the same way as if they were reasoning with persons brought up in a Christian country, with those dogmatical notions imbibed from their infancy.* * * * It has been owing to their beginning with the introduction of mysterious dogmas and of relations that at first sight appear incredible, that notwithstanding every exertion on the part of our divines, I am not aware that we can find a single respectable Musalman or Hindu, who was not in want of the common comforts of life, once glorified with the truth of Christianity, constantly adhering to it.[12]

A true friend, as he was, of Christian missions and missionaries, a spontaneous and powerful supporter of Duff and Adam and many another worker striving for propagation of Christian principles, Rammohun could scarcely be doubted as to his attitude towards them. It is pleasing to hear from his mouth with what feelings of cordiality he welcomed them:

From what I have already stated I hope no one will infer that I feel ill-disposed towards the missionary establishments in the country. This is far from being the case. I pray for their augmentation, and that their members may remain in the happy enjoyment of life in a climate so generally inimical to European constitutions: for in proportion to the increase in their number, subriety, moderation, temperance and good behaviour have been diffused among their neighbours as the necessary consequences of their company, conversation and good example.[13]

But of the methods of missions and missionaries and of their insistence on the dogmas of Christianity as distinguished from the precepts of Christ and the example of his

[12] 'English Works', p. 557.
[13] *Ibid*, p. 560.

life, Rammohun had something else to say. He believed in adapting instructions to the susceptibilities and predilections of the hearers, in other words, in the principle of imparting teaching according to the *adhikar* (capability) * of the person to be taught. Again and again, this thought recurs in Rammohun's first 'Appeal' and he places all the emphasis he can command on the force of early education and influence, on notions "being imbibed from infancy", on one's "being prepared to retain", etc.:

Whether or not he[14] erred in his judgment on that point must be determined by those who will candidly peruse and consider the arguments already advanced on the subject, always bearing in mind the lesson practically taught by the Saviour himself, of adapting his instructions to the susceptibilities and capacity of his hearers. John, Chapter VI, Verse 12. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now".

Hindustan is a country, of which nearly three-fifths of the inhabitants are Hindus, and two-fifths Musalmans. Although the professors of neither of these religions are possessed of such accomplishments as are enjoyed by Europeans in general, yet the latter portion are well known to be firmly devoted to a belief in one God, which has been instilled into their minds from their infancy. The former (I mean, the Hindus) are, with a few exceptions, immersed in gross idolatry, and in belief of the most extravagant description respecting futurity, antiquity, and the miracles of their deities and saints, as handed down to them and recorded in their ancient books. Weighing these circumstances, and anxious, from his long experience of religious controversy with natives to avoid further disputation with them, the Compiler selected those Precepts of Jesus, the obedience to which he believed most peculiarly required of a Christian, and such as could by no means tend, in doctrine, to excite the religious horror of Mohammedans, or the scoffs of Hindus.[15]

* In the phraseology of Logic, *Adhikar* means 'Universe of thought'.
[14] The Compiler, *i.e.*, Rammohun, p. 550.
[15] *Ibid*, pp. 559-60

He there states, that it is on account of these passages being such as were the ordinary foundation of the arguments of the opponents of Christianity, or the sources of interminable controversies that have led to heart-burnings and even blood-shed among Christians, that they were not included in his selection: and they were omitted the more readily, as he considered them not essential to religion. But such dogmas, or doctrinal or other passages as are not exposed to those objections, and are not unfamiliar to the minds of those for whose benefit the compilation was intended, are generally included in conformity with the avowed plan of the work, particularly such as seem calculated to direct our love and obedience to the beneficent Author of the universe, and him whom he graciously sent to deliver these Precepts of Religion and morality, whose tendency is to promote universal peace and harmony.[16]

To the question asked by the Reviewer as to why he should have thought fit to exclude from the gospel of St. John texts which are most essential, in the estimation of orthodox Christians, Rammohun gives the same reply, namely, that the fourth gospel abounds in passages which have given rise to mysterious doctrines:

It is from this source that the most difficult to be comprehended of the dogmas of the Christian religion have been principally drawn: and on the foundation of the passages of that writer, the interpretation of which is still a matter of keen discussion among the most learned and most pious scholars in Christendom, is erected the mysterious doctrine of three Gods in one Godhead, the origin of Mohammedanism, and the stumbling-block to the conversion of the more enlightened among the Hindus.[17]

The 'First Appeal' left many matters undisposed of. The tone of devout adherence to the precepts, and of unqualified reverence to the person of Jesus which pervaded the Appeal, together with the lofty dignity and self-restraint so characteristic of Rammohun had their effect on his

[16] *Ibid*, p. 561.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 558.

adversary. Nevertheless, Dr. Marshman was not to be silenced. There were most vital matters at stake, such as the validity of belief in the miracles, in the immaculate conception, in the Trinity, in the unity of Christ with God and in the doctrine of Atonement. These called for a rejoinder from Serampore which appeared in due course and called forth from Rammohun the Second Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus. In this he dealt with these doctrines in detail. He reiterated the reason above given for avoiding the dogmas and miraculous relations found in the gospels, but in doing so, he did not hesitate to affirm his own belief in those miracles:

> The only reason assigned by the Compiler in the Introduction for separating the Precepts from the abstruse doctrines and miraculous relations of the Gospels, is that the former are liable to the doubts and disputes of Free-thinkers and Anti-Christians, and the latter are capable at best of carrying little weight with the natives of this part of the globe, the fabricated tales handed down to them being of a more wonderful nature. These sentiments respecting the doctrines and miracles, founded as they are upon undeniable facts do not, I presume, convey any disavowal or doubt of their truth.[18]

He also reiterated his conviction that "the Precepts compiled and published as a guide to peace and happiness, though deficient in respect to speculative doctrines and creeds, as well as narrative, yet contain all that is essential in practical Christianity since they teach us the performance of our duty to God and to our fellow creatures and the most acceptable atonement on our part to the All-merciful, when we have fallen short of that duty".[19]

He marshalled a large array of texts to shew "both the indispensableness and the all-sufficiency of the excellent Precepts in question to procure salvation".[20]

[18] The Compiler, *i.e.*, Rammohun, 'English Works', p. 567.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 571.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 572.

As to what he meant by atonement in the above quoted passage would appear from Chapter IV of the Second Appeal which was exclusively devoted to that subject. There Rammohun marshalled all the texts from the New Testament bearing on "the important doctrine of the cross, implying the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus as an atonement for the sins of mankind" and made running comments on them giving his own interpretation, and observing that the term "Saviour" must not be understood in too restricted a sense:

We find the title "Saviour" applied frequently in the divine writings to those persons who had been endued with the power of saving people, either by inculcating doctrines, or affording protection to them, though none of them atoned for the sins of mankind by their death. Obadiah, verse 21. "And *saviours* shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau and the kingdom shall be the Lord's". Nehemiah IX. 27. "And according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them *saviours,* who saved them out of the hand of their enemies". 2 Kings XIII. 5 "The Lord gave Israel a *saviour,* so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians.[21]

* * * *

Jesus is of course justly termed a saviour, for having instructed men in the Divine will and law, never before as fully revealed. Would it degrade Jesus to revere him as a Divine Teacher, because Moses and Prophets before him delivered to the people divine instructions? Or would it depreciate the dignity of Jesus, to believe that he, in common with several other prophets, underwent afflictions and death? Such an idea is unscriptural for God represents the Christ as a Prophet equal to Moses (Deut. ch. XVIII, Ver. 18).

Jesus declares himself to have come to fulfil the law taught by Moses. (Matt. Ch. V, Ver. 7). 'Think not that I am come to destroy, but to fulfil' (Matt. Ch. 23, Vers. 2, 3) * * * It is true that Moses began to erect the everlasting edifice of true religion, consisting of a knowledge of the Unity of God, and

[21] 'English Works', p. 605.

obedience to his will and commandments; but Jesus of Nazareth has completed the structure and rendered his law perfect.[22]

Again, dealing with the question of the Messianic character of Jesus, he definitely declares his faith in it, but in a sense which can hardly commend itself to Christian orthodoxy:

The Reverend Editor might have spared the arguments he has adduced to prove that Jesus was sent into this world as the long-expected Messiah, intended to suffer death and difficulties like other prophets who went before him; as the Editor may find in the compilation in question, as well as in its defence, Jesus of Nazareth represented as "The Son of God", a term synonymous with that of Messiah, the highest of all the prophets: and his life declares him to have been, as represented in the Scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for a temporal one, and great as the angels of God, or rather greater than they. He also might have omitted to quote such authority as shows, that Christ, being a mediator between God and men "declared that whatsoever they (his Apostles) shall ask in his name, the Father will give them": for, the Compiler in his defence of the Precepts of Jesus, repeatedly acknowledged Christ as the Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor with God, in behalf of his followers. But such intercession does not, I presume, tend to prove the deity or the atonement of Jesus, as interpreted by the Editor, for God is represented in the sacred books to have often shown mercy to mankind for righteous men's sake. How much more, then, would he naturally manifest his favour towards those who might petition him in the name of one whom he anointed and exalted over all creatures and prophets?[23]

But the crucial point on which the Serampore missionaries were eager to have a definite answer was "the most abstruse and yet most important of doctrines—the Deity of Jesus Christ". What answer had Rammohun to give on the seven propositions advanced under this head

[22] 'English Works', pp. 605-606.
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 607-608.

by Dr. Marshman? In Chapter II of the Second Appeal Rammohun takes them *seriatim* and deals with them. It is not possible here to convey an adequate idea of the array of textual authority and the inexorable logic of critical analysis brought to bear on this and other important topics in the Second Appeal. The conclusion that he arrived at can easily be gathered from the very title he gave to the Chapter: "Natural inferiority of the Son to the Father'. One or two extracts from this Chapter will suffice to make his reasoned viewpoint clear:

The Saviour having declared that unity existed between the Father and himself (John Ch. X, Ver. 30), "I and my father are one", a doubt arose with regard to the sense in which the unity affirmed in those words should be accepted. This Jesus removes by defining the unity so expressed as a subsisting concord of will and design, such as existed among his apostles, and not identity of being: *Vide* Ch. XVII. Ver. 11 of John, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are*", Ver. 22: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, *even as we are one*! Should any one understand by these texts real unity and identity, he must believe that there existed a similar identity between each and all of the Apostles; nay, even that the disciples also were included in the Godhead, which in that case would consist of a great many times the number of persons ascribed to the Trinity. John, Ch. XVII, Ver. 20-23. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word—That *they all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,—That *they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me*: that they may be made *perfect in one*". I know not how it is possible for those who profess obedience to the word of Christ to overlook the explanation he has here so clearly given of the nature of the unity existing between him and the Father, and to adopt a contrary system, apparently introduced by some Heathen writers to suit their polytheistical prejudices.[24]

For my conviction, and for the satisfaction of those who consider the Precepts of Jesus as a guide to Peace and Happiness, his word "They may be one, as we are," John XVII, verse 11, in defining the nature of unity between God and Jesus fully suffices. Disgusted with the puerile and unsociable system of Hindu idolatry, and dissatisfied at the cruelty allowed by Mussalmanism against Non-Mussalmans, I, on my searching after the truth of Christianity, felt for a length of time very much perplexed with the difference of sentiments found among the followers of Christ. (I mean Trinitarians and Unitarians, the grand division of them), until I met with the explanation of the unity given by the divine Teacher himself as a guide to peace and happiness.[25]

Chapter V of the Second Appeal is entitled 'On the Doctrines and Miraculour Narrations of the New Testament'. A great portion of this Chapter deals with the excesses in violence and outrage to which Christian sectarianism has lent itself, through mistaken zeal in upholding particular doctrines. It is no proof of the soundness of a doctrine that it has succeeded. The final success of the Trinitarian party may be attributed, among other adventitious circumstances, to the fact that "to the people of those ages doctrines that resembled the polytheistical belief that till then prevailed, must have been more acceptable than those which were diametically opposed to such notions.[26] Regarding miraculous narrations, Rammohun again expresses his view, namely, first, he does not doubt their authenticity, secondly, nevertheless he would attach less importance to them than to the precepts of Jesus.

Under these circumstances, and from the experience that nothing but the sublimity of the Precepts of Jesus had at first

[24] *See* Chap. II, Second Appeal, 'English Works', p. 577.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 580.
[26] "The reason for the majority being in favour of three persons of the Godhead at the Council of Nice may be easily accounted for, as I noticed before. More than nine-tenths of the Christians of that age, including the Emperor and Princes, were Gentile converts, to whom the idea of a plurality of Gods was most familiar and acceptable and to whose reason as well as practice the worship of a deity in the human shape was perfectly consonant". *Ibid.*, p. 629.

drawn the attention of the Compiler, and excited his veneration for the author of this religion, without aid from miraculous relations, he omitted in his compilation the mention of the miracles performed by Jesus, without meaning to express doubt of their authenticity or intending to slight them by such an omission.[27]

On mature consideration of all those circumstances, the Compiler hopes he may be allowed to remain still of opinion that the miraculous relations found in the divine writings would be apt at best to carry little weight with them, when imparted to the Hindoos at large, in the present state of their minds; but as no other religion can produce anything that may stand in competition with the precepts of Jesus, much less that can be pretended to be superior to them, the Compiler deemed it incumbent upon him to introduce these among his country men as a Guide to Peace and Happiness.[28]

Chapter VI of the Second Appeal deals with the Impersonality of the Holy Spirit. Rammohun here again goes into deep research and, by reference to texts, establishes that the 'Holy Spirit' or the 'Holy Ghost' is not a Person separate from the Father, but refers only to the attribute of the One Indivisible Person whereby He leads to righteousness those that seek His will with all their heart. He observes:

Were every attribute ascribed to the Deity, which is found personified, to be therefore considered as a distinct personage, it would be difficult to avoid forming a very strange notion of the theology of the Bible. It appears, indeed, to me impossible to view the Holy Spirit as very God without coming to ideas respecting the nature of the Deity, little different from some of those most generally and justly condemned as found amongst polytheists.[29]

In this connection it is important to refer to a matter which has been the subject of misapprehension on the part

[27] 'English Works', p. 614.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 615.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 618.

of some Christian writers. Speaking of Rammohun Roy's views on immaculate conception it has been observed by them that he did believe in it. The passage on which this opinion is based, if taken apart from the context, may be used to denote that meaning. But it would scarcely be a proper way of using it. Taking with the context, it clearly means that Rammohun believing as he did in miracles, (see *supra*) was quite prepared to believe the miraculous phenomenon of Mary, though a virgin, bearing a child but he repudiated the idea of actual conception through the Holy Ghost, the latter being viewed as a person. For the sake of removing the misapprehension above mentioned the whole passage[30] is given below:—

Take for instance Matt. Ch. I Ver. 11 where it is said that Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost Ver. 20. "That which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost". Luke Ch. I, Ver. 35. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee". In interpreting these passages according to the opinion maintained by the Editor, we should necessarily be drawn to the idea that God came upon Mary, and that the child which she bore was in reality begotten of him. Is this idea, I would beg to know, consistent with the perfect nature of the righteous God? Or rather, is not such a notion of the Godhead's having had intercourse with a human female, as horrible as the sentiments entertained by ancient and modern Heathens respecting the Deity? On the other hand, if we understand by those passages, merely that the miraculous influence of God came upon Mary, so that, though a virgin, she bore a child, everything would stand consistent with our belief of the Divine power, without shocking our ideas of the purity of the Deity, inculcated alike by reason and revelation.[31]

The Second Appeal ends with a postcript of which the concluding paragraph sums up Rammohun's estimate

[30] See 'English Works', pp. 618-19.
[31] 'English Works', pp. 618-19.

of the true Christ and the true Christianity that along can find a response in India: —

If Christianity inculcated a doctrine which represents God as consisting of three persons, and appearing sometimes in the human form, at other times in a bodily shape like a dove, no Hindoo, in my humble opinion, who searches after truth, can conscientiously profess it in preference to Hindooism ; for that which renders the modern Hindoo system of religion absurd and detestable, is that it represents the divine nature, though one (Ekam Brahman)[32], as consisting of many persons, capable of assuming different forms for the discharge of different offices. I am, however, most firmly convinced, that Christianity is entirely free from every trace of polytheism, whether gross or refined. I therefore enjoy the approbation of my conscience in publishing the Precepts of this religion as the sources of Peace and Happiness.[33]

Even the Second Appeal of Rammohun's did not satisfy the thirst of the Serampore missionaries. There were still further criticisms, and more ungenerous and adverse comments. And Rammohun with great reluctance had to publish his Final Appeal. All the preceding works on Christianity had been printed at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta. But after the publication of the Second Appeal it declined to print any other work of his. Consequently, he had to purchase types and set up a Press, which he called the Unitarian Press. It was from this Press that the Final Appeal was published in 1823. The spirit in which he embarked on this publication is well expressed in his own words in the Preface: —

I am well aware that this difference of sentiment has already occasioned much coolness towards me in the demeanour of some whose friendship I hold very dear ; and that this protracted controversy has not only prevented me from rendering my humble services to my countrymen by various publica-

[32] The One Brahma.
[33] 'English Works', p. 675.

tions which I had projected in the native languages, but has also diverted my attention from all other literary pursuits for three years past. Notwithstanding these sacrifices, I feel well satisfied with my present engagements ; and cannot wish that I had pursued a different course ; since, whatever may be the opinion of the world, my own conscience fully approves of my past endeavours to defend what I esteem the cause of truth.

The Final Appeal is a master-piece of scholarship and research. An amazing array of arguments which could only be based on wide acquaintance with the highways and bye-ways of Christian Church History, with the intricacies of Greek Grammar and Hebrew idiom, with methods of textual and exigetical analysis, as also with diverse commentaries on the Old and New Testaments, renders this work an invaluable contribution to Biblical literature. Pervading all this there is that ring of earnestness and reality which is a characteristic of all his writings. No wonder that the Indian Gazette upon the appearance of this work wrote of Rammohun as "a most gigantic combatant in the theological field, a combatant who, we are constrained to say, has not met with his match here".

For the purpose of the present work it is not necessary to go into it in great detail. A great portion of the Final Appeal is taken up with further elaboration of the points discussed in the Second Appeal, with the help of numerous texts from the Old and New Testaments. It will suffice to give a few typical extracts which hold up a picture of his exact attitude towards Christ and towards the doctrines of Atonement and the Trinity: —

Whether do these passages imply that Jesus, though he preferred mercy to sacrifice (Matt. IX. 13 ; XII 7) did actually sacrifice himself and offer his own blood to God as an atonement for the sins of others, or do they mean that Jesus knowing already that the fulfilment of his divine commission would endanger his life, never hesitated to execute it, and suffered his blood to be shed in saving men from sin through his divine precepts and pure example, which were both opposed to the

religious system adopted by his contemporary Jews? Were we to follow the former mode of interpretation, and take all these phrases in their strictly literal sense we must be persuaded to believe that God not being contented with the blood of bulls and goats and other animal sacrifices offered to him by the Israelites, insisted upon the offer of the blood and life of his own as his condition for his forgiving the sins of men ; and that Jesus accordingly offered his blood to propitiate God and also proposed to men actually to eat his flesh ! etc., etc.[34]

To avoid such a stigma upon the pure religion of Jesus, it is incumbent, I think, upon us to follow the latter mode of interpretation, and to understand from the passages referred to, that Jesus, the spiritual Lord and King of Jews and Gentiles, in fulfilment of the duties of his mission, exposed his own life for the benefit of his subjects, purged their sins by his doctrines, and persevered in executing the commands of God, even to the undergoing of bodily suffering in the miserable death of the cross—a self-devotion or sacrifice, of which no Jewish high-priest had offered an example.[35]

Hence it appears more consistent with the context and the general tenor of scripture, to understand by the phrase, "The offering of the body of Jesus Christ", the death of Jesus as a spiritual and virtual sacrifice for the sins of all those for whom he became a mediator inasmuch as by that death the blessed saviour testified his perfect obedience and devotion to the will of his heavenly Father, and thereby vindicated to himself the unlimited favour of God. During his life he instructed mankind how they might render themselves worthy of the Divine mercy ; by his death he qualified himself to be their intercessor at the heavenly throne, when sincere repentance was offered by them instead of perfect duty. We may easily account for the adoption by the apostles, with respect to him, of such terms as sacrifice and atonement for sin, and their representing Jesus as the high-priest, engaged to take away the

[34] 'English Works', pp. 701-702.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 702.

sins of the world by means of his blood. These were modes of speech made use of in allusion to the sacrifices and blood-offerings which the Jews and their high-priest used to make for the remission of sins and the apostles wisely accommodated their instructions to the ideas and forms of language familiar to those whom they addressed.[36] * * * *

But I cannot find anything in these passages that warrants an inference so contrary to our ideas of justice, as that the pain thus suffered by Jesus was inflicted on him, though innocent, by God, as an atonement to himself for withholding merited punishment from the truly guilty.[37]

As regards the doctrine of Trinity he says he has never hesitated, when required, to express his views as to its "unscripturality" and "unreasonableness".

The doctrine of the Trinity appears to me so obviously unscriptural that I am pretty sure, from my own experience and that of others that no one possessed of merely common sense will fail to find its unscripturality after a methodical study of the Old and New Testaments, unless previously impressed in the early part of his life with creeds and forms of speech preparing the way to that doctrine.[38]

After I have long relinquished every idea of a plurality of Gods, or of the persons of the Godhead, taught under different systems of modern Hindooism, I cannot conscientiously and consistently embrace one of a similar nature, though greatly refined by the religious reformations of modern times ; since whatever arguments can be adduced against a plurality of persons of the Godhead ; and, on the other hand, whatever excuse may be pleaded in favour of a plurality of persons of the Deity, can be offered with equal propriety in defence of Polytheism.[39]

We are now in a position to judge of the Raja's approach to Christ and Christianity. He constantly lays

[36] 'English Works', p. 705.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 713.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 688.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 874.

stress on the precepts, to bring out clearly the distinction between the precepts and the dogmas. To a superficial observer it may seem, at the first blush, as if he stopped at the precepts. In fact, that is the ground of complaint of the Serampore Reviewers of the 'Precepts of Jesus' who bitterly asked "Of what avail are the law and commandments, for salvation, without Christ?" They failed to see that though unable to accept the orthodox Christian conception of Christ, Rammohun did accept and render homage to Christ the Man. While speaking of the precepts and the message, Rammohun never forgot the message-bearer. Indeed, in his estimation both were as one, i.e., the message of life and the life that lived the message. Else how could Rammohun speak thus of Christ: "and his life declares him to have been, as represented in the scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life, as bread for temporal one"?[40]

When, however, it came to impart this creed to others, the Raja was more than careful. He followed Christ's caution "I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now?[41] Perhaps he felt they were not "prepared to receive it"; that the response, if any, might not be a true one; that there was no use dinning the personality of Jesus into the ears of people, who had "imbibed from infancy" notions of man-God and God-man. May be, he thought that from the precepts to the person should be a short natural step, as it had been with him. And he pre ferred for that reason to leave it at the precepts. Questioned as to the prospects of propagating Christianity among the masses of India he expressed his doubts and gave his answer in guarded terms. Addressing the Rev. Henry Ware of Cambridge U.S.A., in reply to a letter received from him containing a questionaire in the interest of the American Unitarian Mission, the Raja gave answers several of which are of abiding value, specially as they contain the views of

[40] 'English Works', p. 608.
[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 559-60.

the Abbe Dubois with whom the Raja expresses his agreement, in essentials:

I have now prepared such replies to those questions as my knowledge authorises and my conscience permits: and now submit them to your judgment. There is one question at the concluding part of your letter, (to wit, "Whether it be desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons") which I pause to answer, as I am led to believe, from reason, what is set forth in scripture, that 'in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him', in whatever form of worship he may have been taught to glorify God. Nevertheless, I presume to think, that Christianity, if properly inculcated, has a greater tendency to improve the moral and political state of mankind, than any other known religious system.

Q. I—[42]*What is the success of the great exertions which are making for the conversion of the natives of India to Christianity?*

Q. II—What is the number and character of converts?

Ans.—* * * *

To avoid, however, the occasion of a further dispute on this point with the Serampore missionaries I beg to substitute, for my answer to the above queries, the language of the Rev. Abbe' Dubois[43] who, after a mission of thirty years in India, is better qualified than I am, to give a decided opinion upon these subjects, and whose opinions deserve more reliance than those of a private individual who has never engaged in missionary duties. The quotation from Abbe Dubois above alluded to is as follows:—

"Question of conversion,—The question to be considered may be reduced to these two points: First, is there a possibility of making real converts to Christianity among the natives of India? Secondly—Are the means employed for that purpose, and above all, the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the idioms of the country, likely to conduce to this desirable object?

[42] 'English Works' p. 875—'A letter on the prospects of Christianity and the means of promoting its reception in India'.

[43] See 'The Hindu Manner and Customs' by Abbe Dubois.

"To both interrogatories I will answer in the negative: it is my decided opinion, first, that under existing circumstances there is no human possibility of converting the Hindoos to any sect of Christianity ; and, secondly, that the translation of the Holy Scriptures circulated among them, so far from conducing to this end, will, on the contrary increase the prejudices of the natives against the Christian religion, and prove, in many respects, detrimental to it. These assertions, coming from a person of my profession, may to many appear bold and extraordinary: I will therefore support them by such arguments and proofs as a long experience in the career of proselytism have enabled me to adduce.

"When I was at Vellore, four years ago, in attendance on a numerous congregation living in that place, having been informed that the Lutheran Missionaries kept a catechist or native religious teacher at that station on a salary of five pagodas a month, I was led to suppose that they had a numerous flock there ; but I was not a little surprised, when on inquiry I found that the whole congregation consisted of only *three individuals,* namely a *drummer,* a *cook,* and a *horse keeper.*

"In the meantime, do not suppose that those thin congregations are wholly composed of converted pagans ; at least half consists of Catholic apostates, who went over to the Lutheran sect in times of famine from other interested motives.

"It is not uncommon on the coast to see natives who successively pass from one religion to another, according to their actual interest. In my last journey to Madras, I became acquainted with native converts, who regularly changed their religion twice a year and who, for a long while, were in the habit of being six months Catholic and six months Protestant.

"Behold the Lutheran Mission, established in India more than a century ago ; interrogate its missionaries ; ask them what were their successes during so long a period, and through what means were gained over the few proselytes they made. Ask them whether the interests of their sect are improving, or whether they are gaining ground, or whether their small numbers are not rather dwindling down?

"Behold the truly industrious, the unaffected and unassuming Moravian brethren ; ask them how many converts they have made in India, during a stay of about seventy years, by

preaching the Gospel in all its naked simplicity: they will candidly answer, Not one, not a single man.

"Behold the Nestorians in Travancore; interrogate them; ask them for an account of their success in the work of proselytism in these modern times; ask them whether they are gaining ground, and whether the interests of their ancient mode of worship is improving; they will reply that so far from this being the case, their congregations, once so flourishing, amounting (according to Gibbon's account) to 200,000 souls, are now reduced to less than an eighth of this number and are daily diminishing.

"Behold the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore: inquire what are their scriptural successes on the shores of the Ganges; ask them whether those extremely incorrect versions, already obtained at an immense expense, have produced the sincere conversion of a single pagan; and I am persuaded that, if they are asked an answer upon their honour and conscience, they will all reply in the negative".

* * * *

Rammohun then proceeds to answer the questions relating particularly to the prospects of Unitarian Christianity in India:—

Q. XI.—*Are there any reasons for believing that Christianity, as it is held by Unitarians, would be more readily received by intelligent Hindoos, than as it is held by Trinitarians?*

In reply to this question I repeat what I stated in answer to a question of a similar nature, put to me by Mr. Reed, a gentleman of Boston, *viz.*, 'The natives of Hindoostan, in common with those of other countries, are divided into classes, the ignorant and the enlightened. The number of the latter is, I am sorry to say, comparatively very few here; and to these men the idea of a tri-une God, a man-God, and also the appearance of God in the bodily shape of a dove, or that of the blood of God shed for the payment of a debt, seem entirely heathenish and absurd, and consequently their sincere conversion to (Trinitarian) Christianity must be morally impossible. But they would not scruple to embrace, or at least to encourage,

the Unitarian system of Christianity, were it inculcated on them in an intelligible manner. The former class, I mean the ignorant, must be enemies to both systems of Christianity, Trinitarianism and Unitarianism. As they feel great reluctance in forsaking the deities worshipped by their fathers for foreign Gods, in substituting the blood of God for the water of the Ganges as a purifying substance, so the idea of an invisible Being as the sole object of worship, maintained by Unitarians, is foreign to their understanding. Under these circumstances it would be advisable, in my humble opinion, that one or two, if not more gentlemen, well qualified to teach English literature and science, and noted for their moral conduct, should be employed to cultivate the understandings of the present ignorant generation, and thereby improve their hearts, that the cause of truth may triumph over false religion, and the desired comfort and happiness may be enjoyed by men of all classes.

Q. XIV.—*Would it be useful to establish Unitarian Missionary schools for the instruction of the children of natives in the rudiments of a European education, in the English language, in Christian morality mingling with it very little instruction relative to the doctrines of Christianity, leaving them chiefly or wholly out of view, to be learned afterwards from our books and our example?*

This would be certainly of great use, and this is the only way of improving their understandings, and ultimately meliorating their hearts.

The above long extracts may appear to be hardly justifiable. Their value, however lies not in showing up the failures of Christian Missions as may be supposed; but in furnishing a key to Rammohun's mind and *his* general attitude towards all organisations and institutions for the spread of truth. He was painfully conscious of the fact that by long course of tradition, by virtue of early education and influence, by reason of imbibing notions, as it were, with the mother's milk, his people had been brought to such a pass that "the idea of an Invisible Being as the sole object of worship" had become "foreign to their understanding". He, therefore, laid all the emphasis that he could command

on a liberal education in literature and sciences, as also in Christian morality, being given to the young, and the mind of the coming generation being thus "prepared to receive" the Truth. Alas! How often is this forgotten! In his zeal and bigotry the enthusiastic preacher seldom realizes that, no matter how true the message, those that listen must be in a position to accept it in a spirit of reality. The only solvent of this difficulty is either the influence of a living example, or antecedent education or preparation.

In this connection, it is useful to remember what the Raja said in the Final Appeal in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus touching this capital impediment to the progress of truth:

> Have the doctrines of the Vedānta ever succeeded in suppressing polytheism amongst the generality of Hindoos, brought up with the notion of the Godhead of the sun, of fire, and of water, and of the separate and independent existence of the allegorical representations of the attributes of God? Were the sublime works, written by the learned among the Greeks, ever able to shake the early acquired superstitious notions and polytheistical faith of the generality of their countrymen? Nay, even when Christian converts became numerous, did not those who were brought up in the ancient superstition introduce some vestiges of their idolatry into their new persuasion? In fact, nothing can more surely impede the progress of truth than prejudice instilled into minds blank to receive impressions; and the more unreasonable are the doctrines of a religion, the greater pains are taken by the supporters of them to plant them in the readily susceptible minds of youth.[44]

[44] 'English Works', pp. 689-690.

CHAPTER VI

BRAHMAVĀDA (RELIGION OF THE BRAHMAN)

Among his manifold public activities, the one absorbing effort of Rammohun was on the plane of religion. Its underlying idea was to establish the catholic worship in spirit and in truth of the One-God-Without-A-Second (*Ekamevādvitīyam*), irrespective of caste, creed or colour. His unending quest after the *Ekamevādvitīyam* through all the scriptures, Indian and foreign, was but a means to that sovereign end. The more he travelled over unknown realms of thought, through scriptures hitherto unknown to him, the more did it whet his appetite. Like Ulysses he could not rest from travel. Travel he must through diverse domains of thought and speculation in quest of the true theology on which to base the catholic worship of God—the *finale* of his lifelong endeavours. He began with Islamic thought and culture. His work, never published, which is said to have caused an estrangement between him and his father about the age of sixteen, is not extant. But we know that it was directed "against the idolatrous worship of the Hindoos". It is said he had contemplated writing on Islamic scriptures and on the life of the Prophet. But no such work has been discovered among his writings. All we do know is that his Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin abundantly shows the influence of Islamic thought on his mind. In fact, in that work he outdid Islam in iconoclasm. He declared that the essence of all religions is the worship of the One without a second. What is deemed to be peculiar to, or characteristic of, any particular faith is but its local, temporal, racial or traditional garb. The substance is the same as that of any other faith. Weed out those unessentials, take off those excrescences or adventitious factors, and you are left with the residuum which is universal. The winnowing fan by

which the unessentials are thus to be discarded, and the universal is to be reached is innate in man—it is Reason. Tradition (*tawatur*), doctors of religion (*mujtahids*) even "centres of the circles of faiths" are not to be trusted. Put your faith on Reason and on the universal, though it be the universal of subtractions. The universal residuum is threefold: faith in the One Supreme Creator and Preserver of the universe, faith in the existence of the soul, and faith in the immortality of the soul.

Essentials of Theism

What form of faith or worship can be based on a theology such as this? "Gaining the union of hearts with mutual love and affection of all their fellow-creatures, without difference in shape and colour or creeds and religions, which is a pure devotion acceptable to God, the Creator of Nature".[1]

There would perhaps be little difficulty in identifying this creed with Deism or Theophilanthropy except for the fact that he uses the word Reason in a dubious manner,[2] and distinguishes "the invented revelation of mankind" from "the natural inspiration of God". Deism has no concern whatsoever with the revelation of God's nature and purposes to man, nor with an innate or intuitive faculty whereby man is privileged to see or perceive such revelation of God's nature or purpose. Theism, on the other hand, is the child of inspiration, of the revelation of God's nature and purpose. In the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin, therefore, although we do not find the full-blown theistic faith that can alone form the basis of worship and communion, we do find a faith which is on the borderline of Theism.

[1] Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin, 'English Works', p. 957.

[2] Sometimes the word reason seems to be employed in the sense of the reasoning faculty, at other times in the larger sense of an intuitive faculty which leads to direct apprehension of higher things.

THE ĀTMĪYA SABHĀ

The next decade found Rammohun in the service of the East India Company utilising his spare time in study and intellectual preparation. He formed what may be called study circles for discussion of religious and theological topics. His own individual worship took the form of meditating on the mystic syllable *Aum* and on *Ekamevādvitīyam* and *Tat sat.* It is when he retired and settled down at Calcutta that for the first time he made a definite move towards organizing a religious society. This resulted in the establishment of the Ātmīya Sabhā (Friendly Society or Society of Friends) in 1815 in his garden house at Maniktola. What the Ātmīya Sabhā was will appear from one of the earliest Brahmo chronicles available. The Tattvabodhini Patrikā of 1846-47[3] thus describes it:

In the year 1737 (i.e., 1814-15) the Raja established in his garden house at Maniktola the Ātmīya Sabhā. A short time after the place was changed, and the meetings used to take place at his house in Śaśtitala. Thereafter, for a short time, the meetings used to be held at his house in Simla (Calcutta). Then the meetings again started being held at his Maniktola house. At the Ātmīya Sabhā there used to be readings from the Vedas and singing of *Brahma Sangīt* (hymns in adoration of Brahma) in the evening, but there was no such thing as exposition of Vedic texts.[4] The Raja's Adhyāpaka (teacher)[5] would give readings from the Vedas and Gobinda Mala would sing Brahma Sangīt. Dwarka Nath Tagore attended now and then. Braja Mohan Majumdar, Raj Narain Sen, Ramnrisingha Mukhopadhya, Dayal Chandra Chattopadhya, Haladhar Basu, Nanda Kishore Basu and Lal Mohan Majumdar, filled with reverent zeal, adopted the worship of Brahma (monotheistic worship) as the true religion".[6]

[3] Bengali year Sak 1767, Āswin number, p. 4.
[4] This refers to the Vyākhānas or expositions which were a part of the service at a later stage.
[5] Pandit Sivaprasad Misra.
[6] Tattvabodhini Patrikā, Āswin 1769 Sak (1847 A.D.). This account mentions additional names of notable people of those times who though they did not avow their adherence to monotheistic faith were attracted

The Ātmīya Sabhā was thus held at different places from time to time such as at the house of Raja Kalishankar Ghosal of Bhoo-Kailash and finally at the house of Behari Lal Chaubey in Barabazar in 1741 Sak era (1818-19 A.D.).[7] This later stage of the Ātmīya Sabhā is referred to by the Rev. Dr. Lant Carpenter in the following terms: "He gradually gathered round him inquiring intelligent Hindus of rank and opulence some of whom united as early as 1818 in a species of monotheistic worship."[8]

Thus the meetings of the Ātmīya Sabhā went on side by side with the controversial activities of Rammohun during the years 1815-1819, these years coinciding with his most active creative period in relation to Vedantic Theism.

One imbued with the spirit of the Tuhfat might well ask: How could Rammohun reconcile himself to the readings from the Vedas at the Ātmīya Sabhā? Was it in a spirit of criticism or antagonism, or was it in the reverent spirit of worship? The answer is to be found in the gradual change which had come over Rammohun since he wrote the Tufat-ul-Muwahhiddin and which is portrayed at length in Chapters IV and V. No longer did Rammohun look askance at the Vedas or at scriptures in general. Far from endeavouring to demolish the mighty fabric of Hinduism he was during this period engaged in reconstructing Hinduism on its pure and pristine Vedic basis. He was now saturated with the thought and speculation of

by Rammohun's personality and for some time were intimately associated with him. They were Gopinath Tagore, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyaya, Joy Krishna Singha, Kashinath Mullick, Brindaban Chandra Mitra son of Raja Pitambar Mitra, Gopinath Munshi, Raja Kalisankar Ghosal, Raja Badan Chandra Roy, Dwarka Nath Tagore and Prosunno Coomar Tagore. But it is added that, by reason of the Raja's incessant attacks on Hindu idolatry, these friends gradually left him except Dwarka Nath Tagore, Raja Kalisankar Ghosal, Joykrishna Singha and Gopinath Munshi.

[7] It may be recollected that it was at the house of Behari Lal Chaubey above mentioned that on the 17th Pous 1741 Sak (December 1819), Rammohun held the famous disputation with Subramanya Śāstri and carried the palm by a masterly vindication of his views.

[8] See Biographical Sketch by Dr. Lant Carpenter in Miss Carpenter's 'Last Days of Rammohun Roy'. Evidently the year of *commencement* given, (1818) is incorrect.

the ancient Rishi Fathers of yore. He lived and moved and had his being in the spiritual atmosphere of that by-gone age. The Vedanta and the Upaniṣads were now objects of veneration. He never accepted the Vedas, or the Upaniṣads as being axiomatically true. He measured the inspiration of the scriptures by the truths which they revealed. Though in no sense could he be regarded as an out and out Vedantist, accepting the Vedanta as infallible, yet there can be no doubt that he believed the Vedanta to be inspired—the truths of the Vedanta answering to the testimony of Reason. He took his stand unmistakeably on Hinduism—not Paurānic but Vedic Hinduism. What appears in his autobiographical letter[9] as having been his true standpoint was never truer than of this period: "The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahminism but to a perversion of it, and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey."

Thus the readings from the Vedas, and the hymns sung, at the Ātmīya Sabhā were in no other spirit than that of worship and homage. The hymns, which were mostly of Rammohun's own composition, give a clear indication of the underlying principle of Rammohun's philosophy of religion. An interesting contemporary account of

[9] This letter (See Appendix B) is supposed to have been written by Rammohun Roy shortly before he left England for France, and addressed to Mr. Gordon of Calcutta. It was first published after the Raja's death in the Athenaeum, October 5, 1833, by Mr. Sandford Arnot, who had acted as the Raja's Secretary during his stay in England. It was also published in the Literary Gazette. Subsequently, it was reproduced in various other newspapers. It was republished by Miss Mary Carpenter in 'The Last Days of Raja Rammohun Roy' London 1866, p. 249. Miss Collet calls it "the spurious autobiographical letter" published by Sandford Arnot in the Athenaeum of October 5, 1833". As, however, Max Muller observes in his 'Biographical Essays', (See Appendix) "Although the relations between the Raja and his secretary were not very friendly towards the end of the Raja's visit to England, there is nothing in that letter to betray any unfriendly feeling. Whether the Raja wrote or dictated the whole of it may be doubted, but to reject the whole as a fabrication would be going much too far".

the Ātmiya Sabhā is found in the 'Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward' which thus describes it:—

In the month of March, during the saturnalia of the Holee festival, Rammohun Roy and his friends convened a meeting in Calcutta, and held their *first religious service*: Chapters were read from the Vedas which inculcated the unity of the God-head: hymns were chanted, in which power and glory were ascribed to the One Omnipresent and All-powerful Being. *This was the origin of that religious movement* among the intelligent Hindoos of Calcutta and its vicinity *which resulted in the establishment of the 'Brahma Sabhā'* or Society of Vedantists.[10]

CONTACT WITH CHRIST

As observed in Chapter IV, with the 'Precepts of Jesus' there appeared a new phase in Rammohun's spiritual history. Till then his writings had almost exclusively been on Hindu monotheism. But now he stood forth as the interpreter of the theism of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christian theology made little or no appeal to him. Beyond the dogmas and doctrines of Christianity there was the life and faith of Jesus and his sublime teachings that mattered most to him. In the three 'Appeals to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus' the doctrines of incarnation, of immaculate conception, of the eucharist and transubstantiation and many another cardinal doctrine of orthodox Christianity came under his scathing criticism. As for the life and precepts of Jesus, however, his writings, in this his second creative period, breathe unbounded allegiance and reverence. Can it be doubted that the catholicity of Jesus made an indelible impress on his mind, or that the selfless love and sacrifice of the Son of Man gave a concrete form to his concept of Lokaśreya as the sovereign law of Life?

[10] The italics are mine. 'The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward' Vol. II Chap. XII (1816) p. 129.

CONTACT WITH UNITARIANS

Thus was Rammohun brought into close contact with the religion of Christ, rather than with Christianity. He had little in common with the Trinitarian mode of thought or worship. But his relations with the Unitarian community gradually grew into cordial fellowship and, as it were, by natural kinship he felt drawn for a time to the Unitarian form of congregational worship.

In April 1823 Rammohun received a letter from the Rev. Henry Ware, Unitarian Minister of Harvard College, Cambridge, U.S.A., in which the latter addressed a number of interesting questions on 'the prospects of Christianity and the means of promoting its reception in India'. It was not till some time had elapsed that Rammohun found an opportunity of replying to that letter, which he did on February 2, 1824. The reason that he assigned for the unavoidable delay is that his time and attention had been 'much engrossed by constant controversies with polytheists both of the East and the West.' He then proceeded to furnish the answers to the questionnaire administered by the Unitarian divine. They are to this day replete with interest, if for nothing else at least for the insight they furnish into Rammohun's thoughts during this period.

As regards the prospect of converting Indians to Trinitarian Christianity he definitely declares that "their sincere conversion to (Trinitarian) Christianity must be morally impossible". He supports this proposition by extensive quotations from the opinion on the subject expressed by the Rev. Abbe Dubois based upon experience of mission work in India for thirty years, and thus entitled to great weight.[11] "But", he adds, "they would not scruple to embrace, or at least to encourage, the Unitarian system of Christianity, were it inculcated on them in an intelligent

[11] 'English Works' p. 877. Also 'The Hindu Manners and Customs' by Abbe Dubois : See Chap. V *supra*.
[12] *Ibid*, p. 882.

Referring to the work of the Unitarian mission in India, Rammohun observes:

The Rev. Mr. Adam is the only Unitarian Missionary in Bengal and he publicly avowed Unitarianism so late as the latter end of 1821. Nothwithstanding the many disadvantages under which he has been labouring, he has brought this system of Christianity into notice in this part of the globe ; as previous to that period many did not know that there was such a thing as Unitarianism, and others tried to stigmatize it in proportion as their prejudices for the corruptions of Christianity prompted them to abuse reason and common sense, without fear of contradiction. Mr. Adam, although he has made no avowed native convert, has already received every countenance from several respectable European gentlemen, and from a great number of the reading part of the native community of Calcutta.[13]

Another letter of Rammohun's written in 1822 to a gentleman of Baltimore, evidently of the Unitarian fold, expresses the same cordial sentiments towards the Unitarian body:

I have now every reason to hope that the truths of Christianity will not be much longer kept hidden under the veil of heathen doctrines and practices, gradually introduced among the followers of Christ, since many lovers of truth are zealously engaged in rendering the religion of Jesus free from corruptions. * * *

It is, however, a great satisfaction to my conscience to find that the doctrines inculcated by Jesus and his Apostles are quite different from those human inventions which the missionaries are persuaded to profess, and entirely consistent with reason and the revelation delivered by Moses and the prophets. I am, therefore, anxious to support them, even at the risk of my own life. I rely much on the force of truth, which will, I am sure, ultimately prevail. Our number is comparatively small, but I am glad to inform you that none of them can be justly charged with want of zeal and prudence.

[13] 'English Works', p. 880.

I wish to add, in order that you may set me right if you find me mistaken, my view of Christianity is that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal Father, it enjoins them to love one another, without making any distinction of country, caste, colour or creed.[14]

In still another letter dated December 9, 1822 he writes thus:

Although our adversaries are both numerous and zealous, as the adversaries of truth have always been, yet our prospects are by no means discouraging, if we only have the means of following up what has already been done. We confidently hope that, through these various means the period will be accelerated, when the belief in the Divine Unity and the mission of Christ will universally prevail.[15]

The Unitarian Committee

The above extracts refer to the work which had already been started under his auspices and with his active co-operation and was systematically being carried on by a Committee of Indian and European gentlemen of position and influence.[16]

The activities of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee were manifold, as the following extract from Miss Collet's 'Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy' will amply testify:—

"Proselytism", Mr. Adam explains, "is not our immediate object. We aim to remove ignorance and superstition, and to furnish information respecting the evidences, the duties and the

[14] Extracts from a letter written on Oct. 27, 1822—'English Works' p. 919; *Monthly Repository* for 1827, Vol. XVIII. p. 433.

[15] 'English Works', Panini Office edition, p. 920.

[16] Mr. William Adam says in a letter under date June 26, 1827 to Mr. R. Dutton: "The Committee was formed in September 1921 and its present members are Theodore Dickens, a Barrister of the Supreme Court, George James Gordon, a merchant of the firm of Mackintosh & Co., William Tate an attorney, B. W. Macleod, a surgeon in the Company's service, Norman Kerr, an uncovenanted servant of the Company, Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Thakoor, Prosunno Coomar Thakoor, Radhaprasad Roy, and myself". Miss Collet's 'Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy' p. 49 *Footnote.*

doctrines of the religion of Christ. The methods chosen were "education, rational discussion, and the publication of books both in English and in the native languages". In January, 1822, Mr. Adam writes that he with the assistance of a few friends rented a house in which Christian worship is regularly conducted. "Rammohun Roy is one of the warmest of our supporters". As we shall see presently, the Anglo-Hindu school, commenced under the auspices of this Committee, was almost exclusively supported by Rammohun. The Unitarian Press was entirely his property. Mr. Adam, in his new role of Unitarian Minister, seems to have depended for his financial support chiefly on Rammohun's bounty, so that the whole organization was principally in Rammohun's hands. We may regard the formation of this Unitarian Committee as a distinct and important stage in his career as founder.[17]

The Unitarian Committee, or the Unitarian Mission was only one of Rammohun's many endeavours after establishing the Unity of God and of fighting "the polytheists both of the East and of the West". The catholic spirit in which he carried on this campaign is manifest in a tract entitled 'Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in the One True God', which he published under the pseudonym Prosunno Coomar Thakoor in 1823. Under the head 'Advertisement' he prefaces the publication thus: "My object in publishing this tract is to recommend those to whom it is addressed, to avoid using harsh or abusive language in their religious intercourse with European missionaries, either respecting them or the objects of their worship, however much this may be countenanced by the example of some of these gentlemen". He then proceeds to view the believers in God, whether Unitarians or otherwise, in different groups and thus lays down the rule of guidance for Unitarians in their intercourse with them:

Those who firmly believe on the authority of the Vedas, that God is "One *only* without an equal", and that He cannot be known either through the medium of language, thought or

[17] See Collet, p. 49.

vision—how can he be known except as existing, the *origin and support of the universe*?—and who endeavour to regulate their conduct by the following precept, "He who is desirous of eternal happiness should regard another as he regards himself, and the happiness and misery of another as his own," ought to manifest the warmest affection towards such of their own countrymen as maintain the same faith and practice, even although they have not all studied the Vedas for themselves, but have professed a belief in God only through an acquaintance with their general design. Many among the ten classes of Sanyasins, and all the followers of Guru Nanak, of Dadu, and of Kabir, as well as of *Sants*, etc., profess the religious sentiments abovementioned. It is our unquestionable duty invariably to treat them as our brethren.

Amongst foreigners, those Europeans who believe God to be in every sense One, and worship Him alone in spirit, and who extend their benevolence to man as the highest service to God, should be regarded by us with affection, on the ground of the object of their worship being the same as ours. We should feel no reluctance to co-operate with them in religious matters, merely because they consider Jesus Christ as the Messenger of God and their Spiritual Teacher: for oneness in the object of worship and sameness of religious practice should produce attachment between the worshippers.

Amongst Europeans, those who believe Jesus Christ to be God himself, and conceive him to be possessed of a particular form, and maintain Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be one God, should not be treated in an unfriendly manner. On the contrary, we should act towards them in the same manner as we act towards those of our countrymen who, without forming any external image, meditate upon Rama and other supposed incarnations, and believe in their unity.

Again, those amongst Europeans who believing Jesus Christ to be the Supreme Being moreover construct various images of him, should not be hated. On the contrary, it becomes us to act towards those Europeans in the same manner as we act towards such as believe Rama etc., to be incarnations

of God, and form external images of them. For the religious principles of the two last-mentioned sects of foreigners are one and the same with those of the two similar sects among Hindoos, although they are clothed in a different garb.

When any belonging to the second and third classes of Europeans endeavours to make converts of us, the believers in the only living and true God, even then we should feel no resentment towards them, but rather compassion, on account of their blindness to the errors into which they themselves have fallen since it is almost impossible, as every day's experience teaches us, for men, when possessed of wealth and power, to perceive their own defects.[18]

Parallel efforts after Hindu Unitarianism

Side by side with his efforts after promoting Christian Unitarianism there went on parallel efforts after advancing the cause of Hindu Unitarianism. In 1825 he published his 'Different modes of worship' in Sanskrit under the pseudonym Shivaprasad Misra and then brought out a translation in English under the title 'A Friend of the Author'. In this he canvassed the claims of true worship as against worship by means of idols or any other forms, citing Vyāsa who in the Bhāgavata thus lays down the divine injunction:—"Man by charity to the needy, by honour to others, by friendship and by an equal regard to all, shall direct his worship to me who by residing in the heart, dwell in all living creatures'.[19]

The establishment of the Vedanta College in 1826 is another clear indication of the fact that his mind was set on Unitarianism. Whether it was Christian, Muslim or Hindu Unitarianism, in his opinion it had its own value inasmuch as it purged religion of the polytheistic taint.

That such was the breadth of Rammohun's Unitarianism is clearly demonstrated by a few incidents which happened in the following year (1827). The Unitarian services had been discontinued for a time. On August 3,

[18] 'English Works', p. 209.
[19] *Ibid.* pp. 207-208.

1827 they were commenced again. The Committee rented the Harkaru public rooms which were attached to the Harkaru newspaper and library, where Mr. Adam started holding the services in the morning. While regularly attending those services Rammohun published his translation of the Gāyatrī, "the most sacred text of the Vedas"—"a Sanskrit tract inculcating divine worship esteemed by those who believe in the revelation of the Veds as most appropriate to the nature of the Supreme Being". Almost in the same breath he published under the pseudonym Chandra Sekhar Dev (one of his followers) his "Answer of a Hindoo to the question—'Why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship instead of the numerously attended established churches?'" With the Gāyatrī in one hand and 'One Hundred Arguments for the Unitarian Faith' on the other,[20] the Unitarianism that Rammohun preached and practised was broader than what the Christian Unitarians desired or appreciated. No wonder that Mr. Adam should have exclaimed later: "To be candid, however, I must add that the conviction has lately gained ground in my mind that he (Rammohun) employs Unitarian Christianity in the same way, as an instrument for spreading pure and just notions of God, without believing in the divine authority of the Gospel".[21]

Despite Rammohun's powerful support, the life of the Unitarian Mission gradually ebbed away till it died a natural death in 1828. How it came about is vividly portrayed by Miss Collet in her biography of Rammohun:—

But the Unitarian exotic did not thrive. Its roots would not strike. The English morning service begun in August was "very indifferently attended". From the first it received

[20] On receipt of a copy of this book from the American Unitarian Association he forthwith caused an edition to be printed at his own Press for distribution in Calcutta.—Letter of W. M. Adam to Rev. E. S. Garrett, Boston, U. S. A., August 3, 1826.

[21] Letter from Mr. Adam to Dr. Tuckerman, dated January 22, 1829. See p. 90 Collet's 'Life and Letters of Rammohun Roy (Harold Collet 20, Bucklesbury, London, 1900).

little support from avowed Unitarians. "Even a majority of the Committee regularly absented themselves". An evening service was tried in November. It was attended at first by 60 to 80, but gradually "dwindled almost to nothing" * * * The Committee saw no "fit mode in which Mr. Adam can employ himself as a Unitarian Missionary", * * * Poor Mr. Adam retired heart broken. This decisive step seems to have been taken in the first half of 1828.

Then came the next endeavour in the second half of the same year.

On the 20th August 1828 was established another Institution this time called not Ātmīya Sabhā, but "Bruhmo Sabhā"[22] (Society of God)—not the full-fledged Brahmo Samaj which was yet to be, but only a meeting place for monotheistic worship. The mode of worship was in essentials the same as that followed in the Ātmīya Sabhā of 1815 with the difference that whereas in the Ātmīya Sabhā only readings from the Vedas were given by Adhyāpak Siva Prasad Misra and Brahma Sangīt sung by Gobinda Mala, in the Brahma Sabhā there were readings from the Vedas and the Upaniṣads in a small side-room where only Brahmins were admitted and afterwards in the adjoining large room expositions were given by Utsavānanda Goswāmi and Ramchandra Vidyāvāgīś followed by songs by the same Gobinda Mala above mentioned. To this latter the general public were admitted, Brahmins as well as non-Brahmins. The worship used to be held in the rooms rented for the purpose in Kamal Babu's house in Chitpore Road, Calcutta, within a short distance of the place where the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj came subsequently to be located.

Thus the mode of monotheistic worship followed first in the Ātmīya Sabhā and then in the Bruhmo Sabhā were essentially the same,—they were both tentative endeavours after united worship of the One True God. In between

[22] This used to be the spelling in those days. It would now be spelt Brahma Sabhā.

the two, the endeavour to satisfy the same need through Unitarian ministrations in 1827-28 may almost be regarded as the second attempt. Indeed, Miss Collet calls it "Rammohun's second attempt"[23]. Two Telegu Brahmins were secured for the recital of the Vedas, and Tara Chand Chakravarti was appointed Secretary[24].

A very interesting contemporary account of the opening ceremony of the 'Bruhmo Sabhā' is found in the *John Bull* of Calcutta of date August 23, 1828 which observes that in delivering the sermon the officiating Minister lectured "from a separate room, that the Vedas may not be desecrated by being in the same apartment with the *profanum vulgus* of hearers". At the first blush it would indeed seem inconsistent with the general position of Rammohun Roy to have made this special arrangement for the reading of the Vedas. He who had taken upon himself the odium of publishing the sacred Vedas to make them accessible to Brahmins and non-Brahmins alike, and even of publishing them in a foreign language, might as well have dispensed with a *sanctum sanctorum* for the reading of the Vedas. Two reasons may be assigned for this. First, it was by no means easy a hundred years ago to find Brahmins, versed in the Vedas, who would undertake the task of reading the Vedas to non-Brahmins[23]. Secondly, perhaps in this, as in

[23] Collet's 'Life and Letters', Chapter VI, p. 84.

[24] See address in Bengalee delivered by Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore on Baisakh 26, 1786 (1863-64) before the Brahmo Bandhu Sabha and entitled 'Record of Twenty-five years experience in the Brahmo Samaj'; and Maharshi's Autobiography, English Translation, pp. 22-26. See also Adam's description in his letter to Dr. Tuckerman, dated January 28, 1829 of the order of service at the weekly meetings which were usually held on Saturdays between 7 and 9 in the evening. "The service begins with two or three of the Pandits singing, or rather *chanting* in the cathedral style, some of the spiritual portions of the Ved, which are next explained in the vernacular dialect to the people by another Pandit. This is followed by a discourse in Bengali and the whole is concluded by hymns both in Sanskrit and Bengali sung with the voice and accompanied by instrumental music, which is also occasionally interposed between other parts of the service. The audience consists generally of from 50 to 60 individuals, several Pandits, a good many Brahmans, and all decent and attentive in their behaviour."—Collet's 'Life and Letters', pp. 89-90.

various other matters relating to his personal conduct, Rammohun preferred to follow the line of least resistance, although in doing so he might justly be charged with inconsistency. The incongruity or inconsistency in this particular matter remained till his successor Devendra Nath removed it.[26] Let the Maharashi speak of it in his own words: —

When I first visited the Brāhmo Samāj, I noticed that the Vedas were recited in a private room from which the Śūdras were excluded. As *the object of the Brāhmo Somāj* was to popularize the worship of Brahma, as *it was expressly mentioned in the Trust-Deed that all men should be able to worship Brahma without distinction of caste, I was deeply grieved to find the very reverse of this in practice.* Again I saw one day that Rāmchandra Vidyāvāgīś's colleague, Iśwar Chandra Nyāyaratna, was trying to establish from the *vedi* (pulpit) of the Brāhmo Samāj, the fact of the incarnation of Rāmchandra, King of Ayodhya. *This struck me as being opposed to the spirit of Brāhmo Dharma.* In order to counteract this, I arranged that the Vedas should be read out in public and forbade the exposition of the doctrine of Incarnation from the *vedi* (pulpit).

ORIGIN OF THE BRAHMA SABHĀ

There are two versions regarding the origin of the Brahma Sabhā, the one ascribing it to a suggestion proceeding from Babu Chandra Sekhar Dev and the other attributing it to Mr. Adam's initiative. With pardonable readiness to accept the later version Miss Collet, as a devout Christian, declares in favour of the Unitarian Christian Mission as having been directly instrumental in helping the Brahma Sabhā see the light of day. "Mr. Adam", says Miss Collet, "really originated the idea, Rammohun having had it pressed on his notice since the beginning of February * * * But even if Mr. Adam can

[26] This was in Saka 1764 (1842). See p. 26 of the English translation of the Autobiography of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, by Mr. S. N. Tagore.

claim the credit of first suggesting the distinct organisation for worship, we must remember that he was only a secondary agency.....The share which Unitarianism had in the birth of the Brahmo Somaj was distinctly maiuetic not maternal"[27].

By far the most widely accepted account, however, is the other one which is as follows: Rammohun accompanied by his friends was one day returning from the English service which was conducted on the upper storey of the Harkaru office. Chandra Sekhar Dev and Tarachand Chakravarty who were with him regretfully observed that it was a pity that they should have no place of worship of their own where worship could be conducted in their own way and according to their own needs and requirements but that they should be obliged to attend what was to all intents and purposes a 'foreign' place of worship. This appeal for a more suitable place and mode of worship met with ready response from Rammohun who subsequently found support for carrying out the idea from influential friends such as Dwārkanāth Tāgore, Prosunno Coomar Tāgore, Mathurā Nāth Mullick and Kaśi Nāth Roy. The new institution was established at the house of Kamal Basu in Jorasanko in the month of Bhadra 1750 (Sak)[28].

Controversy Over a Date

Some amount of research and controversy has lately centred round the question as to whether the institution of the 20th of August 1828 marked the commencement of the Brāhmo Samāj, or whether the advent of the Brāhmo Samāj in its true sense was coincident with the Trust Deed of 1830 and with the formal opening of the first Universal Temple of worship, shortly after. The question was first

[27] Collet's 'Life and Letters', p. 89. See 'The Centenary of the Brahmo Samaj by P. K. Sen, p. 18, pp. 28-38.

[28] Tattvabodhini No. 50 for Aswin 1769 Sak. See also Collet's 'Life and Letters', p. 87.

raised in connection with the celebration of the centenary of the Brāhmo Samāj. Up to that time the 11th Magh Sak 1751, i.e., 23rd of January 1830 had been accepted without question as the date of commencement.

The reasons which were advanced for the new view may thus be summarized: The hitherto accepted idea that the institution of the 20th of August 1828 was styled "Bruhmo Sabhā" (and not Brāhmo Samāj) has no substantial foundation. Rammohun Roy himself appears never to have given any specific name to it. We must get to other sources to ascertain by what name it was called. There were as many as six or seven different names by which it was popularly known at the time. They were arrived at by a combination of some derivative from the root 'Brahma' with either the word 'Samāj' or 'Sabhā' (both meaning society), such as, Brahmo Samāj,, Brāhmo Samāj, Brāhmya Samāj or Bruhmo Sabhā, Bruhmya Sabhā or Brāhma Sabhā etc. But none of these except "Brāhmo Samāj" can be accepted as the true name. Because there are good grounds for thinking that the first Minister Ram Chandra Vidyāvāgīś called it by the present name—Brāhmo Samāj. Hence, historically, it was a mistake to have dated the origin of the Brāhmo Samāj in 1830. It may have taken a century to discover the mistake. But it *is* a mistake attributable to the early fathers of the Samaj. Now that the mistake has been discovered as the result of research, it must be rectified. The Brahmo Samaj must be deemed to have commenced in 1828 and not in 1830[29].

The basis on which the above contention was rested was the research and recommendation of Babu Ishan Chandra Basu, who collaborated with Babu Rajnarain Basu in bringing out a collected edition of the Sanskrit and Bengali works of the Raja. About the year 1896 (Magh 1818, Sak) he published a compilation entitled *Brāhmo Samājer Prathama Upāsanā Paddhati Vyākhyāna O Sangīta*

[29] See the present author's 'Centenary of the Brahmo Samaj' (1927) for fuller details.

(The First Services Discourses and Hymns of the Brāhmo Samāj). It opens with a reprint of the Raja's Bengali tract entitled *'Brahmopāsanā'* (The worship of Brahma). Then it furnishes a reprint of the early Vyākhyānas under the heading *Ādim Brahmo Samājer Vyākhyāna* (The Discourses of the Earliest Brāhmo Samāj). In giving a reprint of the first Vyākhyāna (of Pandit Rāmachandra Vidyavagīś) of the 6th Bhadra, Sak 1750 (20th August 1828), he makes a statement in a footnote (see page 8) that in the first, i.e., the the earliest edition, each of the Vyākhyānas had a title page and the title page bore the name of the Brāhmo Samāj. Thence he is led to draw the inference that the name Brāhmo Samāj must have been the real name in existence on the 6th Bhadra 1750 (20th August 1828) and, consequently, that date should be accepted as the date of commencement of the Brāhmo Samāj. In the Preface to that very book, however, the compiler very properly observes with reference to the earlier Vyākhyānas that there had been repeated editions of them up to the year Sak 1771 (1849 A.D.)[30]. What guarantee then that the name Brāhmo Samāj had not crept into the reprints as an addition or emendation? For by 1849 during Maharshi Devendranath's period the name Brahmo Samaj came to be well established. On the other hand, Raja Rammohun himself writing from England to his son on the 22nd of September 1832 uses both the names Brāhmo Samāj and Brāhmo Sabhā interchangeably in the same letter; and as that was after 1830, it would only show that nothing turned on the name then[31].

Apart from referring to the controversy as a passing phase it is not the purpose of this work to assign to it an importance that does not belong to it, far less to continue

[30] "এই গুলিন ১৭৭১ শকাব্দ পর্য্যন্ত পুনঃ পুনঃ মুদ্রিত হইয়াছিল Preface page 3. Brāhma Samājer Prathama Upāsanā Paddhati Vyākhyāna O Sangīta by Isān Chandra Basu printed by Adhar Chandra Basu at Monica Press, 51/1, Sukea Street, Calcutta, and Published by Sur & Co., 14, Duff Street, Calcutta, Magh 1818 Sak. See also p. 8 and pp. 116-117.

[31] See photoscript of letter in 'Last Days of Rajah Rammohun Roy' by Mary Carpenter republished by The Rammohun Library and Free Reading Room, 267 Upper Circular Road, Calcutta, 1915, p. 134.

it. Suffce it to say that the controversy, in resting the issue on the mere name, missed the real point. The fundamental fact to be remembered is the universal outlook which is, and will remain the outstanding characteristic of the Brahmo Samaj. The only difference between the then Brahmo Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj of the present day is that this universal outlook has gone on broadening and deepening till its content has now become infinitely richer than what it was at its commencement. Not that this universal outlook appeared suddenly in Rammohun in the year 1830. Universalism, in the sense that all religions teach the worship of One True God and thus draw all humanity in the folds of the same common faith, was present even in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin. But in the Trust Deed of January 1830[32] it came in a concrete form as a challenge to all sectarianism and as the *Magna Carta* of universal worship. It marks the advent in January 1830 of the idea of universalism in actual worship in the Temple "to be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied and appropriated as and for a place of public meeting, of all sorts and descriptions of people, *without distinction,* as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner". The Trust Deed of 1830 truly foreshadows the Brahmo Samaj. It is no mere legal document but it embodies the later and fully developed idea of universal worship which is conspicuous by its absence in the worship adopted by the Brahma Sabhā of the 20th August 1828. The worship contemplated by the Trust Deed was to be open without distinction to all. Moreover, the worship was to be conducted on such lines as would not only tend "to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe" but also "to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, and virtue and the *strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.*" If anything could be said to foreshadow the Brahmo Samaj

[32] See the Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj, App. D.

that was to come in the fulness of time and the spirit of universal brotherhood and universal worship of the Common Father of all, it was this so-called legal document. It was the lofty principles laid down in this document that were sought to be bodied forth by means of the epoch-making event—the opening of the Temple of Universal Worship which followed soon after on the 11th Magh 1751 (23rd January 1830). The fact that it took time to carry out the principles laid down in the Trust Deed in the actual form of worship of the Brahmo Samaj does not affect the position. The worries and preoccupations of the Raja during the period that intervened between the opening of the Temple and his fateful departure for England, as well as other untold obstacles and difficulties in his way, perhaps prevented him from actually putting them to practice. The task was left for the Maharshi and for Brahmananda Keshub Chunder, who were to follow.

On the 23rd January 1830 was consecrated the first Temple "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being Who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe", in the spirit and in the manner set out in the above quoted passages in the Trust Deed[33].

[1] See the Trust Deed *in extenso*, Appendix D.

CHAPTER VII

THE CALCUTTA BRAHMO SAMAJ

Raja Rammohun Roy, whom Keshub Chunder Sen reverently called 'our spiritual grand-father', is truly regarded as the father of Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century. There was no evil—social, moral, political, educational, economic or religious—which escaped his eagle eye, or his winnowing fan. There was not one avenue of progress which his herculean activity did not traverse. It was he who gave the first rude shock to all manner of corruptions, and trod the thorny path of the pioneer. He stood in solitary grandeur in the midst of utter darkness, and sent forth the clarion call to freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom of worship and freedom from all manner of abuses. His call went forth shrill and clear: 'Awake! Arise! Back to freedom, faith and fulness of life!' His was a cry in the wilderness. Not a comrade, fellow-worker or follower had he—none to whom he could hand over the torch. Before he went on his fateful visit to Europe in 1830, he established and opened the first Temple of catholic worship of the *Ekamevādvitīyam* (The One without a second) in spirit and in truth—to be open to all without distinction of creed, caste or colour. This was the beginning of the Brahmo Samaj: But even he in his life-time could not carry out the catholicity of his ideal in its entirety. To avoid wounding orthodox national sentiment as much as possible, he had the Vedas chanted in the Temple from an adjoining room, by Brahmins only, where people of the inferior castes were not allowed to enter. To his mind, perhaps the time had not arrived for taking a bolder step. Nor did he succeed in establishing a body, or a brotherhood, such as would accept his cosmopolitan ideal of work and worship, or would uphold and carry out its implications.

No wonder that after Raja Rammohun's death at Bristol in 1833 there was a lull. Everything was on the wane and his movement seemed for a time to be all but dead. But the seed that he had sown could not die, and there soon arose one who, in the economy of Providence, was to take over as his successor. This was no other than Devendra Nath Tagore, latterly known as Maharshi.

Rammohun's Vedantism

In two characteristic features Rammohun's Vedantic Theism was a foregleam of what was to come after him to mould and transform the thought and life of India. First, his Vedantism, far from encouraging aloofness from the realities of life and from the sorrows and trials of the work-a-day world, was combined with an intense philanthropy—*Lokaśreya,* to use his own language. Broadbased on the consciousness of the One-ness of God was the consciousness of one-ness of humanity, pointing to universal well-being as one of the cardinal principles of his practised faith. Thus his Vedantism escaped being a sterile doctrine. It proved in Rammohun to be a source of power, fruitful in manifold fields of activity for the good weal of all. Next, though resting on the authority of the Vedas, his Theism was broad and catholic enough to appreciate the best that is in Islam and Christianity, not to speak of Buddhism, Jainism and the higher phases of non-Vedic Hinduism. To the Hindu he appealed with all his fervour taking his stand on the Vedas, the most ancient and authoritative basis of Hinduism, which enjoined the worship of the One Omnipresent, Eternal God. To the Christian he appealed with equal earnestness pointing to the Bible as the sheet-anchor of pure monotheism. To the Musalman he was all but a follower of the Prophet accepting in all essentials the uncompromising message of monotheism which is Islam. With the Buddhist he was equally at one, though this is not much in evidence in his writings. It is difficult to imagine how one with Rammohun's deep reflection and wide receptivity

could fail to appreciate the real essence of the Buddhistic scriptures, having regard specially to his long stay in Thibet, whither he wandered during his exile in the most impressionable years of his life. Thus Rammohun enjoyed the unique advantage of being in intellectual sympathy with the four great religions of the world.

It will appear later on how, in due course, the above two aspects of Rammohun's theism found their natural expansion and fulfilment in Keshub Chunder Sen and how their content became enriched almost beyond recognition during the brief but spacious years of Keshub's life and work.

After Rammohun

A decade passed between the death of Rammohun and the advent of Devendranath to the Brahmo Samaj. During this period Ramchandra Vedantavagis, the Minister appointed by the Raja before he left for England, carried on the weekly ministration in the Brahmo Samaj in the old accustomed manner. The readings from the Vedas by the Brahmins in the private room, the *sanctum sanctorum,* and the minister's expositions in the public room, accompanied by singing of hymns, continued as before. There was no congregation, no regular body of worshippers, no covenant or creed that could hold them together. Those that attended the services did so more out of curiosity than in the spirit of worship. Many of them were passers-by who just came in to see what was happening. There was no enthusiasm for the cause save and except in the solitary individual, the minister, who with faith undimmed and with exemplary zeal and steadfastness kept up the dying embers till Devendranath was called to infuse fresh fire into the Brahmo Samaj. Financially, help came mainly from Dwarkanath Tagore, father of Devendranath, a man of great wealth, influence and position who, owing to his lavish expenditure and princely munificence earned for himself the title of Prince. He was a friend of Rammohun and up

to his death regularly rendered financial help. But Dwarkanath was a man of affairs, his hands were full, and his heart was not in Rammohun's cause. It was not for him to do more than what he did for the Brahmo Samaj,—rendering financial help. The rest was left to be done by his son, the Maharshi of the future.

It is an interesting study, the early contact of Devendra with Rammohun. While yet a child Devendranath would occasionally go to the Raja's residence in Maniktala, Calcutta,[1] and wander about in the garden, freely helping himself to the leechies and green peas growing there. In his reminiscences[2] Devendranath recalls how early he came in touch with Rammohun's personality, and how it left an indelible impress on his young mind. A tender look from those wonderful speaking eyes, a gentle pat on the back, a word of cheer, a swing in the garden hammock—the Raja himself alternately taking his turn with the boy—are little bright touches that never faded from Devendranath's memory. A more striking event happened later. While on the point of leaving for Europe, the Raja called at the family residence of the Tagores in Jorasanko to say goodbye. He particularly wanted to meet young Devendra then only about twelve years old. As the boy happened to be absent at the moment, he had to be sent for, and not till the Raja had met him and held him by the grip of his hand to bid farewell to his young friend did he have the heart to leave the place. Years after, when Devendra was a grown up man and felt the call to join the Brahmo Samaj, this little incident burst into his memory with a world of significance —it seemed to him that the last loving shake of the hand was indeed the Raja's moving appeal to him to take up the cause of catholic theism.

[1] On Upper Circular Road. A marble tablet placed on the gate tells the pilgrim that the house was at one time the residence of Raja Rammohun Roy.

[2] See Devendranath's Autobiography, Chap. V, English rendering by Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi—Macmillan & Co., 1916. *See* also Appendix E.

PRADHĀNĀCHARYA DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

CHAPTER VIII

DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

Early Life

Devendranath born in 1817, the eldest son of Dwarkanath Tagore of Jorasanko, Calcutta, was brought up in the lap of luxury, amid all the pomp and circumstance which surrounds the scion of a wealthy city magnate. He was educated at first in the school founded by Raja Rammohun Roy and then in the Hindu College. Early in life, he imbibed the influences of an ordinary orthodox Hindu household, owning adherence to the religion of his forefathers. Plunged in luxury and pleasures he had given no real thought to spiritual truths. But inscrutable are the ways of Providence. It was in the school of sorrow that he learnt the first lesson of Life. When he was eighteen his grandmother, to whom he was deeply attached, died and it was this bereavement which wrought in him a conversion. She was a lady of great character and deep piety, and by her life of unfailing love and self-abnegation had drawn him to her with ties of affection that proved more abiding in death than in life.

The First Awakening

According to the orthodox practice his grandmother (father's mother) was taken to the banks of the Ganges prior to her death to enable her to breathe her last by the side of the sacred stream. To quote his own words from his autobiography,—

During this time, I was always there with her, by the river. On the night before Didima's[1] death, I was sitting at Nimtola

[1] 'Didima' means grandmother.

Ghat[2] on a coarse mat near the shed. It was the night of the full moon ; the moon had risen, the burning ground was near. They were singing the Holy Name to Didima: "Will such a day be vouchsafed to me, that while I am uttering the name of Hari, my life will depart." The sounds reached my ears faintly, borne on the night wind ; at this opportune moment a strange sense of the unreality of all things suddenly entered my mind. I was as if no longer the same man. A strong aversion to wealth arose within me. * * * * in my mind was awakened a joy unfelt before * * * * My mind could scarcely contain the unworldly joy, so simple and natural, which I experienced at the burning-ghat. Language is weak in every way ; how can I make others understand the joy I felt? It was a spontaneous delight, to which nobody can attain by argument or logic. God himself seeks for the opportunity of pouring it out. He had vouchsafed it unto me in the fulness of time.

But this blessedness was not to last. It soon disappeared, leaving a void in his soul, a hunger and a thirst unsatisfied, a deep craving for more of that light and joy unspeakable. Meanwhile, his grandmother breathed her last.

I drew near and saw that her hand was placed on her breast, with the fourth finger pointing upwards. Turning her finger round and round, and crying 'Hari-bol',[3] she passed into the next world. When I saw this it seemed to me that at the time of her death she pointed out to me with uplifted finger : 'That is God and the Hereafter'. As Didima had been my friend in this life, so was she the guide to the next.[4]

Dark Days

Then came a great yearning, and a struggle to recover that ecstatic joy, but in vain. He tried the path of renunciation and the path of knowledge—all for getting in touch with the Reality. But for a time all these pathways proved

[2] Cremation ground of that name, in Calcutta on the bank of the Ganges.
[3] Take the name of Hari (God).
[4] Autobiography, Chap. II.

to be blind alleys, and led to nothing. He lost interest in everything else. He felt as if he was like Narada of old. Narada had once been vouchsafed this joy that passeth understanding, this beatific vision which destroys all sorrow, but Narada too soon lost it; and no amount of contemplation or spiritual discipline availed him for recovering it. Then, it is written, Narada heard a voice in the air saying: 'Those whose hearts have not been purified, who have not attained the highest yoga cannot see Me. It was only to stimulate thy love that I once appeared before thee'. "I was exactly in the same position" says Devendranath. "For want of the joy of that night, my heart was sore distressed. But it was that which awakened my love of God". Devendranath in his Autobiography thus vividly portrays his trials and strivings during this period of spiritual desolation:

I would go to the Botanical Gardens in the middle of the day, whenever I got a chance. It was a very unfrequented, lonely spot. I used to take my seat on a tombstone in the middle of the gardens. Great grief was in my heart. Darkness was all around me. The temptations of the world had ceased, but the sense of God was no nearer ; earthly and heavenly happiness were alike withdrawn. Life was dreary, the world was like a graveyard. I found happiness in nothing. The rays of the midday sun seemed to me black. At that time this sound suddenly broke from my lips, "Vain, oh! vain is the light of day ; without knowledge all is dark as night". This was my first song. I used to sing it out loud sitting alone on that tombstone * * *

My endeavour was to obtain God not through blind faith but by the light of knowledge. And being unsuccessful in this, my mental struggles increased from day to day. Sometimes I thought I could live no longer.[5]

On the Path to Knowledge

To knowledge and self-purification he was thus led to direct all his energies. For chastening and purification

[5] Chap. V—Autobiography.

what is so essential as renunciation? As the first act of renunciation he gave away to others the valuable articles of furniture he possessed. He took regular lessons in Sanskrit grammar so as to be able to read the scriptures in Sanskrit. He threw himself into deep study of the Mahabharata, also all manner of philosophical literature in English in hopes that he might find therein the Truth which was his quest.

But with all this, the sense of emptiness of mind remained just the same, nothing could heal it ; my heart was being oppressed by that gloom of sadness and feeling of unrest.

The discipline of study and reflection had, however, its own effect in preparing his mind for the reception of higher truths. On the one hand, close and continued introspection, on the other, a close observation of the ordered design and harmony in external nature brought him gradually to "recognise the sway of wisdom operating throughout the whole world," and thus all but brought him into contact with Infinite Wisdom.

And yet my heart kept trembling. The path of knowledge is beset with difficulties. Who would bear me up, cheer and encourage me along this path? Who would give his assent to the conclusion I had arrived at?

Thus struggling, stumbling, trembling he pursued the thorny path of knowledge, till the conviction grew on his mind that God was without form or image and that the way to God did not lie through idolatrous forms of worship. Then he remembered Rammohun, "I came to my senses. I pledged myself heart and soul to follow in his footsteps".

The Great Response

It was at this point that the devoutly wished for response came, and from an unexpected quarter. While he was in this depressed state of mind, one day all of a sudden he saw a page from some Sanskrit book flutter past him.

Out of curiosity he picked it up but found he could understand nothing of what was written on it. He took it to his Sanskrit teacher, but he too failed to decipher its meaning. Devendranath then applied for help to Pandit Ram Chandra Vidyavagis, the then Minister of the Brahma Sabha, as he called it, who at once said 'Why, this is the Īśopaniṣat' and proceeded to expound it thus: "Whatsoever there is in this universe is wrapped up in God. Enjoy that which he has given unto thee. Covet not another's wealth".

Devendranath felt as if nectar from paradise streamed down upon him with those words. All his doubts were dispelled. Lo! there was the response in that verse to his deepest thoughts and sentiments.

I had been eager to receive a sympathetic response from men ; now a divine voice had descended from heaven to respond in my heart of hearts, and my longing was satisfied. I wanted to see God everywhere, and what did I find in the Upanishads? I found, if the whole world could be encompassed by God, where would impurity be? Then all would be pure, the world would be full of sweetness. I got just what I wanted. I had never heard my most intimate thoughts expressed like this anywhere.[6]

Would he have heard the response if he had not sought it with all his heart through four desolate years? Would the Light have burst forth without his having had to pass through the vale of darkness? Was it then the result of his *sādhanā*? Or, was it the grace of God which alone availeth in man's striving after the Infinite? Or was it, again, the meeting halfway of the seeker and the Sought. Let those who think they know, answer. For Devendranath, the grace of God was sufficient answer to all these questionings.

Could men give any such response? The very mercy of God Himself descended into my heart ; therefore, I understood the deep significance of *Īśābāśyamidam sarvam*. Oh! what words were those that struck my ears! *Tena tyaktena bhunjithā*

[6] Autobiography—Chap. V.

—'Enjoy that which He has given unto thee'. What is it that he has given? He has given Himself. Enjoy that untold treasure ; leave everything else and enjoy that supreme treasure. Cleave unto Him alone, and give up all else. Blessed beyond measure is he who cleaves unto Him alone. This tells me that which I have long desired. * * * *

But when the divine voice declared that I should renounce all desire of worldly pleasure and take my delight in God alone, I obtained what I had wished for, and was flooded with joy. It was not the dictum of my poor intellect, it was the word of God himself. Glory be to that Rishi in whose heart this truth was first revealed ! My faith in God took deep root ; in lieu of worldly pleasure I tasted divine joy. Oh ! what a blessed day was that for me—a day of heavenly happiness ! Every word of the Upanishads tended to enlighten my mind, with their help I daily advanced along my appointed path.[7]

The Tattvabodhini Sabha

When he had thoroughly entered into the Upaniṣads, he felt a strong desire to impart to his friends what he had received and to share with them the joys of spiritual intercourse. As a beginning, on the 21st Aswin, 1761 Saka (6th October, 1839) he started an association with his brothers, friends and relations, which was to meet on the evening of the first Sunday of every month. This association was the Tattvaranjini Sabha. It had for its object the diffusion of the truths of the *Śāstras* and the knowledge of Brahma as inculcated in the Vedanta, by which was meant the Upaniṣads, not the Vedanta philosophy. There used to be papers read, and discussions on them, as also worship in the form of invocation. On the first day there were only ten members; gradually the number began to increase. At the second meeting Ramchandra Vidyavagis was ordained Acharya (Chief Minister) of the Sabha and he re-named it Tattvabodhini Sabha. The association thus started was destined to play a most important part in the history of the Brahmo Samaj.

[7] Autobiography—Chap. V.

Two years passed and as the Sabha was going to enter upon the third year of its life Devendranath conceived the idea of attracting members by giving it due publicity and by celebrating its anniversary with pomp and ceremony. This was in 1763 Sak (1841 A.D.).

THE THEN BRAHMO SAMAJ

The following year Devendranath joined the Brahmo Samaj, and took upon himself the task of organizing it on proper lines. It would be interesting to hear from his own lips how he found the Brahmo Samaj when he joined it, and what steps he took to re-vivify it: —

I thought to myself that as the Brahmo Samaj had been established for the worship of Brahma, our object would be the more easily attained by amalgamating the Tattvabodhini Sabha with it. With this view, I paid a visit to the Samaj on a Wednesday. I saw a Dravidian Brahmin reciting the Upanisads just before sunset, in one of the side rooms of the Samaj. Ramchandra Vidyavagis, Iśwar Chandra Nyāyaratna, and one or two other Brahmins were the only ones sitting there listening. Sudras were not allowed to attend. After sunset Ramchandra Vidyāvāgīś and Iśwar Chandra Nyāyaratna sat in public on the *Vedi* in the Samaj hall. Here Brahmins and Sudras and all castes had equal rights. I noticed that there were few people present. To the right of the *Vedi* was spread a white floor cloth, on which were seated four or five worshippers. And on the left were placed a few chairs which were occupied by three or four visitors. Iśwar Chandra Nyāyaratna expounded the Upanisads and Pandit Vidyāvāgīś explained the Mimānsa of the Vedanta philosophy.[8] In front of the *Vedi* the brothers Krishna and Vishnu sang hymns in unison. The service was over at 9 o'clock. After this experience I took upon myself the task of reforming the Brahmo Samaj and amalgamated the Tattvabodhini Sabha with it. It was arranged that the Tattvabodhini Sabha would further the interests of the Brahmo Samaj.

[8] The Vedanta is divided into two parts—Purva Mimansa, which is more a system of ritual than philosophy and Uttara Mimansa, which is the Vedanta proper, founded on the Upanisads.

From that time forward the monthly morning service of the Brahmo Samaj was instituted in place of the monthly meeting of the Tattvabodhini Sabha ; and instead of the anniversary of the Sabha on the 21st Aswin the date of consecration of the Brahmo Samaj building *viz.*, the 11th of Magh was fixed upon for its anniversary. In the month of Bhadra 1750 the Brahmo Samaj was first founded in a hired house belonging to Kamal Basu in Jorasanko ; and the anniversary of this, which used to be held in Bhadra, had been discontinued since 1755 Sak (A.D. 1833), before I joined the Brahmo Samaj.[9] * * * * Again—

When I first visited the Brahmo Samaj, I noticed that the Vedas were recited in a private room from which Sudras were excluded. As the object of the Brahmo Samaj was to popularize the worship of Brahma, and as it was expressly mentioned in the Trust Deed that all men should be able to worship Brahma without distinction of caste, I was deeply grieved to find the reverse of this to be the practice. Again, I saw one day that Ramchandra Vidyāvāgīś's colleague Īśwar Chandra Nyāyaratna was trying to establish, from the *Vedi* of the Brahmo Samaj, the fact of the incarnation of Ramchandra, King of Ajodhya. This struck me as being opposed to the spirit of the Brahmo faith. In order to counteract this, I arranged that the Vedas should be read out in public, and forbade the exposition of the doctrine of incarnation from the *Vedi*.[9]

What then was the theology of the Brahmo Samaj under Devendranath as compared with that of Raja Rammohun. We get a clear indication from the following statement of Devendranath himself in his Autobiography:

Those Upanisads which treated of Brahma were alone treated by us as the true Vedanta. We had no faith in the Vedanta philosophy, because Śankarāchārya[10] seeks to prove therein that Brahma and all created beings are one and the same. What we want is to worship God. If the worshipper

[9] Autobiography—Chap. VIII.

[10] The famous philosopher was born about A.D. 708. He wrote commentaries (Bhāṣya) on the Vedānta Sūtras, the Upaniṣads, and Bhagavadgītā.

and the object of worship become one, then how can there be any worship? Therefore, we could not subscribe to the doctrines of the Vedanta philosophy. We were opposed to monism just in the same way as we were opposed to idolatry. We were unable fully to acquiesce in the commentaries of the Upaniṣads as made by Śankarāchārya, inasmuch as he has tried to interpret them all in a monistic sense. For this reason I had to write a new commentary of the Upaniṣads in place of the Bhāṣya.[11]

Again—

By worshipping Him I obtain Him as the result. He is the worshipful, I am His worshipper. He is my Master, I am His servant. He is my Father, I am His son. This was my guiding principle. To disseminate this truth throughout India, to induce everybody to worship Him in this manner, to ensure that His glory should be proclaimed everywhere—this became my sole aim.

In a letter addressed to a member of the editorial staff of the Samaj organ we find Devendranath severely reprimanding the writer[12] of an article that had appeared in it on the subject of 'The Divine Principle'. The following is a translated extract from the letter:

The Divine Principle, and the attributes thereof, which you have set up appears to me to be nothing but a blind force. Your Divine Principle has no self-consciousness, no non-ego consciousness, no will, no initiative, no justice, no love. Of what use is it to us? In these my closing years it would be a great relief to me if you wrote an article under the caption 'Divine Providence' and thereby elucidated the Brahma (God) of the Brahmo faith. The Brahma of the Brahmo religion—He knoweth soul by Soul. He is All-knowing, Omniscient. * * * * Our God is not an abstract God, but an intelligent free person who consequently has a consciousness of Himself. He is our Friend, Father, Dispenser, our supreme Deity, the object of our worship. * * * * If you call Brahma a sub-

[11] Autobiography—Chap. VII.
[12] Believed to have been Rajnarain Bose.

stance void of qualities such as knowledge, will etc., then the Brahma becomes an abstract entity. This kind of abstract entity neither is (*Sat*), nor is not (*Asat*), it is an empty ideal only The existence of the real God implies a Person with attributes such as knowledge, will etc. It is Him we worship.—Mussoorie, 4th Jaistha 35 (1881 A.D.).[13]

In another letter he puts the matter categorically, thus:

The Brahmo Samaj must be saved from three dangers (*vighna*) : first, idolatry ; second Christianity ; third, Vedantism. Our Samaj does not possess that power of learning, men or money wherewith to strengthen (propagate) its faith. With much effort the Brahmo Samaj started a paper with the object of ventilating in English the principles of its faith. If in its columns the belief of the Vedantic system which is antagonistic be ventilated and fostered, then the life of the Brahmo Samaj will be in danger. In that number of the Patrika let it be clearly stated that this (article) has nothing to do with the Adi Samaj—this is my advice to you.

The Tattvabodhini Patrika

To carry out the above object Devendranath brought about the union of the Tattvabodhini Sabha with the Brahmo Samaj, which had, as will be seen, far-reaching results. Then he proceeded to establish a printing press and a journal. He felt that the members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha were rather scattered. They hardly got notice of meetings of the Sabha and were often unable to be present. Those that could not attend were out of touch with what was going on in the Sabha. They thus missed the discourses of Vidyāvāgīś which, he thought, should be given greater publicity. The books written by Rammohun Roy had also to be brought within easy reach of all. Besides, works of general educative value which tend to widen the mind and elevate character should be published. With

[13] *Ātmajīvanī*, published by J. N. Banerjee & Son, 119, Old Boytakhana Bazar Road, 1898—*Parisista*, Chap. IV, pp. 16-18.

these objects in view he started in 1765 (A.D. 1843) the monthly journal *Tattvabodhini Patrika,* which happily has lived and served to this day through many vicissitudes. He appointed Akshay Kumar Dutt editor. In ideas and viewpoints Akshay Kumar Dutt differed from Devendranath in many respects. But Devendranath kept control over the editor, and took great care to maintain intact the objects he had in view for the journal. Akshay Kumar was a man of brilliant literary talents and has left his mark on the literature of Bengal. It was in no small measure due to him that the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* had a most distinguished career. Many journals have come and gone since. But to the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* belongs the honour of being their forerunner. Day by day it grew to be a most influential and informative organ of opinion and education and played an important part in developing the Bengalee language.[14] Here is an interesting picture drawn in Devendranath's own pen how the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* functioned at the time.

I appointed Akshay Babu on a handsome salary. I used to strike out such portions of his writings as were contrary to my opinions, and tried to bring him round to my point of view. But this was not an easy matter, for we were as poles asunder. I was seeking to know my relations with God, he was seeking to know the relations of man with the outer world. The difference was as between heaven and earth. In the end, however, with the assistance of a man of his abilities, I was enabled to realise my ambitions with regard to the *Tattvabodhini Patrika.* In those days few men possessed his beauty of style. Only a small number of newspapers then existed, and they did not touch upon any subject conducive to public welfare or instruction. The *Tattvabodhini Patrika* first supplied this want in Bengal. The propagation of the Vedas and the Vedanta, and the worship of the Supreme Brahma, my principal object, were amply fulfilled by the publication of this Patrika.[15]

[14] See *intra* Chap.
"People all over Bengal awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness".—R. C. Dutt's 'Literature of Bengal'.
[15] Autobiography, Chap. VII.

The First Covenant

One of the most important items of work in Devendranath's programme was the framing of a covenant. Those that came to attend the worship in the Brahmo Samaj were yet but a floating population. They were not bound by a common tie, not inspired by a common ideal, nor drawn to each other by the attraction that grows out of a pursuit of common interests. Devendranath keenly felt that this state of things could no longer be allowed to continue.

People kept coming and going to and from the Brahmo Samaj like the ebb and flow of the tide, but they were not bound together by any tie of religion. So when the number of visitors to the Brahmo Samaj began to increase, I thought it necessary to pick and choose from among them. Some came really to worship, others came without any definite aim: whom should we recognise as the true worshipper of Brahma? Upon these considerations, I decided that those who would take a vow to renounce idolatry and resolve to worship the one God, they alone would be regarded as Brahmos.[16]

Accordingly, he drew up a declaration of faith, for initiation into what was then called "the true religion inculcated in the Vedanta",[17] containing a clause to the effect that daily worship was to be performed by means of the *gāyatrī-mantra.* This was in consonance with Raja Rammohun's injunction to adopt the *gāyatrī* for the worship of Brahma. It was also laid down in the form of declaration that prayers must be said in the morning, fasting.[18]

Having drawn up the covenant he felt that he must lead the way by signing it himself. He approached Pandit Vidyāvāgīś with the request to initiate him, and nineteen others along with him. The solemn ceremony of initiation into the Brahmo Dharma was performed by Vidyāvāgīś on

[16] Autobiography—Chap. IX.

[17] বেদান্ত প্রতিপাদ্য সত্যধর্ম্ম— *Vedāntapratipādya satya dharma.*

[18] Autobiography, Chap. IX. Mr. Kshitindra Nath Tagore, however, doubts if this was so, and points out that no injunction as to fast was laid down in the covenant.

the 7th Pouṣ 1765 (Dec. 1843). The old minister was so deeply moved that he shed grateful tears observing, "Such was the aim of Rammohun Roy, but he was not able to realise it. After all this time, his desire has been fulfilled". The 7th of Pouṣ thus may truly be regarded as a red-letter day in the Brahmo Samaj. It saw the birth of the Brahmo communion—a body or brotherhood bound by the ties of a pubilcly avowed faith. As the Maharshi says, "The day the Tattvabodhini Sabha was founded was a memorable day; the day of initiation was another day of days".[19] Within the month of Pouṣ 1767 (December 1845) five hundred persons took the vow and were enrolled as Brahmos.

It was not long before Devendranath's spiritual insight discovered that the *gāyatrī-mantra* was too deep and too difficult for the majority of people to grasp and that it was likely to become a fetish. Hence he decided that it should be optional to adopt the *gāyatrī-mantra,* and those who felt incapable of entering into the spirit of it should be free to adopt any easier method of communion with God. Accordingly he set the declaration, or the covenant, free from the thraldom of the *gāyatrī.*[20] In its altered form the covenant stood thus: "I shall daily devote my soul to the Supreme Brahma with love and reverence".

But he felt that the ordinary average man needed some guidance. Public or private worship required a formula wherewith to guide itself, lest it should otherwise become aimless and erratic.

For the communion of the soul with God, words are a potent medium. And if those words are time-honoured and well known, and easy of utterance, and comprehensive, the worshipper benefits by them all the sooner.[21]

[19] Chapter IX—Autobiography.

[20] Chap. X—*Ibid.* As for himself, he clung to the *gāyatrī* all his life. "Though I did not succeed in benefiting others by the promulgation of the *gāyatrī mantra,* yet in my own case it was productive of much good. I continued to worship daily by means of the *gāyatrī,* before touching any food, with mind alert and collected so as to fulfil completely the injunctions of the Brahmo Dharma—Autobiography, Chap. XI.

[21] See also Biography of Maharshi by Mr. Ajit Chakravarti, p. 97.

Hence he promulgated a liturgy consisting of suitable texts from the Upaniṣads on the attributes of God and His relation to nature and to man. The best known and the most widely used of these selected texts is the following:

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म
आनन्दरूपममृतं यद् विभाति

Brahma is Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite.

His manifestation is eternal Bliss: It shineth forth. To the above were added three more verses:

(1) स पर्य्यगाच्छुक्रमकायम व्रण—
मस्नाविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविमनीषो परिभूः स्वयम्भू
याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्य समाभ्यः ॥

He is all-pervading, spotless, formless, without veins or scars, pure and undefiled, without sin,
He is all-seeing, and the ruler of our minds;
He is the most high and self-revealed
He bestows upon His creatures at all times all things that are needful.

(2) एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्व्वेन्द्रियानि च ।
खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥

He is the source of life, mind and all the senses; of sky, air, light, water, and that which contains them all—this earth.
He is the sustainer of all things; and the universe to this day is moving under His control.

(3) भयादस्याग्निस्तपति, भयात्तपति सूर्य्यः ।
भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥

At His command the fire burns bright
At His command the sun gives light
At His command the clouds and wind speed on and death itself roams abroad.

To these he added the Pancha Ratna Stotra (five-jewel hymnal adoration) from the Mahānirvaṇa Tantra,[22] with modifications, wherever he thought they were called for in view of the theology of the Brahmo Samaj.

The modifications were directed to counteract, as he thought, the monistic or pantheistic tendency of the verses concerned. For, he observed, "According to the Brahma Dharma, God is the Creator, not the substance of the universe".[23] In conclusion, he added a prayer in Bengalee composed by himself, as follows: —

"O Supreme Spirit, deliver us from sin committed through delusion and guard us from evil desires, that we may strive to walk in Thy appointed path of righteousness. Inspire us to meditate constantly and lovingly upon Thy immeasurable glory and supreme goodness, so that in the fulness of time our desires may be crowned by the heavenly bliss of everlasting communion with Thee".

The above form of worship was introduced into the Brahmo Samaj in A.D. 1845.[24] This liturgy has practically

[22] Canto III, verses 59-63. This *stotra* (hymn of adoration) was extracted by Raja Rammohan and incorporated in his little tract entitled *Brahmopāsanā*.

[23] See Autobiography—Chap. X, where the modifications are set out in detail, with reasons.

This uncompromising attitude has subsequently been somewhat relaxed. The emendations then made in the text of the verses would appear to be unnecessary now in the light of the broader philosophical standpoint of the Brahmo Samaj which is akin to that of the well-known commentators of the Vedanta such as Rāmānuja, Mādhva and Nimbārkar as distinguished from Śankara.

[24] Babu Rajnarain Bose in his *Ātmacharita* (autobiography) observes that the general prayer said in unison by the congregation : অসতো মা সদ্গময় তমসো মা জ্যোতির্গময়, মৃত্যোর্মামৃতং গময়, etc., (Lead us from untruth unto truth, lead us from darkness unto light, lead us from death unto immortality, etc.) was a later addition introduced at his instance first of all in the Midnapore Brahmo Samaj and afterwards adopted at Calcutta and elsewhere. This is how he traces their introduction by different stages : *"Satyam Jnānam Anantam Brahma Ānandarupam Amritam yad bibhāti*—this *sloka* was first extracted by Babu Debendranath from the Taittiriya and Mundaka Upanisads. After much thought and deliberation he thought it proper to use it. Again, after much thought and deliberation it was decided that *Sāntam Śivam Advaitam* should be similarly extracted and used. The Bengali translation of *Namaste sate te jagatkārandya* and the prayer *Asato mā sadgamaya Tamasomā jyotirgamaya mrityormāmaritam gamaya,* etc., were adopted from the

been followed to this day in the Brahmo Samaj over which Devendranath once presided, latterly called the Adi Brahmo Samaj.[25]

The Tattvabodhini Pāthaśālā

Meanwhile, the Tattvabodhini Sabha had entered upon a varied programme of constructive activity. In addition to the publication of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* which was its creation, and which became the organ of the Brahmo Samaj, the Sabha opened a Theological School, named the Tattvabodhini Pāthaśālā, with a view to train up young men in the spirit and principles of the "true religion inculcated in the Vedanta". Started at Calcutta in the year 1840, it was transferred in 1845 (1764 Śak) to the village of Bānsberia,[26] where it continued for four years. One of the teachers in that school was Akshay Kumar Dutt, the talented literateur and editor of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika.* Subsequently, the institution had to be closed on grounds of financial stringency. During the time it lived, however, it did splendid work in equipping a number of enthusiastic young men as workers and missionaries.

Beginnings of Mission Work

Devendranath's burning desire to spread far and wide the 'true religion of the Vedanta' caught others in course of time and spurred them on to missionary activities which were carried on under the auspices of the Tattvabodhini

form of worship of the Midnapore Brahmo Samaj where I had introduced them"—*Rajnarain Basur Ātmacharita,* p. 63—Kuntalini Press, Calcutta, 1909.

[25] Note what Maharshi observes in the concluding portion of Chap. X of his Autobiography: "Before this form of worship was introduced in the Brahmo Samaj they used to have only the recital of the Vedas, the reading of verses from the Upanisads, together with their commentaries, sermons by Ramchandra Vidyāvāgīś and the singing of hymns." The mode of worship followed in the *other* Brahmo Samajes, which came into existence later, will be indicated in due course.

[26] Situated within easy distance of Tribeni, a place of pilgrimage where three sacred rivers meet which was at that time a seat of Sanskrit learning.

Sabha. A number of earnest souls carried the message to places far and near, mainly in Bengal. Prominent among them was Lala Hazarilal of whom Devendranath makes honorable mention in his Autobiography. Hazarilal had been picked up, a helpless orphan boy, at Brindavan, by Devendranath's grandfather when he had gone there on pilgrimage. He gave him a home, intending to do the best for him. But he was swept off his feet by the vicious current of town life, fell into evil company and evil habits, and for some time led a thoroughly depraved and dissolute life. Later, however, a change came over him. Having weathered many storms, his vessel came to harbour in Brahmoism. He became a devoted disciple of Devendranath and threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of propagating the Brahmo faith.

This same Hazarilal afterwards became a Brahmo missionary. Having obtained release from the tortuous ways of sin by accepting the Brahmo Dharma, he tried to bring others also into the path of virtue. He began to point out the way to the highest good, which lies in the Brahmo Dharma to every person in Calcutta, rich and poor, wise and honoured. It was entirely owing to his efforts that so many people then became Brahmos within such a short time.[27]

Brahmo Samajes began to rear their heads in many places in Bengal, such as Dacca, Midnapore, Rungpur, Comilla, Bansberia, Sukhsagar, etc. The later history of Hazarilal is wrapped up in mystery. In 1847 he accompanied Devendranath to Benares. Thence he set forth with nothing in his pocket, to preach in distant lands.

All that he possessed was a single ring on which was engraved in Hindi "Even this will not remain". Thus he departed, never to return ; and I did not see him again.[28]

[27] Autobiography—Chap. XV.

[28] Autobiography, Chap. XVII. Compare the following : "Lala Hazarilal was the first Brahmo missionary. His home was Indore. He had a ring with the symbol 'OM' engraved on it. In those days any

Dethronement of the Vedas

The most remarkable development in the doctrinal position of the Brahmo Samaj was still to come, namely, the formal repudiation of the infallibility of the Vedas. From the time of Rammohun Roy onwards the Vedas had been tacitly accepted as the basis of Brahmoism. True, Rammohun himself never blindly accepted any scriptural authority. His unfailing guide in discriminating the true from the false doctrine was, as he called it, 'the intuitive faculty', or 'the eye of reason'. It was only when he found that the Vedanta, or the Resolution of all the Vedas,[29] contained the quintessence of reason that he accepted it. But he believed in the efficacy of scriptural authority; and he always adhered to the time-honoured practice of paying homage to the Vedas as the seat of authority for the Hindus, even as he put forward the authority of the Bible to Christians and that of the Qoran to the Musalmans. One reason perhaps why the primacy of the Vedas thus continued undisturbed was that a first-hand knowledge of the Vedas had well nigh become extinct at the time in Bengal. The teaching in the Tattvabodhini Pāthaśālā was mainly concerned with the Upaniṣads, which are regarded as the Vedanta or the crown of the Vedas. But in course of time it was borne in on the mind of Devendranath that a knowledge of the Vedas themselves was indispensable. Hence he sent four Brahmin students to Benares for the study of the Vedas—the first of them in 1844 and later, three others—and he himself followed them in October, 1847.

When I found the knowledge of Brahma and a system of His worship in the Upaniṣads, and when I came to know that this was the *Śāstra* whose authority was recognised throughout the whole of India, I resolved to propagate the Brahmo form

one who was initiated a Brahmo used to be given a ring like that. Below the symbol was inscribed in the Persian language *Een Ham Nakhahad Mand* which being translated means "Thus shall it not be always".... He died at Indore his birth place"—*Ātmacharit* (Autobiography) by Rajnarain Bose, pp. 45-46.

[29] See *supra*, Rammohan.

of worship by means of the Upaniṣads. All our theologians revere the Upaniṣads as the Vedanta, the crowning point and essence of all the Vedas . . . . But the Vedas, whose crowning point were the Upaniṣads, the Vedas whose doctrines and conclusions the Vedanta philosophy took such pains to arrive at, those Vedas were a sealed book to us. A few of the Upaniṣads had been published at the instance of Rammohun Roy, and I too had collected some that had not yet been printed. But we could learn nothing of the extensive Vedic literature. The Vedas had become virtually extinct in Bengal.[30] . . . . . I felt a keen desire to learn the Vedas thoroughly. Benares was the seat of Vedic culture, so I purposed sending students there to learn the Vedas. In the year 1844 (1766 Śak) I sent one student to Benares. He collected all the original Vedic manuscripts there, and began to study them. In the following year three others were sent there. Ananda Chandra, Taraknath, Baneshwar and Ramanath—these were the four students. When I sent them to Benares, my father was in England.[31]

[30] Max Muller in his *Biographical Essays* observes: "Now it may sound strange, but I feel convinced that Rammohun Roy himself when, in his controversies with his English friends, he fortified himself behind the rampart of the Veda, had no idea of what the Veda really was. Vedic learning was then at a low ebb in Bengal and Rammohun Roy had never passed through a regular training in Sanskrit." It seems to have escaped Max Muller that Rammohun received his training in Sanskrit at Benares, the seat of Vedic learning and not in Bengal.

[31] Autobiography—Chap. XIV. It will be observed that the first of the students was sent to Benares in 1844 and not in 1845 or 1846, as Max Muller thought. Max Muller seems to have been under the wrong impression that it was through his contact with Dwarkanath Tagore in Europe in 1845 that Devendranath was influenced to send students to Benares for a study of the Vedas. "When Dwarkanath Tagore came to Paris, he found me there in 1845 copying the text and commentary of the Rig-Veda, and there can be little doubt that his son Devendranath heard from his father that European scholars had begun in good earnest the study of the Veda, and that its halo of unapproachable sanctity would soon disappear. Devendranath Tagore, not knowing much of Vedic literature, in order to satisfy his own mind, sent four young Brahmins to Benares about 1845 or 1846, to study the Vedas under some of the most learned theologians of that Indian seat of learning."

See Max Muller's letter to Devendranath dated 12th October 1884 which indicates his impression that Devendranath was led to send the four scholars to Benares *after* having heard of Max Muller's study of the Vedas from his father in 1845. He writes: "I was so glad to receive your letter. My thoughts have so often been with you, but I always imagined you had become quite a *sanyasin*, and did not wish to be troubled by letters. You know that I saw a great deal of your father when he was in Paris in 1845 and I had also the pleasure of knowing your son. . . . . I should like to know whether your father

There was another impetus, from an unexpected quarter, to the examination of the Vedas as the basis of Brahmo Dharma. In *Bysakh* 1767 (1845 A.D.) one Umesh Chandra Sarcar, a pupil of Dr. Duff's school, and his young wife—both minors, belonging to the orthodox Hindu society[32]—were converted to Christianity by Dr. Alexander Duff, then in the height of his influence, under circumstances which caused great indignation and distress of mind to Devendranath. Unlike Rammohun Roy, Devendranath was never friendly to Christ or Christianity. As his son Satyendranath Tagore observes: "It is singular that the one field of religious inspiration which was foreign to him was the Hebrew scriptures. He was never known to quote the Bible, nor do we find any allusion to Christ or his teachings in his sermons. For him the Indian scriptures sufficed". On a temperament such as that the effect of the two conversions can well be imagined. They roused his energies to the utmost in order to counteract the invasion of Hindu society by what he deemed to be foreign to Indian thought and culture. The *Tattvabodhini Patrika* took the matter up and spirited articles began to appear in it saying "Even the ladies of our zenana are falling away from their own religion and adopting that of others. Are we not going to be roused even by the direct evidence of such dreadful calamities"? Apart from ventilating the matter in the Patrika, Devendranath organized a movement to prevent Hindu boys from being sent for education to Christian missionary schools. He secured the help of Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Raja Satya Charan Ghoshal and Ram Gopal Ghosh. So great was the enthusiasm created among orthodox Hindus that the long standing enmity between the Dharma Sabha which represented orthodox Hinduism, and the

wrote to you from Paris to tell you that I was preparing an edition of the Rigveda when at Paris in 1845, or whether you had sent your scholars to Benares before that time to study the four Vedas. But I do not wish to give you any trouble and I shall quite understand if I do not hear from you again". *Maharshi Devendranāther Patrāvali* (Letters of Maharshi Devendranath) by Priya Nath Sastri, pp. 225-227.

[32] The boy was aged 14 and his wife 11 years only.

Brahmo Samaj which represented reformed Hinduism, was forgotten. It will be remembered that the origin and purpose of the Dharma Sabha was to counteract the 'Brahma Sabha', as it was then called, of Raja Rammohun, and to thwart its pro-Christian, or at any rate heterodox, proclivities. But now there was a change in the tide. "This did away with the rivalry between the Dharma Sabha and the Brahma Sabha, and all other disagreement with each other.[33] They joined their forces against the common enemy and did their best to prevent children going to Christian schools, and missionaries making Christian converts. A largely attended public meeting was convened and Rs. 40,000/- was raised then and there for starting a school where children might be taught free of charge, as in Christian Mission schools. The school was established under the name Hindu Hitārthi Vidyālaya (School for Hindu welfare).

Exasperated by this organized opposition, Dr. Duff engineered an attack in the *Calcutta Review* on the Brahmo Samaj, and roundly challenged the soundness of Brahmo doctrines, among others the doctrine of infallibility of the Vedas. The *Tattvabodhini Patrikā* thus answered the charge:

> We will not deny that the reviewer (Dr. Duff) is correct in remarking that we consider the Vedas and the Vedas alone, as the authorized rule of Hindu theology. They are the sole foundation of all our beliefs, and the truths of all other *śāstras* must be judged of according to their agreement with them. What we consider as revelation is contained in the Vedas alone ; and the last part of our holy scriptures treating of the final dispensation of Hinduism, forms what is called the Vedanta.

Despite this public declaration of Vedic infallibility in the columns of the accredited organ of the Brahmo Samaj, it soon became manifest that there was really no agreement in this particular between the members of the Samaj. Most of the articles which appeared in the Patrika in defence of

[33] Autobiography—Chap. XIII.

Vedic infallibility came, it is believed, from the pen of Rajnarain Bose who had joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1845, and was a patriotic advocate of indigenous religion. There were, however, others who kept an open mind, and felt that they could not conscientiously subscribe to it. The editor, Akshay Kumar Dutt, himself was no believer of Vedic infallibility, and he and his friends made no secret of their heterodox opinions. While, therefore, the editorial columns of the *Tattvabodhini Patrikā* became the bulwark of scriptural authority of the Vedas, the correspondence columns were charged with explosives calculated to destroy all vestige of faith in them. Devendranath kept an open mind throughout, devoutly waiting and watching, and preparing himself for the course which Truth would prescribe. The controversy continued for quite two years with varying intensity till it came to a head on the return of the Brahmin students from Benares in 1847. The upshot is thus stated by Satyendranath Tagore in his Introduction to the English rendering of the Maharshi's Autobiography:

> Finally, after much discussion, my father formally renounced the doctrine of verbal inspiration. At a general meeting of the Brahmos it was agreed that the Vedas, Upaniṣads and other ancient writings were not to be accepted as infallible guides, that Reason and Conscience were to be supreme authority, and the teachings of the scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonized with the light within us.[34]

The public dethronement of the Vedas took place in 1850. But to all intents and purposes their repudiation dates from 1848. Rightly does Max Muller observe: "I know of no other instance in the whole history of religions that equals the honesty and self-denial of the Brahmo Samaj in their throwing down and levelling the ramparts of their own fortress and opening the gates wide for any messengers of truth. Their honesty will appear all the more creditable

[34] Autobiography—Introductory Chapter by the Translator S. N. Tagore, p. 5.

when we remember that they were by no means inclined to discard the Vedas altogether, but only declared that reverence for the Deity prevented them from claiming any longer anything like divine workmanship or penmanship for the whole of it".[35]

THE ORDEAL

While these momentous developments were taking place in the Brahmo Samaj causing no little strain on the mind of the leader, he was personally passing through the severest trials of his life. In 1846, he lost his father who died at the age of fifty-one in London. His youngest brother Nagendranath and his cousin Nabin Chandra Mukherji were in London present by his bedside. He and his second brother Girindranath were at home. They faithfully performed all the rigorous austerities prescribed for a son on his father's death. But when it came to performing, or complying with, idolatrous rites in connection with the *Śrāddha* there he drew the line. He had taken the vow of Brahmoism and he definitely declared that he could not do anything contrary to that vow, he would not commit a sin against religion. He made up his mind to perform the *Śrāddha* without any taint of idolatry in it, and according to the highest teachings of the Upaniṣads. Leaders of the orthodox society who were friends of his father's such as Raja Radhakanta Dev would not have it: for in that case the *Śrāddha* would not conform to the recognized rites. But no fear of social ostracism, or worldly loss could deter him. He stood firm. His brother Girindranath was in favour of choosing the line of least resistance and ultimately succumbed to dictates of prudence, leaving Devendranath severely alone. "No one uttered a single word of hope or encouragement". There was only one staunch friend by his side in this hour of sore trial and tribulation, and that was Lala Hazarilal. He alone echoed Devendranath's

[35] Max Muller's 'Auld Lang Syne', Second series, p. 83.

deepest sentiments. "We shall cling to the Brahmo Dharma", said he, "even at the risk of our lives". At last the day of the *Śrāddha* arrived. Devendranath chose a *mantra* (text) free from all association with idolatry and repeating it he made his offerings of gifts, away from the place where they had deposited the Śāligram,[36] and then retired to his own room where with a few Brahmo friends he read the Kathopaniṣat; "for it is written that whosoever shall read this Upaniṣat at the time of *Śrāddha* shall thereby reap fruit everlasting". His brother Girindra chose discretion as the better part of valour and performed the *Śrāddha* in conformity with the recognized rites. This was the first instance of a *Śrāddha* being performed without recourse to any idolatrous rites and in accordance with the rites of Brahmo Dharma. It was the triumph of conscience over convention, of Truth over tradition, of religion over social repression. So Devendranath significantly observes:

> Friends and relatives forsook me, but God drew me nearer to Himself. I gained satisfaction of spirit at the triumph of *dharma*. And that was all I wanted.

He that Loseth His all shall Save it

The death of Dwarkanath took place at an untoward moment when he was deeply involved in debts. It was found that his liabilities amounted to a crore of rupees whereas his assets were only forty-three lacs.[37]. The assets consisted of landed properties and business, the chief among the latter being the firm of Carr, Tagore & Co., in which Dwarkanath owned a half share. In 1843 he had made a will whereby he bequeathed his half share to Devendranath alone, the share-holders of the other half being some Englishmen. Devendranath, however, would not have it only for himself. With characteristic generosity, he shared it equally

[36] The name of the stone that represents the deity.
[37] A crore means ten millions, while a lac means one hundred thousand.

with his two brothers. Subsequently, the other half share was also acquired by the family, so that the whole firm came to belong to the Tagores, and it was Girindranath who used to look after it. But Dwarkanath Tagore had contracted heavy debts in the name of the firm (Carr, Tagore & Co.) which led to its downfall in March 1847. For the protection of the family Dwarkanath had taken care to secure a portion of his property in the shape of a trust. D. M. Gordon, the Head Assistant of the firm, called a meeting of all the creditors before whom he placed an account of the assets and liabilities of the proprietors. It showed that the total liabilities of the firm amounted to one crore of rupees and the total money due and realizable was seventy lacs; there was, therefore, a deficit of thirty lacs. To meet this deficit he informed the creditors that the proprietors were prepared to throw in their zamindaries and other landed property so that the creditors would be in a position to have the assets of the firm together with the zemindaries, etc., under their control, and would thus satisfy their respective dues, as far as possible. "But", he added, "there is a trust property which does not belong to them of right; this property only you will not be able to touch". This, however, did not commend itself to Devendranath's sense of justice and probity. He held a brief consultation with his brother Nagendranath and told him that the best thing that in his opinion they could do was to come forward and say that although the trust properties, could not be sold up in payment of their liabilities, yet they were ready to break up the trust and employ even the properties comprised in it for clearing off their debts. And this he actually did, thus placing every item of property unreservedly in the hands of the creditors.

At this proposal of ours we saw that many kindly-disposed creditors were moved to tears. . . . . They proposed that as we had resigned all claims, we should get an annual allowance of Rs. 25,000/-, out of the estate for our maintenance. Thus a

friendly feeling was established between debtors and creditors. Not one of them commenced legal proceedings in order to realize their dues. They took the whole of our property into their own hands and formed a committee of their principal men to manage it."[38]

Devendranath felt supremely happy and observed to his brother Girindranath while returning from the meeting 'We have just performed the Viśvajit Yajña[39] by giving up everything'. It was indeed a triumph of righteousness.

The rest of the story is best told in the words of his second son, Satyendranath Tagore: —

The creditors, however, did not long continue to hold the property. They were so convinced of my father's honest intentions that in two years they relinquished the estate to his management, and accordingly he resumed its charge. It took years and years for him to pay off the compounded debts, but by means of judicious management and exemplary self-denial he eventually succeeded in doing so to the last farthing. It was not only in the matter of his father's debts that he was scrupulous. Dwarkanath Tagore had been profuse in his charities, and some liberal promises of pecuniary assistance remained unfulfilled at his death. My father took upon himself the discharge of all such obligations, and in one instance, in the case of a promise of a lac of rupees (£6666) made to the District Charitable Society of Calcutta, it is said that he paid out not only the full donation, but interest thereon from the date on which it had been promised.[40]

But apart from the joy of uprightness, this episode afforded him a true taste of renunciation. As he puts it—

Things turned out just as I wished ; all our property went out of my hands. As in my mind there was no desire for the things of this world, so too no worldly goods were now mine ;

[38] Autobiography—Chap. XIX.
[39] A ceremony of public renunciation of all worldly goods.
[40] Introduction to Autobiography (English Version) p. 9.

like unto like, both sides were balanced. . . . . If whilst I was praying thus for lightning, lightning came and consumed every thing, then what would there be to wonder at? What I had said was 'O Lord, I want nothing but Thee!' He had graciously accepted my prayer, and revealing Himself unto me, wrenched away everything else. 'Not a farthing's worth of sugar have I, O Lord, on which to have a drink of water'.[41] What I had prayed for was granted and realized.

That was a day of days at the burning-ground and this day was just such another. I had taken another step forward. I reduced my staff of servants, sent all my horses and carriages to be auctioned, brought my food and clothing within reasonable bounds—became a *sanyasi* without leaving home. I took no thought for what I should eat and how I should clothe myself on the morrow. Nor did I trouble myself as to whether tomorrow I should stay in this house or have to leave it. I became totally free from all desire. I had read it in the Upanisads about the peace and happiness of him who desires nothing; and now I tasted of it in real life. As the moon is freed from Rahu,[42] so did my soul become free from the things of the world, and feel the heaven of Brahma. "O Lord in the midst of untold wealth my soul was in agony, not having found Thee—now finding Thee, I have found everything.[43]

[41] It is usual in some parts of India to have something sweet before taking a draught of water.

[42] According to Hindu mythology, Rahu is a trunkless demon who periodically tries to swallow the moon but cannot retain it—this is the cause of the eclipse.

[43] Autobiography—Chap. XIX.

CHAPTER IX

LAYING THE FOUNDATION ANEW

The four students returned from Benares. One of them had devoted himself to the study of the Upaniṣads, the Vedāngas and the Vedanta philosophy with its varied annotations and ancillaries. This was Ananda Chandra Bhattacharya. Devendranath gave him the title of Vedāntavāgīś and appointed him to the post of Upāchārya (Minister) of the Brahmo Samaj. Of the rest one had specialized in Rig-Veda, the other in Yajur-Veda and the third in Sāma-Veda. The more Devendranath entered into the Vedas, the more he felt that the Vaidiks never worshipped the outward material sun, fire or wind, but the Being dwelling in them —the Indwelling Spirit. "One is He, but the Brahmans call Him variously Agni, Yami, Vayu" (Rig-Veda). So also in the Yajur-Veda "He Himself is all the gods". With a view to dispel the false idea current at the time and "to acquire a knowledge of the gradual evolution of our ancient manners, customs, and religion" he set to work to translate the Rig-Veda with the help of a Pandit from Benares. Ultimately, however, he found that it was a stupendous task and had to discontinue it. While, however, thus immersed in the study of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads he came to realize that the two texts which had till then found a place in the Brahmo Samaj form of worship: *Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahma, Ānandarūpam Amṛtam—yad bibhāti*— left a void which could only be filled by adding *Śāntam Śivam Advaitam*—full of peace and beatitude; without a second. This was accordingly done in 1848, *i.e.*, three years after the introduction of the liturgy in the Brahmo Samaj. Even to this day the adoration in the different sections of the Brahmo Samaj is preluded by the choral chanting of the following text—*Satyam Jnānam Anantam Brahma, Ānanda-*

rūpam Amṛtam yad bibhāti Śāntam Śivam Advaitam Śuddham Apāpavidham—the last two attributes *Śuddham Apāpaviddham* were subsequently added by Brahmananda Keshub Chunder Sen.

ĀDEŚ (DIVINE COMMAND)

The form of worship he evolved is indeed an index to the gradual evolution which came about in Maharshi's spiritual consciousness. At first he had come into contact with Reality in the outer universe, "in the canopy of heaven and the furniture of the earth". He had saluted Him as the Creator and Governor of the universe. Now he beheld Him within himself and in all the lineaments of his innermost soul. Nay more, he heard His voice in the promptings of his conscience. It was with this growing sense of fuller realization that little by little he laid the foundation of individual and Samaj (community) worship. Let him speak of this change which thus came over his consciousness in his own words: —

By this time I was firmly convinced that God was not merely a silent witness with regard to myself. He was an indwelling spirit, who ever inspired my thoughts and volition. In this way a deep and living connection was established with Him. Formerly, I had deemed it a privilege enough to salute Him from a distance; now I obtained this thing beyond all expectation that He was not far from me, not only a silent witness but that He dwelt within my soul and inspired all my thoughts. Then I knew I was not helpless, He is my stay everlasting. When not knowing Him I was wandering sad and despondent, even then, dwelling within me, He gradually opened my inner eye, the eye of wisdom. All this time I did not know that He was leading me by the hand; now I consciously walked under His guidance.

From now, I began to train myself to listen for His command, to understand the difference between my own inclina-

tion and His will. What seemed to me to be the insidious promptings of my own desires, I was careful to avoid ; and what appeared to my conscience to be His command, that I tried to follow. Then I prayed to Him to inspire me with righteousness, to guard me with moral strength, to give me patience, courage, fortitude and contentment. What profit, beyond all expectation had I not gained by adopting the *gāyatri mantra*! I had seen Him face to face, had heard His voice of command, and had become His constant companion. I could make out that he was guiding me, seated within my heart, inspiring all my righteous feelings and guiding my soul. Even as He, dwelling in the sky, guides the stars and planets, so does He, dwelling within my heart. . . . . I felt that ever enshrined within my heart, He taught me wisdom like a Guru, and prompted me to do good deeds, so that I exclaimed 'Thou art Father too and Mother, Thou art the Guru and bestower of all wisdom'. In punishment as in reward I discerned His love alone. Nurtured by His love, falling to rise again, I had come thus far. I was then twenty-eight years of age.[1]

Thus did he feel in 1845. Then came the trials—his father's death, the fall of Carr, Tagore & Co., the doubts and questionings as to the authority of the Vedas and Upaniṣads. He emerged from these trials with a chastening of heart, and a broadening of vision, and with a will fortified. The form of worship which he promulgated was the product of all this *sādhanā* (discipline). How he arrived at it he thus portrays in his Autobiography:

He who is the presiding Deity of our soul, and who ever instils into it all wisdom and spirituality, He is "Truth, knowledge, the Infinite Brahma" in the midst of the beauty of this Universe situated in boundless space, then we see that "That whose manifestation is eternal bliss shineth forth". He shines

[1] Autobiography—Chap. XI. Also Chap. XII—"Hitherto He had existed beyond and outside myself; now He revealed Himself to me, I saw Him within my soul. The Lord of the world-temple became the Lord of my heart's shrine, and from thence I began to hear silent and solemn religious teachings".

forth as the embodiment of bliss and immortality. The self-existent Supreme Soul is without, even as He is within. Again He is "without and within us, yet He exists in Himself", and is ever conscious of His blessed will that all may be elevated in wisdom and righteousness, love and goodness. He is "full of peace and beatitude ; without a second".

Seekers after God must realize Brahma in these three places. They must see Him within, see Him without, and see Him in that abode of Brahma where He exists in Himself. When we see Him within our soul, we say, "Thou art the innermost Soul of the soul, Thou art my father, Thou art my friend, Thou art my comrade". When we see Him without us, we say, "Thy royal throne is in the infinite sky". When we see Him in Himself, see the Supreme Truth in His own sanctuary, then we say "Thou art in thine own Self, Supreme Goodness and Peace ; One without a second". . . . . By His grace I have now come to believe that the Yogi who can see this trinity of His at one and the same time, and see that while existing in Himself He exists in the hearts of us all, while existing in Himself He exists outside us all, and exists in Himself self-contained and self-conscious, time without end, he is the true Yogi.[2]

The New Foundation

But apart from the form of worship for the Brahmo Samaj, there was another momentous question which was engaging his attention. The rejection of the Vedas as the authoritative basis of religion led to much searching of heart as to what, if anything, could take its place. Could it then be the Upaniṣads? If not, where was the anchorage to be found?

First I went back to the Vedas, but could not lay the foundation of the Brahmo Dharma there ; then I came to the eleven authentic Upanisads, but how unfortunate ! even there I could not lay the foundation. Our relation with God is that of worshipper and worshipped—this is the very essence of

[2] Autobiography—Chap. XI.

Brahmoism. When we found the opposite conclusion to this arrived at in Śankarāchārya's *Śārirak Mīmāmsā* of the Vedanta Darśaṇa, we could no longer place any confidence in it ; nor could we accept it as a support of our religion. I had thought that if I renounced the Vedanta Darśaṇa and accepted the eleven Upaniṣads only, I would find a support for Brāhmoism ; hence I had relied entirely upon these, leaving aside all else. But when in the Upaniṣads I came across "I am He" and "Thou art That", then I became disappointed in them also.[3]

* * * *

Again, when I saw in the Upanisads that the worship of Brahma leads to Nirvāṇa, my soul was dismayed at the idea :

"Deeds together with the sentient soul, all become one in Brahma." If this means that the sentient soul loses its separate consciousness then this is not the sign of salvation but of terrible extinction. What a vast difference between the eternal progress of the soul according to the Brahmo Dharma, on the one hand, and this salvation by annihilation on the other ! This Nirvāṇa-salvation of the Upaniṣads did not find a place in my heart.[4]

These Upaniṣads could not meet all our needs : could not fill our hearts. Then what was to be done now ? What hope was there for us ? Where should we seek a refuge for Brahmoism ? It could not be founded on the Vedas, it could not be founded on the Upaniṣads. Where was its foundation to be laid ?

I came to see that THE PURE HEART, FILLED WITH THE LIGHT OF INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE—THIS WAS ITS BASIS. Brahma reigned in the pure heart alone. The pure unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brāhmoism. We could accept those texts only of the Upaniṣads which accorded with that heart. Those sayings which disagreed with the heart we could not accept. . . . . These were the relations which were now established between ourselves and the Upaniṣads, the highest of all *Śāstras*. In the Upaniṣad itself we read that God is revealed through worship to the heart illumined by an intellect free from doubt.[5] To the soul of the righteous is revealed the wisdom of God.

[3] Autobiography, pp. 160-161.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 165.
[5] Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad—Chap. IV, V. 17.

The Rishi of old who by means of contemplation and the grace of wisdom had seen the Perfect Brahma in his own pure heart, records his experience in these words: "THE PURE IN SPIRIT, ENLIGHTENED BY WISDOM, SEES THE HOLY GOD BY MEANS OF WORSHIP AND MEDITATION."[6] THESE WORDS ACCORDED WITH EXPERIENCE OF MY OWN HEART, HENCE I ACCEPTED THEM."[7]

And so he laid his heart open to God saying "Illumine thou the darkness of my soul". Where was the creed that could form the meeting-ground of all Brahmos? "By His mercy my heart was instantly enlightened": With the help of that light he formulated the creed, thus[8]:—

In the beginning, there was only one Supreme Spirit ; there was naught else. He created all this that is. He is infinite in wisdom and goodness: He is everlasting, all-knowing, all-pervading, formless, changeless ; One only without a second, almighty, self-dependent and perfect ; there is none like unto Him. Our welfare here and hereafter consists only in worshiping Him. To love Him and to do his bidding is to worship Him.

The foundation of the Brāhmo Dharma—how was that to be laid? With the dethronement of the Vedas the Vedanta and the Upaniṣads, and with the declaration that the pure heart filled with the light of intuitive knowledge was alone to be regarded as the sheet-anchor of religion, the ordinary average Brahmo was left without any objective source of response, such as Devendranath himself had received from the Upaniṣads earlier in life; or a confirmation,[9] such as he had himself found, of the inner light vouchsafed to him. He, therefore, thought that it was necessary to compile from the sacred writings what was in consonance with reason, or the "light of intuitive knowledge". But

[6] Mundakopaniṣad III—1-8.
[7] Autobiography—Chap. XXII, pp. 161-162.
[8] This was in 1848—see Autobiography, Chap. XXIII. But it was not published till 1849—see Chap. XXIX.
[9] See p. 11 *supra* 'The great response'.

how could he hope to do it? Could he rely on his own intellect? Or must he not place himself in the hand of God as a mere instrument? This is how he describes what happened: —

Then I laid my heart fervently open to God. The spiritual truths that dawned on my heart through His grace, I went on uttering as fluently and forcibly as the current of a river falling from the mouth of the Upaniṣads, and Aksay Kumar Dutt at once took them down. * * * *

Thus by the grace of God and through the language of the Upaniṣads I evolved the foundation of the Brāhmo Dharma from my heart. Within three hours the book of Brāhma Dharma was completed. But to understand and grasp its inner meaning, will take me my whole life time ; and even then it will not be finished. It is my humble prayer to God, the inspirer of faith, that my reverence for these truths of the Brāhmo Dharma may remain unwavering. The work does not represent the sweat of my brow: but only the outpourings of my heart. Who inspired me with these truths? He who again and again inspires us with intelligence in the paths of religion, worldly prosperity, desire and salvation ; that living spirit Himself inspired my heart with these truths. They are not the conclusions of my weak intellect, nor the ravings of a deluded or wandering mind. THEY ARE GOD-SENT TRUTHS THAT GUSHED FROM MY HEART. These living truths have descended on my heart from Him who is the Life of Truth, the Light of Truth. Then did I come to know Him. I came to know that he who seeks Him, finds Him. It was by dint of my longing that I was enabled to gain the dust of His feet, and that dust became the ointment of my eyes. * * * * Let no man think that our Vedas and Upaniṣads were altogether discarded by me, and that we did not keep in touch with them at all.

The Brāhmo Dharma was built of the essential truths contained in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and my heart was witness thereunto. The Brāhmo Dharma was the fruit on the topmost branch of the Vedic Tree of Life. The Upaniṣad is the crowning point of the Vedas: and the crowning point of the Upaniṣads is the Brāhmi Upaniṣat—the Upaniṣat relating to Brahma. This has been incorporated in Part I of the 'Brāhmo Dharma'. It

was in the Upaniṣads that I first found an echo answering to the spiritual emotions of my soul; hence I endeavoured to establish the Brāhmo Dharma on the whole of the Vedas and the whole of the Upaniṣads, but found to my sorrow that I could not do so. But this sorrow is vain, since the whole of a mine does not contain unalloyed gold. The worthless ore has to be broken in order to extract gold therefrom. Not that all the gold contained in the mine has been extracted. Many truths still remain deeply imbedded in the mine of the Vedas and Upanisads. Whenever devout, pure and earnest souls desire to seek for them their heart-gates will be opened by the grace of God, and they will be able to unearth those truths from that

Thus in one sitting was completed the first part of the work entitled 'Brāhmo Dharma' which consisted of texts from the Upaniṣads as they came to him, placed in a setting quite different from that in which they were to be found in the different Upaniṣads. They deal with the attributes of God, and His relation to man.[11] The second part, which forms a code of conduct and consists of moral precepts culled from Manu, Yājnavalkya, Mahābhārata and other Hindu scriptures, was compiled later. In an Appendix to the book is set out the creed, or the cardinal principles of the Brahmo faith.[12] This Book was begun and completed in 1848.

With the framing of the covenant, and the influx of enthusiastic initiates; with the increase in the number of Samajes; with the bold avowal that the light of intuitive knowledge is the sole basis of religion and that scriptures are acceptable only in so far as they are found to be in consonance with it; with a definite form of individual and community worship evolved in accordance with felt spiritual requirement; and with intense faith in its own destiny the Brahmo Samaj entered upon a new chapter in the year

[10] Autobiography—Chap. XXIII, pp. 167-171.

[11] The translation and Bengali commentary were written long after the publication of the first and second parts of the 'Brāhmo Dharma'.

[12] See *supra*, p. 171.

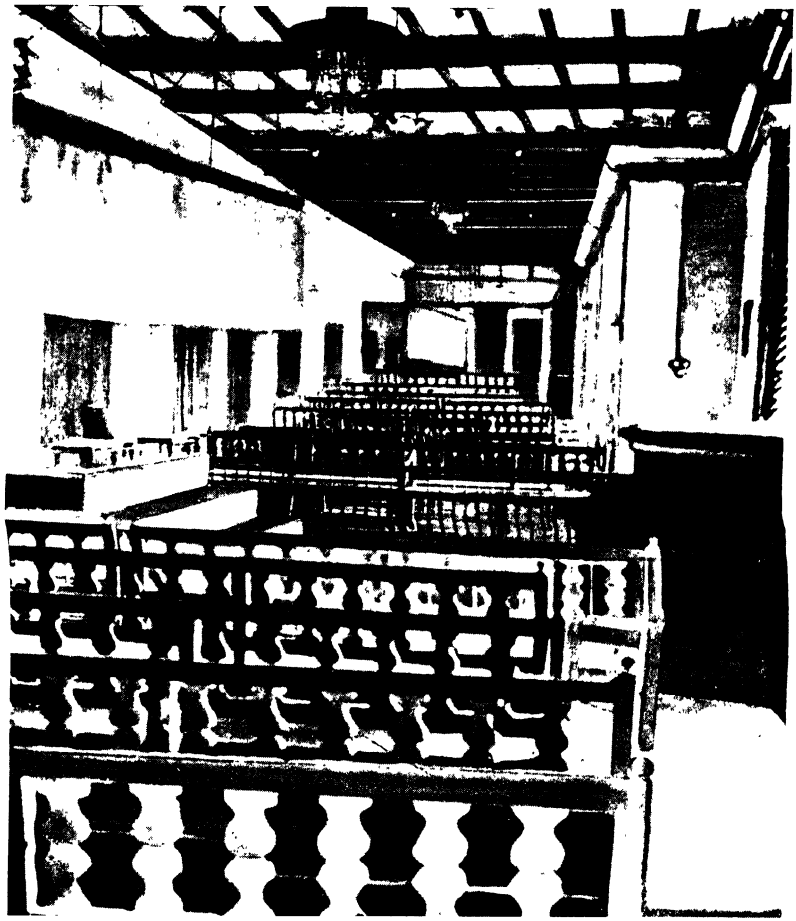
1850. The ten years from 1839 to 1849 form a momentous period in the history of the Brahmo Samaj during which the Vedantism of Rammohun underwent gradual changes, and the Brahmo Samaj as a community was born. In the fitness of things the Samaj house was also extended to a third storey. By the 11th of Magh, 1849, the new hall in the third storey was made ready for celebrating the nineteenth anniversary. It was an anniversary marked by abundant blessing and benediction from on High. Maharshi thus describes it:—

The white marble reading-dais, the well-decorated singing platform in front, the wooden gallery rising east and west, all was new and beautiful and white. The whole was lighted by crystal chandeliers. We arrived with our family party at the Samaj in the evening. Every face bespoke new zeal and new love; every one was filled with delight. Vishnu[13] from his place in the choir gave out the song, "O Thou Supreme Joy". Then the Brāhmo service commenced, all of us reciting the *svādhyāya* in unison. Verses were recited from the book of Brāhmo Dharma. The service was brought to a close with the words, "Peace, peace, peace in the Lord!"

As all became silent I stood up in front of the dais, and read the following prayer with a heart full of joy and devotion:

"O Lord! If most men fail to realize Thee through this beautiful universe that Thou hast spread around us, that is not because Thou art far from any of us. Thou art more vividly near to us than anything that we touch with the hand, but our senses, busied about external things, have kept us under the spell of illusion and turned us away from Thee. Thy light shines forth through darkness, but the darkness comprehends Thee not. As Thou art in the darkness, so art Thou also in light. Thou art in the air, Thou art in the sky, Thou art in the clouds, Thou art in the flowers, Thou art in the scent, O Lord! Thou revealest Thyself everywhere, Thou shinest through all Thy works; but erring and thoughtless man heeds Thee not.

[13] A noted singer whose singing of hymns in the Brahmo Samaj of the earlier days will always be gratefully remembered.



INNER VIEW OF ADI BRAHMO SAMAJ PRAYER HALL

The whole universe proclaims Thee alone, and repeatedly cries aloud Thy holy Name, but we are so dull by nature that we remain deaf even to the mighty tones which proceed from the universe. Thou art all around us, Thou art within our hearts, but we wander far from our hearts, we do not perceive our soul, and do not feel Thy presence therein. O Thou Supreme Spirit! O Eternal Spring of light and beauty! O ancient One, without beginning and end, Life of all living creatures! they who seek Thee within themselves, their endeavours to see Thee are never fruitless. But alas! how small the number of those that seek Thee! The things Thou hast given to us have so engrossed our minds, that they do not suffer us to recall the hand of the giver. Our minds have not a moment's freedom in which to turn from worldly pleasures and think of Thee. We depend on Thee for life, yet live in forgetfulness of Thee. O Lord! unless we know Thee, what is life? What is this world? The meaningless things of this world—the passing flower, the ebbing current, the fragile palace, the fading picture, the glittering metals appear real to us and attract our minds. We think them to be pleasing things ; but we do not consider that the pleasure they afford us is given to us by Thee through them. The beauties Thou hast showered upon Thy creation have concealed Thee from our sight. So high and pure art Thou, that our senses cannot reach Thee. Thou art "Brahma, Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite". Thou art transcending sound, transcending touch, formless ; imperceptible to taste or to smell. * * * * How happy is that soul which seeks after Thee, which yearns to find Thee. But he alone is supremely happy, to whom Thou hast revealed the full glory of Thy face, whose tears have been dried by Thy hand, who by Thy loving mercy has attained the fulfilment of all desire in attaining Thee. Ah me! how long, how much longer must I wait for that day on which I shall be filled with the fulness of joy in Thy presence and bring my will in harmony with Thine. Flooded with joy by this hope, my soul says, O Lord, there is none equal to Thee. My body feels faint, the world fades away at this moment when I see Thee, who are the Lord of my life, and my support everlasting."

The prayer was composed by the great Fenelon, the French Brahmavādi: and Rajnarain Babu made a fine translation of it, which I interspersed with suitable texts from the Upaniṣads.

After this prayer was read I saw that many Brāhmos were affected to tears.

Such emotion had never before been witnessed in the Brāhmo Samaj. Hitherto the severe and sacred flame of knowledge alone had been lighted in Brahma's shrine ; now He was worshipped with the flowers of heart-felt love.[14]

[14] Autobiography, Chap. XXIV. The italics are mine. The passage marks the first advent of emotion as a conspicuous factor in the public worship of the Brahmo Samaj.

CHAPTER X

THE DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE EARLY BRAHMO SAMAJ

We are now in a position to examine and clarify, if need be, the doctrinal position of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj in the middle of the last century.

Scriptural Authority

As already observed, Mr. Satyendranath Tagore has characterised the repudiation of Vedic infallibility as the renunciation of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. He observes: "Finally, after much discussion my father formally renounced the doctrine of verbal inspiration".[1] It may, however, be doubted whether the Brahmo Samaj at any stage took its stand on 'verbal revelation', as it is understood in the language of western theology. In the first flush of the controversy with Christian missionaries headed by Dr. Duff in the forties of the last century, the accredited organ of the Samaj, the *Tattvabodhini Patrikā,* answered their charge in words which would almost amount to an avowal of belief in verbal revelation.[2] But in fact it was not so. The Brahmo Samaj of the day was avowedly committed to the Hindu standpoint. But informed Hindu theology did not go as far as some of the writings in the *Tattvabodhini Patrikā* did. This was evidently due to the fact that opinion was rather unsettled on the point within the Brahmo Samaj. Here is a specimen already given in Chapter VIII which would bear repetition:

We consider the Vedas and the Vedas alone as the authorised rule of Hindu theology. They are the sole foundation of all our beliefs ; and the truths of all our Śāstras must be judged of according to their agreement with them. What we consider as revelation is contained in the Vedas alone ; and

[1] See *supra,* Chap. VIII under head "Dethronement of the Vedas'.
[2] See *supra.*

the last part of our holy scriptures treating of the final dispensation of Hinduism forms what is called the Vedanta.[3]

Now, it is true that Hindu religious tradition through the centuries has demanded that the Vedas are to be regarded as the ultimate repository of the highest knowledge, the quintessence of the wisdom of ages. All other scriptures owe their origin and authority to the Vedas. Hence in so far as their injunctions agree with the Vedas they are binding, but where they are in conflict the Vedas must prevail. This may be said to exhaust the claims of Vedic authority. From this it does not follow that other sources of knowledge, or other norms of conduct are totally discounted or disregarded. On the contrary, the Upaniṣads definitely declare that the Vedas themselves, namely, Rik, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva, together with the ancillary sciences, the Vedāngas, that is, Śikṣā (pronunciation and euphony), Kalpa (science of rituals), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Niruktam (vedic glossary), Chhanda (science of metre, prosody) and Jyotiṣam (astronomy and astrology) are all inferior (*aparā*) Vidyā, whereas what leads to the knowledge of the Absolute is the only Vidyā that deserves to be called superior (*parā*). It is apparent from the above that the standpoint of orthodox Hindu theology regarding the Vedas has little in common with that of belief in verbal revelation. The latter requires not only that every word, every syllable of the scripture said to be revealed is unquestionably true and binding, but that all other knowledge must necessarily be devoid of authority. Far from encouraging such monopoly of authority, Hindu theology definitely makes room for other criteria of values, other standards of conduct. Here is an authoritative text on the point:

> *Vedokhilo dharmamūlaṁ smriti śīle ca tadvidām*
> *Ācāraścaiva sādhūnāṁ ātmanastuṣṭireva ca.*[4]

[3] Chap. VIII.
[4] Manu, Chap. V. 12.

"The Veda is the foundation of all dharma, so the Smriti (recollection) and śīla (virtues) of those versed in the Vedas; also the usages established by the righteous; so also is the inner satisfaction of the righteous". The self-satisfaction mentioned as a criterion of right conduct is not the satisfaction felt by anybody and everybody but only of the righteous (sādhūnām). This is a recognised criterion of right or wrong in moral and religious matters. In the field of objective science it is of little use, as it does not lend itself to objective examination or measurement. For obvious reasons, it is intended to serve as a criterion in moral and religious matters, where the testimony of the inner consciousness is of supreme value. Thus in the absence of any guidance in matters of conduct, from the Veda, from Śīla or from Sadācāra, the inner light that lights the righteous mind must be taken as the true guide.

Here is another text which lays down the same principle:

Vedāh Smriti sadācāra svasya ca priyamātmana
Etaccaturvidham prāhu sākṣāddharmasya lakṣaṇam.

"The Veda, Smriti (tradition), usages established by good men and the satisfaction of one's own (inner) self—these are declared to be the fourfold basis of commendable conduct".[5]

It is, therefore, clear that without subscribing to the doctrine of verbal revelation so-called, the traditional Hindu theology easily assigned primacy to the Vedas as the seat and source of scriptural authority; and withal it left room for the (light of) inner satisfaction of the good and the righteous as one of the criteria for assessing moral and spiritual values.

The standpoint of Raja Rammohun in respect of scriptural authority was not far different. For India's

[5] Manu,

national religion he avowedly accepted the Vedas as the ultimate scriptural authority. But that did not preclude him from giving to "the intuitive faculty of discriminating good from evil" its proper place in spiritual discernment.[6] This thought occurs again and again in Rammohun's writings. Even in the *Tuhfat ul Mawahhiddin,* where he speaks not only of the Hindu scriptures but of the scriptures of other religions as well, he appeals to this innate faculty as a source of the knowledge of higher things:

O God ! Notwithstanding implicit faith in the orders of the Mujtahids or the doctors of religion, there is always such an innate faculty existing in the nature of mankind that in case any person of sound mind, before or after assuming the doctrines of any religion, makes an impartial and just inquiry into the nature of the principles of religious doctrines, of different nations, there is a strong hope that he will be able to distinguish the truth from untruth and true propositions from fallacious ones and also he, becoming free from the useless restraints of religion, which sometimes become sources of prejudice of one against another and causes of physical and mental troubles, will turn to the One Being who is the fountain of the harmonious organisation of the universe, and will pay attention to the good of society.[7]

Although each individual without the instruction or guidance of any one, * * * has an innate faculty in him by which he can infer that there exists a Being who (with His wisdom) governs the whole universe ; yet it is clear that every one in imitation of the nation in which he has been brought up, believes the tenets of that creed in their entirety. * * * These persons do not make any distinction between the beliefs which are the results of a special training and habit and an absolute belief in the existence of the source of creation which is indispensable for man.[8]

[6] See Chap. III; Chap. IV.
[7] 'The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy'—published by the Panini Office—p. 947.
[8] *Ibid,* p. 948.

Again,

Those who prefer the so-called invented revelation of mankind to the natural inspiration from God, which consists in attending to social life with their own species, and having an intuitive faculty of discriminating good from evil, instead of gaining the union of hearts with mutual love and affection of all their fellow-creatures without difference in shape and colour or creeds and religions, which is a pure devotion acceptable to God, the Creator of nature, consider some especial formulae and bodily motions to be the cause of salvation and receiving bounty from Almighty God.[9]

It may be said that in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin one finds expressions of a dubious nature which leaves it uncertain as to whether Rammohun meant by the "intuitive faculty" the faculty of reasoning whereby man could arrive at the knowledge of God, the soul and immortality, etc., by inference, or whether he meant by it Reason or Apperception whereby man could attain direct knowledge of higher realities of the spirit, even as he could, by Perception, acquire direct knowledge of the external world. It is not clear which of the two he refers to. He is, however, keenly conscious of the limitations of the reasoning faculty as will appear from his Introduction to the English Translation of the Kena Upaniṣad in which he discusses the authority of the Vedas and other sources of higher knowledge:

I have often lamented that, in our general researches into theological truth, we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other ; and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is, alone, to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incom-

[9] The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy'—published by the Panini Office—p. 957.

patible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best method perhaps is, neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other, but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both, endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties, relying on the goodness of the Almighty Power which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for.

Extracts could be multiplied. Suffice it to say that, not only in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin but throughout his prolific writings, Rammohun adhered to the view that the authority of all scriptures—and in the case of India, of the Vedas—must always depend on their being consonant with reason, "the innate faculty of distinguishing truth from untruth".[10] What is this innate faculty but the light of inner satisfaction of the righteous which Manu speaks of?

There was no occasion for the Brahmo Samaj under the Maharshi, until the so-called formal renunciation of the Vedas, to make a departure from the position of Raja Rammohun above indicated. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that there had been no departure, and we shall presently deal with the facts which establish that. What then is the explanation for the out-and-out unquestioning allegiance to the Vedas expressed in the passage from the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* quoted at the beginning of this Chapter? The answer is to be found in the heat of the controversy with the Christian missionaries. Reference has been made in the last Chapter to the conversion to Christianity of Umesh Chandra Sircar and his wife, both minors of tender age, under the influence of Dr. Duff, and the indignation which it caused amongst the intellectual *elite* of Calcutta, not to speak of the masses. The result was attack and counter-attack from both sides in the course of which the Christian missionaries challenged the validity of the scriptural basis of Hinduism. The Hindu and Brahmo com-

[10] See *supra*, summary of Rammohun's views on this subject in Chap. IV.

munities combined to return the attack setting up the Vedas as their unassailable bulwark. All this, we have said, happened in 1845. But, actually, the controversy was of earlier origin. It began in protest against Dr. Duff's book entitled 'India and India's Missions' in which he vigorously attacked the ethics and religion of the Hindus, specially the doctrines of the Vedanta. This called forth editorials in the columns of the *Tattvabodhini* of 1844 (Sak era, 1766), which in turn led to a cannonade from the *Calcutta Review,* the *Christian Herald,* and the *Friend of India.* The views of the then Brahmo Samaj were ably set forth in a booklet entitled "Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated" which was published in the same year. There are good grounds for believing that the book was jointly written by Devendranath and Chandrashekar Dev, one of Raja Rammohun's intimate associates. It was solid and substantial in its matter, and calm and dignified in its tone.[11]

It appears that, in the 'Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated', the position taken was certainly not one of absolute Vedic infallibility. During the five or six years in which the dispute regarding Vedic authority continued to be ventilated in the columns of *Tattvabodhini Patrika,* the doctrinal position does not seem to have been definitely crystallized, and articles betraying an unsettled state of opinion were frequently to be found appearing. Taking a broad view, however, it would be safe to assert that the attitude of the Brahmo Samaj in respect of the Vedas was never one of belief in verbal revelation.

We get it from Rajnarain Bose that the real ground on which the Vedas were looked upon as authoritative was that

[11] Mr. Leonard in his 'A History of the Brahmo Samaj' gives the name of Chandra Sekhar Dev as the author. But Mr. Ajitkumar Chakravarti, Maharshi's biographer, opines that the aptness and abundance of Sanskrit texts as well as the line of argument adopted in the book unmistakably shows Devendranath's hand in it, for none but he could have confronted the crusaders with such a solid column of Upanisadic artillery. The view, sometimes hazarded, that Rajnarain Bose had a hand in its authorship is obviously incorrect as he did not join the Brahmo Samaj till the year after (1845). Besides, in his autobiography there is ample evidence against his authorship.

their contents commended themselves to Reason. Rajnarain's testimony in this respect is of great value. His father Nanda Kishore Bose was one of the favourite disciples of Raja Rammohun Roy. He formally embraced the Brahmo faith in the year 1844. In 1845 the son followed him, and upon his acceptance of the Brahmo faith a cordial friendship sprang up between Devendra Nath and the young initiate. The latter sat at his feet and read the Īśa, Kena, Katha, Mundaka and Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣads, which he translated into English.[12] In course of time he became a valued co-adjutor, specially in the matter of propagating the faith and principles of the then Brahmo Samaj through the medium of English. Not that Devendranath agreed with his views in every essential. There were at times pronounced differences and Devendranath had to draw attention to them in unmistakable language and at times even severely to censor his writings. Of this we shall speak hereafter. It cannot however be gainsaid that to a very large extent Rajnarain became from the year 1845 onwards, by his writings and by his speeches, the mouthpiece of the orthodox section of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj. It is for this reason that his account of the controversy on Vedic authority affords valuable information.

Referring with approval to the 'Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated' (1844) he speaks of a later period 1848-1850, and elucidates the position that the primacy of the Vedas was only accepted in so far as they conformed to the dictates of Reason.[13]

During the three years 1848-50 the question as to whether the Vedas were revealed or not was often the subject-matter for discussion amongst us. True, at that time, we believed in Divine revelation but the reason why we believed in the Vedas

[12] See his *Ātmacarita*, p. 50. In September 1846 he was appointed by the Tattvabodhini Sabha on a pay of Rs. 60/- per month to translate the Upanisads into English. This work of translation was executed with the constant help of Devendranath, the latter had to explain the meaning of the verses while Rajnarain rendered them into English.

[13] Rajnarain Bose's *Ātmacarita*, p. 65.

as divinely revealed is that their contents were in agreement with Reason. The fact that this was our belief will be proved from the following extract from my little book "Defence of Brahmoism and the Brahmo Samaj".

After the death of Rammohun Roy, the catholic character of the Samaj was not destroyed. Even while its leaders admitted the Vedas to be a revelation they did so solely on account of the "reasonableness and cogency of these doctrines" (see 'Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated') as compared with the other Śāstras of the Hindus, and the religious scriptures of other nations. They rejected the idea of a revelation supported by external evidence. "The only ground", they said, "on which the truth of any system of belief can be maintained is that founded on the nature of the doctrines inculcated by it". "If the doctrines of theology and the principles of morality taught in the sacred volumes referred to appear to be consonant to the dictates of sound reason and wisdom—if these tenets and precepts carry the unimpeachable character of truth in them—the man who has received them and continues to place his trust in them will have no reason to fear the vituperative surmises of ungodliness in respect to his religion" ('Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated'). The letter of Babu Devendranath Tagore published in the 'Englishman' in October, 1846, speaks of his religion as one "whose principles are echoed to by the dictates of nature and of human reason and human heart ; and *by the sense of the wisest of all ages and countries*". The Rev. Mr. Mullens, in his 'Essay on Vedantism, Brahmoism and Christianity' says:—"Though the Brāhmos claim the Vedas as a revelation of divine truth they look primarily upon the works of nature as their religious teacher. From nature they learned first and because the Vedas (as they assert) agree with nature, therefore they regard them as inspired". He quotes in support of the above assertion the following passage from the 'Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated': "The knowledge derived from the sources of inspiration deals with eternal truth which requires no other proof than what the whole creation and the mind of man unperverted by fallacious reasonings afford in abundance". It is, therefore, evident that the leaders of the Samaj at this time considered the Vedas to be revealed solely on account of the reasonableness and cogency of these

doctrines. Their error lay in believing that whatever they contained was reasonable and cogent. As soon as they perceived their mistake after a wider study of the Vedas, they shook it off at once. Now, why did they do so, so easily? The reason is that a higher standard of belief had always predominated in their minds as shown by the above extracts from their publications over that of written revelation, that is, the standard of reason, and as conscientious men they could not continue, professing that to be a revelation which was found to contain errors'.[14]

While on this topic it would be fair to the memory of Devendranath to rectify an error which seems still to lurk in certain quarters as regards Devendranath's special part in the controversy. It is sometimes stated that the Brahmo Samaj is indebted to Akshay Kumar Dutt for fighting the battle against the Vedas unaided by Devendranath and perhaps in the teeth of the latter's disapproval. There is no justification whatsoever for such a statement. As already observed there was a period during which the members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha were more or less unsettled in their views regarding Vedic authority. They were all endeavouring in the spirit of truth and sincerity to arrive at a definite formulation of their faith. There can be no doubt that during this period the contribution which the scientific mind of Akshay Kumar Dutt made towards the final solution of the problem was of great assistance to his leader Devendranath. But it cannot be gainsaid that it was Devendranath who led the forces and took all the momentous steps for arriving at the final result.

Apart from the negative aspect of the controversy which has hitherto occupied us, it is the affirmative assertion by

[14] The above extract is from a lecture of a much later date (21st June 1863). But its internal evidence, such as, the reference with approval to the line of reasoning in the 'Vedantic Doctrine Vindicated' of 1844, lends strong support to the view that it must be taken as a faithful representation of the doctrinal position relating to Vedic authority in the forties of the last century.

Devendranath of a higher seat of authority which now interests us. He thus puts it in his own language.[15]

"These Upaniṣads could not meet all our needs ; could not fill our hearts. Then what was to be done now? What hope was there for us? Where should we seek a refuge for Brahmoism? It could not be founded on the Vedas, it could not be founded on the Upaniṣads. Where was its foundation to be laid? I came to see that *the pure heart filled with the light of intuitive knowledge,—this was its basis.* Brahma reigned in the pure heart alone. The pure, unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brahmoism. We could accept those texts only of the Upaniṣads which accorded with that heart. Those sayings that disagreed with the heart we could not accept. These were the relations which were now established between ourselves and the Upaniṣads, the highest of all Śāstras. In the Upaniṣad itself we read that God is revealed through worship to the heart illumined by an intellect free from all doubt.[16] To the soul of the righteous is revealed the wisdom of God. The Rishi of old who by means of contemplation and the grace of wisdom had seen the Perfect Brahma in his own pure heart, records his experience in these words: "The pure in spirit, enlightened by wisdom, sees the holy God by means of worship and meditation". These words accorded with the experience of my own heart, hence I accepted them.

Thus was laid the seed-bed of Brahmo philosophy by Maharṣi Devendranath.

ADVAITAVĀDA (Doctrine of Monism)

Three things the book of Brāhmo Dharma definitely sought to ward off—the doctrines of *Advaitavāda* (Monism), *Avatāravāda* (Incarnation) and *Māyāvāda* (Illusion). How and why the Brahmo doctrine was inconsistent with Monism

[15] See *Supra,* Chap. IX.
[16] *Hrdā manīṣā manasābhiklptah*—See Chap. XXII, p. 161, Autobiography (English Translation).

has already been dealt with above. This is how he roundly condemns it: —

But that I myself am the Supreme Deity—such vaunting is the source of much evil ; one feels ashamed at the very idea. Bound as we are by thousands of worldly evils—steeped as we are in decay and sorrow, sin and evil—what is more strange than that we should consider ourselves eternal, free, and self-existent? Sankaracārya has turned India's head by preaching the doctrine of Monism ; the identity of God and man. Following his teachings, both ascetics and men of the world are repeating this senseless formula, 'I am that Supreme Deity' ".[17]

AVATĀRAVĀDA (DOCTRINE OF INCARNATION)

As regards Avatāravāda, the 'Brahma Dharma' lays down: 'He Himself did not become anything'.

Thus, it was thought, that the doctrine of Incarnation was for ever scotched. So, again, with reference to Māyā-vāda, Devendranath observes with emphasis: —

The 'Brahma Dharma' says: *Sa tapostapyata sa tapas-taptva idam sarvamasrjat yadidam kimca"*. He considered within Himself and considering within himself He created all that is—the universe is the outcome of perfect truth. This universe is relative truth ; its Creator is the Truth of Truth, the Absolute Truth. This universe is not dream-stuff, neither is it a mental illusion but it exists in reality. The Truth which has given it birth is the Absolute Truth, and this is relative truth. Thus the doctrine of Māyāvāda was denied.[18]

Devendranath would brook no compromise with what he regarded as pseudo-philosophic faiths. To the last day of his life he clung to his post and levelled his artillery against them. He would not tolerate the slightest aberration from pure undiluted Theism. From that vantage

[17] Autobiography, Chap. XVIII, p. 199.
[18] Autobiography (English Translation), Chap. XXIV, pp. 175-76.

ground Deism was to him as obnoxious as Pantheism. And, after all, he said, what were Avatārism and Atheism but two distinct off-shoots of Advaitism (Monism)? Take *saguna* Brahma and view it in its multiform manifestations in the history of humanity and you arrive at Avatārism. The Avatār is no other than Divinity in flesh and blood, Divinity manifest in *saguna* form, or, to be more accurate, the *saguna* Brahma mutilated beyond recognition and thought to be bodied forth in human form. On the other hand, emphasize the *nirguna* aspect of Divinity and you gradually find yourself in the vacuity which is another name for Atheism or Agnosticism. Of these two extremes, the Scylla and Charybdis of theistic faith, Devendranath was ever keenly conscious and he left no stone unturned to save his little flock of fellow-believers from the danger of either of them. Writing from Mussoorie about twenty-five years later (1885), he administered a rebuke to a friend and follower who had published an article on 'Divine Principle': —

The Divine Principle that you have set up, with the attributes you indicate appears to me to be a blind force. Your Divine Principle has no self-consciousness, no external consciousness (*bāhya-jñāna*), no will, no initiative, no justice, no love. What shall we do with it? If you elucidate (the principles of) Brāhmo Dharma by writing on 'Divine Providence', it will give me great satisfaction in these the closing years of my life. The Brahma that Brāhmo Dharma believes in, knoweth soul by soul. He is All-Knowing, Omnicient. Determined by His will the universe created by Him is going on in accord with law. He is the Source of all Dharma, the Chastiser of sin, the Saviour, the Mighty Lord, the Supreme Being, the Soul of souls, the Lord of the heart. Such is the God whom the Brahmos worship. To establish this through the Vedas and the Vedanta is the object of the Adi Brahmo Samaj.[19] Our God is not an abstract God, but an intelligent

[19] The Calcutta Brahmo Samaj was named the Ādi (original) Brahmo Samaj in the year 1866, when the younger section seceded from it. See *infra*.

free person, who consequently has a consciousness of himself. He is our friend, our father, our provider, and our object of worship. I would request you to read the twelfth exposition (*vyākhyāna*) of 'Brahma Dharma', entitled *Tamāhuragraṁ Puruṣaṁ Mahāntam*. If you divest Brahma of attributes such as knowledge, will, etc., and call it a mere existence, such existence amounts to an abstract entity. This kind of abstract entity is neither existent nor non-existent. It is a mere empty ideal. By the 'Real' God one can only mean the Brahma Puruṣa possessing attributes like wisdom, will, etc.[20]

The gentle remonstrance administered to his erring disciple did not fail of its purpose. Another letter published by Priyanath Śāstri in those valuable appendices (*pariśiṣta*) to the autobiography, discloses the fact that an article under the caption 'Divine Providence' appeared, as suggested, from the same pen about a month later and called forth the master's unqualified approbation. On the 3rd Asar 1883, Devendranath writes from Mussoorie quoting Victor Cousin: —

"The first notion that we have of God, to wit, the notion of an infinite Being, is itself given to us independently of all experience. It is the consciousness of ourselves as being limited that elevates us directly to the conceptions of Being, who is the principle of our being, and is himself without bounds."—Cousins. Your article on 'Divine Providence' is at once learned in its contents, and elegant in style. Besides it is faultless.[21] I am pleased with it.

Maharshi takes care to point out, along with Vedāntism, other shoals and sand-banks that confront the Brahmo Samaj.

[20] See Autobiography in Bengali, edited by Pandit Priyanath Śāstri (1898); Appendix (Pariśiṣta) IV, pp. 16-17. It is greatly to be regretted that from the new edition of Maharshi's *Ātmacharita* these valuable appendices have been expurgated.

[21] Ibid p. 18. Obviously, it means that doctrinally it is faultless, as distinguished from his previous article headed 'Divine Principle'. In this connection see the foregoing chapters, where although he makes no mention of them, he accepts the standpoint of Viśiṣtādvaitism represented by Mādhwa, Rāmānuja and Nimbārkar as distinguished from that of the absolute Advaitism of Śankarācārya.

The Brahmo faith must be protected from three dangers. The first is Idolatry, the second is Christianity, and the third is Vedāntism. * * * While the idolators ascribe humanity to Brahma, the Vedāntists empty the contents of Divinity. For instance you have shown from the *Panchadaśi*, "when all are removed, nothing remains, that nothing is that (Brahma)". But, the Brahma of Brāhma Dharma manifests the attributes of all the senses and is yet devoid of sense. * * * He has no hands, yet He receives. He has no legs, yet He moves. He has no eyes, yet He sees. He has no ears, yet He hears. He knows all things that can be known, but He cannot be known. Those who know Brahma call him the Supreme Spirit. He is our Friend, Father and Dispenser (of good).

One reason why Christianity was included in the list of obnoxious doctrines is that it is undoubtedly a form of Avatārism for which, in any shape or form, Devendranath had an extreme aversion. So great was his dread of Avatārism that sometimes his utterances on the subject of great men came to be highly tinged by it and made him appear more hostile than he really was. By nature he was not cynical or disrespectful to great characters, but lest the respect and homage paid to them should transcend proper bounds and turn into hero-worship, he became unsparing in his criticism not only of hero-worshippers but of the heroes as well. Indeed, this became one of the causes that determined the schism in the Brahmo Samaj in 1866. His attitude on great men is clearly reflected in the correspondence that passed between him and Bijaykrishna Gosvami a few years later.[22] Gosvami put a question to him in the following terms:

"If people through mistake worship great men as Incarnations how are the latter to blame for it? If the examples of their lives purify the mind, should not such examples be gratefully accepted?"

[22] Although the correspondence is of later date, it sets forth views which Devendranath firmly held earlier in his life.

To this Devendranath's reply was most significant:—

The answer to this question at once raises both sorrow and pain in our minds—sorrow in speaking ill of those who have as great men and incarnations obtained the respect and homage of different denominations ; pain in remaining inactive in the matter of removing such errors and untruths as have stood between God and man. That any one is born as a great man, or is great in a special sense is a belief to which we cannot at all with a candid mind subscribe. Howsoever man may by effort and training advance on the path to progress, he still remains a man, there is no doubt about this. He possesses the same nature, the same impulses, the same soul, the same heart, as other men do. The only difference is that whereas in the others, the innate noble qualities may perhaps lie dormant in the absence of direction and care, in those whom we wish to revere as great those qualities have through favourable circumstance have greatly developed, or have by their brilliance attracted general attention. Who is great (sādhu)? Is this term relative or absolute? If complete freedom from sin be another word for greatness (sādhutā) then, there is no sadhu in this world beyond Brahma, who is pure and untouched by sin. If on the other hand greatness (*sādhutā*) has only a relative significance, then all men in this world are partially good (*sādhu*) and partially not (*a-sādhu*).

I do not consider it necessary to waste words on the question as to whether those who have been accepted by the world as incarnations, and have shared with God the reverence and homage of human hearts, which are the dues of Divinity alone, have striven by words and deeds to establish the fact of their incarnation. The history of the world will bear witness. The lives of Moses, Christ and Mohammad, will furnish proof. We do not call them deceivers of men, yet we cannot help callling them voluntary victims to their own error. Perhaps under the influence of their erroneous belief, that unless they established their own incarnation they would not be able to obtain for the religion which they preached the world's faith and homage, they misused the blind reverence of men. Whatsoever is good in their teaching and in their example, we cordially accept, but we do not believe them in any respect to

be different from other men, or to belong to a special class. To proclaim their names along with the name of God, or to establish the necessity of paying homage to them, along with that of paying homage to God, we do not by any means consider to be consonant with Dharma.[23]

The above passage bears a striking resemblance to Raja Rammohun's observations in Tuhfatul Mwahhiddin against the "centres of the circles of faith".[24] The outlook of the two leaders Rammohun and Devendranath on this subject appears here to be identical. But neither of them uniformly adhered to this viaew.[25]

[23] Life of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore by Ajit Kumar Chakravarti in Bengali (passage translated by the present author).
[24] See Chapter III.
[25] See *supra* Chap. IV and V.; cf. *infra* Chap. XVII.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

During the quarter of a century following the death of Rammohun, the condition of Bengal, and of India, underwent radical change. Rammohun, it may be remembered, found himself called to wage war single-handed against the age-long abuses and corruptions of society. His was a voice in the wilderness. They hated and reviled him, they fought him incessantly for his heterodox views. They looked upon him as a dangerous heretic who should either be disabled or despatched from the arena. His efforts against the practice of *Suttee* raked up a hornet's nest. The orthodoxy poured its vials of anger and animosity on his devoted head. They raised the Dharma Sabha to combat his Brahma Sabha, and the rival organization carried on a continuous fusillade against the ideas and efforts of Rammohun. He found himself almost friendless amongst his own countrymen. Though foreigners from far and near admired and appreciated the extraordinary energy and erudition which Rammohun brought to bear on his campaign against idolatry, insincerity and superstition, it almost seemed at times that the forces of orthodoxy would turn out too powerful for Rammohun's single-handed endeavours. Events, however, presently took a turn which proved that Rammohun's mission was destined to succeed and that the powers of evil were bound to be discomfited, though Rammohun might not live to see that day. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Never was this truth more vividly demonstrated than in the few decades that followed Rammohun, which exhibited a violent reaction from orthodoxy.

New Outlook on Education

One of the important factors that determined subsequent history was the new educational policy of the Government of India. They had at first adopted the policy of

promoting and encouraging Oriental learning. The Hindu College was started with the help and co-operation of David Hare, the great educationist, Dewan Ram Kamal Sen, Raja Rammohun Roy, Sir Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Sudder Dewany Adalat, Baidyanath Mukherjee and other notabilities. It began its work on January, 20, 1817, definitely committed to the above policy. The fact that orthodox opinion was predominant in the Hindu College at its commencement is shown by an interesting incident which throws a side-light on Rammohun's magnanimity. When it came to be known that Rammohun was one of the principal projectors of the College, and his name was mentioned as a member of the managing committee, the other Hindu promoters objected to his association with it on the ground of his heterodox proclivities. Rammohun, who cared more for the advancement of the project than for his own participation in it, at once gladly offered to stand out and did actually withdraw so that harmony amongst the workers of the Institution might be secured.

Following the same principle as the Hindu College a few other schools and colleges were started at the time for the revival of classical learning. But a different policy soon came to be adopted by the Government. It may be remembered that Rammohun took a prominent part in the controversy that arose on the question as to whether education should be imparted on Eastern or Western lines.[1] A sturdy advocate of Oriental learning as he was, he vigorously pressed the claims of Western learning as being essential to make up for the drawbacks and deficiencies of the existing system of education in India. In a memorable note addressed to Lord Amherst, he pressed the claims of educating Indians in Western sciences through the medium of English, in the course of which he observed: —

If it had been intended to keep the British nation from real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have

[1] See *supra* Chap. II.

been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of British Legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will subsequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning, educated in Europe and providing a College, furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.

The question that was engaging the immediate attention of the authorities was whether the annual grant of Rupees one lac sanctioned in 1813 for education, which had up to that time been employed for the encouragement of Oriental learning, should thenceforth be utilised for instruction in Western learning. Macaulay took the view that there could be no question about the superior claims of English education, and as usual with him, he proceeded to throw his proposition into superlatives!

I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their values. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

Later generations of foreign and Indian scholars, with a more accurate knowledge of facts, would feel amused at this ignorant estimate of Oriental literature. However, we are more concerned here with the result than with the

reasons that were given in justification. Finally, Macaulay gave his opinion on the issue involved, thus: —

To sum up what I have said, I think it is clear that we are not fettered by any pledge, expressed or implied ; that we are free to employ our funds as we choose ; that we ought to employ them in teaching what is best to know ; that to know English is better than to know Sanskrit or Arabic ; that the natives are desirous to be taught Sanskrit or Arabic ; and neither as the language of law, nor as the language of religion, have the Sanskrit or Arabic any peculiar claim to our encouragement ; that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.

The New Generation

Thus with the weight of Macaulay's support Lord William Bentinck decided the important issue in favour of the Western system of education.

But it was not only the system of teaching promulgated, but also the personality of some of the teachers that had a far-reaching influence on the new generation. The names of Henry Louis, Vivian Derozio and Captain D. L. Richardson figure prominently in the educational history of the times. Derozio was a man of striking personality, deep erudition, cosmopolitan ideas and great charm of manners. The pupils that came under his influence, direct or indirect, such as Krishnamohon Banerjee, Rashik Krishna Mullick, Ram Gopal Ghose, Shib Chandra Deb, Ramtanu Lahari, Pearychand Mitra, Radhanath Sikdar, Dakhinaranjan Mukherjee, Rajnarain Bose and others, although thrown into different spheres of life, all bore the impress in later life of their teacher's honesty, integrity and fearlessness. Captain Richardson was a consummate Shakesperian scholar,[2] and his intimate contact with his pupils had an

[2] "I have never known any one read and interpret Shakespeare like Capt. D. L. Richardson. Macaulay thus remarked on his recitation from Shakespeare : 'I can forget everything of India but your reading of Shakespeare"—Rajnarain Bose's *Atmacharita* (Autobiography) p. 22

enduring effect on their outlook and attitude on men and affairs. Both these teachers were of an eminently practical and positivist turn of mind, and their pupils caught that contagion. They were determined to carry out their ideas and beliefs to the letter. To be true to themselves they vigorously opposed the nameless customs and practices of orthodox society. They felt bound to repudiate them, and they did so with more than ordinary gusto. In matters of eating and drinking as much as in other essentials and non-essentials they took delight in behaving like infidels. If the flesh of the bovine species was interdicted by Hindu orthodoxy, they began to indulge not only in eating it, but in making a display of it to outrage orthodoxy. So with drink. They were not content with taking liquor, but they seemed to think that they must make a parade of it. The following passage from Mr. George Smith's life of Dr. Alexander Duff vividly potrays the doings of these young renegades:

If there be anything on which a genuine Hindu is taught from his earliest infancy to look with absolute abhorrence, it is the flesh of the bovine species. If there be anything which, of itself singly, must at once degrade a man from his caste, it is the known participation of that kind of food. Authentic instances are recorded, wherein a Brahmin, violently seized by a Moslem, has had such meat forced into his mouth, and though deprived of voluntary agency as much as the veriest automaton, the contamination of the touch was held so incapable of ablution that the hapless, helpless unwilling victim of intolerence, has been actually sunk along with his posterity for ever into the wretched condition of outcast. Well, in order to furnish the most emphatic proof to each other of their mastery over prejudice, and of their contempt of the ordinances of Hinduism, these friends of liberty had some pieces of roasted meat, believed to be beef, brought from the bazar into the private chamber of the *Inquirer* (the paper edited by K. M. Banerjea). Having freely gratified their curiosity and taste with the unlawful and unhallowed food, some portion still remained, which was thrown in heedless and reckless levity into

the compound or inner court of the adjoining house, occupied by a holy Brahmin amid shouts of 'There is beef! There is beef!' The sacerdotal master of the dwelling, aroused by the ominous sound, and exasperated at the unpardonable outrage which, he soon found, had been committed upon his feelings and his faith, instantly rushed with his domestics to the quarter whence it proceeded, and under the influence of rage and horror, taking the law into his own hands, he violently assaulted the *Inquirer* and his friend.

On all sides there were signs of a reaction. The younger generation would have nothing to do with the blind bigotry and unreasoning restrictions which the orthodox society sought to impose upon them. Rammohun had written volumes setting forth arguments against the prevailing practices. The generation that followed had no patience for argument. Their opposition manifested itself in violent action. They not only poured ridicule and abuse upon the sanctimonious religiosity of their elders, but they drove a chariot and four through all social rules and ordinances. If Derozio and Richardson had taught anything it was the lesson of truth, frankness, fearlessness in everyday affairs of life. Their disciples went about bearing witness to their training in whatever sphere they were called upon to work. Many were the outrages which by their action they intentionally perpetrated on the feelings of their orthodox elders. Here is a telling illustration: Rashik Krishna Mullick, coming of a well-known and highly respectable *tili*[3] family of Calcutta, was cited as a witness to give evidence before the Supreme Court. According to the practice then prevailing, the oath used to be administered with ceremony. The Hindu had to swear to his veracity holding a copper vessel with his hands with *tulsi* leaves and Ganges water in it—two things that the Hindu holds most sacred. Rashik Krishna on being called upon to do so flatly refused, declaring that he was not a Hindu

[3] The hereditary occupation of the Tili caste is that of manufacturers and purveyors of oil.

and could not conscientiously take the oath in that form. Needless to say, this caused utter consternation. A most interesting and valuable testimony to the ideas and practices that prevailed among young men of his times comes from Rajnarain Bose who in his Autobiography records his experiences with more than ordinary frankness thus: —

It was my intention to prosecute my studies in the Hindu College for two or three more years. But owing to a serious illness I was obliged to discontinue in 1844. The cause of that serious illness was excessive drinking. The students of the Hindu College in those days used to regard drinking as a mark of civilization—they saw nothing wrong in it.[4] * * * They would never drink unless they regarded it as indicating refinement. Our lodgings were then in Pataldanga. Along with * * * others, I used to drink in College Square. There were a few shops at the place where the Senate House now stands, which used to sell *Shik Kābāb*.[5] Not having the patience to go out of the square by the gate I used to scale the railings and bring *Kābāb* from the shop for eating. My associates and I used to think that eating meat and drinking neat brandy were acts that marked the climax of civilization and social reform.[6] * * * In the matter of drink there was a difference between the disciples of Rammohun Roy and the pupils of Hindu College. Rammohun Roy's followers were very moderate in their drinking habits, but the majority of the latter were not so. Once upon a time one of Rammohun's disciples indulged in excessive drinking with the result that Rammohun did not look at his face for six months.[7] * * * The day we embraced Brāhma Dharma was solemnised by the supply of biscuits and sherry. This was done for the purpose of showing that we did not believe in caste distinctions.[8] But everybody did not do the same to solemnize the acceptance of the Brahmo faith. At this time I used to drink very mode-

[4] Rajnarain Bose's *Atmacharit*, p. 43.
[5] A Mahomedan meat-dish, usually prepared with beef in the meat-shops.
[6] Rajnarain Bose's *Atmacharit*, p. 42.
[7] *Ibid* p. 42.
[8] *Ibid* p. 46.

rately. I had come to my senses after my illness. How and when I gave up drink absolutely will be described later.[9]

Relating an anecdote Rajnarain Bose puts before us a picture of the habits of eating and drinking amongst most people in those days. His father Nanda Kumar Bose, a close disciple of Rammohun Roy's, having come to know that the son had become addicted to excessive drinking, called him and asked if the report he had heard was true. Promptly came the answer that it was. Thereupon he took Rajnarain into his room and closed the door. He then drew from out of his drawer a bottle of sherry and a wine glass; he also opened a tin box containing *polao, kalia* and *kofta.*[10] He placed all this before his son and said 'Come and have these good things with me every evening. But you shall not have more than two glasses of sherry. The day I come to know that you drink wine elsewhere I shall stop it."[11]

Illustrations could be multiplied to prove, if proof were needed, that frankness and fearlessness were the badges of the new generation, whatever their faults might be; and that they had the urge in them for emancipation from all that was calculated to restrain their natural growth. Some of these men made their mark in literary pursuits, some in education, some in politics, and the rest in business as men of affairs. But they all have left their impress on the history of the times as free lances,—earnest and honest in their own respective lines.

LITERARY ILLUMINATION

The same urge for reform made itself manifest in the literature of Bengal. Raja Rammohun is justly regarded as the father of prose literature in Bengali. His *Hindudiger pauttalik dharmapranāli* (Systems of Idolations Religion

[9] Rajnarain Bose's *Ātmacharit,* p. 46.
[10] Different courses of meat prepared by Mohammadans.
[11] *Ātmacharita,* pp. 43-44.

among the Hindus) is not extant, though mention is made of it in the short autobiographical sketch which he addressed to a friend during his stay in England. Afterwards he wrote a large quantity of Bengali prose on various subjects, social, political and religious. All this was pioneer work in Bengali prose literature which was for the first time employed for serious dissertations on social and religious matters.

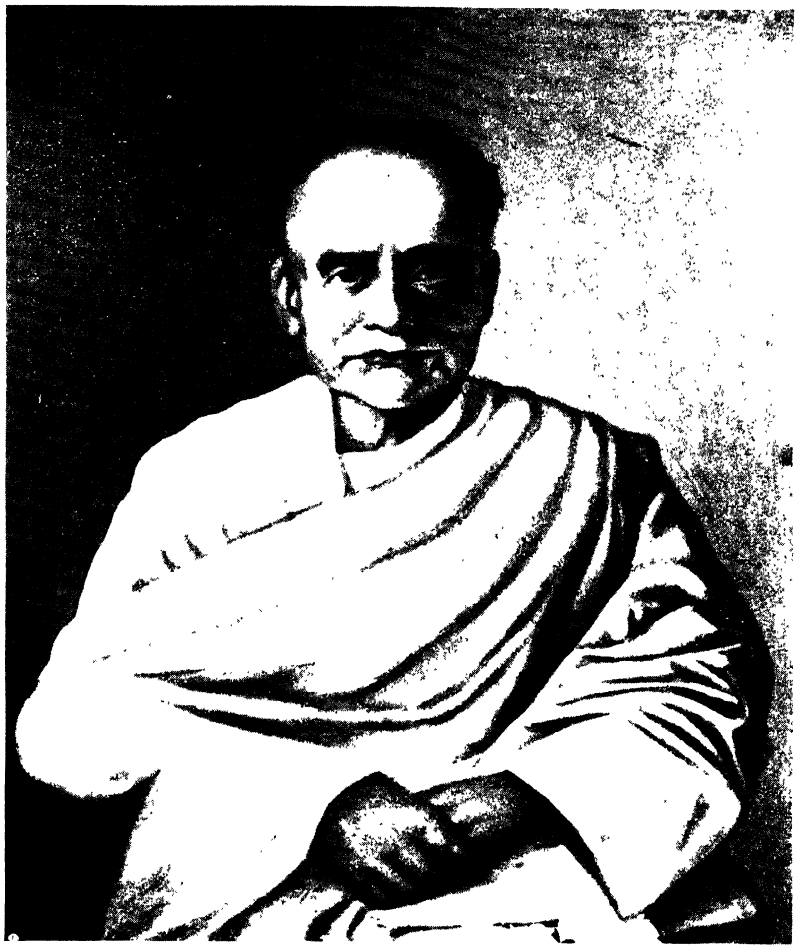
Akshay Kumar and Vidyasagar

It was left to Akshay Kumar Dutt and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, true successors of Rammohun in the literary field, to perfect the rough-hewn Bengali prose of Rammohun into a powerful vehicle of expression. Both of them were associated with the *Tattvabodhini Patrika,* and both of them contributed to its popularity. It is said that Ram Gopal Ghosh,[12] one of the foremost men of the time who was rather partial to English language and literature, and had a poor opinion of the possibilities of Bengali, on reading one of Akshay Kumar's articles in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* turned to his friend the distinguished Ramtanu Lahiri and observed: "Have you ever seen profound and thoughtful composition in the Bengali language? It is here."[13]

Akshay Kumar and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar were both born in 1820. Akshay Kumar lived up to 1886, but the last thirty years of his life was spent in retirement as an invalid. Nevertheless he completed his monumental work entitled *Bhāratvarṣiya Upāsak Sampradāya.* (Denominations of worshippers in India) containing an elaborate account of Hindu religious sects and denominations. From his retirement he had the satisfaction in his last days to see a new generation grow up under the wholesome influence of his life-long literary labours. The following interesting

[12] For an account of Ram Gopal Ghosh's life and work, see Buckland's 'Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors.'

[13] *The Literature of Bengal* by R. C. Dutt, p. 164, Thacker Spink & Co., 1895.



PANDIT ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

review of the life work of the two great Bengali prose writers gives an accurate estimate of their contributions.

The great merit of Akshay Kumar's style is its earnestness, its surpassing vigour and force. * * * The style is the man, and Akshay Kumar's style reflects the true patriot and the earnest, enthusiastic reformer. Vidyasagar's style appears to us to be more finished and refined, Akshay Kumar's is more forcible and earnest. In Vidyasagar's style we admire the placid stillness and soft beauty of a quiet lake, reflecting on its bosom the gorgeous tints of the sky and the surrounding objects. In Akshay Kumar's style we admire the vehemence and force of the mountain torrent in its wild and rugged beauty. Vidyasagar is the more accomplished master of style. Akshay Kumar is the more forcible preacher. Modern Bengali prose as we understand it, has been shaped by these twin workers whose memory will be long preserved in Bengal.[14]

The combination of these two with Devendranath Tagore, Rajendra Lal Mitra and Rajnarain Bose on the editorial committee of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* made it a literary focus of more than usual intensity. No wonder that it is said that "people all over Bengal awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness, and the silent and sickly, but indefatigable worker at his desk swayed for a number of years, the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of the people of Bengal".[15]

High as Vidyasagar's place is in the literary world, he has a higher place in the hearts of men as a reformer and philanthropist. The woes of Hindu widows roused his tenderest sympathies and in 1855 he brought out his work on *Vidhavā Vivāha* (Remarriage of Hindu widows). In that work, with scholarly thoroughness and with the aid of quotations from Hindu scriptures he established that the Śāstras

[14] *The Literature of Bengal*, pp. 167-169. Mr. R. C. Dutt rightly observes "A complete edition of Akshay Kumar's literary works has yet to be published and we look to the Brahma Samaj for the performance of this patriotic task."

[15] *Ibid*, p. 164. The 'worker at his desk' is no other than the editor Akshay Kumar Dutt.

did not encourage or enjoin perpetual widowhood. It created a commotion and brought down upon him the scorn and indignation of the Hindu community. The controversy that ensued brought forth tracts and pamphlets in abundance disputing Vidyasagar's propositions. Nothing daunted, Vidyasagar brought out his second work on the subject, in which he met his opponents' arguments with such consummate skill and learning as to silence all opposition. He then agitated for the legalisation of widow remarriage and for the removal of all disabilities of the issue of such marriage. He accomplished his object and the Act was passed in 1856.

Vidyasagar's efforts did not stop at mere legislation. He was always prepared to extend his active help and support for facilitating the remarriage Hindu widows. The first of such marriages was with Srish Chandra Vidyaratna, assistant Secretary to the Hindu College (later, deputy Magistrate). It was solemnised with Vidyasagar's active help and encouragement. So was the second with Madhusudan Ghose of Panihati. The third and fourth were with Durganarain Bose and Madan Mohon Bose, cousin and brother respectively of Rajnarain Bose, who writes in his autobiography thus: —

> The day the first widow marriage (with Srish Chandra Vidyaratna) took place, the people of Calcutta were taken aback, and seemed to think that an epoch-making event was happening before their eyes. Most of the English-educated enlightened men of Calcuttta headed by Ram Gopal Ghose walked with the bridegroom's palanquin.[16]

Speaking of Devendranath Tagore's attitude regarding widow remarriage, he records the following interesting incident: —

> At that time Maharsh Devendranath Tagore had gone up-country. I wrote to him giving the news of the widow

[16] Rajnarain Bose's *Atmacharita*, pp. 99-100.

marriages (in my family) he wrote to me saying 'the poison that will arise out of this widow marriage will make your tender mind restless. But Heaven helps those whose object is righteous'. This last phrase has now become a common maxim against the Brāhmas, but it was first used by the *Pradhānāchārya* on that occasion.[17]

A few years after, Vidyasagar gave his only son in marriage with a widow. The indomitable energy and ardour with which Vidyasagar threw himself into this noble cause, and the generosity with which he opened his purse strings for the relief of suffering humanity has made his name a household word in Bengal, nay in India.

He next directed his energies against polygamy, in particular against the most objectionable form of it, prevailing amongst the *kulin* classes of Bengal. Here too he followed the same principle, namely, to expose the custom by showing that it had no sanction whatever in the Hindu scriptures. His works on the subject gave another shock to orthodox Hindu society. Another controversy ensued, which Vidyasagar again silenced by means of his unrivalled scholarship and polemical skill.

Vidyasagar's activities for social reform were only equalled by his pioneer work in the matter of education. Before him there were hardly any schools or Colleges started and maintained by private endeavour. Whatever there was, was due to Government; and that too was very little indeed as compared to the real requirements. Vidyasagar started school after school in different districts and towns of Bengal and in different quarters of the metropolis of Calcutta. Text books suitable for Bengali boys, in Bengali as well as in English, were published by him in quick succession with the result that within a few years educational facilities were doubled or trebled. It is impossible to estimate the number of poor students who were enabled through Vidyasagar's munificence to meet their education expenses.

[17] Rajnarain Bose's *Ātmacharita*, p. 101.

The Bengali Drama

The middle of the nineteenth century was a momentous period in history, which saw in Bengal an all-round upheaval. We have already dealt with the social, educational and moral aspects of it. In the realm of literature, we have found, Bengali prose attained a purity and power it had never possessed before. In drama too, Bengal made a new departure. The old indigenous methods known as *jātrā, pāchāli, tarjā, kavi, half-ākrāi,* etc., were left behind; and histrionics on modern lines of scenic representation and stage management came to be patronised in larger measure. At first the demand for drama was catered for by translations from Sanskrit works, such as *Vikramavarshi, Uttara-Rama-Charita, Sakuntala* and the like. But in the usual course of nature, wherever there is a true-felt demand, it is bound to be met by a supply. Even so Bengali drama appeared in 1854 for supplying a real need. The first original Bengali drama came from the pen of Pandit Ramnarain Tarkaratna. Be it said to his credit that this the first original drama composed in Bengali was directed against a social abuse,—the pernicious custom of polygamy which went by the name of Kulinism. The *Kulina-Kula-Sarvasva,* for that was the name of the piece, made a frontal attack on that hateful custom and covered it with ridicule. It was put up on the stage at the Oriental Seminary, a reputed educational institution of the day. This led to a further development,—Pandit Ramnarain was specially commissioned to write a second drama, to be put on the stage in the garden villa of the Rajas of Paikpara. The second drama produced was *Ratnāvali.*

At this point we must break off from the main story with a view to record an interesting incident. By a significant conspiracy of events the development of the Bengali drama came to be associated with the destinies of the greatest of modern epic poets that India has produced. Michael Madhusudan Dutt, one of the distinguished *alumni*

of the Hindu College and a brilliant linguist and literateur, had up to the time above indicated been courting the muses in the English tongue with no appreciable success. English was in those days the fashion with the intellectual aristocracy. If they did not despise the Bengali language, they at any rate thought that it had no power or potentiality. They were enamoured of Milton and Shakespeare, Homer, Virgil and Dante. Literary aspirants preferred to make their début in the English language. It hardly ever entered their minds that it was neither natural nor probable for an Indian to write verses in a foreign tongue with any approach to perfection. Madhusudan was one of these. He had been in Madras for some years teaching in a school and writing poetry in English, trying thereby with difficulty to make two ends meet. At the date in question he had returned from Madras to Calcutta where he was employed in the post of Interpreter in the Police Court. The organisers of *Ratnāvali* thought that as distinguished European gentlemen were expected to be present at the performance in Paikpara, it would be of help to them, if an English rendering of it were placed in their hands. Their choice fell upon Madhusudan for rendering *Ratnāvali* into English which he did with great credit and distinction.

It is not, however, the reputation that he gained by the translation that is of any consequence. What is of far greater moment is that, in accomplishing his task, the idea for the first time flashed through his mind that he should try his hand at poetry in his mother tongue. The result was *Sarmisthā* (1858). This beautiful play in Bengali seemed at the time to offend the orthodox ranks of Bengali poets. But poetry in Bengal was yet in its infancy. The *Sarmisthā* marked the beginning of a new era over which Madhusudan was destined to be the presiding genius.

To continue the story of the stage, other dramas followed in quick succession from Ram Narayan, Madhusudan, Dino Bandhu Mitra and others. But the *Nīladarpanā* (1860) must be regarded as the high water level of Bengali

drama in the last century. Its main theme turned on the oppression of indigo planters and, apart from its great literary excellence, it made a profound impression upon the country by reason of the human element uppermost in it throughout. Its author Dino Bandhu Mitra, like Madhusudan, was an ex-pupil of the Hindu College and was almost a contemporary of the great poet. Having regard to the remarkable development of poetry and drama in India since the last century, it is but meet that we remember the pregnant years of the decade 1854-1864, which brought about their rebirth.

When Madhusudan made his début, Ishwar Chandra Gupta's influence, such as it was, was still in the ascendant. Strangely enough, the very year which saw the appearance of *Sarmisthā* (1858) Ishwar Chandra passed away, as much as to indicate that the appearance of Madhusudan on the literary firmament spelt the death of the old-time poetry, which more often than not delighted in the mere jingle of rhymes. Madhusudan's blank verse was a bold departure. The flights of his genius in the lofty heights of epic poetry were bolder still. The grandeur of the stately periods in his master-piece *Meghnād-vadha*[18] remind the reader at every step that the fetters of convention had been broken, and that the message of the times was unmistakably—Freedom.

[18] His intimate friend Rajnarain Bose records in his *Ātmacharita* how conscious the poet was of his great mission : "The day I saw him at Calcutta I found him correcting the proof sheets of *Meghnad-vadha*. Looking over the sheets he observed 'My dear Raj, this will surely make me immortal', I answered, 'There can be no doubt about it'."—*Ātmacharita*, p. 108.

CHAPTER XII

DEVENDRANATH AND SOCIAL REFORMS

Freedom was in the air—freedom of thought and action, freedom in all spheres of life. The forces of freedom were specially in operation in the Brahmo Samaj. Devendranath himself, an ex-pupil of the Hindu College, did not escape the spirit of revolt from conventions. The claims of truth were with him primary and imperative, and he would respond to them at any cost, where essential. At the same time his temperament, his spiritual leanings made him cautious and conservative to a degree. He would revolve a thing over and over again in his mind before he took action, specially when it involved a departure from established practice. In order rightly to understand Devendranath's attitude and action in respect of important social problems one has to bear in mind the clash between these two conflicting factors in his mind—his love of truth and his cautious conservatism. It is this which affords the clue to his successes and failures.

There was a time when it was generally believed that Devendranath's views in the matter of caste, the sacred thread, inter-marriage, widow remarriage and various social reforms were hostile to progress through out. This is contrary to fact. Pandit Priyanath Sastri has rendered a great service by publishing a collection of Maharshi's letters, *Patrāvali,* which removes the misapprehension. The letters cast a great deal of light upon many matters which were formerly obscure. Among other things, they show definitely that Devendranath had long been giving his serious attention to social problems and considering how the Brahmo Samaj should solve them. In a letter, dated January 10, 1854 (Pous 27, 1775 Sak) he says:

On the 18th Pous I invited a few of the prominent Brahmas and took them to our Phalta garden-house. About sixty

Brahmas gathered together * * * *. A proposal was made there to the effect that Brahmas should form themselves into a band, the members of which would give and take daughters in marriage from amongst themselves. In that case no Brahma would be forced into a position so as to have to do anything against the principles of Brahma Dharma. Eight Brahmas thereupon came forward and declared their willingness to reciprocate in the manner proposed. Endeavours are now being made to carry out the proposal. No doubt if it is achieved the religion will take firm root.[1]

On January 20, 1854 (Magh 8, 1775 Sak) he addresses another letter to Rajnarain Bose, in which he expresses his opinion on the desirability of having a reformed code of ceremonials such as marriage, funeral and the like. But he apprehends that if there be a revised code, the only people who would care to be married under that code were the sons and daughters of existing Brahmas. Older people and those who were not already Brahmas would not accept the code, nor would they feel secure about the validity of such marriages:

Those who do not consent to marry into a different caste would not agree to have their marriage solemnised according to new or revised rites. If there is to be a change it would not do to change the rites only—caste distinctions must be done away with. * * * * In my opinion, investiture of a Brahma with the sacred thread is not in consonance with his religion. Hence it must be abandoned. If the Brahmas have to give up the sacred thread, then where remains the difference between a Brahmana and a Sudra which can raise the question of caste at the time of marriage. * * * Perhaps the time has come when no one can prevent this change.[2]

How Rajnarain Bose met the points raised in the above letter by Devendranath, it is not possible to say; but an indication of it is found in the somewhat different tone of

[1] *Patrāvali*, pp. 47-48.
[2] *Patrāvali*, p. 49.

RAJNARAIN BOSE

Devendranath's next letter, dated January 27, 1854 (Magh 15, 1775 Sak): —

You are a man of great experience, what you have written about caste distinctions is quite right. The time has not yet come for breaking down caste. But it seems quite clear that in the course of time caste distinctions will not remain ; many circumstances converge to that end. When I wrote that the time had arrived when no one could prevent the change, I did not mean that change should be effected in a day. What I meant was that no one could stop the course of the change that had already commenced. What you have written about investing a Brahma initiate with the thread, is rather a novel idea. It is very interesting. While we are eager to see that the thread is renounced before initiation into Brahmoism, you wish to introduce the rule whereby the thread is to be given at initiation. However, the time has not yet come for breaking down caste. Akshay Babu is of the same opinion. He says that one should not cut oneself off from one's one people and give pain to one's father, mother, wife and children. * * * Our primary object is not the abolition of caste distinctions, but to see that the worship of the God of Truth and Love may spread.[3]

On the most important question of ministration in the Brahma Mandir, long before the storm burst in 1865 Devendranath was evidently cogitating hard. A letter, dated August 20, 1860 (Bhadra 5, 1782 Sak) makes it quite clear that he had come to the definite decision of dispensing with the rule that the ministers must necessarily be Brahmins: —

I have tried and found that the work of ministration can by no means be well done by Brahmin Pandits. * * * Brahmin Pandits have now become very greedy. * * * In the Calcutta Brahma Samaj I had engaged Brahmin Pandits as ministers, and I have been greatly disappointed owing to their utter indifference to religion. At present, I have appointed three persons to conduct the service in the Mandir by turns. I used occasionally to stand and speak, but at the request of friends.[4]

[3] *Patrāvali*, pp. 50-51.
[4] This refers particularly to Keshub Chunder Sen.

I have had to give up that practice and to take my seat on the pulpit. At the beginning I used to feel awkward, but now I am getting accustomed. At present there are three that sit on the Vedi—Vedantavagish,[5] myself, and another Brahma. * * * What profits it to listen to a religious discourse from one who has no regard for religion, one who talks of religion but is not prepared to carry it out in action. What can one say of a rule which gives him the principal seat in the Samaj? * * * We must knock the idea on the head that one cannot be a minister unless one is a Brahmin. Is a hypocrite of a Brahmin to be preferred to a true Brahma?[6]

Later on in 1861, Devendranath married his second daughter Sukumari Devi according to reformed (Brahmo) rites. These were really the Hindu rites divested of idolatrous elements. The fact that he had lived to carry out his ideas, and that he had been able to solemnize the first Brahmo marriage in his own family filled him with grateful satisfaction. Writing to Rajnarain Bose on September 9, 1861 (Bhadro 25, 1783), he says:

In my own family, there now remains no savour of idolatry. This has led my relations and kinsmen to desert me. Even Ganendra was not present at the wedding. They are saying all sorts of things.[7]

The next letter to Rajnarain, dated September 15, 1861 (Bhadro 31, 1783 Sak), is still more illuminating. Apparently there was some apprehension in his mind that Rajnarain might yield to idolatrous ceremonies being introduced into his daughter's marriage, which was expected to take place soon. Devendranath, therefore, felt called upon to make a moving appeal to his friend and disciple enjoining upon him never to encourage them:—

Those who have accepted the vow of the Brahma faith, how difficult it is for them to live up to it! Your father could never

[5] Ananda Chandra Vedantavagish, one of the three who had been sent to Benares and who came back versed in the Vedas.
[6] *Patrāvali*, pp. 78-79.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 33.

have thought that by embracing the Brahma faith your path would become as difficult as the sharpened blades of a razor. If you begin to carry out the rites of Brahma *Dharma*, and firmly to adhere to your vow, your mother shall be enraged, your brothers shall desert you, and your wife shall, even in your life-time become helpless.[8] But when I think of the fire of Brahma in your heart, I cannot understand how at the wedding of Svarnalata,[9] dear to you as your very life, you will be able with a pure heart to introduce a small unworthy created object, in the place of the Supreme Brahma, the Creator of all. This has become a matter of great anguish to me. * * * You must be aware of all this, and it is needless for me to tell you. Still I must endeavour to help you keep your vow unbroken. That is why I am writing to you. Do not take me for an unsympathetic opponent. One has to be firm in contending with this hard world. What can be more absurd than to think that by giving away the daughter in marriage in the presence of the true God, the marriage will not be valid, but that it will be validated by the worship of a piece of stone, which may be the abode of worms! There is no doubt that the help of legislation will have to be sought, for giving currency to the Brahma rite. But even if we fail to obtain it, what does it matter?[10]

In the rest of the letter he holds up before Rajnarain the inconsistency and unworthiness of making certain declarations during worship, and failing to act up to them in real life.

It is not unoften that one comes across the observation that the difficulty that arose between Devendranath and the older section of the Calcutta Brahma Samaj, on the one hand, and Keshub Chunder and the younger section, on the other, a few years later, was due to the fact, that the former would keep the plane of faith and worship separate from the

[8] Contrast this with the sentiments expressed in an earlier letter dated January 27, 1854—*supra*, p. 211.

[9] Eldest daughter of Rajnarain Bose married to Dr. K. D. Ghose. They were the parents of the well-known patriot, Aurobindo Ghose.

[10] *Patrāvali*, pp. 34-35.

plane of domestic and social duty, and the latter viewed them as inseparable and governed by the same rule of life. This is truer of the older members of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, other than Devendranath. So far as he himself was concerned, the letters establish that, with Keshub as his co-adjutor, he had, at one time at any rate, passed the stage of vacillation and had arrived at the definite conclusion that work and worship must be on the same plane, and could not be allowed to belie each other. Such a conflict, he was convinced, would spell the ruin of individual and social life. As years passed, this conviction became stronger in his mind. The accession of strength received from Keshub Chunder's entry into the Brahmo Samaj made Devendranath firmer and firmer, until strange and untoward developments took place which made Devendranath retrace his steps. Here is a letter that gives us an inkling into Devendranath's mind, even as late as 1863. Writing again to Rajnarain on January 26, 1863 (Magh 13, 1784 Sak) he says:

In your daughter's marriage, you should not go against the Brahma faith. The Brahma is he who renounces the worship of the finite God, and worships the Infinite God. He alone is a true Brahma who, in all domestic ceremonies, clings to his faith, and worships the Infinite and under no circumstances bends his head to worship a created object in His place. * * 'Sarman' 'Basu', 'Mitra' etc., the family surnames that have come down through generations, it is not the object of the Brahma Samaj to alter. * * * *The traditional names may continue, but it does not follow that distinctions of caste can remain. There are no caste distinctions amongst the Brahmas,—giving and taking in marriage between Brahmanas and Sudras is allowable.* By this is not meant that if marriage takes place in the same caste, it shall not be Brahma marriage. If it is your intention to marry your daughter into a different caste, every Brahma will rejoice at the proposal ; and there are parties who will be prepared to marry your daughter.[11]

[11] *Patrāvali,* pp. 37-38.

On the subject of widow remarriage reference has already been made[12] to Devendranath's strong views in favour of it. These letters and others will repay perusal in their entirety. On all questions of important social reform, they convey an idea of his clearly formulated opinions, although those opinions were not publicly expressed at the time in his writings or utterances. How, despite these opinions, he could not see eye to eye with the younger members, and preferred to support the elders in their rigid conservatism, is an interesting study.

Strong as were the claims of social reform, the call to spiritual culture and communion was more imperative with Devendranath. He gradually found the atmosphere in the Samaj uncongenial to him. Akshay Kumar Dutt and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, two of the moving spirits of the Tattvabodhini Sabha were of a definitely positivist turn of mind. They were more concerned with science, culture and general improvement in moral standards. With Upanishadic piety they had very little to do. Ethical exaltation they understood and appreciated, spiritual exhaltation was beyond their experience. In course of time the incompatibility of outlook and experience became more and more accentuated, and Devendranath appears to have found it difficult to get on with them. On March 8, 1854 (Falgun 26 1775), he writes in terms of appreciation of a lecture delivered by Rajnarain Bose at Midnapore, which he wanted to be published in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika,* but which he regretted had not found a place in its columns. Incidentally, he observes that it might be owing to the 'atheists' on the Editorial Committee (*Grantha Sabha*) that it had not been published:

> A few atheists have formed the Editorial Committee. Not until these are turned out will there be any facility for the spread of the Brahma Dharma.[13]

[12] See *ante,* Chap. IV, p. 16.

[13] *Patrāvali,* p. 11. Cf. Parisista, p. 20 (Appendix to Devendranath's Autobiography).

Affairs began to take a more serious turn when Akshay Kumar Dutt and his friends started a society called Atmiya Sabha (Friends' Society) in which they proceeded to decide upon the attributes of God by votes! Here is Devendranath's own description of it:

Then, again Akshay Kumar Dutt started a Friends' Society, in which the nature of God was decided upon by show of hands. For instance, somebody said, 'Is God the personification of bliss or not?' Those who believed in his blissfulness, held up their hands. Thus the truth or otherwise of God's attributes was decided by a majority of votes! Amongst many of those who surrounded me, who were as my very limbs, I could no longer see any signs of religious feeling or piety ; each only pitted his own intellect and power against the others. Nowhere did I obtain a sympathetic response. My antipathy and indifference to the world grew apace. This profited me greatly in one respect, in as much as I became eager to descend into the deeper recesses of my soul in search of the Supreme Soul. I began to enquire into first principles * * * Where I was, why I came here, where I shall go again ; all this has not been revealed to me. I have not yet attained as much knowledge of God, as is possible here. No longer will I join the frivolous throng, or waste my time in idle talk. I shall concentrate my mind, and practise severe austerities in retirement for His sake. I shall leave my home, never to return.[14]

And so he went to the Himalayas where he spent his time in deep contemplation, study and communion, in complete surrender to the will and purpose of God. This was in 1856. And he did not return to Calcutta till shortly after the Sepoy Mutiny in 1858

His return was not of his own seeking. He was made to return. In this, as in many other important events of his life, the Maharshi was a conscious tool in the hands of God. Even if he tried to struggle against the commandment, he could not succeed. He had no option but to follow implicitly the Guide within him. The great Call had to be

[14] *Autobiography* (English translations), Chap. XXIX, pp. 203-204.

AKSHOY KUMAR DUTT

obeyed, and he did obey. Let him describe what happened in his own words:

One day in the month of September, I went down the *khud,* and, standing on the bridge of a river, was filled with wonder to see the indomitable strength and playful whirls of its current. Ah! how pure and white is the river here. How naturally clear and cool its waters. Why then does it dash downwards, in order to deprive itself of its purity? The lower it goes, the more will it become defiled, and tainted by the dirt and refuse of this earth. Why then does it rush headlong in that very direction. But what power has it, to keep still for its own sake? By command of that All-ruling One, though it be stained with the dirt of the earth, still it has to humble its pride, and take a downward course, in order to fertilise the land, and make it yield grain.

I was musing thus, when suddenly I heard the solemn commandment of the Guide within me: 'Give up thy pride, and be lowly like this river. The truth thou hast gained, the devotion and truthfulness that thou hast learnt here; go, make them known to the world.' I was startled. Must I then turn back from this holy land of the Himalayas? I have never thought of this. After having gone through so much trouble to detach myself from the world, must I again return to it, and be one with worldly people? My mind took a downward course. I remembered the world, I thought of the home, to which I should have to go back. My ears will be deafened by the noise of the world. This thought blighted my heart and I returned to my rooms in a despondent frame of mind, * * * It was God's command that I should go back home; could man's will hold out against that? At the slightest protest against that command, one's very physical nature revolted,—such was His ordinance. "The inner command is everything; the outer command is nothing?" Could I possibly stay in Simla any longer? * * * Whether my constitution was weak or strong it did not matter; how could I stay on in Simla? His will was my law. Harmonising my will with His, I made ready to go home.[15] Strength inspired my mind. There were still many

[15] Autobiography, Chap. XXXVII, pp. 261-263.

dangers on the road, and rebel bands lurked still in various places. But I did not give way to these fears. As the river's mighty current rolls onward inspite of obstructing stones, so did I also not pay heed to any hindrance whatever.

Despite the dangers of the Mutiny on the way he returned home. In November 1858. He was then forty-one years old. Here began a new chapter in his life, and in the life of the Brahmo Samaj! Shortly after his return from Simla, in 1859, an event occurred which had far-reaching effect upon its outlook and activities. This was the coming of Keshub Chunder Sen within the fold of the Brahmo Samaj.

The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore ends with his return from Simla in 1858. "After that is Keshub's period", said he in reply to Pandit Priyanath Sastri's query[16] as to why the Autobiography did not go beyond 1858. In truth, the next few years[17] saw Devendranath and Keshub Chunder working hand in hand in close, unexampled fellowship.. It would not be correct to say that in the firmament of the Brahmo Samaj Keshub was the sole luminary, at any rate up to 1866, though his life, example and ideas presently began to leaven the Brahmo Samaj. The observation of Maharshi above quoted, only shows the breadth of his heart and the ample space which Keshub came to occupy in his affections.

We now turn to the third stage of the history of the Brahmo Samaj in which Keshub Chunder Sen became the dynamic centre.

[16] He was the amanuensis taking down from Maharshi's dictation.
[17] Up to 1865-66.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ERA OF KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

"He will live more really now that he is dead," said Max Müller,[1] "than he would be if his life had been spared for many years." This prophecy has come true. Over sixty years have passed since Keshub departed this life, and every year has brought him, unconsciously though it may be, nearer and nearer to the heart of India. The principles he preached and practised, the protests he encountered, the persecution he suffered, the message of Harmony he delivered—harmony of religious, and religious disciplines, harmony of scriptures, harmony of saints and prophets, harmony of *Yoya, Bhakti, Jnana* and *Karma,* the social, moral, political, educational and economic reconstruction he envisaged, the doctrines he interpreted and even the disciplines he inculcated—all have now passed into the life-history of his people. Slowly, but surely, Keshub's life and message have leavened India. In the fulness of time they will leaven humanity. What is local and national in him, special and particular to the land of his birth and nurture, will remain the heritage of India; what is international and universal will be the heritage of the world.

The memorable nineteenth century forms a record of remarkable awakening and unfoldment,—nowhere more so than in India. In social, moral, political and religious reform it marks the period of India's renaissance. The time has come for the devout student of history to understand and appreciate the play of spiritual forces that brought it about. What is genius but a living focus through which moral, social and spiritual forces radiate? What is social or moral reconstruction but the natural out-

[1] Monograph on Keshub Chunder Sen, by Max Müller, 1884, soon after Keshub passed away on the 8th of January that year. See his "Biographical Essays", Vol. II.

come of this concentration of forces in outstanding personalities, or geniuses? Such a genius was Keshub Chunder Sen, who, from the early sixties of the nineteenth century, became the dynamic centre of the Brahmo movement. To study him and his predecessors is to study the time forces—the Time-Spirit and its dispensations for the uplift of humanity. To weed out what is temporal, adventitious and unessential and to get to the real substance of the man and his message, is worth the quest of every earnest seeker. And when that is done, the conviction is overwhelming that the force that was Keshub is more really alive to-day than it ever was.

It is futile to attempt a study of Keshub regardless of his moral and spiritual ancestry. He traces his descent from that family of God-intoxicated men who behold all the good things of this world, as well as of the next, flow only from the fulness of spiritual life. The walk in the ways of righteousness is with them the natural and essential pre-requisite to individual and social well-being. Let the man-soul, they say, be at one with the Over-soul, and all good will follow as the night the day. It is unprofitable, nay unreal, to regard them as mere reformers, mere benefactors of humanity—in the sense of having striven for material amelioration; though, in point of fact, the world stands indebted to them for much reform and much material good to humanity. With them, as with Keshub, the source and spring of all good is the prompting of the Spirit. Hence the key to well-being, individual or social, is the God-ward attitude. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all things shall be added unto you', has ever been their principle of living.

The first of his immediate predecessors, was Raja Rammohan Roy whom Keshub reverently called 'our spiritual grand-father'. Rammohun is truly regarded as the father of the Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century. There was no evil—social, moral or religious, educational, economic or political—which escaped his eagle eye or his

winnowing fan. There was not one major avenue of progress which his herculean activity did not traverse. It was he who gave the first rude shock to all manner of corruptions and trod the thorny path of the pioneer. He stood in solitary grandeur in the midst of utter darkness and sent forth his clarion call to freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom of worship and freedom from all manner of abuses. The call went forth shrill and clear: 'Awake! Arise! Back to freedom, faith and fulness of life!' Alas! his was a cry in the wilderness. Not a comrade, fellow-worker or follower had he—none to whom he could hand over the torch. Before he went on his fateful visit to Europe in 1830 he established the first temple of catholic worship of the *Ekamevādvitīyam* (the One without a second), in spirit and in truth, to be open to all without distinction of creed, caste or colour. This was the beginning of what afterwards became the Brahmo Samaj. But Rammohun himself in his life-time could not carry out the catholicity of his ideal in its entirety. Perhaps, the time had not arrived for it. Nor did he succeed in establishing a body or a brotherhood such as would accept his cosmopolitan ideal of worship and work, or such as would be committed to uphold and carry out its implications. No wonder that after the great Rammohun's death at Bristol in 1833 there was a lull. Everything was on the wane, and Rammohun's movement seemed for a time to be all but dead. But the seed that he had sown could not perish, and there soon arose another who, in the economy of Providence, was to take over the torch and carry it as his successor. This second great leader of the Brahmo Samaj was no other than Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, whom Keshub fondly looked up to as "our spiritual father".

The unique relationship that sprang up between the young man of twenty and the mature man of forty has rightly formed the theme for many a glowing tribute in and outside the Brahmo Samaj. There is a law of the spiritual world by which these men who live by the Spirit

come to find each other out, notwithstanding distance or disparity that stands between them. Their mental furniture, their outlook on life, may by no means be the same—the two may differ almost like polar opposites. But by divine dispensation each has his distinctive function to fulfil in the unfolding of one common purpose. Thus were Keshub and Devendranath drawn together in the divine net, despite contrarieties. But two such differing temperaments could not long act in unison. Soon the time came when they listened each to his inner voice, and parted. When they were together their hearts and souls were at one, and the Maharshi could find no term but *Abhinna-hridaya* (undivided in spirit) to express the relation that existed. The Maharshi named him *Brahmānanda* (Rejoicer in God), he ordained him as *Āchārya* (Minister), and even after the parting he saw with prophetic eye the future mission of Keshub,—Reconstruction.

The union of Keshub and Devendranath and their separation due to differing ideals determined not only the later subsequent history of the Brahmo Samaj but the thought and life of India as a whole. After the separation Keshub's work took him far out of the narrow confines of the Brahmo communion as it then was. It became cosmopolitan, assumed protean variety, and magnetized every conceivable sphere of social, moral and national reconstruction.

Keshub Chunder Sen's Family and Ancestry

His earthly life was but a brief span of forty-five years. (19th November, 1838—8th January, 1884). He was born at Calcutta in the Colutola residence of the Sen family.[1] His natal chamber, now marbled and made respectable, was a damp, dingy, ill-ventilated apology, for a room, on the ground-floor. Not that there was dearth of accommodation in the house. But owing to unforeseen circumstances, a

[1] The Sens originally belonged to Garifa, a village about twenty-four miles from Calcutta on the river Hooghly.

DEWAN RAMKAMAL SEN

room had anyhow to be improvised in a strange corner. Hence it so came to pass that the illustrious reformer, destined to take the vow of poverty and to preach and practise the lesson of abstinence and asceticism, saw the light in the lowliest of surroundings.

A scion of the distinguished Sen family of Garifa, tracing its descent from Ballal Sen, the Vaidya King of Bengal, a grandson of Dewan Ram Kamal Sen whose name was a household word in Bengal, and a son of Peary Mohan Sen distinguished for probity, piety and beneficence, Keshub had a noble ancestry. His moral heritage was as great as the rank, refinement and dignity to which he was born. Wealth without the pride that goes with it, charity without ostentation, true Vaishnava piety, and a simplicity bordering on asceticism, coupled with enthusiasm in all endeavours after the common weal of society—these are the qualities invariably associated with the character and memory of his self-made grandfather, as also of his father Peary Mohan. Indeed, in those days Dewan Ram Kamal's was a name to conjure with.

Ram Kamal Sen was a contemporary of Raja Rammohun Roy. He was one of that small handful of men of whom it has been said that the seeds of superior Western example found in them a soil truly Indian, and yet brought forth abundant fruit. Far from being westernized, they imbibed and assimilated a few of the good things that the West had to offer, and with their aid built up for themselves careers and characters full of will, enterprise and intrepidity, honesty and integrity. Ram Kamal began life at seventeen as an assistant type-setter in the Asiatic Society's Press. By dint of his industry and intelligence he gradually rose to the clerkship, thence to the office of Native Secretary to the Royal Asiatic Society. He attracted the attention of the celebrated Orientalist Horace Hayman Wilson with whom thus sprang up a life-long friendship and mutual esteem. Ram Kamal had started life in poverty, and had had little or no opportunity in early life to satisfy his thirst

for knowledge. He was not slow to seize and utilise the opportunities now afforded by his association with the learned Society to start on an intensive course of study and research. Soon he was admitted to the membership of the Council of the Society. His honesty and integrity won him such an enduring reputation that he shortly found himself in the office of Treasurer of the Calcutta Mint—a position of great responsibility. Success in the last mentioned post brought him the coveted honour of being appointed Dewan of the Bank of Bengal on a monthly pay of Rs. 2,000/-. His enthusiasm for knowledge and culture led him to appreciate the existing difficulties in the way of self-education and, in the rare moments of his leisure, he started compiling an elaborate dictionary of English and Bengali words. How great was the appreciation of this work in those days may be gathered from a review of it in the *Friend of India* (edited by Dr. Marshman of Serampore fame) which remarked "This dictionary is the fullest, most valuable work of its kind which we possess, and will be the most lasting monument of Ram Kamal Sen's industry, zeal and erudition. It is perhaps this work by which his name will be recognised by posterity." But Ram Kamal's activities were not confined to authorship only. Whether it was the Hindu College, started in 1817, the Sanskrit College, started in 1818, the Doveton College, for the education of European and Anglo-Indian children, or the District Charitable Society, or a hundred other endeavours after the welfare of his countrymen, Ram Kamal was ever ready with his talents and unremitting energies to promote their advancement.

Amid all the wealth and distinction which he achieved, Ram Kamal in his personal habits remained simple to a degree, almost an ascetic. He had only one meal at the end of the day and even that he cooked with his own hands —a spare meal of boiled rice and vegetables—occasionally a guava thrown in to do duty for vegetables! A strict Vaisnava, joyous in the consciousness of service to God and

his fellow men, he lived up to the age of sixty-one years (March 15, 1783 A.D.—August 2, 1843 A.D.) and died when his tiny grandson was only about five years of age. It is said that he was often heard to observe that Baso (the pet name by which Keshub was known in the family) would sustain the reputation of the family. Indeed, as Keshub's biographer and lifelong friend puts it: "His (Ram Kamal's) genius and his labours pre-figured the catholic, many-sided career of his illustrious grandson."[2] Peary Mohan, though not known to fame like his father Ram Kamal, kept up the good name of the family and succeeded his father in the high office of Dewan of the Bank of Bengal. Those that knew him speak of him as a handsome man of great charm of manners, striking personality and outstanding piety and integrity. He died at the early age of thirty-four when Keshub was only about nine years old. The charge of Keshub's upbringing thus fell on his mother Sāradā Devi. She came from the same village, Garifa, and belonged to a family of the Śākta persuasion but with none of the prejudices and proclivities of the Śākta cult. By nature deeply religious, her religious instincts were further deepened by the sorrows, trials and tribulations through which she had to pass in her early widowhood, till they mellowed down to that calm faith and trust that lit up her later years. She stood by her illustrious son through the trials and persecutions of his stormy career and entered thoroughly into the spirit of the new life which he preached and practised. In Keshub's last moments, when he lay in physical agony but in perfect spiritual

[2] "The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen" by P. C. Mozoomdar, p. 49—republished by Navavidhan Trust, 1931. The following passage which occurs on the same page is of great interest, in view of the large place which prayer filled in the spiritual life of Keshub Chunder Sen :—

"Some years ago in turning over the old family papers with Keshub, we lighted upon a number of beautiful Bengali prayers in manuscript, all written in a scrupulously neat hand by Ram Kamal Sen. The devotions were intended for family use. They were adapted to different occasions of life, to be said in the morning and evening, before meals, or when leaving for distant journeys. The sentiments were simple, devout, a pure heart-felt piety pervaded them all."

readiness for the last journey, the mother heart of Sāradā Sundari cried out in bitterness: "Your pain my child," she said, "is the outcome of my sins. The righteous son suffers for the wretched parent's unworthiness." "Oh! say not so, mother dear," replied Keshub, "know that the Supreme Mother sends it all to me for my good. Where can there be another mother like you? Your virtues God has given me. All that I call my own is yours." So saying he took the dust of her feet and put it on his head. After this, hardly anything is needed for the biogrgapher to show to what extent Keshub was indebted to the influence of his saintly mother for all that he became in after life.

Keshub's biographer presents the following pen-portrait of Sāradā Devi, as she was in her closing years, which in turn shows the influence of Keshub's great life on his loving mother: "There is an awful calm about her aged brow since the death of her great son. Her form has not lost, but gained in dignity by her unspeakable sorrow. She bears ample testimony to Keshub's worth, she considers him hardly human. Fervent and sweet-tempered in her piety always, there is a strange dignity and pathos in her prayers now, which seems to be of another world. When she comes to Keshub's domestic sanctuary at times, and offers her sorrowing devotions, the whole congregation is melted to tears, and thrilled into awe. Truthful, tender and sympathetic always, there is now a motherly kindness about her ways which few can forget. All, all who see her, whatever their feelings, whatever their differences, find a ready welcome. Yet she is identified in love with one only, from one source she draws her inspiration of goodness and that is Keshub, her darling departed son."[3]

Keshub's True Caste

It would be anything but fair to Keshub's memory, were we to be content with tracing his family and ancestry

[3] "The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen", pp. 52-53.

in the time-honoured fashion. As years passed, Keshub, himself discovered that in his heart of hearts he had little in common with the Sens of Garifa—with all their pomp and circumstance, power and prestige. "I was reared," says Keshub, "by a wealthy father and grand-father. Opulence and luxury surrounded my childhood. But as I grew up in years the inherent poverty of my spirit began to show itself." It is not that he embraced poverty as a matter of principle, penance or duty—he came to perceive that his caste was that of the poor, and he reckoned himself as one of them:

Often have I asked myself whether my soul is of rich or poor lineage. The answer to this question forms an important chapter of my *Jeevan-veda*. One must know the caste in which one's soul is born * * * * I am convinced that my soul belongs to the class of the poor. My blood is that of the poor, my brain is that of the poor. The articles of food, my daily habits—all bear ample evidence of the spirit of the poor. * * * The practice of poverty is not a difficult exercise with me ; it comes naturally. My nature takes delight in (plain) rice and herbs. This fact reveals to me an unspeakable secret of my inner life. I take it to be a sign of God's special grace for me. If I have to travel by railways, I usually go third class. I hesitate to travel first class lest I transgress my own province and trespass on the domain of the rich ; lest things and thoughts foreign to my nature rob me of rest and peace of mind. And the decision comes in an instant,—the mind instinctively seeking the place where the poor and the lowly are. If ever I travel first class, it is because I am obliged to. * * * Where the poor are there is rest for me, there is life for me. I never learnt this poverty by effort, it came to me naturally * * * * Do I not sit with the rich? Do I not shake hands with great people? What of that? Does that change my mind? If the Chandāla[4] touches the hand of the Brāhmana, does he thereby become a Brāhmana? If the man who feeds on rice and herbs is feasted once in the house of the Emperor, does he become a

[4] *Chandāla* is a low, untouchable caste.

rich man? Nature never changes, and therefore I can safely mix with every one. I also know and determine by secret signs who have the badge of my caste. But one thing I must say—what I find in this scripture: Though I always keep the company of the poor and the ragged, though my dearest friends are those who are content with little, yet I honour the rich too. It was said of old 'Hate the rich and give honour to the poor ; salvation is not for the rich ; where there is rank and prosperity no virtue can abide—religion dwells only in the hovel'. But the scripture of the New Dispensation teaches us: 'Honour the rich and the poor alike ; they both go forward on the path to heaven. There is no harm if a man is outwardly rich, when he is poor in spirit. Love the rich and the poor impartially. God the source of all righteousness dwells alike in the palace and in the cottage'.[5]

[5] *Jeevan-veda,* Chap. XIV.

CHAPTER XIV

KESHUB'S BOYHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE (1847-1857)

As a boy Keshub was marked out by unusual intelligence, strict morals and rather reserved and taciturn habits. The progress he made in his studies was phenomenal. Though younger than the average student in his class, he was looked up to with respect by his class fellows, almost with awe. "His simple boyish beauty was angelic."[1] The purity of his character was beyond cavil or question, in fact, was contagious—it made his companions feel that no association with him was possible unless they too were minded to eschew evil and impurity. In the library and the class-room, in the company of his teachers or elsewhere, he carried with him a calm and thoughtful reserve which could not but win him the respect and admiration of the boys. Ever mild and gentle, without a touch of anger or ill-temper, free from falsehood and free from vice he seemed to be on a plane far and away above that of the average student. Indeed, the boys looked up to him as a saint in their midst. Apart from excelling in his studies, his talents found expression in other ways. In improvising new games, mastering and exhibiting the juggler's art, organising impromptu dramatic and concert performances and in many other daring enterprises that could take a boy's fancy, he proved a past master, and evinced unusual resourcefulness and power of command. His friend and biographer Mozoomdar observes, "as a boy he was the pride of his mother's heart, the delight of his family, the ornament of his school, the glory of his village and the natural leader of his companions. * * * He was a born king in our

[1] "Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen", by P. C. Mozoomdar, p. 58—Navavidhan Trust, 1931.

boyish world".* Of spirituality, or religious intensity, there was yet no indication. His school life was marked by moral rigour rather than by religious earnestness. The spirit of poverty to which reference has been made in the last chapter had not yet made its appearance.

The years of adolescence that followed found him first at Hindu College, then at the Metropolitan, thence back to the Hindu College, these unfortunate changes at the instance of his guardians seriously interfering with his regular progress. From 1856 to 1858 he principally devoted himself to the study of philosophy as a casual student under the guidance of Mr. Jones, the Professor of Philosophy.

Religious Consciousness

But there came a significant change over him during this period, which was of greater moment to his future work than his intellectual pursuits. It was the dawning of a religious consciousness and the chastening and the purification that goes with it. Not that there was no trace of religious feeling in his school days. Only, it came to him now with a power and a spontaneity he had never experienced before. What made him abjure all animal food at the age of fourteen? As it was, in a Vaiṣnava family such as his, meat was a rarity. But he gave up fish-eating too. Was it on the principle of *Ahimsā?* Or, was it due to that nameless spontaneity that led him to seek poverty and plain-living of his own choice as a thing natural and appropriate to him ? There is no definite clue to the exact cause of it. It is clear that in his own case he thought it would be a sin to do otherwise. He never made it a code of conduct for others. But for his associates he always approved and encouraged vegetarianism and many if not most of them became vegetarians. In the *Nava Samhitā*[2] written in the

* *Ibid.*, p. 54

[2] "New Sacramental Code",—his last work in which Keshub Chunder Sen laid down the laws for guidance of the householder in all the essentials of plain living and high thinking, making it quite clear that it was the spirit of it that was to be observed, not the letter.

KESHUB CHUNDER SEN (1859)

last year of his life (1883) he says: "As for meat, let those abstain who have taken the vow of poverty and simplicity and are pledged to self-denial, with a view to guard themselves and their neighbours against carnality." The same spontaneity that made him a vegetarian early in life led him to pray. It was simple, artless, heartfelt, spontaneous prayer. When he knew not how to pray, he wrote prayers, morning and evening, and read them in solitude on the terrace of his house. He saw evil and impurity in himself, and spontaneously sought divine help for deliverance. He saw evil and impurity outside, in the society round about him, in the land of his nurture, in the country from one end to the other, and that made him restless all the more. He wrote exhortations and warnings and stuck them on to the house-walls in his neighbourhood. It was too real an experience to admit of a false humility that sees sin in oneself and none in others. While he was consumed with a sense of his own sins and shortcomings, he felt that they were but a part of the aching imperfections of the people round about him with whom he was organically connected. That wonderful sense of oneness, undividedness (*abhinnatā*), at-one-ment with all, which became a passion with Keshub later in life, was already making itself felt in this period of his early *Sādhanā* or preparation.

Asceticism and Austerities

He began to practise severe austerities. The same spontaneity that made him seek shelter in plainliving and poverty drove him to seek chastening through austerities. This was but the beginning. Again and again Keshub betook himself to it at different stages of his life. He did so for himself, he prescribed it for his comrades; and he reaped harvest a hundredfold. Many years after, in 1875, there was a renewal of asceticism. They raised a war-cry against it. They jeered and scoffed at the name of self-discipline and asceticism. But Keshub gently said: "It is needed. That

is my explanation. Providence has pointed out this remedy for many of the besetting evils of the Samaj in these days. A little asceticism is needed as an antidote. How long our people shall require it, and in what forms, He alone knows who is guiding us. It may be only for the time, or for six months, or for two years, or in a qualified form for all life. Do regard it then as a remedy for the time, most urgently needed." Thus gently admonishing them he went on to define what his asceticism was not, and what it was: "If you come and see us as we are, you will be surprised to find how little we possess of that sort of asceticism. * * * If we were like the Roman Catholics, or the Indian hermits, the sharp criticisms called forth would have been deserved. But here those who know facts say no such thing. This, however, I will not conceal from you—I love and wish to encourage asceticism. But my asceticism is not what is ordinarily accepted as such. * * * Energy, philanthropy, meditation, work, self-sacrifice, intellectual culture, domestic and social love—all these are united in my asceticism."[3]

Alas! the time was not ripe for it, the people were not ready for that type of asceticism. Between the two opposite extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence they could see no middle path of self-imposed poverty or austerity for the sake of better discipline and better service. It needed a whole life-time of fiery precepts and every-day practice to prepare them for it. And now, in the economy of Providence, history is repeating itself in the nation. The same precept and practice is incarnated in the sage of Sevāgrām whose vow of poverty and code of self-denial are bringing the nation back to Brahmānanda. All honour to Mahatma Gandhi and his close associates for proving to the world that the salt has not lost its savour; that the way to self-expression lies through self-reverence, self-knowledge and self-control; that the way to life lies through self-denial and

[3] Extract from Keshub's letter to Miss Collet.—"Brahmo Year Book", 1877, p. 22. For a fuller treatment of the subject and Keshub's letter *in extenso*, see *infra*, Chapters XXII and XXV.

self-sacrifice. The only difference, if any, is that with Keshub life came first and politics was only a part of it; but in the sixty years that have passed since Keshub left this world, politics seems to have obtained a monopoly license over life itself and, in the words of Sir John Culpepper speaking of monopoly in the Long Parliament, "it sups in our cup, it dips in our dish, it sits by our fire". Indeed, it has over-swept our whole social life.

In 1856, came his marriage, quite unexpected. He had, as in orthodox households, little say in the matter. His guardians, according to time-honoured usage, settled the match with a little girl of nine or ten, Jaganmohiny Devi, daughter of Chandra Kanta Mozoomdar. The marriage took place in the village Bali, across the river Gangā, about six miles to the north of Calcutta. Marriage amongst the Hindus is no doubt a sacrament but, in the majority of cases, the ceremony has lost its significance as a sacrament. Keshub though a party to it was, if anything, a mere passive actor. It went off with due pomp and circumstance. But Keshub's heart was elsewhere. "My honey-moon," says he, "was spent amid austerities in the house of the Lord." He had very little to do with his wife. For some years of his married life he was more an anchorite than a husband. "He developed in his ideas of conjugal relations as he developed in other things till in the end his domestic life became a true model for all."[4] But at the moment he was absorbed in his austerities.

A vivid picture of this period of Keshub's life and of the spiritual forces which held sway over him is found in his famous lecture entitled 'Am I an Inspired Prophet?', in which he thus speaks of himself: —

Then what am I, if I am not a prophet? I am a singular man. I am not as ordinary men are, and I say this deliberately. I say this candidly, I am conscious of marked peculiarities in

[4] "The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen", p. 63.

my faith and character. My singularity began when I was fourteen years of age. I then learnt to abstain from animal food. That was no doubt a small thing considered in itself. But it was a momentous change considered in the light of what followed. My life was destined for asceticism and abstinence, for the simplicities of faith and life. I was to be debarred from the luxuries of the world. That even at least showed which way the wind was blowing. I was constrained by the spirit of God. Within a few years I felt more and more this constraining influence. What was it that made me so singular in the earlier years of my life? Providence brought me into the presence of three very singular persons in those days. They were among my soul's earliest acquaintances. As I was walking along the path of my life, I met three stately figures, heavenly, majestic, and full of divine radiance ; and who were these? A wild-looking man, John the Baptist, was seen going about—not exactly in the midst of the gloom of night, but in the morning twilight—in the wilderness of India, saying "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". I felt he was speaking to me as I am speaking to you here. I confronted his spirit, I heard his voice in the soul. It was real ; it was clear—"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". Those words stirred me. The man's raiment was of camel's hair, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. I fell down, and I learnt contrition and repentance at the feet of John the Baptist. Why came he to me? Did he really come to me? Yes, he did come to me—he whose voice was heard in Judea several centuries ago. And he came to me because God sent him to me for my benefit, and I heard his words, and profited greatly. He passed away, and then came another prophet far greater than he, the prophet of Nazareth. Standing on a high hill, he addressed to me these solemn words—words which were even more touching and thrilling than those of John the Baptist—"Take no thought for your life," said Jesus to me, "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on. Take no thought for the morrow." These words of Jesus found a lasting lodgment in my heart, and have even since continued to influence me. Hardly had Jesus finished his words, when came another prophet and that was the travelled ambassador of Christ, the strong, heroic, and valiant Apostle Paul. And

what did he say to me? He gave me but one lesson, and that was enough. He said unto me, "Let them that have wives be as though they had none"; and these words came upon me like burning fire at a most critical period of my life. I was then about to marry, or had just got married. It was my impression at the time that marriage was the gate to worldliness, and I was glad to find a response in Paul's Epistles. Verily, verily, as Paul says, those that have wives try to please them. They think of the things of this world, and not of the things of Heaven. They are worldly-minded men. Therefore, those that have wives ought to be like those who have none ; in other words, they should discharge their household duties, but should love the Lord above all things ; they should not be immersed in carnality and worldliness. I entered the world with ascetic ideas, and my honeymoon was spent amid austerities in the house of the Lord. From that time I was determined never to sink into worldliness. The temptations and allurements of the world were hateful to me, and I said—Heaven save me from these treacherous snares! Paul's words flashed like lightning across my whole heart and soul, and I began to realize my destiny more vividly from that hour. I was to live in the midst of the world and do my work, and fulfil my mission there, but I was not to be gathered amongst worldly-minded men. I was destined to be a man of faith. I was destined and commissioned by God to be a spiritually-minded, and not a worldly-minded man.

Having thus spoken to me through these eminent prophets, and taught me self-denial and asceticism, the Lord took me away gradually from the world, and gathered me into His fold and into His Church in the spirit-world. And He said unto me—"I am thy Church and doctrine, I am thy creed and thy immortality, thy earth, thy heaven ; I am thy family and thy habitation, thy food and thy raiment, thy treasure here and in heaven. Believe in Me." Thus the freedom of my reason was completely overcome, and I lost my self-will. At three places had I to sell my freedom. I had to sell my freedom to my country, and then to my Church, and all that was left—the residue of my independence was swallowed up by the all conquering and all absorbing grace of God. Thus was I sold for ever. I had no life of my own to lead, no doctrine of my

own to teach ; I had no right to feel, think or do as other independent minds did.[5]

Sequel to *Sādhanā*[6]

The later phase when the sorrow and tribulation of his earlier *sādhanā* was replaced by the fulness of joy in all the relations of every day life is also depicted by him in the same lecture thus:

I wanted nothing else but the Kingdom of Heaven, but I soon found I had got everything necessary for my temporal as well as spiritual welfare. This singular faith in a singularly jealous God of heaven brought me day by day nearer to Him, and further and further from worldliness. Months and years rolled away, and I found that dark places of my life were being illumined, and the joy of heaven had taken those places which had been given up to sorrow, care and anxiety. I was no longer a child of sorrow, burning in the midst of trial and tribulation. The benignant face of my Father shone forth on my face, and his loving kindness wiped off the tears from my cheeks, and I felt happy. My days were pleasant. My nights no longer nights of unrest and trouble, but nights of serenity, peace and joy.[7]

Characteristics of His Early Spiritual Culture

It is singularly characteristic of him that the stuff of which these austerities were made was the same as, or similar to, that of 1875 above referred to. They were not calculated to make him self-centred, seeking spiritual fruition in barren self-mortification. Were it so, it would not have found expression in those incessant efforts after moral and spiritual fellowship with comrades and kindred

[5] K. C. Sen's Lectures in India, Vol. I, Cassell's Edition, 'Am I an Inspired Prophet?' pp. 334-7.
[6] Moral or spiritual culture and discipline.
[7] 'Am I an Inspired Prophet?' 339-40.

souls during this pregnant period. His self-discipline led him on to establish schools, classes, societies and fraternities. Keshub founded them, fostered them, unremittingly worked for them with the sweat of his brow, turning his associates into ardent fellow workers under his guidance. The British India Society (1854),[8] the Colutola Evening School (1855),[9] the Good Will Fraternity (1857)[10] are but three out of the host of organisations which he established and maintained. A hallowed memory of these three, as also of the Brahma Vidyalaya and the Sangat Sabha which flourished later, has survived to this day. The others have passed into the limbo of oblivion. But the work that they did abides. And now that the country is flooded with clubs and societies—some for 'self-improvement', some for 'mutual protection', when the nation sits down to cast up its figures and reckon the profit and loss, will not the credits mount up only for such of them as, like Keshub's, looked more to others than to themselves and practised the hard code of self-denial?

Keshub's *sādhanā,* it must be admitted, during these early years of preparation was bleak, hard, austere, with none of the sweetness or flavour of fruition. He was sowing in tears with no thought, or even hope perhaps, of reaping in gladness. Trust there was—a blind unquestioning trust. Faith there was—a spontaneous faith of which the lineaments could not then be visualised even by himself. Enthusiasm? Yes, a rough, fiery, tempestuous enthusiasm that took him he knew not where. The thoughts that took possession of him and the topics over which he poured forth a torrent of words full of feeling were those of Truth, Faith, Prayer, Free Will, Sin, Conversion, Inspiration, Universal Brotherhood, Eternity and the like. Not only did he think hard, but he read hard. From 11 o'clock in the morning to 6 o'clock in the evening he was to be found at his table in

[8] Its object was the cultivation of literature and science.
[9] Its object was the promotion of general knowledge.
[10] A purely religious institution where Keshub used to lecture *extempore.*

Metcalf Hall,[11] poring over philosophy, metaphysics and poetry. The works of the Scottish School of philosophers—Reid, Hamilton M' Cosh—and those of Morell, Victor Cousin, Theodore Parker, Miss Cobbe, Emerson and the like, furnished ample food for his voracious mind. He made friends with Milton, Young and Shakespeare—and it proved a life-long friendship. Apart from reading he dived deep into himself, seeking light and guidance from Within. He prayed for what his being needed—faith, love and purity. He prayed for what his country needed—catholic love and national unity. He prayed for what the world needed—Universal Brotherhood. In the whole realm of earnest human aspiration and endeavour there are few such examples of a plain, natural man spontaneously seeking purification through plain and natural channels—plain living and prayer, communion with God, communion with his fellow men—thus equipping himself for his life-work. It is this plainness about him that makes him to-day the prophet of the plain man—the struggling and the striving, the youthful, the untutored and the unendowed.

Years after in England, in the year 1870, he thus delineated in his own words his early struggles:

English education unsettled my mind, and left a void ; I had given up idolatry but had received no positive system of faith to replace it. And how could one live on earth without a system of positive religion? At last it pleased Providence to reveal Himself unto me. I had not a single friend to speak to me of religion, God and immortality. I was passing from idolatry into utter worldliness. Through Divine grace, however, I felt a longing for something higher ; the consciousness of sin was awakened within me, sin was realised in the depth of my heart in all its enormity and blackness. And was there no remedy? Could I continue to bear life as a burden? Heaven said 'No sinner, thou hast hope,' and I looked upward and there was a clear revelation to me. I felt that I was not

[11] Now the National Library, the oldest and biggest public Library in Calcutta.

groping in the dark as a helpless child, cast away by his parents in some dreary wilderness. I felt that I had a Heavenly Friend always near to succour me. God himself told me this—no book, no teacher, but God Himself, in the secret recesses of my heart. God spoke to me in unmistakable language and gave me the secret of spiritual life, and that was prayer, to which I owed my conversion. I at once composed forms of prayer for every morning and evening, and used them daily, although I was still a member of no Churh on earth and had no clear apprehension of God's character and attributes. I felt profoundly the efficacy of prayer in my own experience. I grew in wisdom, purity and love. But after this I felt the need of the communion of friends from whom I might be enabled, in times of difficulty and doubt, to receive spiritual assistance and comfort. So I felt that not only belief in God was necessary but I wanted a real brotherhood on earth. Where was this true church to be found? I did not know. Well, I established in my earlier days a small fraternity, in my own house, to which I gave the somewhat singular but significant name of the "The Goodwill Fraternity." I did not allow myself for one moment to honour sectarianism, but preached to my friends these two doctrines—God our Father, every man our brother. When I felt that I wanted a Church, I found that the existing sects and churches would not answer my purpose. A small publication of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj fell into my hands, and I read the chapter on 'What is Brahmoism'?[12] I found that it corresponded exactly with the inner conviction of my heart, the voice of God in the soul. I always felt that every outward book must be subordinated to the teachings of the Inner Spirit—that where God speaks through the spirit in man all earthly teachers must be silent, and every man must bow down and accept in reverence what God thus revealed in the soul. I at once determined that I would join the Brahmo Samaj, or Indian Theistic Church.[13]

[12] See Rajnarain Bose's *Ātmacharita*, p. 78. "It was on reading my lecture on the characteristics of the Brahmo faith—*Brahmo dharmer lakṣaṇa*—that Keshub Babu embraced Brahmoism"—Translated by the author.

[13] "Lectures in England", 1870, (Navavidhan Publication Committee, 95, Keshub Chandra Sen Street), 1939.

CHAPTER XV

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
(1858-1862)

So to the Brahmo Samaj he went. He signed the printed covenant sent to him for the purpose, and quietly became a member, without going through the prescribed ceremony of declaration before the Minister and the congregation.[1] It was a critical juncture—a parting of the ways in the history of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj. The paternal presiding spirit of the Samaj, Maharshi Devendranath, tired of the wranglings and the rule of majority that threatened to control it destinies,[2] had retired to the serene heights of the Himalayas where he was spending his days in deep contemplation and meditation. Prominent among those who remained on the plains at the helm of affairs were men of the stamp and calibre of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Dutta. Great as was the debt of the Samaj to them for their unique intellectual contribution, and for the splendid support they lent to Devendranath in rejecting the authority of the Vedas, religious enthusiasm was no part of their mental furniture. They were characterised more by a critical and analytical bent of mind than by piety, or depth of religious fervour. In course of time, however, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar went and found more congenial fields for his activities and Akshay Kumar Dutta had to retire to inactivity on grounds of continued ill-health. It was at this psychological moment

[1] "This was a somewhat private arrangement. The ordinary usage for an intending convert was to stand up before the pulpit at the end of the monthly morning service and make a declaration of faith before the Minister and the congregation. The document was then signed by the candidate for initiation and countersigned by the *Pravartaka* or the person who induced him to accept the religion of the Brahma Samaj."—"Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen", republished by the Navavidhan Trust, 1931.

[2] See *supra*, Chapter VI.

that Keshub brought with him to the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj in ample measure the fire and the faith that burns in a truly consecrated soul. Keshub thus describes his own conversion:

> In utter helplessness I threw myself at my Father's feet. And at last it pleased Providence to reveal the light of truth in a most mysterious manner, and from that time commenced a series of struggles, aspirations and endeavours which resulted, I am happy to say, in the conversion of my heart.[3]

In 1858 Devendranath heard the Call, as he beautifully records in his Autobiography[4] and returned from the hills in November 1858. He was greatly impressed by the personality, self-consecration, ability and enthusiasm of the young recruit. The result was a true and abiding attachment between Keshub and Devendranath which led the way to their working together in perfect unison. Together they started planning and carrying out measures of far-reaching importance to the community at large.

The First Trial

But his trials were now to begin. Hitherto he had been passing through the school of self-discipline. The training that he had thus received formed his convictions and shaped his resolves. The actual conflict with the established order—family, friends, society—was still to come. Within a year of his joining the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, came the first of these struggles. It was in connection with the proposed initiation (*dīkṣā*) of Keshub at the hands of the family *Guru* (spiritual preceptor). The office of the *Guru* is hereditary. He is looked upon as verily the path to salvation and is paid semi-divine honours. He goes occasionally on rounds to the families which are hereditarily associated

[3] "Lectures in England", 1870.
[4] See *supra*, Chap. VI; *Ātmacharita*, Chapter XXXVIII.

with him as *jajmāns* (disciples). During these visits it is the practice of the orthodox families to get their young folk receive *Dīkṣā* (initiation) at the hands of the *Guru*. In the usual course, the *Guru* of the Sen family came round on his visit to their Colutola house and it was decided by the elders that young people in the house, including Keshub, were to receive initiation and the saving formula (*mantra*) from him. In his mind and heart Keshub had done with such lifeless ceremonies. It was not in him to submit to a form from which the spirit had long since departed, or to subscribe to a formula which could not claim the approval of his conscience. He consulted his spiritual confidant, the Maharshi, who left it to Keshub's own inner voice. And that voice prevailed. Keshub definitely refused.

While the incident caused an estrangement in Keshub's relations with his family elders, it knit him closer to the heart of Devendranath. The nearer to Devendranath the farther from correct society, so thought the Sen *pater-familias*. For, the Tagores though living within the Hindu society and observing the religious rites and ceremonies of the Brahmins, were somewhat outside the pale of strict orthodoxy. Whatever might have been the reason, the exclusion such as it was does not seem to have affected the position, culture or influence of the Tagores. If anything, it has enabled them to pursue their course unhampered by social tyranny, and thus to accelerate their own progress. In addition to this prejudice against them in general, there was the further prejudice against Devendranath, in particular, for having abjured idolatrous practices and taken his stand on reformed Hindu Theism. No wonder, therefore, that the growing intimacy and attachment between Keshub and Devendranath should have become a source of alarm to the Sens of Colutola. In another four or five months, however, they discovered that it was impossible to restrain Keshub's heterodox proclivities. On the 27th of September 1859, he was missed, and on anxious search it was found that Keshub had sailed for Ceylon in the company

of Devendranath, his son Satyendranath (later, a member of the Indian Civil Service) and a friend of the name of Kali Kamal Gangooly. This was Keshub's first sea-voyage. Indeed, it was his first outing beyond the confines of Bengal. It brought him mental as well as spiritual exhilaration, and he returned with redoubled energy for his work. While on the point of landing he makes the following entry in his Diary: "Father, may I serve Thee and glorify Thy name with increasing zeal and earnestness and *make truth the centre of my thoughts and actions.* May I by Thy grace and the help of those great ideas with which Thou hast filled my mind grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hail fatherland! Hail!"

The 'Widow Re-marriage' Drama

Early in 1859 Keshub plunged into new activities. He was always partial to drama. He now took it up as an instrument for awakening society to the need for social, moral and spiritual reformation. In his early adolescence he had staged Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and had himself played the part of the hero with consummate skill. In the maturity of his life he again gave ample evidence of his appreciation of the stage as a powerful educative factor by staging the *Navabrindāvan* drama and playing the parts of producer, organiser and actor in it. He now conceived the idea of placing on the stage the *Bidhavā-Vivāha Nātak* (Widow Remarriage Drama) and thereby awakening his countrymen to the endless sorrows and sufferings of the girl widow in India. He was coach, organiser, stage-manager, all in one, and he utilised the earnest souls of the Colutola Evening School and the Good Will Fraternity as the *dramatis personæ.* The performance took place in the spacious building in *Sinduriāpatti,* known as Gopal Mullick's house where the Metropolitan College of those days was located. It was altogether a new enterprise and perhaps in the history of modern India, the first of the

so-called social 'problem plays' after *Kulina-kula-sarvasya.*[5] Its effect on the public mind was deep and abiding. From the highest to the humblest, all classes of people, including the great Vidyasagar, whose name will always be gratefully remembered for all that he did for ameliorating the condition of widows, were profoundly moved. Keshub succeeded in enlisting the active sympathy and support of right-thinking men in suppressing the evils of early marriage and of enforced widowhood.

The Brahma Vidyālaya

In May 1859, he started the *Brahma Vidyālaya* (Brahma School), an institution which was destined to play a considerable part in developing and clarifying the theology of the Brahmo Samaj, and in furnishing an intellectual background to the spiritual education of the young and the earnest. The classes of the *Vidyālaya* used to be held every Sunday at which while Devendranath discoursed in Bengali on the attributes of God, on the relation of man to his Maker and on the transcendental joys of spiritual communion, Keshub held forth in English on the philosophical basis of the Brahmo faith, and on the ethical aspects of spiritual life—conscience, self-sacrifice, love and service. The bulk of the pupils was recruited from the Colutola Evening School and the Good Will Fraternity. In fact, as Mozoomdar puts it, "four institutions now ran abreast of each other under Keshub's supervision. There was the Colutola Evening School, the Good Will Fraternity, the Brahma School and the Theatre at Chitpore Road. As nearly the same individuals comprised the staff of them all, it was sometimes amusing and perplexing to hear the several bells ring almost simultaneously for the classes of the first, the services of the second, the lectures of the third, and the

[5] See Chapter V.

rehearsals of the fourth! But Keshub's zeal and energy knew no bounds."[6]

This is how Mozoomdar, Keshub's early friend and associate, and member of all these institutions, describes their interesting origin and development:

This Brahma School was an all-important institution in the history of the whole Brahmo movement. It not only produced a body of intelligent doctrines, and systematized the uncertain conceptions of Brahmo theism on a sound rational basis of philosophy, such as modern thought throughout the world laid down to be the rudiments of all religion, but it created a necleus of well-trained men whose sympathy, devotedness, and active co-operation made all future progress in the Brahmo Samaj possible. About a dozen such men, all in the prime of youth, some of whom are still missionaries of the Brahmo Samaj of India, gathered at the first meeting which took place on the 24th April, 1859, in a damp and dingy one-storied house, where the Colutola Evening School held its classes, not far from the ancestral residence of the Sens in Bhawani Charan Dutt's Lane, Colutola. Nothing could exceed the zeal, energy, faith, and cheerfulness with which Keshub set about the work of organizing his youthful adherents into the new school. The Goodwill Fraternity contributed its members, the Evening School its teachers and senior pupils to that object, and both in the course of time dissolved into the higher purposes of the Brahma School. Devendranath readily came, unmindful of surroundings, and began by teaching the youngmen the rules of the Sanskrit recitation of the Brahmo Samaj liturgy, whereby they might join the services then held every Wednesday evening at Jorasanko. The School, holding weekly classes on Sundays, was soon removed to more respectable quarters at Chitpore Road, in a grand building, known as Gopal Mallick's house, which has been since demolished and thence to the second floor rooms of the Adi Brahmo Samaj at Jorasanko. Keshub in his lectures, delivered on every alternate Sunday, poured forth a torrent of metaphysics and moral fervour, and Devendranath in chaste classical Bengali discoursed on the opinions and faith of the Brahmo Samaj.

[6] 'Life and Teachings', Navavidhan Trust Edition, p. 75.

Tracts for the Times

To give publicity to the subject matter of the discourses at the *Vidyālaya,* Maharshi's addresses were published in the form of a book entitled *Brahmo Dharmer Mata O Viśwās* (the Faith and Principles of the Brahmo Samaj)[7] and the lectures that Keshub delivered began to be published monthly in the form of twelve tracts ('Tracts for the Times') beginning with 'Young Bengal—This is for you' in June 1860. Amid the vast variety of Keshub's writings, speeches, prayers and sermons, in English as well as in Bengali, these twelve tracts seem to have been almost forgotten. But though written at the early age of twenty-two they disclose a maturity and an intensity of conviction which is remarkable. Indeed some of them vividly body forth his maturest views, held later in life, as for instance on prayer, inspiration, God-vision, on social and educational reforms, on patriotism and politics, on sectarianism or universal brotherhood.[8]

Young Bengal This Is For You

'Young Bengal—This is for you' even to this day is a fitting exhortation to all young men of India on the diverse phases of earnest endeavour which call for their co-operation. Thus does Keshub address young India to-day, even as he did in 1860:

[7] The public is indebted to his son Mr. Satyendra Nath Tagore who recorded these addresses and ultimately published them under the title *Brāhmadharmer Mata O Viswās.*

[8] The following are the titles and dates of the twelve tracts :
1860—Young Bengal, This is for you (June); Be Prayerful (July); Religion of Love (August); Basis of Brahmoism (September); Brethren, Love your Father (October); Signs of the Times (November); An Exhortation (December).
1861—Testimonies to the Validity of Intuitions, Part I (February).
Ditto, Part II (March); The Revd. S. Dyson's Questions on Brahmoism answered (April); Revelation (May); Atonement and Salvation (June).
See Mozoomdar, 'Life and Teachings', Navavidhan Trust edition—"Keshub utilised the substance of his addresses in the tracts which before long he began to publish" (p. 74).

It is impossible, my friend, to calculate the amount of mischief which has been wrought in our country by godless education * * * Verily, to this source—to the influence of ungodly education—is to be attributed the want of due progress in the social condition of the country. Witness the numerous improvement societies, friendly meetings, debating clubs, literary associations, etc., whose number is hourly increasing * * * Many and varied are the schemes proposed for the country's good, but hardly do they pass beyond the pales of theory. Social reforms are speculated upon but not practically undertaken * * * True, there are acute understandings and powerful intellects ; true, there are high flights of imagination and brilliant rhetorical attainments ; true, there are minds stored with science and arts—but where is the heart to work? * * * Verily, there is a line of demarcation between a mind trained to knowledge and a heart trained to faith, piety and moral courage. Rest assured, my friend, that if in our country intellectual progress went hand in hand with religious development, if our educated countrymen had initiated themselves in the living truths of religion, patriotism would not have been a mere matter of oration or essay but a reality in practice * * * That unity and nationality which is considered a great desideratum would have been established ; and our countrymen, consolidated by religious love would have realised all the benefits of united exertions and mutual sympathies, and effectually surmounted many of those difficulties in the way of social reforms which are now considered insuperable.

Spontaneity of Prayer

In the second tract entitled 'Be Prayerful', he dwells on the spontaneity, necessity and utility of prayer. It is in the form of a dialogue between the Inquirer and the Brahmo. In perfect spontaneity he clung to prayer all his life and what else could he so confidently testify to as his own innermost experience! Here are a few telling passages from the dialogue:—

B. : * * * Prayer forms the gateway of faith. * * *

I. : Why, the very reasonableness of prayer I dispute. My impression is that it is altogether untenable on philosophical grounds and, besides, not at all necessary for, certainly, a man may be religious and yet not prayerful. I have made it a point to remain aloof from prayer till I am logically convinced of its propriety.

B. : Logically convinced of its propriety! What curious notion of prayer! * * *

I. : Do you mean to say, one should scatter all his philosophy and logic to the winds, and run headlong into devotions and prayer? * * * * This sort of argument by which you ingeniously seek to exclude prayer from the province of reason, is wholly exceptionable. It shows you are avoiding the real difficulty.

B. : Is prayer a fact of our reflective consciousness? Do you think that men are led into it by arguments and reasons, that it is the result of logical processes?

I. : It ought to be so. Whatsoever a reasonable man does, should be the issue of deliberate thought, and valid reasoning. I don't care if the illiterate and credulous pray without reasoning.

B. : Well, tell me, however, what prayer is?

I. : It is merely a petition for the removal of a want. In its theological acceptation it means, I think, a petition to God for the removal of spiritual wants.

B. : Precisely so. Now closely reflect on this definition, and say, does a man pray because he has convinced himself by elaborate syllogistic arguments of the philosophical propriety of doing so? What an unnatural process! * * * Does logic impel the child, the beggar, and the patient to ask for relief? Is it the conclusions of reasoning that dictate them to do so? Far from it. Common sense assures us, it is the violent feeling of want, that drives them to pray. Who doubts that when the hungry and the thirsty lustily cry for food and drink, it is not a Whately, Mill, or a Hamilton, but nature, that prompts them to do so? Man feels a want, and naturally prays for its removal. Evidently, prayer in all such cases is but the spontaneous outpouring of the mind, and is not a reflective process.

As I ask mortal man for food because it is essential to the sustenance of my body, so I pray to my God for spiritual blessings which are essential to the sustenance of my soul. In both cases a deep want, a pressing and irresistible necessity is the origin of prayer: in neither is there any reference to logic. * * *

If you ask me why I pray to God, I will say—not because logic or psychology teaches me to do so—not because my school master insists on my doing so—but because the deep wants of my soul drive me to the necessity of praying to Him who is my Father and my Friend. And if your profound logicians attempt to deter me from prayer on the ground of what they generally call its philosophical fallacy, I shall say unto them,—'Can ye prevent the hungry from asking for food? Ye cannot then prevent the soul from praying for the bread of life.' * * *

With prayer you must begin religion, with prayer you must continue it. As a nurse prayer fosters and nourishes religion in its infancy ; as a faithful friend it encourages and helps it in its manhood ; and as a physician restores its healthful tone when it is deranged. Thus whatever stage of religion we view, we find prayer is essential to it.

Religion of Love

The third tract deals with the evils of sectarianism and the catholicity of the Brahmo faith. This is also thrown into the form of a dialogue, and throughout breathes the loftiest spirit of brotherly love among all men irrespective of caste or colour: —

I. : To tell you frankly although my religious sentiments animate me, and comfort me, they can hardly prevent clouds of doubt from overhanging my mind, when I see the outward phenomena of the religious world ; and sometimes I have been even driven to confess that religion is a mystery, and its history a mere chronicle of anomalies, persecution, conflicts and war. Tell me, good friend, as an unbiassed and truth-loving soul, and not as a bigoted sectarian, what I ought to do, in respect to the choice of a religion. Where shall I find rest? Where shall I enjoy peace?

B. : In Brahmoism, in the sweet religion of Brahmoism. Speak not to me of sects and parties. I cannot recommend you to sever yourself from the mass of mankind, and cling to an exclusive creed. Away with sectarian creed and dogmas ; away with the malign spirit of sectarianism.

I.: If I have to turn away from sectarian creed, with what earthly reason can I accept Brahmoism? Is not Brahmoism a special creed like Hinduism and Christianity and Mahomedanism? Do not the Brahmos like the followers of other religions, constitute a sect?

B. : O no, my friend. Brahmoism is anti-sectarian ; catholicity is its distinguishing characteristic ; love is its very life. It is not the religion of a particular community, epoch or country ; it is universal religion ; it is Human Catholic Religion. It is this which clearly distinguishes Brahmoism from all systems of faith. While they are founded upon the peculiarities of time and place, Brahmoism stands upon a basis coextensive with human nature upon principles that are catholic and universal. While they seek to divide mankind into distinct and hostile parties, Brahmoism goes forth to bring all mankind to a state of unity and harmony. While they confine their love within their own respective sects, Brahmoism extends the holy current of love to the whole human race. Sectarianism limits and distorts man's views and sentiments ; Brahmoism expands its soul and enlarges his conceptions. The former is a battle-field in which communities strenuously fight against each other, actuated by inveterate jealousy, or the maddening spirit of fanaticism. The latter is the kingdom of peace, in which all mankind are a brotherhood and Love reigns supreme.

Seeing and Feeling God

In the fourth tract—'Basis of Brahmoism'—published in September of the same year Keshub forcefully testifies to the knowledge of God being not an inference, or abstrac-

tion, but a direct perception; and speaks of seeing and feeling God, as the true tests of the living religion:

Brahmoism is a living religion. It reveals truth immediately, and with all the vividness and force of direct perception. How animating for example is a Brahmo's knowledge of God! He does not seek God through abstractions and generalizations. He has not to carve out his God by the chisel of logic; he does not worship an abstract metaphysical ideal of the Divinity, destitute of charms, and lifeless. Nor on the other hand is his God a historical personage, cognizable through the medium of representation and with the aid of proper evidences—and withal a God "that was but not is". His God is neither a logical nor a historical divinity. His God is an ever-living and ever-present Reality that can be seen and felt. No teacher, no idea, no abstract proposition, no consecrated object acts as a mediator between him and God. He stands before his Father face to face. He beholds Him who is infinite in time and space, wisdom and power, love and holiness, and is at once enlivened and enraptured; then the clouds of doubt fly away, the soul is armed with indomitable faith, all the spiritual energies are quickened and love and joy sweeten the heart.

The Philosophy of Intuition is Limited to a Few; but Intuition Itself is Universal Property

He proceeds then to discuss the universality of this direct perception:

True, the philosophy of intuition is limited to a few, for every man is not a philosopher. But intuition itself is universal property; its truths are the patrimony of the human race. Brahmoism is co-extensive with human nature, though a few only can master Brahmic theology. Brahmoism is not confined to metaphysicians or historians. Metaphysical training is not an indispensable requisite to the knowledge of its truths; scholarship is not the *sine qua non* of admission into our faith. Nature is the preceptor and the guide. She leads every simple, unsophisticated and unbiassed man into the shrine of

Brahmoism. The universe is the cathedral, Nature the high priest, every man, whether an illiterate rustic or a profound philosopher, a throned monarch or a ragged clown, a native of Europe or of India, a man of the first or the nineteenth century has access to his Father, and can worship and serve Him with faith and love.

In intensity of conviction and power of spiritual perception the writings of this period on the subject of seeing hearing and feeling God pre-figure Keshub's famous lecture on God-vision, delivered in the Town Hall of Calcutta four years before his death.

Catholic Church of the Future

In the sixth tract—"Signs of the Times'—Keshub thus portrays the catholic church of the future, supporting himself now and then by extracts from various thoughtful writers of repute: —

Freedom and progress are the watch-words of the 19th century. It is likewise beginning to be felt that true faith does not consist in an intellectual assent to historical events, but in earnest and steady reliance upon the ever-living, ever-present Deity * * * Many an earnest soul is strenuously protesting against the worship of the "dead letter"—antiquated symbols, and lifeless dogmas, and vindicating the living revelations of the spirit within. * * * * * A strong yearning after the living and spiritual is thus clearly manifest. Nor, again, does the controversial and jealous spirit of sectarian dogmatism fall in with the catholic views of the age. History has portrayed in frightful colours the mischievous effects of sectarianism, and has fully proved that *opinion* cannot serve as the bond of religious confraternity—that what is local, contingent and specific, cannot constitute the basis of a church. Such a church as stands upon what is above time and place—upon catholic principles of Faith and Love, such a church as shall establish the brotherhood of man, many are looking forward to with eager expectations.

BOOK-REVELATION—SELF-CONTRADICTORY AND SUICIDAL

One of the most important of these tracts, again in the form of a dialogue, is the eleventh entitled 'Revelation' and published in May 1861. It not only excels in the closeness of its reasoning but in the catholicity which it breathes throughout:

We believe that our understandings are not sufficient to give us salvation ; and we acknowledge the paramount importance and necessity of a light from on high. We account revelation as the only way through which we come in contact with the saving truths of the spiritual world. The scriptures of all religions are regarded by us as rich repositories of what is noble, pure, and saving ; and we accept the truths which are in them with profound reverence, although we do not identify them with revelation. * * * A book-revelation is self-contradictory and suicidal. Revelation is a state of the mind, a process of intelligence, a truth, an actual fact of consciousness. Hence a book-revelation, inasmuch as it is a book, an external object, cannot be scientifically called a revelation. Revelation is subjective, not objective.

REVELATION—SUBJECTIVE NOT OBJECTIVE.

* * * It is clear then that a book whether fallible or infallible cannot be identified with revelation, and truths revealed can only mean truth infallibly revealed in actual consciousness. The essence of revelation lies not in the outward book, but in the 'Kingdom within'—not in the text, but in the soul. To the truth of this Christendom bears ample and undeniable testimony. What does the distinction between the 'letter', and the 'spirit' signify? What means the doctrine that none unenlightened by the Holy Ghost can understand the truths of the Bible. No Christian can deny that the Bible is not sufficient ; that the mere letter, the mere book is nothing ; and that there is an essential difference between the Bible as a book, and the Bible as a revelation—the Bible read by those, who are not spiritually enlightened, and the Bible read with the aid

of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Thus, whatever view we may take of the subject, unless we are dogmatical, we are at last brought to the same central principle that revelation is a spiritual communication made to the mind, and is realized and realizable in the intuitional consciousness only. * * * *

Thus if revelation is taken in its primary and literal signification, *viz.*, knowledge communicated by God, it is possible only as a fact of mind, and cannot therefore be identified with books or other external objects, however rich they may be with moral and religious significance. It is altogether subjective, and hence whatever truth remains in an objectified state is beyond its province. The dogma of book-revelation there falls to the ground. If on the other hand revelation is understood in the secondary acceptation, *viz.*, whatever teaches us precious doctrines, and elevates our moral and religious conceptions and feelings, far from being confined to the texts of any particular book as the exclusive sacred repository of divine truth, it extends over all books that inculcate truth—nay, it embraces the whole universe as a living revelation. Such is our doctrine of revelation.

From the philosophy of Brahmic revelation, I have already explained, it clearly follows that the Brahmos acknowledge God alone as the Fountain-head of revelation, hold the inner revelation to be superior to all outward books, and repudiate all second-hand and derivative revelations. It is the primitive direct communication of God in the intuitive consciousness that constitutes a Brahmo's revelation so that if his revelation is derived from any source at all it is from Infinite Intelligence ; and if he is guilty of theologic larceny, his real guilt lies in having stolen from God's inexhaustible store-house of truths in the 'Kingdom within'.

REVERENCE FOR ALL SCRIPTURES

The doctrine of harmony of scriptures, so inseparably associated with Keshub's maturer teaching, had not as yet made its definite appearance in his spiritual horizon. But there is, in this tract on Revelation, a spirit of reverence for

all scriptures irrespective of creed or country which may rightly be taken to be the earnest of what was to come later:

O, my brother, it comports not with Brahmoism's exalted and catholic spirit to scoff at or hate book-revelation. Such a scoffing and hatred we consider an abomination. It is our duty to kiss and love truth wherever we can find it. O those charming psalms of David that draw tears of piety from the hardest heart and bring relief even unto the most afflicted! How inexhaustible are the riches of the precepts of Jesus! Can any one read them without being conscious that the heart is growing warm with love and the soul strong with faith and enthusiasm? If you have studied the writings of that child of resignation, *Hafiz*, have you not oftentimes felt yourself soaring upon the wings of faith to the regions above, and there drinking plenteously the sweets of God's love in His blissful presence and encircled by His affectionate arms? When the *Upanishads* describe in stirring eloquence the sublimities of the spiritual world, what heart can crawl on the platform of vulgar cares, or forbear feeling the exalted joy and strength of the higher nature. Can it be believed that a heart that lustily thirsteth after wisdom unto salvation would reject or even view with indifference the noble ideas set forth in such books? A prejudice in this matter betrays only a disregard of truth: and a Brahmic heart abhors such a prejudice.

Atonement and Salvation

In the last tract entitled 'Atonement and Salvation', Keshub criticises with great thoroughness the Christian doctrines of sin, vicarious punishment and salvation, and sets forth the principle of spiritual atonement, believed in by the Brahmo Samaj. It is often asserted with little justification that Keshub had borrowed his early ideas of sin and salvation from Christian theology. A careful study of this tract written by him when he was only twenty-two years old, shows how unfounded this notion is. True, the consciousness of sin, imperfection, unworthiness was one of the dominant characteristics of his early *Sādhanā*. In this he

may have been deeply influenced by the life of Jesus. But there was nothing in common between his faith and the doctrines of Christian theology. Here are a few extracts from the dialogue: —

I.: Is not God Infinite in justice as He is in goodness. How then can a sin once committed be atoned for, as it has already stirred justice to the execution of its rigid and irrevocable decrees? That which is done is done ; you *must* suffer for it.

B. : True, atonement is impossible in the nature of things, if it means uncommitting a sin already committed. This is but the vulgar and popular idea of atonement * * * Atonement, scientifically considered, is nothing more than a return to God. The word 'atone' simply means to be *at one* with God—to be reconciled to him. By the commission of sin, we turn astray from Him ; we cease to enjoy His company. By atonement we renounce our sin, again draw near to Him, and enjoy the blessings of His company. Hence the turning back to God is the whole philosophy of atonement. Hence our belief that 'repentance is atonement,' because repentance is the indispensable means of turning away from iniquity, and returning to God. * * *

The very idea of delivering a sinner from his iniquity by saddling another party with it is preposterous in the extreme. Yet it is upheld with the object of reconciling God's justice and mercy. * * Let theorists dream dreams, *there is no royal road to salvation ;* there is no easy and convenient mode of atonement: there can be none. Behold then the baselessness of the stupendous fabric of the dogma of vicarious atonement! Nor is this dogma less mischievous in its practical tendencies than it is absurd in theory. By giving sinners the assurance that the awful punishment of their sins will be transferred to others provided they believe in some scheme of mediatorial atonement, and thereby dispelling all fears as to the heavy penalty which actually awaits them, it systematically encourages wickedness, far from discouraging it.

Apart from giving publicity to the subject matter of the discourses held at the *Brahma Vidyālaya,* steps were taken to consolidate the knowledge on the part of the pupils by holding periodical examinations, and awarding certificates of honour to the examinees who gave proof of proficiency. Thus the *Brahma Vidyālaya* laid the foundation for a sound reflective basis of religion, viewed as work and worship, among the young enthusiasts.

SANGAT SABHĀ

Equally if not more important, in the life history of Keshub and the country, was another institution started by him about September or October of 1860. If the *Brahma Vidyālaya* was a large study circle meant to be a reflective training ground for the mind and the heart, the *Sangat Sabhā* was a closer circle for intimate spiritual fellowship, for mutual interchange of ideas and aspirations. There were no fixed hours, no formalities observed, as for a meeting, or a lecture or a regulated discussion; no choice of set subjects except such as were dictated by the needs of the moment; no restraints, no programme. It was soul-force that brought them together, knit them together and determined the proceedings of the *Sabhā.* It was the first nucleus of a true brotherhood. None can estimate the signal services it rendered to the thought and life of the generation. And who that has had the privilege of contact with any one of those consecrated lives can deny the power of true and abiding fellowship? What the Brahmo Samaj, nay, what India wants to-day is a true brotherhood, such as that of the *Sangat,* which may yet transmute the base metal of our lives into gold. Let one of those very men testify to the work and worth of the institution:

It was mainly for religious conversation, though occasionally there was prayer ; and the influence it exercised upon the minds and lives of those who attended it was remarkable.

Strange earnestness characterized every proceeding ; all the members were sturdy young men, steadfast followers of Keshub, the quintessence of the Brahma School, where he lectured, and the old Good Will Fraternity. They met frequently, and with fiery zeal of self-reformation, laid bare their whole hearts, freely and frankly discussed their own faults, courted mutual aid and criticism, and under Keshub's guidance made most genuine progress in spiritual and moral life. Hunger and fatigue seemed to have no power over them. They sat up the whole night, from the evening to the morning twilight, in Keshub's room in a corner of the large family house of the Sens of Colutota, comparing experiences, practising penitence, making resolutions, offering prayers. They were, as if apart from, and above the rest of the world, themselves and their youthful leader their own world. They were young men fresh from the Colleges, the hope of their parents, the source of support to their families, and their guardians and friends took considerable alarm at their indiscreet enthusiasm. But in them Keshub found congenial spirits ; he magnetized them ; they magnetized him ; and together they formed a nucleus of organisation out of which the best materials of Keshub's subsequent movements were supplied.[9]

The Good Will Fraternity, the *Brahma Vidyālaya,* the *Sangat Sabha* were not mere expressions of a desire to organize institutions. They were more than that. They were a part of his being. They grew as he grew. It was not given to him to grow alone, isolated. He was destined to draw others unto him and daily grow with them in stature. His unfoldment was the unfoldment of others along with him, and theirs his. They were indeed mystic fraternities "face answering to face—heart answering to heart." These societies were only the fore-runners, in his youth, of many others that followed in due course later in life. All these sprang into being at the call of the Spirit whom he saw, heard and felt within himself, read in the hearts of his fellow devotees, in the society round about him,

[9] P. C. Mozoomdar in 'Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen', pp. 84-85.

in the history of nations, and in the universe of Nature outside. With Keshub nothing mattered but the voice and the vision of God. The whirlwind of activities which swept over his life at different stages were but the natural manifestation of his inner life. This new vision of life as an entirety was his mission to hold up before the world. The infant societies were only so many instruments in ushering in the New Age, the New Ideal, the New Dispensation yet in the making. Call them youthful efforts, early strivings after self-expression, whatever you like, but read them as a part and parcel of his being; and then alone does his whole life present itself as a continuity, full of meaning to the country and the world at large. His ardour for national unity, national education, political freedom, social regeneration, economic uplift, emancipation of women, demolition of caste and sectarianism—took colour from the New Ideal which steadily dawned upon him. Religion was nothing apart from all these, never a mere abstraction. These were to him the very flesh and blood of religion. To practise this living, loving religion what man needs is purification, so that with heart undefiled, and with its inner light undeflected, he may serve God and man. Hence, as with the Puritan Fathers of old, conscience and consecration became the watchwords of these mystic fraternities and enthusiasm the very garment of their faith.

The early history of the Sangat Sabha is replete with interest. In the month of September, 1860 there was a gathering of friends and fellow-believers in the Ultadingi garden house of Jaigopal Sen at which were present Devendranath and his sons, Keshub, and many other Brahmos. After Divine service and breakfast they engaged themselves in conversations on various topics that affected their lives individually and as members of the Samaj. In course of discussion, among various other matters the one that came to the fore was the need for a society which would afford an opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas on the spiritual requirements of its members and for devising the best means

for satisfying those requirements. The society was established then and there. Devendranath, after the manner of the Sikhs, named the society ‚Sangat Sabhā'. Enthusiasm ran high and it found its manifestation in what may well be regarded as the first street *sankirtan* procession in the Brahmo Samaj. The whole gathering consisting of Devendranath and his sons, Keshub Chunder with his young band of associates and the late Haradeb Chattopadyaya leading the procession in dance and rhythym, threaded its way along the streets towards the Brahmo Samaj, singing in unison with spontaneous ardour. This is a significant occurrence, specially in view of the fact that up to that time the *sādhanā* of the Brahmo Samaj was more or less restricted within the quiet contemplative plane of the upaniṣads. Indeed, in the earlier stages of his unfolding Devendranath had almost a sort of aversion to the vaiṣnavic type of *sankirtan* which appeared to him to savour too much of the sentimental.[10]

The Sangat societies established were three in number, one in Colutola at Keshub's residence; another elsewhere in the same locality; and the third in a quarter of Calcutta known as Simla. It was decided that, apart from their respective weekly meetings, the three should meet together once every month and that the joint meeting was to be held at the residence of Devendranath in Jorasanko. In course of time the last mentioned two societies ceased to exist. But the first which used to hold its sittings at Keshub's Colutola residence continued with unabated vigour.[11]

Philanthropic Efforts

In the first quarter of the year 1861 came the terrible famine that devastated large tracts of Upper India. Could

[10] See Maharshi's Autobiography, translated by Satyendra Nath Tagore and Indira Devi—Macmillan & Co.

[11] The vicissitudes of its later history will be found from the work entitled 'Sangat', Vol. II, published by the Navavidhan Publication Committee, 1938. See its introduction where the history is set out in detail.

Keshub's wakeful nature fail to seize this opportunity for service? He organised a regular campaign. The little community was thrown into a ferment of feeling and philanthropy. At his instance a special famine relief service was held in the Brahma Mandir. Devendranath with his scrupulous regard for details signalized the occasion with great demonstration and with a soul-stirring address. The men of the *Sangat Sabhā* and allied organizations—each did his own part to the best of his ability —begged for alms at every door. The poor helped with their mite. The women parted with their jewels. It opened the door to all-India philanthrophy. Nothing progresses like progress. In November of the same year when there was another visitation, this time nearer home, in the shape of a fever epidemic which devastated Lower Bengal, the memorable address which Keshub delivered excited a volume of public sympathy. The enthusiastic work of cooperation that followed for the relief of the distressed will testify to generations to his reality as a man of action. We see therein the beginnings of the first youth movement in India harnessing all the ardency and enthusiasm in the country to the noble cause of relief. Thus did Keshub exhort his hearers: —

The First Youth Movement

The papers I hold in my hands, and which will shortly be presented to you to invite your contributions to the proposed Fund, are indeed very valuable. I rejoice to rise with these papers in my hand, for I rise to advocate a noble cause—the cause of humanity, of truth, and of Brahmoism. I rise to discharge the sacred duty of exhorting you to make a combined effort to alleviate the sufferings of thousands of our dying countrymen.

* * * *

It is said in some quarters that our Church is mainly composed of young men and boys ; and this circumstance is

urged as an evidence of the weakness and decline of the Samaj. It is certainly true that of late we have had a pretty large number of young men in the membership of the Samaj, and in our public meetings we generally see them foremost. But does this circumstance at all derogate from the importance and worth of our Church? Does it not rather tend to the glory of Brahmoism? When proofs are not at all wanting to show that Brahmoism is doing real good to the country: when it is patent to all that our Church is indentifying itself with social and moral reforms, what matters if the Samaj has been employing the agency of young men? It is not grey hairs or wealth that we want; what we want is real earnestness in the cause of truth; an enthusiasm which regardless of the paltry considerations of wealth, intelligence or age, consecrates all to the service of the Lord in a spirit of humble resignation. If with the aid of young men our church has been enabled to inaugurate a movement for the promotion of education in India; if with their energy and zeal it has taken the first step towards the establishment of social usages and customs upon sound principles; if with their instrumentality it has succeeded in disseminating, far and wide, the living principles of its creed, which shall one day burn up the stupendous fabric of Hinduism in one general conflagration; if from their limited resources it exacted thousands of rupees for the relief of the famished people of the North-West; if, in short, with their aid it is progressing in importance and usefulness, who shall deplore their connection with the Samaj? Who will not rather hail with his whole heart such youthful accessions to our Church? With such facts before us are we not irresistibly led to the inference that Brahmoism is full of life and fire. It has the power of arming youth with unconquerable enthusiasm and ardour; it can convert rags into rich vestments, clay into gold, and turn simplicity into wisdom. Surely, where there is deep faith in the Omnipotent Lord, and a thorough reliance upon His fatherly providence, young men and boys can work wonders, and poor men achieve triumphs, which opulence and age will perhaps shrink from. If it is the wish of the Highest that young men shall promote the cause of Brahmoism, let us say with one accord "Lord, let thy will be done". And let us on our part, becoming perfectly indifferent as to whether we are

poor or illiterate, zealously endeavour to fill our souls with the sweets of faith, love, and purity, and discharge those varied duties to God and man for which we are accountable, and the neglect of which neither our limited age nor intelligence will justify. What the young men of our Church did on the occasion of the famine, a few months ago, is still fresh in my memory. It is a lasting monument to the glory of our Church, and in my life I shall never forget it. Did they not go about from door to door soliciting contributions, begging their friends, their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, their kinsmen, and neighbours to unite in that sacred work? Did they not in noble self-denial part with many a comfort of life and even some of the necessaries of life to feed their starving brethren? Did not even their wives and sisters in blessed sympathy readily part with their ornaments?

KRISHNAGAR CAMPAIGN

Amid these various activities he visited Krishnagar. It was primarily a pleasure trip taken for recoupment of health. But it turned out to be a missionary expedition. His fame as a brilliant *extempore* speaker had preceded him. Krishnagar accorded him a cordial welcome, and expressed its eagerness to hear his message. It had a distinguished tradition for learning and literature. Nothing was more welcome to Keshub than to be an instrument in creating a centre of influence there. He delivered a number of addresses on a variety of subjects: Basis of Brahmoism, Repentance, Salvation, The Aim of Life and the Necessity of Prayer, Sacrifice for God's sake etc. *Extempore* lectures were quite a new departure in the line of missionary propaganda. With Keshub it was the only method possible. He could never speak from notes, far less read a written discourse. Words came to him in such ceaseless torrents and clothed with such heavenly fire that they fell like thunderbolts on the auditory. His lectures made a profound impression on the learned and the unlearned of Krishnagar. Incidentally, Rev. Mr. Dyson felt that he could not afford

to let the message of the Brahmo Samaj go unchallenged. He thought fit to deliver counter-lectures. Keshub took up the gauntlet. Who could be more reverential to Christ than Keshub? But he attacked the lifeless dogmas of Trinitarian orthodoxy and like a young lion tore them into tatters.[12] The Christian missionary felt his own discomfiture and retired from the field.

The comment of the Tattvabodhini Patrika on the Dyson controversy was at once dignified and magnanimous. It said:

> The day Keshub Chunder spoke on Divinely revealed scripture, the local Christian Missionary Mr. Dyson who was present could not assent to any of his propositions. They amounted to no more than this, namely, that 'God imparts to the soul of every man, some commonsense truths. That is our revelation. That is our scripture. We do not acknowledge any particular book as our scripture'.
>
> Mr. Dyson said that all religions that were opposed to Christianity would in course of time die out and that ultimately Christianity would triumph. We too say with all our heart 'Truth shall triumph, not untruth'. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which Jesus has preached as the essence of Christianity shall forever remain true. If these sentiments constitute Christianity, such Christianity can never die. Such Christianity is the true Brahmo faith.

How did Keshub sum up his experiences at Krishnagar? With the lesson of love. Towards the close of a written report of his work there, which he submitted to Devendranath, he characteristically opens his heart thus: "The conviction is getting rooted in my mind that Love stands first and foremost amongst the means of propagating the Brahmo faith. A missionary that hath no love is worth nothing. Love lends patience and enables one to bear hard words, insults, ridicule and persecution. Love enables one

[12] Keshub's replies to Dyson's questionnaire formed his tenth Tract and was published in April, 1861.

to cast away self-consciousness, anger, and pride and to bend in humility before the rich as well as the poor. Love enables one quickly to bring round the truth-seeker, to vanquish the enemy, to attract and steal the hearts of all. At this moment what we need is a number of (true) missionaries. We must train up some without delay. * * * God is the propagator of His religion. He is the Preacher. We are only instruments in His hands."[13]

SELF-CONSECRATION

"Whatever he thought in his mind," said Devendranath of Keshub, "he had the power to express in speech. Whatever he said, he had the power to do. Whatever he did, he had the power of making other men do." Nothing was truer of Keshub. The thought that was now uppermost in Keshub's mind was what he expressed in the above short report of the Krishnagar expedition, dated May 12, 1861, sent by him to Devendranath. The need of the hour, he felt, was a band of men thoroughly consecrated and wholly devoted to the work of national rehabilitation. No half-measures could ever fill his mind. In God's vineyard, half-hearted love, half-time work were to him unthinkable. There is a tide in the affairs of life and he believed that for him the tide had come. As this feeling grew and grew on him, he began spontaneously to give expression to it. But it was contrary to his nature to preach a thing without practising it. Thus it appeared clear that the moment had arrived for him to give up every other vocation, and to devote himself wholly and solely to the service of God and man. Since November 1859 he had been employed in the Bank of Bengal, now the Imperial Bank of India. His pay was not big to begin with, but his prospects were undoubted. His personality and talents had already attracted the attention of the Bank authorities, who were

[13] Translated from *Acharya Keshub Chandra*, First Part.

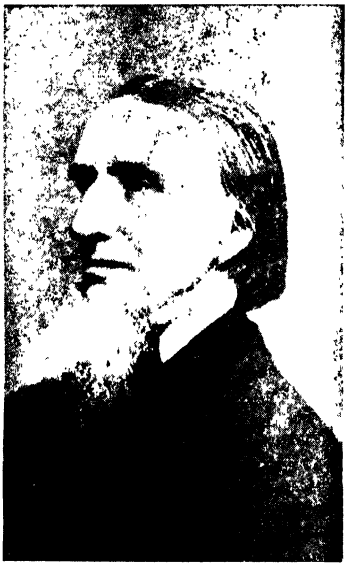
not unaware of his additional claims to recognition by reason of the distinguished services rendered to the Bank by his ancestors. But nothing weighed with Keshub. Once his mind was made up no advice, remonstrance or expostulation from friends or relations was of any avail. Just at the threshold of preferment and prosperity, on the 1st of July 1861, Keshub resigned his post in the Bank of Bengal. It was the Inner Voice again that prevailed. In Keshub's generation, such sacrifice and renunciation was unknown and was the first of its kind. But it was by no means the last. As his biographer puts it: "One act of true renunciation provokes a hundred others. The men of the *Sangat* soon began to take counsel who should follow Keshub's footsteps, and devote themselves to the service of the Church. One after another began to take leave of secular life, till the Brahmo Samaj came to possess a powerful body of apostolical workers, all in the prime vigour of life, consecrated with their families to self-sacrifice, determined to spread the spirit and principles of Hindu Theism by ceaseless labours throughout the land. The most momentous results have followed such enthusiastic propagation. Keshub's true leadership has been the leadership of such men; his real ministry has been to form the characters, and shape the destinies of such men."[14]

The Indian Mirror

In August 1861, Keshub started the *Indian Mirror,* then a fortnightly newspaper. Among other co-adjutors of Keshub in this undertaking was Monomohan Ghosh, later well-known as one of the leading members of the English Bar, and one of the foremost citizens of Calcutta. The only other English newspaper under Indian editorial control and management at the time was the *Hindu Patriot,* which accorded a warm welcome to the *Indian Mirror.* The *Mirror* had a distinguished career. Started as a fortnightly, it

[14] 'Life and Teachings', Navavidhan Trust edition (1931), pp. 85-86.

MAX MULLER



FRANCIS W. NEWMAN

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subsequently became a weekly, and in 1871 it became the first Indian daily paper in English. It fully justified its name. The old files of the *Indian Mirror* show that whatsoever was goodliest and best in India's thoughts, aspirations and efforts was reflected in its columns, and for a considerable number of years it continued to shape and prepare public opinion for the national reconstruction in progress. Not only Keshub himself but his friend and fellow-worker Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar and some time after his accomplished brother Krishna Behary Sen and his talented cousin Narendra Nath Sen (who, subsequently, joined the Theosophical Society) must be gratefully remerbered as builders of its reputation. This was the first of a series of journalistic enterprises, to be mentioned later, that came each in its proper time, each having a character all its own.

National Education and Reform

Apart from his multifarious duties as the Secretary of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, and his work as teacher, lecturer, tract-writer, editor and missionary, Keshub was quietly elaborating in his mind a comprehensive educational programme. He could not carry it out in all its details till some years after. But he was firmly convinced that the way to regeneration of the masses lay through wide-spread education, carefully adapted to the requirements of different classes of recipients. Anxious to establish contact with free-thinkers and philanthropists in other lands he opened correspondence with Francis William Newman, Miss Frances Power Cobbe and other theists and publicists in England. Keshub proposed a simultaneous agitation in England and India for educational reform, so as to impress on the Government the urgency of certain radical changes in the educational machinery of the day. Mr. Newman wrote a brochure making an appeal to the British people and Keshub himself inaugurated the agitation in India. The first broad outlines of his programme he foreshadowed

before a meeting of the Brahmo Samaj which he specially convened for this purpose on the 3rd of October 1861, in the Brahmo Samaj building.

In the address which he then delivered, he first of all emphasized the necessity on the part of the Brahmo Samaj to view life as a whole and to co-operate with all sections in every public endeavour:

* * * those who have entered deeply into the spirit of Brahmoism, and have appreciated its real character, must confess that it behoves us more than any other class of our countrymen to enter upon this undertaking. Possessed of a religion which demands the consecration of the whole life to whatever is good and true, we are expected to struggle with the utmost forth-putting of our power to promote the real welfare of India. Some have identified our creed with unpractical mysticism, some have called us a race of thinkers. But from the eyes of such the real truth is hid. That truth is this. Theism is the religion of life. It seems to develop all the energies and sentiments of man. It imparts muscles to the hands, love to the heart, a strong intellect to the mind, and piety and faith to the soul. What our Church has hitherto done has been only a preparation ; its due progress various circumstances have contributed to impede. The world has yet to see what it is capable of achieving. Brahmoism, brethren, is destined to become a power in the world. Times, however, have already materially altered. A light has dawned upon the face of our Church. Our consciences have been roused from dormancy, and stimulated to activity by the solemn calls of duty coming from all quarters. We have learnt to feel that our mission is immense as the ocean and lofty as the sky,—that duty, in its manifold varieties forms the object of our life, and whatever interferes with duty must be eschewed by us. If Brahmoism is the religion of Love, we must mix with the good of all classes and community. Whether it be the promotion of social reform, such as widow-marriage or abolition of caste, or of political good, we shall try to give efficient support to whatever is calculated to extend the cause of truth and advance the happiness of man. Universal brotherhood—co-operation with all classes for general good—is our principle.

Let us then strive with commensurate energy to make our Church what it ought to be—a source of real usefulness—foregoing all that apathy, inconsistency, and compromising policy, which have hitherto made us, Brahmos, the butt of merited censure, derision and contempt. Hypocrisy is not ours, brethren ; hypocrisy is not ours ; empty professions, barren declarations are not ours. Duty, sacred and solemn duty, *is* ours. Firmness of purpose, steadiness of resolution, consistency of character,—these constitute a genuine Brahmo. It is the recognition of these truths that is bringing our Church into the arena of public enterprises.[15]

From this broad point of view he proceeded to view the question of a comprehensive system of education which had become emergent. He pleaded for the sovereign necessity of leading an all-round life of thought, feeling and action, of meditation, devotion and service, and the urgent need of spreading education far and wide with a view to national reconstruction. If Brahmo *dharma* was the religion of love, he said, then it must be realised that it could not consist of a mere bundle of beliefs, or a passing rush of good impulses. Nor could it exhaust itself in empty praise of God in the Mandir. It must become the sovereign law of life and bear abundant fruit in acts of service. It must invigorate the body, inspire the soul, and fire the will for serving those around. It must naturally manifest itself in initiation of movements of reform all along the line, and in co-operation with existing movements of reform wherever found. It would not do to depend on Government for help in every particular. Must they even bake our bread and cook our food? Self-help and self-reliance must be the watch-word for all workers. They had only to be conscious of the fact that they were workers in God's vineyard, and the strength born of faith would be theirs immediately. He indicated three main lines of work: first, radical reformation of the

[15] See full report of the address in the Tattwavodhini Patrika No. 213 of Kartik, Sak 1783 and Indian Mirror, 1861; subsequently published in Keshub Chunder Sen's *Discourses and Writings*, Part I.

prevalent system of education, divesting it of mere memory work and cram, and stressing the education of the heart as well as of the mind. Secondly, the education of the lowlier classes. Education should not be the monopoly of the rich and the prosperous. Of what avail would it be if education merely touched the surface and left the bulk of society in darkness? How would the barriers of caste be broken unless education were thrown open to all, irrespective of so-called rank and respectability? Thirdly, spread of education among women. The country could never prosper unless and until the light of education penetrated the zenana. Educate the men as you might, the women folk, if left uneducated, would always be a drag on society. Women must first be rescued out of their deplorable condition before salvation could come to India.

In this lecture we find the broad outlines of the problem of education as conceived by Keshub Chunder Sen as far back as 1861. More than three quarters of a century have passed since and why is it that we find ourselves faced to-day by the self-same problems? The remedy is as far from us as ever. We still sit like children in the market place, peevishly grumbling, 'We have played unto you and ye have not sung; we have piped unto you and ye have not danced'. Schemes and projects too numerous to mention have come and gone but the solution of the problem of education is not in sight. Is it not because we have tried only to water the branches leaving the roots of the tree of life neglected? Let Keshub answer:

To live religiously is to live naturally: to live naturally is to act up to the dictates of conscience. To live to nature is to live to God. *There can be no corruption in the nature of man as created by, and coming directly from, the hands of God.* Our impurities are not God's creation but the creation of our free will; and unreasonable is it to charge nature, and thereby nature's God, with sins of our own doing. Man is destined by Providence to pursue the path of virtue and truth: not to pursue it is unnatural.

Man's destiny, then, is to attain God, or make progress unto Him. Progress or development is the end of our being. This is the true vocation or mission of man in this world. Every man is thus a missionary. We have been sent to this world with a mission sacred and solemn, for the proper discharge of which we are accountable to Him Who hath sent us. * * *[16]

Untouchability and Social Reform

"There can be no corruption in the nature of man as created by, and coming directly from, the hands of God." What a terrible indictment on the so-called doctrine of untouchability! If only this truth was realised by the nation and its lesson accepted as the basis of action the problem of untouchability would be instantly solved. No half-measures, no coquetting with caste, no cajoling with orthodoxy. The futility of half-measures is being proved every-day. Despite the infinite solicitude and sacrifice of Mahatma Gandhi, the age-old and decrepit *Varṇāśrama dharma*[17] rises again and again phoenix-like out of its ashes, and flaps its wings with new life and vigour at every re-birth. And on the other hand, we behold the spectacle of religion being dragged into the mire of political diplomacy. The leaders of the so-called 'untouchables' threaten and say, "Give us a weightage, or a handsome majority or else we embrace Islam, or Sikhism, and thus secure political ascendency." As if religion is a pawn in the game of politics! Keshub Chunder Sen from the early age of twenty-two raised a solemn note of warning against prostituting religion, or denying it its natural function as the foundation of social and national reconstruction. He was deeply convinced that

[16] Lecture on 'The Destiny of Human Life' (1862).

[17] *Varṇāśrama* is the institution of caste based on the economic principle of hereditary persuasions, such as the *Brahmin* or the sacerdotal caste, for religious ministration, the *Kshatriya* or the warrior caste, for protection of the realm, the *Vaishya* or the commercial caste, for trade and business, and the *Sudra* or the servitor caste, for menial service. With the impact of Western civilisation, and the advance of thought, this system has now become obsolete and any revival of it must be in the nature of an anachronism.

in view of India's past, her genius and traditions, she could hope for no social or political regeneration unless it were through a movement having for its basis a genuine moral and religious consciousness. Life, individual as well as national, must be viewed as an integral whole and progress must mean progress of that whole through natural spiritual unfoldment:

> But this progress must be of the whole life: we must seek the development of the whole man. All the compartments of life must advance in the way of truth; all the powers and sentiments of the mind must be cultivated and developed. In whatever way we choose to divide life, the principle for which we are contending remains unaffected; all the ideas and energies of which we are possessed, must be duly cultivated; the neglect of any one of them is so much departure from our destiny. This normal development of the whole man—this "one continued growth of heavenward enterprise," is the true destiny of human life. Our progress must also be ceaseless and constant.
>
> There is a unity in religion which, however our wishes may incline and theories dictate, can never be fractioned. Religion is not a thing of "shreds and patches". It is one indivisible unity which, if you seek to have it, must be sought in its entirety and fulness. To be religious in the morning but not in the evening; to be religious in seasons of prayer alone, but not in practical life; to be religious in special conditions of life, is to have the shadow of religion—not the reality. Religion is not confined to the heart or the intellect; it pervades the whole life and enters into every creek and corner of its varied details, illuminating and ennobling all its thoughts and feelings, its words and actions.[18]

Did Keshub ask for too much? Would it not have been expedient for the moment to have put aside the claims of conscience, and come to a compromise with orthodoxy? Would it not have been more practical on his part to have kept religion separate from social reform—to have suffered

[18] Lecture on 'The Destiny of Human Life', January 11, 1862—K. C. Sen's 'Lectures in India'.

a severance between the realms of worship and of work? Instead of throwing himself right out of the pale of orthodox society, why did he not remain within it by compromising a few of his principles, so that a few others might find acceptance with the parent community? These questions have again and again been asked. But expediency and policy have no place in the logic of conscience. No real progress or reconstruction has ever been achieved by moral compromise. What is more, expediency has been tried and found wanting. Later events in his own life would show that the prudent among his co-adjutors who held back in alarm saying 'Thus far and no further,' and took to the path of compromise with orthodoxy, came utterly to grief. Keshub knew one way, and that was to listen to the Inner Voice. In unessentials, he was always prepared to allow for peculiarities of tastes and for unmeaning, if harmless, social rites and customs. But in essentials he would have no compromise. Hence Keshub from the outset set his face against a separate secular movement of reform. He definitely took his stand on establishing the equality of man *on religious* grounds and for making a frontal attack on all manner of inequalities and iniquities thriving under the sanction of so-called religion. Far from making a covert approach, he declared the line of his attack from the house-tops. Here is an instance:

Hence social reformation must be based upon religion. It is true that the reformation of social customs and usages may, to a great extent, be accomplished independently of religion ; but it is not true that social reformation can be thorough and complete without religious advancement. Religion, by improving the mind and investing conscience with supreme authority, lays the axe at the very root of corruption, whether in the individual character or in the institutions of society. It is futile to attempt to reform society thoroughly so long as prejudices lie deep in the heart of the nation. Social reformation must therefore be preceded by and based upon religious reformation. This has been adopted by the Samaj as the mainspring

of all measures of social reform. The Hindu meets his religion at every turn. In eating, drinking, moving, sitting, standing he is to adhere to sacred rules, to depart from which is sin and impiety. Under such circumstances, how is it possible to overthrow all the social evils of Hinduism, when faith, in its authority, is suffered to reign undisturbed in the heart? The Samaj does not seek to destroy caste as an institution distinct from Hinduism, by setting up a purely secular movement to oppose its laws and principles. It seeks to establish the equality of man on religious grounds, and thus indirectly abolish caste distinctions. It wages a purely religious war with all evils, theological and social.

The thorough reformation of native society is the object of the Brahmo Samaj. It proposes not merely to destroy the superstitious foundation and all superstitious appendages of Hindu society, but likewise to give it a re-organisation upon the basis of pure faith, and adorn it with useful institutions. In regard to caste, for example, the destructives represent it to their minds as a horrid institution apart from Hinduism and direct their attention and energy to its abolition. Let members of different castes promiscuously dine in public, let them subscribe their names to a covenant and pledge themselves inviolably to ignore the distinctions of caste in all that they do ; such is their plan of operation. The constructive policy is—bring all men within the bosom of One Church, under the feet of One True God, the Universal Father of all: community of interests and feelings will keep up social fellowship, and caste will naturally perish in the uncongenial atmosphere of religious brotherhood,—destroy caste but construct brotherhood.[19]

While pleading, however, for the primacy of conscience and faith Keshub always recommended the middle path that steered clear of dangerous experiments, on the one hand, and cold calculating timidity, on the other. "We must neither rush impetuously into dangerous experiments of social innovation, nor must we yield ourselves wholly to the cold calculating policy of the time-server." Again

[19] Lecture on 'Social Reformation in India'—Feb. 21, 1863.

and again, while leading the vanguard of progress in regard to education and emancipation of women, we find him resorting to this middle path and avoiding dangerous exotics, so that the progress of education might, in his own words, be "at once natural and national". It was to no small degree from amongst his own followers, imbued with the spirit of Western manners and customs, that he received the bitterest opposition to "the natural and national" programme which alone he was prepared to sponsor.

If the lectures made the public declarations of principle, there was the *Sangat* for coming to practical decisions. It formulated the code of conduct to be followed. In due course, the *Sangat* laid down what would then be regarded as a most revolutionary code: Caste must be given up; so must every badge or mark savouring of idolatry or caste; the sacred thread, denoting superiority of man to man must be abjured; no countenance must be given to the dancing of public women (*nautches*); all members must practise strict temperance, impart to their women-folk the light of knowledge and religion they had themselves received, make their wives true partners in life, and be scrupulously clean and honest in their dealings with neighbours. It was not a mere paper code,[20] but was carried out with strictness and punctiliousness such as would recall the memory of the Puritan Fathers of old. As a natural consequence, the members proceeded to discard the sacred thread and one after another made short shrift of it. When *Acharya* Devendranath saw the resolution, he looked at his own sacred thread and said 'why, then, this must go, and promptly discarded it. The elderly members of the Samaj, prudent and pusillanimous, were little prepared for such a catastrophic change. But the broader mind of Devendranath had already turned over and examined the position which was fast arising. He evidently preferred to go with Keshub and the young enthusiasts, as far as he could. His

[20] Published towards the end of 1861 under the caption *Brāhma dharmer anusthān.*

sympathies hitherto were definitely with Keshub and the progressives. On the 26th July 1861, Devendranath solemnised the marriage of his second daughter Sukumari Devi with Hemendranath Mukherji strictly according to unidolatrous Brahma rites. The ceremony based on Vedic texts was framed by Devendranath himself and the charge to the bride and the bridegroom was added by Keshub. Thus under the sunshine of the *Acharya's* approval Keshub felt that his ideal of national reform and reconstruction was well within reach.

Mirror of Activities in 1860-61

We get a vivid picture of the activities of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj during the year 1861 from the report presented by Keshub in his capacity as Secretary of the Samaj at its annual general meeting on the 22nd of December, 1861. The meeting was presided over by Babu Baikunthanath Sen. The Office-bearers appointed for the ensuing year were the following: *President,* Devendranath Tagore; *Members of the Executive Committee,* Devendranath Tagore, Kalikrishna Dutt, Baikunthanath Sen, Nilmony Chatterji, Kanai Lal Pyne, Thakurdas Sen; *Secretary,* Keshub Chunder Sen; *Assistant Secretary,* Ananda Chandra Vedantavagis; Editor of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika,* Tarak Nath Dutt. It was decided at the meeting that the Annual General Meeting was to be held not in the month of Pous, as theretofore, but in the month of Baisakh.

The report which followed gives a clear indication not only of the activities but also of the aspirations of the then Brahmo Samaj. It refers to its philanthropic efforts in connection with the famine in the United Provinces and the epidemic of fever in lower Bengal. In regard to the problem of education, after a passing reference to the general meeting of the Samaj held on the 18th of Asvin (October, 1861)[21] from which a letter was addressed to in-

[21] See *supra* under head 'Scheme of National Education and Reform.'

fluential friends and sympathizers of India in England for help and support, Keshub proceeded to deal with more concrete educational efforts. The first and foremost was the Brahma Vidyālaya (the Brahma School) which had held its second annual examination with the result that eight examinees had successfully passed. Apart from the main school, branches had been established at Bhawanipur and Chinsurah at which about one hundred and fifty pupils were being regularly trained in the principles of the Brahmo faith. Eleven candidates had passed out of the Bhawanipur Brahmo School. Secondly, with a view to give wide publicity, the principles of the Brahmo faith had been presented to the public in the form of small tracts. Thirdly, the life-giving sermons and exposition (*vyākhyānas*) delivered from the pulpit by Āchārya Devendranath Tagore had been published and were helping men on to the paths of righteousness. Fourthly, a book entitled *Brāhmo dharmer anusthān* was in the press and would soon be published. It contained in easy language lessons on work and worship which would be of great help to seekers after truth. Fifthly, in Colutola a school for children had been established which was meeting every Saturday evening.

Report (1861): Mirror of Activities

But all this did not bring forth results commensurate with requirements. The Brahma Vidyālaya met only once a week, and after all there were very few attending it; what was needed was to impart knowledge of God (*Brahma Vidyā*) along with other knowledge, *aparā-vidyā*. For this purpose Keshub submitted, there should be established under the auspices of the Brahmo Samaj a school in which instruction should be imparted on altogether different lines, so as to admit of systematic training in spiritual matters along with other knowledge. For it was only by impressing upon tender minds the principles of true religion that one could hope speedily to uproot prejudices and superstitious

from the land, and to establish the reign of Truth. About two months ago, a letter had been addressed to Mr. Francis Newman in England on the spread of education in India inviting his co-operation and support. But apart from seeking the help of others it was the duty of the Brahmos themselves to put forth their best exertions and to do whatever lay in their own powers. Thus Keshub exhorted the assembly to try and husband all their resources and to establish a school with the special features above described.

Another important point stressed by the Secretary was the absence of any method or system in the matter of propagation of the Brahmo faith. This he pointed out, could be traced to the absence of any systematic training for teachers or preachers. If a Brahma Vidyālaya was established it was necessary, first of all, to employ well-trained teachers to take charge of the classes. Even missionaries who would go forth to hold up before others the principles and practices of the Brahmo Samaj had not that solid foundation of character, or that thorough training, that could alone enable them to discharge their duties satisfactorily. It should, therefore, be definitely laid down as a rule that whosoever should be appointed as teacher, minister or missionary must first have gone through a course of systematic training qualifying him for those functions.

One of the all-important matters that we find foreshadowed before this momentous meeting by Keshub, was the establishment of a Representative Assembly, *Pratinidhi-Sabhā*. The object of this body was to be to cement unity among the different branch Samajes established at various places. A representative from each of the Samajes was to be placed on the central body, and these representatives would be in a position to exchange ideas and thereby to promote such uniformity as was needed among all the Brahmo Samajes in regard to their common life and effort. By way of illustration he observed that matters relating to *nāmakaraṇa* (christening ceremony) *dīkhṣā* (intiation ceremony) *vivāha* (marriage ceremony) as well as such other

matters as affected the Brahmo community could come within the scope of joint discussion and decision. The society would thus tend not only to promote fellowship and unity amongst the different samajes but also uniformity of action in furthering their common object.[22]

The last named proposition, namely, regarding the establishment of the *Pratinidhi Sabhā,* did not materialize till the 30th of October, 1864 when at a meeting held on the first floor of the Brahmo Samaj the Sabhā took birth.[23]

The Ordination

It was a wonderful five-year-plan of Providence (1857-1862)—the period of his preparation for ministry. With prayers and penitences, vows and sacrifices, work and worship, with educational, philanthropic and journalistic efforts the five years passed like a whirlwind. In April 1862, Devendranath sprang a surprise on every one, including Keshub, by his announcement of Keshub's ordination as *Āchārya* on the first day of the Bengali Shakabda 1784 (13th April, 1862). With the exception of Pandit Ram Chandra Vidyāvāgiś—in earlier days and under entirely different circumstances—no one had before been installed as *Āchārya* (Minister) of the Brahmo Samaj. They were all *Upāchāryas* (sub-Ministers) under the venerated Devendranath who was the Āchārya. Moreover, the idea of a non-Brahmin minister bore on its face the mischievous portent of a radical change of outlook. Was the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj to depart from the even tenor of its life and take to a course all but revolutionary? Whence this suddenness? This is how the Maharshi himself accounted for it:

I had pitched my tent at a place called Ghuskarā, not far from Burdwan, in a mango grove, containing thousands of trees. It was about mid-day. And there the voice came to me

[22] *Adhibeśan* (Proceedings of the Brahma Samaj of India, including proceedings of the Pratinidhi Sabha) pp. 1-9 Brahmo Tract Society, 1917.
[23] See Chapter under the head 'Pratinidhi Sabhā'.

saying "Appoint Keshub the minister of the Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj shall grow and prosper under him." I returned to Calcutta and determined to make the appointment. The elderly Brahmos entreated me not to do this. They said, "Appoint him *Upāchārya,* do not appoint him *Āchārya.*" Keshub Babu was not prepared for this honour. But the voice of God came to me, I had received the inspiration, and I determined to act accordingly. Such leadings (*chālanā*) I have often received during the progress of the Brahmo Samaj.

Thus Devendranath, as in a prophetic vision, saw the ample space which Keshub was to fill in the future history of the Brahmo Samaj. No one is more competent to speak of this attitude of Devendranath towards Keshub than Keshub's intimate friend and biographer Protap Chunder Mozoomdar. This is how he writes about it:

In Devendra's prophetic eye, Keshub centred in himself the whole hope and promise of the future Brahmo Samaj, the ideal spirituality of the rising generation, the gifts and blessings of Providence in the land. Everything he did or said carried a good omen to Devendra's fatherly heart ; every feature of his face and mind was a gleam of the Light Eternal to his imaginative trusting soul. Keshub's enthusiasm filled him with the electricity of the highest spheres, Keshub's sympathy intoxicated him, Keshub's intelligence deepened and confirmed his own wisdom, he found a marvel of religious genius in Keshub Chunder Sen. This excessive regard annoyed many, and was looked upon as a sort of idolatry. Till past midnight the two often sat together, the mature man of fifty and the young enthusiast of twentyfive, and out-watched the whole company of attendant Brahmos. They sat together face to face, absorbed in the ecstasy or transcendent spiritual intercourse, drunk with mutual sympathy and communion. Every wish Keshub expressed about the Brahmo Samaj was sacred to his generous friend, while Keshub carried out, like a dutiful son, every responsibility that was lovingly reposed upon him.[24]

[24] 'The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen' by P. C. Mozomdar, Navavidhan Trust, third edition (1931), p. 93.

To return to the narrative, the investiture was to take place in the course of the Bengali New Year's Day service on the 1st of Baisakh, Śak 1784 corresponding to the 13th April 1862. Preparations were set on foot for the momentous occasion. Devendranath did nothing without bestowing attention on every little detail, and everything was done in keeping with the solemnity, the sanctity and the joyousness of the occasion. It was an impressive service, ending with the following charge to Keshub Chunder, who was given by the Maharshi the title of Brahmānanda (Rejoicer in God):—

The Charge to Brahmānanda

Sreeman Keshub Chunder! This grave responsibility which you are about to undertake—I know that through it endless good will result to this faith. You shall with unconquered spirit bear it day and night. You shall endeavour to advance the Brahmo Samaj and to dispel darkness and dissension from the minds of Brahmos. You shall not be inimical to, or speak ill of, any established religion; your teaching should be calculated to promote bonds of unity among all Brahmos. Express your thoughts unreservedly and fearlessly, but always be humble. Respect the elders. Give unto every one the respect that is due. The work which you are about to undertake is difficult; but do not underrate yourself because you are young in age. The founder of our faith, the great-souled Rammohan Roy, left the country for the sake of religion at the age of sixteen. The urge that led him at the age of sixteen remained in his heart for all time. Those that make sacrifices at an early age for the sake of religion, never despond. Out of your own will, make an offering of your mind and heart and soul to God. Neither by wealth nor by power, but by sacrifice alone can He be found. Never be dismayed in having to make sacrifices for the sake of religion. Stake your life to sow seeds of the Brahmo faith in the hearts of Brahmos.

Now let your soul be immersed in the ocean of nectar. Meditate on the supreme wisdom and power of the Creator

of the Universe, the supreme God who is the source of all intelligence. He is now consecrating you with the nectar of Heaven. By his command too I am installing you in the office of Āchārya. By assuming the office of Āchārya of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj may you spread good all round.

Towards the conclusion of the charge he presented Keshub with a copy of the *Brahmo-dharma-grantha* and then adjured him thus:—

Do accept this *Brahmo-dharma grantha*. Even if the Himalayas are laid low and crushed into atoms, not an iota of truth contained herein shall perish. Let even the ocean dry up, yet not one of these truths shall be falsified. After the manner of the *agnihotris* of old, who used to preserve the holy fire, you shall keep alive the flame of the Brahmo faith. Brahmos! from this day you shall lend all support to the Āchārya and accept his teaching with respect. Thus will the Brahmo faith be glorified.

So saying he presented Keshub with the instrument of appointment dated the 13th April, 1862, framed in gold on which the Āchārya's duties and responsibilities were set forth in beautiful language, the document being signed at foot by Devendranath himself. It ran as follows:

OM TAT SAT

Brahmajñāna, Brahmadhyāna, Brahmānandarasapāna To Keshub Chunder Brahmānanda, Āchārya, Calcutta Brahmo Samaj: By the grace of God you are appointed this day Āchārya of the Brahmo Samaj. By your thoughts, words and deeds you shall discharge your duties whole-heartedly. Let your precepts and practices be to the Brahmos as steps to immortality. You shall impart to them such wise counsel and place before them such good example as will lift their minds and souls up to the Creator, the Preserver and the Provider of the universe ; as will foster love of religion, purity and righteousness ; as will dispel hatred and dissension and establish a bond

of union amongst them. In prosperity and adversity, amid praise and dispraise, honour and abuse you shall unperturbed preach the truths of Brahmo Dharma. Regardless of your own honour, prestige or authority you shall glorify God. May God protect you. Let your knowledge and faith grow from more to more. May your body grow strong, your mind powerful, your intellect resplendent, your piety selfless, your heart tranquil and pure, and your tongue sweet. Let your eyes behold goodly things and your ears hear goodly words! Peace, Peace, Peace!

The appointment brought great rejoicings to the younger section who looked upon Keshub as their natural leader. To Keshub the recognition was a matter of deep thankfulness. It came to him as a divine benediction on his efforts. Henceforth, Devendranath came to be known as the Pradhānāchārya (Chief Minister).[25]

The Second Trial

Great as was the event, taken by itself, it was destined to become greater by the trial of faith that went with it. The day of his ordination proved to be the day of his excommunication. Keshub was determined to bring his young wife to the Jorasanko house to take part in the divine service on that momentous occasion. The angry patriarchs of the Colutola family would not have it. They had already put up with a great deal of insubordination, as they thought, on Keshub's part. But they set their face resolutely against this fresh outrage on decency and orthodoxy. Keshub was inexorable. Quietly, but with infinite firmness, and in the presence of the crowd of forbidding relatives the young couple left the family mansion and proceeded to their destination. "He had that about his face", observes Mozoomdar, "which on great emergencies compelled immediate

[25] It was so decided by a resolution at a meeting of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj convened on the 8th April, 1862, *i.e.*, a few days before Keshub's ordination as *Ācharya* (Minister).

obedience." And so he triumphed. A word must be said here of the little girl-wife who thus stood by Keshub's side in this ordeal and faced it with admirable courage and trust. Little did she know then that she was performing the first rite of *yugal-sādhanā* of which she and Keshub gave such a splendid example later in life! This was only the beginning of that life of struggle and endurance which they were destined jointly to lead. Throughout Keshub's trials and successes she stood by her husband's side, co-operated with him in trust and veneration, faithful to the last. And when the day of bitter parting came, who knew better than she did that Keshub had only passed from glory to glory! At the conclusion of the ordination ceremony, he received a letter from his irate uncle purporting to forbid him from entering the family dwelling-house which he had disgraced by his insubordinate conduct. With the doors of his own house thus closed against him, with the love and ministration of his beloved mother and brothers cruelly denied him, with the withdrawal from his reach of every help and every comfort, Keshub launched upon his ministry naked of all worldly resources, clothed with the vestments of poverty and privation. But what he lost for the time being was more than made up for by the fond fatherly affection of Devendranath who at once warmly received Keshub and his wife into his household. There they stayed for months without being made to feel for a moment that they were strangers. The sons of Devendranath were more than brothers and the daughters received Keshub's wife with open arms into their midst as one of their very own. The relationship thus established proved life-long and never-to-be-forgotten. Keshub, however, was visited with a prolonged and painful illness which kept him bedridden for months. At times, there was great anxiety felt about his recovery. It was not till the end of the year that Keshub could be taken to a rented house near his family dwelling-house where his mother could come and offer him her loving ministrations.

MAHAMSHI'S PARK STREET HOUSE

Woman's Place in the Samaj

This act of Keshub, taking his wife to the Jorasanko house to be by his side on the day of his ordination, is symbolic of the new ideal of the future Brahmo Samaj. Hitherto woman had occupied none but a subsidiary place in the Brahmo Samaj. She had not come into her own. This threw open the gateway of fuller life to womanhood, and has since, through Keshub's organised efforts and by definitely marked stages, enabled the daughters of India to participate in the larger life of the world to which they are by birth-right entitled. This is how Rev. P. C. Mozoomdar, Keshub's biographer, chronicles the event. "Thus was laid the first stone of woman's education and emancipation in the Brahmo Samaj. Henceforward the wives of the Brahmos began to be recognized as a factor in the community, means began to be devised for their higher education, improvement and welfare. Keshub began to write a few well-chosen precepts under the heading of *Streer Prati Upadeśa* (Precepts To the Wife). Plans were discussed as to how ladies might be accommodated in the prayer-hall of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Altogether, the movement seemed to take a new start".[26]

Controversy with Christian Propagandists

The year 1863 opened propitiously. Reinstated in his family dwelling-house, restored to all the rights and privileges there as an independent member, his disputes with his uncle over his affairs amicably settled, Keshub once more threw himself with all the enthusiasm of his nature into the work that lay before him. On return to his house his first act was that of the Brahmo householder to celebrate the *jâta-karma* (thanks-giving ceremony on the birth of a child) of his first-born, Karuna Chandra. It was performed with unidolatrous Brahmo rites, of course, and with due pomp and circumstance.

[26] See *infra* for account of later efforts.

One of the notable events of the year was the controversy with Christian propagandists about the faith and principles of the Brahmo Samaj. Keshub, always reverential to Christ, and friendly to messengers of Christ in all their efforts after public weal, had had no occasion since the Dyson controversy to pick up the gauntlet thrown by them. Meanwhile the Brahmo Samaj, through the personality of Devendranath and Keshub Chunder, had attained a prominence and popularity which to the less thoughtful of the Christian missionaries appeared detrimental to their cause. This found expression through the writings and speeches of Rev. Lal Behari Dey, an Indian Christian convert and a *Padre*—"one of the first fruits of Dr. Duff's labours". He started a weekly journal, the *Indian Reformer,* and in its columns opened a bitter campaign of ridicule and raillery against the faith and philosophy of the Brahmo Samaj. Indeed, he utilised the press as well as the platform for the purpose, and challenged Keshub to defend the Brahmo Samaj if he could. Thus lectures and counter-lectures followed in quick succession with the result that the Brahmo Samaj emerged out of it not only amply vindicated but considerably reinforced in power, influence and popularity.

The Brahmo Samaj Vindicated (1863)

The lecture that he delivered in April, 1863 entitled 'The Brahmo Samaj Vindicated' was not only a masterpiece of oratory but, in closeness of reasoning, dignity of expression and breadth of outlook, stands to this day unparalleled in the literature of controversy. It should be read in entirety in order to form an estimate of the earnestness and thoroughness with which Keshub set about refuting the charges brought against the Samaj. It was after this lecture, to which Dr. Alexander Duff listened intently, that he made the famous observation: "The (Brahmo) Samaj is a power and a power of no mean order—in the midst of us."[27]

[27] 'Christian Work for July'.

BRAHMO BANDHU SABHA (1863)

(Society of Theistic Friends)

In the same year, 1863, was established the Brahmo Bandhu Sabha (Society of Theistic Friends) with the five-fold object of—(1) forming a bond of union amongst the Brahmo Samajes at various places (there were forty-one branch Samajes at the time) besides four Samajes at Calcutta and thus co-ordinating the methods of mission work to be adopted—(2) printing and publishing suitable books and pamphlets for the welfare of women—(3) promoting general welfare, establishing Brahmo schools, organizing lectures and publishing books and tracts; also addresses in simple language for the edification of the general public in the town and countryside—(4) establishing dispensaries for medical relief and administering comforts to the mind and body of the sick and the infirm—(5) publication of suitable books on the Brahmo faith.

On the 1st March 1862, Keshub had already started and was since carrying on the Calcutta College on approved lines for the moral and intellectual education of young men. The teachers at this College were Keshub's co-adjutors, all selfless men after his heart, working whole-heartedly without remuneration. It was at this College that Keshub's youngest brother Krishna Bihary Sen and two of Devendranath's sons received their education. The special feature of the College was the imparting of moral training along with the ordinary syllabus.

The present activities of the Samaj were more particularly directed to the welfare of women, so as to make them realise the supreme position of usefulness they enjoyed in the social and religious reconstruction in progress. A suitable syllabus of studies was drawn up for promoting and assisting the education of girls at home, so that those who were not in a position to avail themselves of the education imparted in the few existing girls' schools might still not have to go without any education at all. Another syllabus

was prepared for elderly ladies and measures were taken to offer them facilities for carrying on self-education. It was to the Brahmo Bandhu Sabhā that Devendranath delivered his famous address entitled 'My experiences of twenty-five years in the Brahmo-Samaj' which presents a connected account of the development of the Samaj from the earliest times to the year 1864, in Maharshi's chaste Bengali.[28]

[28] The first of such connected accounts (up to the year 1860) appears to have been written in Bengali by the late Rajnarain Bose and presented before the Annual General Meeting of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj held on the 7th Pous 1782 (Sak), corresponding with the 20th December 1860. In it he observes "The authorities of the Samaj have entrusted me with the most pleasant duty of writing a history of the gradual development of Brāhma Dharma"—Rajnarain Bose's works.

MAHARSHI'S JORASANKO HOUSE
(showing his room)

CHAPTER XVI

VISION OF A LARGER RECONSTRUCTION (1862-1866)

In the midst of all these activities, there was dawning upon Keshub, clearer and clearer every day, the vision of a wider and larger Brahmo Samaj. Intensely national and liberal-minded as he was, the Brahmo Samaj of his conception fast outstripped the confines of Bengal and we find him again and again, in his utterances pointing the path to a greater Theism for all India—a National Religion, a National Church. Nay more. The vision of a Universal Church of catholic Theism rose before his eyes, such as would make the whole world unted at the footstool of God. Its forms of expression, its modes of realization would be different with different peoples—would be National—but the eternal verities on which such brotherhood was based would ever remain Universal. From the earliest days of his ministry this dominating idea continued to determine his conduct and career. It gained in vividness and precision as time went on. But the essential idea was there from the earliest days of his ministry. As early as 1862 we find it clearly expressed in the sermon delivered by him on the occasion of the thirty-second anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj. "The Brahmo Samaj," says he, "will unite the East and the West, the North and South."[1] In his famous prayer at the special family service held on that occasion, at the Jorasanko house of the Tagores, he thus expresses it:

Our hope that all the world will be united as one family can never be in vain. Gradually, family with family will unite till all families will merge in one. In God's Kingdom there can be no two families—all will become one. It is only the beginning of it to-day in Bengal.[2]

[1] & [2] See *Acharya Keshub Chunder* in Bengali by Upadhyaya Gour Gobinda Roy (Part I).

This idea of building up God's undivided family was predominant throughout, along with the idea of breaking down portions of the old structure, as a preliminary. The latter comprehended various items, such as breaking down barriers between man and man; removal of caste, untouchability, disabilities of all sorts; overpowering sectarianism etc., all these being only means to the sovereign end of constructing a wider and wider family. Were these ideas favoured by the *Pradhānāchārya?* There can be no doubt that they were, up to a certain point. Much more in his private letters of this period than in his public utterances, we find his entire approval of the reformative idea. Thus on the 7th Asarh, 1783 (A.D. 1861) he writes: "It seems proper now to devise means for having inter-caste marriages validated by legislation."[3] On the 25th Bhadra, 1783 *Śak* (A.D. 1861) in a letter, which should be read and re-read by every sincere lover of reform, he observes, "There is no doubt that legislative recognition must be sought for the rites of Brahmo marriage, but even if that cannot be obtained, where is the harm?"[4] On the 13th Magh, 1783 (A.D. 1861), he again writes, "There are no distinctions of caste among the Brahmos. There can be inter-marriage between Brahmins and Sudras"[5] (the highest and the lowest of the two original castes). In fact, more than one inter-caste marriage was solemnised in the Brahmo Samaj, if not with the *Pradhanacharya's* active participation, at least with his tacit approval. At the same time Devendranath never made a secret of his fundamental principle that the Brahmo Samaj must never go outside the pale of the Hindu community but must initiate and extend reforms from within the Hindu fold. The clash between Keshub and Devendranath which, shortly afterwards, led to their unavoidable separation was the natural consequence of a clash between these two opposing principles. Those that

[3] *Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore* (Biography in Bengali by Ajit Kumar Chakravarty, 1916), p. 339.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 328-329.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 363.

favoured the latter principle had to turn their backs at reforms for the sake of remaining within the parent community. Those that whole-heartedly favoured reforms and reconstruction were, much against their will, thrown clean out of Hindu society by the indignant orthodoxy of the day.

Tour in Madras and Bombay

At this juncture in February, 1864 Keshub conceived the idea of coming into direct personal contact with other parts of India and as a beginning started on a tour through the presidencies of Madras and Bombay. He sailed from Calcutta on the 9th February and reached Madras on the 14th where he made a few days' stay making the acquaintance of the leading people and discussing with them the possibilities of establishing a Society on the lines of the Brahmo Samaj, in Madras. His lecture at the Pacchayyappa's Hall, on 'The Duties and Responsibilities of the Educated in Madras', which was attended by almost all the enlightened and influential Indians, and a fair number of Europeans, made a profound impression and they called him the Thunderbolt of Bengal, marvelling at his eloquence and earnestness. Some of them strongly insisted on his remaining on in Madras for a while to "put the stones together" of the great social edifice he exhorted Madras in his lecture to build. Keshub was unable to stay as he was bound for Bombay. But we find the following interesting entry in his Diary of 26th February. "I have every reason to hope that if a man, sufficiently qualified, lives among the people as a missionary for sometime, his labours will be crowned with success. * * * Some one must lead, the multitude will follow. Let the Brahmo Samaj extend her mission, and all India will follow."

From Madras to Bombay. All opportunities were afforded him for coming into contact and exchanging ideas with all sections of the community. He lectured in the

Town Hall and in the Framji Cowasji Hall, conducted divine service, held discussions and impressed upon all the need for immediate and earnest endeavour. His lecture on 'The Rise and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj' was attended by all the notabilities of Bombay and was deeply appreciated. The influence of his eloquent appeals and his genuine efforts at constructive work in Madras and Bombay did not remain restricted to those towns only. It permeated all parts of the Peninsula, for every newspaper gave them due publicity. The *Madras Daily News,* the *Madras Observer,* the (Madras) *Athenaeum,* the *Nilghiri Excelsior,* the *Bombay Gazette,* the *Times of India* (Bombay), the *Native Opinion,* the *Bombay Saturday Review,* the *Indu Prakash,*—all took up the cause and declared their conviction that the time was opportune for making a real move in the direction of reform and reconstruction, as pleaded by Keshub. Thus the planting of reform strongholds in Bombay and Madras now became a mere matter of time. On return home Keshub's idea of an all-embracing, all-India National Church became a vivid and vital part of all his teachings and programme of work.

PRATINIDHI SABHĀ

One of his earliest measures was in October 1864 to organise the *Pratinidhi Sabhā* (Representative Society) with a view to consolidate the Samajes scattered all over the country with no common tie. This is one of those Sabhas or societies which have, as observed above,[6] appeared at different times as mile-stones in the gradual advance of the Brahmo Samaj movement. They represent distinct stages of advance and have appeared just when they are most wanted. With the progress of ideas and with the expansion of scope of activities, old machinery must give place to new, and old institutions merge into new. Thus the Goodwill Fraternity and the Colutola Evening School gradu-

[6] See *supra,* under head 'Sangat Sabhā'.

ally merged into the Brahma Vidyālaya (Brahma School) which in turn prepared the way for the more intimate circle of fellow-devotees and workers in the Sangat Sabhā. We get the first fore-glimpse of the Pratinidhi Sabhā in the mirror of activities and aspirations of the Brahmo Samaj presented by Keshub as Secretary before its Annual General Meeting on the 22nd December 1861.[7] In 1863 there was a partial attempt to carry out the idea of consolidating the Samajes by means of a representative body through the Brahmo Bandhu Sabha (Society of Theistic Friends).[8] At that time there were only 45 Samajes, including four in the town of Calcutta itself. In October 1864 the figures showed 50 Samajes and 2000 Brahmos spread over all parts of the country. Hence on the 30th of October 1864 (15th Kartick, Śak 1786) we find the idea of the Pratinidhi Sabhā definitely taking shape.[9]

In his opening address at the inaugural meeting he clearly laid down, as the first principle—the watchword, so to say, of the Society—the independence and autonomy of every unit. But with due regard to freedom of thought and action there should be uniformity in certain matters and there should be every endeavour by means of faith and love, and mutual interchange of ideas and aspirations, to cement the Samajes into one large body. This should be done by and through one central tie of representation, so that the representatives of the different organizations might bring all questions of common requirements and common aspirations before the Society for a united solution. The Society should promote mission work; organize social and educational reforms; and should be united by co-ordinated work for the improvement of women, for spread of education among the masses, for removal of caste distinctions and superstitions, for purifying marriage customs and the like. Devendranath, who presided over this inaugural

[7] See *supra*, under head 'Mirror of Activities'.
[8] See *supra*, under head 'Brāhmo Bandhu Sabhā'.
[9] See Report of Inaugural Meeting—*Adhiveśan*, pp. 9-14—Brahmo Tract Society publication (1917).

meeting, was elected President of the Society, and Keshub the Secretary. Thus the *Pratinidhi Sabhā* started under the joint auspices of Devendranath and Keshub with the object of serving as a powerful auxiliary for carrying out and propagating reform in the land by a grand united effort. Keshub also started in October of this year the *Dharmatattva,* the well-known Bengali fortnightly which is functioning to this day and which together with the *Indian Mirror* did yeoman's service to the cause of reform during this momentous period.

At the inaugural meeting of the *Pratinidhi Sabhā* above referred to it was resolved that any one professing faith in the cardinal principles of the Brahmo faith would be eligible as member. The following persons were requested to frame a set of rules for guidance and present them before the next meeting:—Devendranath Tagore, Keshub Chunder Sen, Peary Chand Mitter, Iswar Chandra Nandi and Sreenath Banerjee. The rules were duly presented before the second meeting which took place on the 27th of November 1864 (13th Aghran, Śak 1786). The final confirmation of the rules did not come till the 7th May 1865, the date of the fourth meeting (26th Baisakh, Śak 1787). Leaving aside the rules relating to eligibility of members, mode of election or representatives, frequency of meetings, etc., the more important of the rules to be noted are the following: "The object of the Sabhā is to promote and propagate the Brahmo faith in diverse ways". and "No doctrinal questions shall be discussed at the meetings of the Sabhā". Thus the Pratinidhi Sabha was clearly intended to be an effective machinery for consolidating the Samajes and for organizing mission work, extensively and intensively. This appears more clearly when we look at two of the resolutions passed at the last mentioned meeting of May 1865. One of them runs thus: "The relation between the Brahmo Samaj and the Pratinidhi Sabhā is this that the missionaries shall be looked after by the Pratinidhi Sabhā and they shall submit reports of their

mission work every year to the Sabhā". The other resolution lays down that any contributions received from the Samajes for mission work shall be expended for helping missionaries. It was also resolved at this meeting that there was no need for appointing an executive committee. It would be left to the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary to carry on the work in consonance with the wishes of the members. The dispute between the younger members of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj headed by Keshub and the Trustees of the Samaj had meanwhile brought matters to a head. At the third meeting of the Pratinidhi Sabhā on the 26th February 1865 (16th Falgun, Śak 1766), which was a momentous one, held in the premises of the Hindu Metropolitan College in Chitpore Road, the whole question as to the relation between the mission work of the Brahmo Samaj as a whole and the Trustees was reviewed and considered. The Trustees as the custodians of the Samaj property had disallowed the meeting of the Pratinidhi Sabhā to be held in the Samaj. This matter came under discussion and it was held that, apart from the property of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, the Trustees could have no control over the organization itself or its activities in relation to mission work or other endeavours. These lay within the province of the Brahmo public and the Pratinidhi Sabhā. The next, *i.e.*, the fourth meeting of the Pratinidhi Sabhā above mentioned, of 7th May 1865 (26th Baisakh, Śak 1787), was held in the premises of the Calcutta College, the Trustees having already diallowed the use of the Samaj building for the purpose. The subsequent history of the Pratinidhi Sabhā will be given in its proper place at a later stage.

THE SEPARATION

As time passed, it became increasingly clear that the two parties in the Brahmo Samaj—the conservatives and the progressives, the old and the young—could hardly pull

together any longer. The following year brought matters to a crisis. The causes that brought about the separation are thus set forth by the *Pradhānācharya's* son, Satyendra Nath Tagore[10]: —

As regards social reformation, he (Devendranath) was for adopting a slow and cautious policy, a policy of conciliation ; he was in favour of leaving such reforms as were really required to the influence of time, and to the effect of the teachings of a pure religion. Keshub, on the other hand, was a reformer of a more pronounced type. Though for many years he had sat at the feet of the Maharshi, a time came when he could no longer pull together with his conservatism. Inter-marriage, re-marriage of widows, abolition of caste distinctions, all these questions of radical reform were started and discussed. On these questions, it would seem, my father yielded as far as his conservatism would permit, but when he thought that Keshub's disciples were going too far, he drew back in alarm. Then, again, there were other differences between the two. My father, as I have said, was intensely national in his religious ideal, whereas Keshub's outlook was more cosmopolitan. While not exactly denationalized, he was better fitted by his training and education to assimilate the ideas and civilization of the West. Indeed, his whole character was moulded by Western culture and Christian influence. He drew much of his spiritual store from the New Testament in a manner which made his missionary friends cling to the hope of his conversion to their faith. In 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia,' a lecture delivered in April, 1865,[11] Keshub says: "I cherish the profoundest reverence for the character of Jesus, and the lofty ideal of moral truth which he taught and lived. In Christ we see not only the exaltedness of humanity, but also the grandeur of which Asiatic nature is susceptible. To us Asiatics, therefore, Christ is doubly interesting, and his religion is entitled to our peculiar regard. And

[10] Autobiography of Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, translated from the original Bengali by Satyendra Nath Tagore and Indira Devi, Macmillan & Co., 1916. See Introduction by Satyendra Nath Tagore, pp. 14-17.

[11] The date of the Lecture given here is wrong. It was in fact 5th May 1866 and not April 1865. The separation definitely took place on 26th February 1865, and the formal establishment of the Bhāratvarshiya Brahmo Samaj followed on the 11th of November 1866.

thus in Christ, Europe and Asia, the East and the West, may learn to find harmony and unity." These utterances, though of a date subsequent to the separation, are sufficient to show his attitude towards Christianity, in marked contrast to my father's. A struggle between two such temperaments and such opposite ideas was bound to end in disruption and matters soon came to a crisis. * * * * The mutual love between the Pradhānāchārya and Brahmānanda delayed the catastrophe. But as no compromise was possible between the two, separation was inevitable. In February 1865 Keshub finally withdrew from the parent church : in the following year he sent a parting address[12] to my father, and established the Brahmo Samaj of India. On the secession of Keshub's party my father gave his own church the name of 'Adi Brahmo Samaj.'

The above is a pre-eminently fair and unvarnished representation of the contrariety of temperaments and the conflict of ideals which led to the separation of the two leaders Brahmānanda Keshub Chunder and Maharshi Devendranath. The one was ardent, impetuous, ever-advancing—he would venture forth into unknown regions of thought and activity ; the other was quiet, cautious, afraid of the new and the unknown. The one would consolidate the old and the new; the other would fain conserve the old. The one viewed life as a whole and refused to draw the line between work and worship ; the other would keep worship on a plane all its own, and let social custom and convention primarily determine the duties of life. Keshub's indomitable spirit would not let him rest within the fenced acreage of caste and sectarianism ; the Maharshi's repose of soul would not let him face the clash of arms, or the din of controversy involved in the revolt against caste, creed and convention. Keshub would go forth to all ages and climes, to all cults and cultures in quest of truth and light ; to the

[12] In this for the first time Keshub and his co-adjutors reverently addressed him as 'Maharshi' by which name Devendranath has been called ever since. The formal establishment of the new Brahmo Samaj took place at a meeting held on the 11th November, 1866.

Maharshi India alone sufficed for all purposes. Keshub was national as well as international; the Maharshi was intensely national—for him nationalism was all in all.

KESHUB AND DEVENDRANATH

As to the manner in which the personality of the Ministers, Devendranath and Keshub, reacted on the members of the congregation, Protap Chunder Mozoomdar's testimony, coming as it does from his own personal experience, is illuminating. He observes:

> The present generation of Brahmos were intensely impressed through their Chief-Teacher, Devendranath Tagore, with the supreme fact that God was an Indwelling Spirit, and an All-pervading Soul. But it must be confessed that for purposes of personal piety, for tender devotions such as may call sinners to repentance and give salvation to the sorrow-stricken, the exalted teaching of Devendranath Tagore, great as it was, was not sufficient. Our conceptions required more fullness and definiteness. Though from the lips of the revered saint the strange beautitudes of his own faith fell like honey, and we drank it, and were filled with gladness and enthusiasm, yet God was to us an unknown God. * * * * Keshub Chunder Sen is and always has been a man of prayer. He began his religious life by appealing to God to show him the light of His face. He always insisted upon realising the presence of God before him as the idolator, who unmistakeably saw his idol present near his own body. Thus one of his characteristic teachings is that of seeing God. He means, of course, spiritual perception, vivid realisation in faith of the presence of the Supreme Spirit. But this process he describes to be exceedingly simple and natural. He says in one of his sermons that 'as it is easy for the body to see and hear, so it ought to be easy for the soul to see and hear. Hard struggles are not necessary for the soul to see God. Bring the soul to its natural condition, and you will succeed.[13]

[13] *Theistic Review and Interpreter*, July, 1881, p. 16.

Elsewhere,[14] he thus expresses it:

Keshub, on the other hand, had to deal with the excommunicated, the youthful, the widowed, the unmarried, the unendowed men and women, seeking settlement in faith, life, character, in the relationships of home, sympathy, and society. The demands and appeals of a new generation fell upon him thick and fast waiting for a ready response. He had imbibed new ideas almost with his mother's milk. His nature yearned after those who could not approach Devendranath in his exalted dignity, but who looked up to him as their brother and succourer.

It is refreshing to contemplate how, although they parted from each other, the two leaders maintained their spiritual friendship unimpaired to the very last. A year and a half before his passing, Brahmananda, broken down in health and suffering from a painful and wasting malady, wrote to Maharshi from Simla:

Bless all India that they may have the privilege of rejoicing in Brahma. Now that your soul is steadily rising heaven-ward, do keep the faithful (*Bhakta-mandali*) bound to you with ties of love so that they may also rise with you.[15]

Maharshi's reply holds up a beautiful picture before the world of their mutual relationship:

The response that I have received from you, I have never received from any one else * * * Long ago did I name you Brahmananda ; even now I receive response (proof) of it. Nothing is lost on you. What an auspicious moment was it when I came to be united with you! Many an unpropitious event has not been able to snap the bond asunder. It is to you that God has entrusted the duty of keeping the faithful (*Bhakta-mandali*) bound together. You have been bearing that burden with joy, indeed you are inebriated with that work. Nothing else has any taste for your palate. God has not kept you in need of anything. Even as a *faquir* you are performing work that the wealthy (alone) can do.[16]

[14] Mozoomdar's Faith and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj, p. 202.
[15, 16] Maharshi's Autobiography in Bengali, edited by Priyanath Shastri (1898), Appendix, pp. 25-26.

But even the above pales into insignificance compared to the glow of love and pride with which Maharshi wrote of his Brahmananda in the year 1881 to Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar:

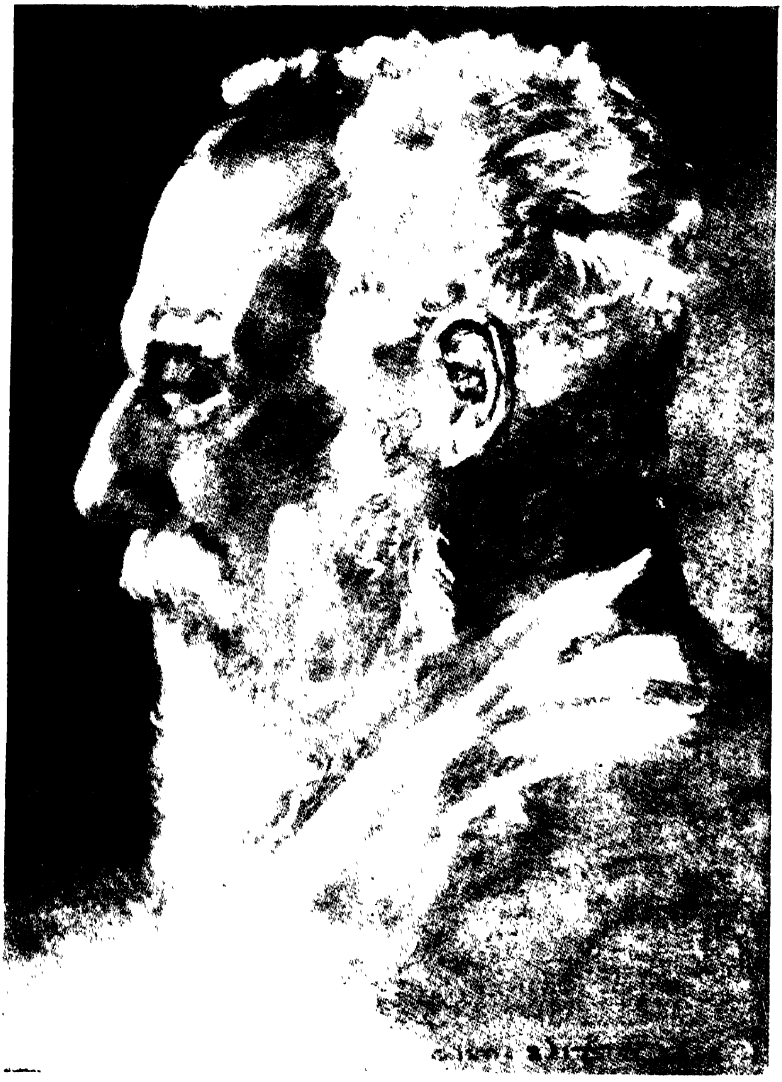
Some honour him (Keshub), others censure him ; but in honour and dishonour, in praise and blame, he remains firm and absolutely devotes his life to the progress of the Brahma Samaj. In the palace of the prince and in the cottage of the peasant he enters like the sunbeam, and spreads the light of religion. As long as he disseminates God's religion and as long as he sings His glory, so long is his life ; and even death will be dear to him for the sake of truth. His powers are like the glory of the mid-day sun ; but his cheerfulness, his gentleness, his piety brighten the beauty of his face. That handsome face is still a living reality in my heart. If in my mind there lives the image of any man, it is his image. His whole form, from the peculiar manner in which he dresses his hair to the bright nails on his feet, at this moment, even as I write this letter, appear in my mind like living realities. If for any one I have shed tears of love, it is for him * * * In the love for our country we have felt the desire of wisdom to be satisfied by what our own Rishis have taught. But he, inspired with a love catholic and extraordinary, has prepared himself to bring about a reconciliation between the monotheists of India and those of Arabia and Palestine.[17]

The very last of Maharshi's letters arrived only three months before the call came to his beloved Brahmananda from the other world—arrived like the last benediction:

By His grace have you received the sight celestial. Your wisdom is wonderful. Your words are wonderful. May you live long preaching the sweet name of Brahma to all.

And after Brahmananda had been taken from him by

[17] Biography of Maharshi Devendranath in Bengali by Ajit Kumar Chakravarti, p. 594.



MAHARSHI IN THE CLOSING YEARS OF HIS LIFE
(from a drawing by Abanindranath Tagore, 1890)

death and some friends went to condole with him, it was thus that the Maharshi addressed them:

When I had him near, I considered myself the master of all the wealth which the kings of the world could command. When I sat up with him, often till one or two in the morning, conversing with my departed friend, I never perceived how the time passed. The union between our souls is never to be destroyed.

The Actual Separation: Wider Horizons

The actual separation though felt to be imminent, was yet to come. Meanwhile, Keshub and his young friends threw themselves with uncommon ardour and self sacrifice into the work which lay before them. The year 1865 opened with a wider vision of religion. In the anniversary sermon delivered by Keshub on the 23rd January, he struck a universal note when he said from the pulpit of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj:

Our cathedral is the universe, our object of worship is the Supreme Lord, our scripture is intuitive knowledge, our path to salvation is worship, our atonement is by self-purification, our guides and leaders are all the good and great men. In this catholic Brahmo faith there is no trace of sectarianism, no cause for dissension. It is the property of all, hence it is not a sectarian body. It belongs to all those who, as worshippers of the One True God, will love Him and do the work He loves.

Then came the momentous event in February—the definite separation of the progressives from the conservatives. Various endeavours were made to find out ways and means for continued work as a united body, to bring about a *rapprochement*. Months passed but all efforts failed. In July, 1865 before a distinguished audience Keshub delivered an address on "The Fight for Religious Freedom and Progress in the Brahmo Samaj" in the hall of the Calcutta

College. It lasted for about three hours and set out in great detail the causes and the real nature of the inevitable conflict which had arisen in the Brahmo Samaj. It was a masterly defence against the charge of internecine quarrel which was expressly or impliedly being hurled at the two opposing sections, and it succeeded in rallying the friends once again round its banner. Besides this, there was a volume of literature in the *Indian Mirror* on the subject from Keshub's pen which kept the public intelligently informed of the fact that it was not a mere quarrel but a conflict of ideals and principles. An opportune article from his pen in the *Indian Mirror* (fortnightly) of 1865 testified in glowing terms to the indebtedness of Theism in India to the life and example of Rammohun and Devendranath.[18] Meanwhile, mission work proceeded apace, more educational institutions sprang up, tracts and pamphlets multiplied. There was no end of activity.

The Brāhmicā Samaj

In the autumn of 1865 was founded the Brāhmicā Samaj (Association of Brahmo women), the first of women's associations in this country. It had a humble beginning but it was destined to play a distinguished part in the new Brahmo Samaj to come. It was also to be the mother of many such organizations in the days to come. Its first sitting took place in Pataldanga in the rented house of Kishori Lal Maitra, one of the earliest Brahmos, and the first address with which Keshub opened the proceedings was on 'Seeing God'. Later, addresses on various subjects were delivered by distinguished people, sometimes with the help of magic lantern illustrations. The purport of the proceedings and the addresses used to be reported in the "Bāmāvodhini Patrika'. As already observed, the year 1865 was a momentous one. The differences which finally

[18] 'The Brahmo Samaj or Theism in India', *Indian Mirror*, 1865. See Appendix.

led to the first schism had by that year taken a pronounced form. The younger section had already become notorious as being well-nigh revolutionary in their go-ahead ideas and principles of social reform. Two of the incidents which were regarded by the then elderly and orthodox section as spelling disaster took place in the house of Kishori Lal Maitra above referred to. These were widow marriages and, what was worse, one of them was an inter-caste marriage too. Again, on the 2nd Aghran, Sak 1788 (16th November 1865) another inter-caste marriage was solemnized that of Rajlakshmi Devi daughter of Kishori Lal Maitra, a Brahmin by caste, with Prosunno Coomar Sen (later, a Missionary of the Brahmo Samaj of India), a Vaidya by caste. It was on this occasion that the Brahmo sacramental code for marriage was for the first time reduced to writing.[19]

East Bengal Tour

In October of the same year, Keshub accompanied by Aghore Nath Gupta and Bijay Krishna Goswami, proceeded on a missionary tour to East Bengal in the course of which he visited Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh. This tour made a very deep impression and gave a tremendous impetus to the cause of Theism in East Bengal.

True Faith

The journey to East Bengal was mostly by river in slow boats. It was while travelling from Faridpur to Dacca in one of these boats that Keshub composed the remarkable booklet entitled 'True Faith'. It is said to have been meant for a guide to missionaries, but it is also a record of his highest spiritual experience, and lays down standards of apostolic zeal and rectitude which will endure for all time

[19] Reminiscences of Sm. Rājlakṣmi Devi. See *Dharmatattva* of 16th Magh and 1st Falgun Sak 1854 (29th January and 13th February, 1933), pp. 22-23.

and for all manner of men. It is, in fact, a summing up of the principles of high spiritual living. Rightly does Miss Collet observe: "It resembles the mediaeval mystics in its beatific vision of God."[20] It is divided into fourteen brief chapters including the 'Exhortation', with which it opens. Here are a few jewels picked out from them: —

Faith in God

Faith is direct vision, it beholdeth God and it beholdeth immortality.

It is no dogma of books, no tradition of venerable antiquity.

It relieth upon no evidence but the eyesight, and will have no mediation.

It neither borroweth an idea of God from metaphysics nor a narrative of God from history.

It doth not bow its neck before a logical or historical deity.

It adoreth the ever-living and ever-present Reality.

The God of faith is the sublime I AM.

In time He is always now, in space always here.

Hence faith has a short creed, which owns no pilgrimage to distant age or clime, for nearer than aught can be is God the Immanent Spirit.

As outwardly in all objects, so inwardly in the recesses of the heart faith beholdeth the living God.

The eyes close, and the inward kingdom revealeth God.

There in ineffable beauty He shineth as the Life of life; the dependent soul quickened by mysterious animation worshippeth Him, and entereth into joyful communion with Him.

The eyes open, and all objects in external nature reveal the resplendent Spirit and breathe His presence.

East, west, north and south, He filleth all space.

The universe is God's vast cathedral, where nature both quick and inanimate chanteth hymns unto His glory in solemn music.

The soul roused by sympathy joineth the service and swelleth the chorus.

[20] Brahmo Year Book.

Thus within and without faith liveth always in the midst of blazing fire, the fire of God's presence.

It is a presence to be seen and felt, not learned or remembered.

It is a presence not to be put by, so pervading, so interwoven with life and nature.

Verily, Divine presence hath electricity ; it quickeneth the heart and the nerves, and maketh the very hairs of the body stand erect.

Hence true worship is no ceremony or form in honour of a dead or distant deity, but the living homage of the soul unto the living and near God.

But the near is dear by nature's law.

And God is both living and loving.

Hence faith holds living and loving communion with Him who is dearer than life.

It establisheth a personal relation, even that between the son and the father.

It buildeth a domestic altar in the heart for the Author of the universe, and saith—My God, My Father.

The Thou of its prayers is as much a reality perceived by the spiritual eye as a personal God held in personal attachment.

The vividness of perception is equal to the warmth of the heart, for in faith knowledge and love, belief and trust are one.

Wisdom

Faith is true wisdom, which is noble and divine.

It loathes prudence, which is earthly and mean.

Prudence is the arithmetic of fools.

It weigheth consequences, counteth loss and gain, and measureth utility, but hath no regard for truth.

And as the wind tosseth the dry leaf so do fear and shame lead the worldly-wise hither and thither.

They have no wisdom of their own but traffic in other men's opinions, always using those in demand.

They are not their own selves, but other men's selves.

Having no principle to guide them they turn with the wind and move along the tide.

A rude rustic is wiser than they, and a child can overturn the very foundations of their philosophy.

Deluded men! wise in their own conceit, they are but the slaves of fashion and popularity.

But faith never courteth popularity nor doth it accommodate itself to fashion.

It is firm unyielding and is built on immovable principles.

Its wisdom is the wisdom of truth, which never varies though fire should become as cold as ice and the sun breathe darkness.

Faith has originality, freedom and self-reliance, and never deigneth to take lessons from the world.

It firmly walketh upon the counsels of conscience, which are the revelations of God.

Self-Sacrifice

Faith is the surrender of self to God.

It thinketh not what it shall eat or drink, but how it shall serve and glorify the Lord.

It sacrificeth self and the world on the altar of God, that it may say with wholeness of heart—I am thine.

It selleth all it hath and followeth God, and reserveth nought for self.

It dedicateth its whole life, heart and soul, mind and body unto Him and saith—Not my will but thy will be done.

It thinketh not of joy or sorrow, but maketh duty its only concern and the divine will its sole aim.

But the maturity of faith is love, for love completeth the union which faith beginneth.

Then duty and desire harmonize.

Then the soul saith—I and my Father are one.

'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia'

In May 1866 Keshub made an announcement of a lecture to be delivered by him in the Medical College Theatre (Calcutta) on 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia.' The announcement was somewhat startling. The Brahma Samaj up to that time had had very little to do with the founder

of Christianity. Raja Rammohun Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, had no doubt been greatly influenced by Mahomed and Jesus, and he never failed in his writings to acknowledge them as great teachers of humanity. But apart from his personal indebtedness to them, he never sought to introduce their teachings into the literature, or worship, of the Brahmo Samaj. Indeed, there was no occasion for him to do so. The Brahmo Samaj had not developed in his time into a community, or a body of worshippers. As for the form of worship, such as it was, it drew upon the Vedic and the Vedantic sources alone. The homage and reverence Rammohun paid to the person of Christ as a great man, the ample space it filled in his life and the larger humanity he envisaged under the influence of Christ, gradually came to be forgotten in the Brahmo Samaj. The name of Christ became an anachronism, nay, an anathema. Why resurrect him? Keshub was firmly persuaded that within the larger faith and family of the new Brahmo Samaj there was room for Christ, need for Christ. Indeed, there was room for all great men, need for all the 'elder brothers of humanity'. It was, therefore, with a profound consciousness of the need of the hour that he delivered the two memorable lectures in 1866—'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia' in May, and 'Great Men' in September. These endeavoured to plant the Brahmo Samaj on a higher and wider platform of humanity whence the vision of universal religion would become a concrete fact of spiritual experience. They opened up vistas of unknown possibilities of spiritual companionship and culture. But, on the other hand, they gave the handle for much misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

As regards the first lecture 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia', it may broadly be divided into several themes. First, it dealt with the character and career of Christianity in the East and in the West, its many vicissitudes, its abuses and excesses under exceptional conditions, its underlying essence that time or circumstances cannot destroy, its

wonderful effect on Christendom. Secondly, it dealt with the inescapable personality of Jesus Christ. Surely, said he, Jesus is above ordinary humanity. Thirdly, it dealt with a topic which came in appropriately at the moment as an urgent matter of socio-political interest. One R. Scott Moncrief, a Scottish merchant of Calcutta, had in a public lecture traduced the character of the Indians, not even excepting the gentler sex. The excitement and resentment of the Indian public knew no bounds. As feelings had been worked up to a high pitch of rancour and race-hatred, Keshub felt that nothing could heal the wound better than by a frank and outspoken protest. How in making this protest he poured oil over troubled waters by invoking the aid of the Prince of Peace can only be appreciated by reading the lecture from beginning to end. It was a scathing but dignified protest, a trenchant yet truthful portraiture of the blemishes of the Indian and the Englishman, and a most powerful appeal to the Christians in India to be true messengers of the Prince of Peace. After reviewing the growth and progress of Christianity in the East and in the West, not excluding from mention its many aberrations and excesses, he thus expressed his homage to the greatness of its founder:

> Tell me, brethren, whether you regard Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, as an ordinary man. Is there a single soul in this large assembly who would scruple to ascribe extraordinary greatness and supernatural moral heroism to Jesus Christ and him crucified? * * * * Blessed Jesus, immortal child of God! For the world he lived and died. May the world appreciate and follow his precepts!

He then passed on to the topic as to what influence Christ and Christianity should have on the Indians and the Europeans who have met together on the soil of India.

> I shall now proceed to discuss its ethics in its application to, and bearing upon, the character and destinies of the European and Native communities in India with a view to draw certain

wholesome lessons of a practical character for their guidance, and for regulating and adjusting their mutual relations. In handling this rather delicate part of my subject, I must avoid all party-spirit and race-antagonism. I stand on the platform of brotherhood, and disclaim the remotest intention of offending any particular class or sect of those who constitute my audience, by indulging in rabid and malicious denunciations on the one hand, or dishonest flattery on the other. * * *

But does harmony actually prevail among us? United by political ties, are we morally united? Does brotherly love subsist between the conquering and conquered races? Do the former recognise Jesus as their guide and master in their dealings with the latter, and exercise on them the influence of true Christian life? Are the Europeans and the Indians so far influenced by the love of God and man which Jesus Christ preached, as to combine harmoniously to promote their mutual welfare and fulfil the purposes of Providence? Alas! instead of mutual good feeling and brotherly intercourse, we find the bitterest rancour and hatred, and ceaseless exchange of reviling, vituperation, and slander. * * *

I regard every European settler in India as a missionary of Christ, and I have a right to demand that he should always remember and act up to his high responsibilities. But alas owing to the reckless conduct of a number of pseudo-Christians, Christianity has failed to produce any wholesome moral influence on my countrymen. * * * Behold Christ crucified in the lives of those who profess to be his followers!

I hope, therefore, that European and Native communities will understand aright their respective defects and shortcomings, and the good qualities of each other, that they may with humility and mutual respect cultivate fellowship with, and do good to, each other. * * *

What follows is of supreme interest not only by reason of the view of Christ which it presents as being an Asiatic but also on account of the fact which it discloses that Keshub, by a gradual but natural process of expansion, has now come to think and speak of his own nationality as being not only Indian but Asiatic.

If, however, our Christian friends persist in traducing our nationality and national character, and in distrusting and hating Orientalism, let me assure them that I do not in the least feel dishonoured by such imputations. On the contrary I rejoice, yea, I am proud, that I am an Asiatic. And was not Jesus Christ an Asiatic? Yes, and his disciples were Asiatics, and all the agencies primarily employed for the propagation of the Gospel were Asiatics. In fact, Christianity was founded and developed by Asiatics and in Asia. When I reflect on this, my love for Jesus becomes a hundredfold intensified ; I feel him nearer my heart, deeper in my national sympathies. Why should I then feel ashamed to acknowledge that nationality which he acknowledged. Shall I not rather say he is more congenial and akin to my Oriental nature, more agreeable to my Oriental habits of thought and feeling? And is it not true that an Asiatic can read the imageries and allegories of the Gospel, and its descriptions of natural sceneries, of customs and manners, with greater interest, and a fuller perception of their force and beauty, than Europeans? In Christ we see not only the exaltedness of humanity but also the grandeur of which Asiatic nature is susceptible. To us, Asiatics, therefore Christ is doubly interesting, and his religion is entitled to our peculiar regard as an altogether Oriental affair. The more this great fact is pondered, the less I hope will be the antipathy and hatred of European Christians against Oriental nationalities, and the greater the interest of the Asiatics in the teachings of Christ. And thus in Christ, Europe and Asia, the East and the West, may learn to find harmony and unity.

'Great Men'

In the controversy with Christian missionaries in 1861 and 1863, Keshub Chunder Sen appeared as the defender of Theism against dogmatic Christianity. There can be no doubt that his personality and persuasive eloquence effectively stemmed the tide of conversion of educated Indians to Christianity, which was then at its height. Apart, however, from dogmatic Christianity, Keshub's reverence for Christ as a great man was unbounded. For

the broadening of individual, social and national outlook, for the up-building of national life on the broadest lines, Keshub felt that a closer spiritual contact and companionship with great men was of momentous significance. It was for this reason that in his lecture, 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia,' he spoke on the sublimity of the life of Christ, and on the principle of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice of which it was a crowning example. While, however, speaking of Christ and Christianity, a subject large enough by itself, he could not within the limited time cover the much larger field as to great men in general. He had to leave a great deal that was uppermost in his mind unsaid at the moment, and to reserve it for independent treatment at a later date. Meanwhile, a controversy arose as to the exact position which Keshub had assigned to Jesus Christ and other great men. On the one hand, a particular section accused him of having gone too far towards hero-worship. On the other hand, another section accused him of not having gone far enough towards Avatārism (incarnation). Over eighty years have passed since and much that was then misunderstood and misinterpreted now stands clarified and illuminated by Keshub's later lectures, sermons and writings which form a treasure-house of knowledge on great men. With a view to the uprearing of individual and national life on universal lines Keshub was not content with a mere intellectual appreciation of great men as historic characters. He felt that a spiritual assimilation of their lives as facts of consciousness was needed. For this purpose later in life,[21] he practised and prescribed for his immediate friends and co adjutors a form of spiritual culture known as *Sadhu Samāgama* or 'Pilgrimage to saints and prophets'. By close study, meditation, introspection and prayer, these devotees sought within their hearts to commune with the departed saints and prophets—nay, the messengers of truth and light in

[21] In 1880. See *infra*.

every sphere of life. The life and personality of Moses, Socrates, Buddha, the Hindu Rishis, Jesus, Mahomed, Chaitanya thus formed the subject of special study and contemplation and were followed up by those of path-finders in science such as Faraday, Carlyle, Emerson and the like. Though of later date, the following passage is typical and truly represents Keshub's views about great men as early as 1866.

As pilgrims we approach the great Saints and commune with them in spirit, killing the distance of time and space. We enter into them and they enter into us. In our souls we cherish them and we imbibe their character and principles. * * * If they are not personally present with us, they may be spiritually drawn into our life and character. They may be made to live and grow in us. This is a normal, psychological process to which neither science nor theology can take exception.

In order properly to appreciate the exact import of his teachings on the subject it is necessary to turn to a few of the pregnant passages in the lecture.

What part do Great Men play in the economy of our lives and souls? Are they of any spiritual importance to us?

Yes, they are of the deepest interest and importance to our souls. They are destined to subserve the most momentous purposes in the moral economy of all men, of whatever race, or country, or age. With what is purely personal, local, and contingent in them we have certainly nothing to do ; but that which is divine and universal in them, that which makes them great men, deeply concerns us all, for it is God's gift to us. * * * * We cannot dishonour or trifle with them ; we cannot dispose of them as mere great historic characters with empty praise and admiration ; we must regard them as God's manifestations to each one of us, and so open the whole heart to them, that it may be filled with all that is great, noble, and divine in them.

INCARNATION?

Then Keshub proceeds to delineate the constitution and function of great men and their place in divine economy from which is deduced our relationship with them:

Great men are sent by God into the world to benefit mankind. They are His apostles and missionaries, who bring to us glad tidings from Heaven ; and in order that they may effectually accomplish their errand, they are endowed by Him with requisite power and talents. They are created with a nature superior to that of others, which is at once the testimonial of their apostleship and the guarantee of their success. They are not made great by culture or experience: they are born great. They are ordained and sanctified as prophets at their birth. They succeed, not because of any ability acquired through personal exertions, nor of any favourable combination of outward circumstances, but by reason of their inherent greatness.* * * *

It is God's light that makes them shine, and enables them to illumine the world. He puts in their very constitution something superhuman and divine ; hence their greatness and superiority. They are great on account of the large measure of divine spirit which they possess and manifest. It is true they are men ; but who will deny that they are above ordinary humanity? Though human, they are divine. * * * *

The doctrine of Divinity in humanity is nothing new. It is a tragedy that it should be encrusted with superstition and should be fruitful of nothing but multiplication of deities in the already overcrowded pantheon of mythology. What Keshub does is merely to lift the veil of mystery and superstition that enshrouds it and get at the reality:

A deep mystery hangs over the root of his life: the essence of his being is an inexplicable riddle. Who can solve it? That some nations have carried their reverence for prophets so far as to deify them, and worship them as God, or rather God in human shape, does not in the least appear to me surprising

or unaccountable, however guilty they may be of man-worship. For if a prophet is not God, is he a mere man? That cannot be. Such a hypothesis would not adequately explain all the problems of his life. The fact is, as I have already said, he is both divine and human ; he is both God and man. He is a "God-man". He is an "incarnation" of God. Yes, I look upon a prophet as a divine incarnation ; in this sense, that he is the spirit of God manifest in human flesh.

True incarnation is not, as popular theology defines it, the absolute perfection of the divine nature embodied in mortal form ; it is not the God of the universe putting on a human body—the infinite becoming finite in space and time, in intelligence and power. It simply means God manifest in humanity—not God made man, but God in man. * * *

But in speaking of divinity in humanity, does Keshub mean that it is restricted only to great men? He declares in unequivocal terms that the manifestation of God in humanity is universal. What then is the difference between ordinary humanity and great men?

He is not generically different from the human kind, but is simply exalted above it in degree. Made of the same flesh and blood, endowed with the same constitution as ordinary men, he is far superior to them on account of the high destiny of his life, the divine commission he bears, and the large measure of moral force which he naturally possesses for the successful accomplishment of the same. When, therefore, he is honoured above others as God's incarnation, we are to understand his superiority to be one of degree, not of kind.

For it must be admitted that every man is, in some measure, an incarnation of the divine spirit. The constitution of man is of a composite character ; it is on the one hand gross, carnal, and earthly ; on the other, holy, spiritual and heavenly. It is a strange combination of the lusts of the flesh and the divine instincts of the soul. Do we not feel that, though we are made of dust, there is within us something which is not of this earth, which is immortal and holy, born of heaven and destined for heaven? Are we not all conscious that, however sinful we may be, God dwells in each of us, inherent in our

very constitution? "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" * * * *

If, then, incarnation means the spirit of God manifest in human flesh, certainly every man is an incarnation. And great men are pre-eminently so, for they exhibit a larger measure of the divine spirit. They are singularly brilliant manifestations of that Eternal Light which all men in some measure reflect.

Thus, if great men are above ordinary humanity, they are not above, or beyond, the operation of laws—natural or moral. They are not miracles, and if they are miracles they are only greater miracles than ordinary men. The fact that great men appear under the operation of natural laws is only another way of saying that they appear under the dispensation of Providence, that their life and work are but a fulfilment of one increasing Purpose which unfolds itself with the process of the suns and through the history of nations.

Great Men and Special Dispensations

Thus, you see that great men are superhuman, and, I may add, supernatural ; but there is nothing miraculous about them, in the popular sense of that word—there is no deviation from the established laws of nature. They are perfectly natural phenomena ; and if they are miracles, they are only greater miracles than ordinary men. They are supernatural only in the sense of being above ordinary nature. None will deny that there are common and uncommon, ordinary and extraordinary, things and phenomena in the world ; but they are all included in the established economy of nature.

Great men, like comets, move in eccentric orbits. As the course of comets seems irregular when compared with the movements of planets, so does the career of great men when compared with that of ordinary men. And yet comets have orbits of their own, which are perfect and regular in themselves.

Great men appear when they are needed. In the history of nations there occur now and then crises of a very serious character, when the advancing tide of progress shakes the very foundation of society ; at such times certain great minds appear, being called forth by the peculiar necessities of the age, who avert impending perils, meet all existing wants, and remodel society on an improved basis ; and they die when their work is over.

In the established economy of Providence they are special dispensations, to meet the pressing wants of humanity. Hence their appearance is not a mere accident, a casual phenomenon, but the sequence of a regular and constant law which regulates the moral interests of mankind. Their birth is always the result of a deep and irrepressible moral necessity. Wherever and whenever peculiar circumstances demand a great man, the very pressure of that demand drags him forth perforce. In God's moral government, to feel a want is to get the thing needed. Great men cast their shadows before. The circumstance of the age foretell their birth: signs and prognostics herald their advent. We see a peculiar fermentation and upheaving and excitement on all sides.

Representative Character of Great Men

Keshub then passes on to consider the representative character of great men. If they are the result of a deep and irrepressible moral necessity, is it possible that that necessity should be of an abstract character, unrelated to the age and the country in which they are called to work? Certainly not.

In him the old generation dies, and a new generation is born. Himself the child of the past, he becomes in his turn the progenitor of an altogether new race of men.

* * * *

Great men possess a representative character. They are representative in a double sense: They represent their country and age. They represent specific ideas. This quality is essential to greatness.

* * * *

They represent only their own people and their own age. A prophet is, in fact, the highest embodiment of the spirit of his country and time—the leading type of contemporaneous nationality. In him the people recognise their truest representative, and they spontaneously and trustfully throw themselves on his guidance. Nay, they often find that he understands them better even than they, and enters more deeply into their wants and wishes.

* * * *

Great men are representatives in another sense: they represent particular ideas. Every great man comes into the world with a certain great idea fixed in his mind, which it is his mission to realize and stamp on his age. This idea is not an accident, but the essence of his being. It is not a doctrine learnt from books or deduced by reasoning. It is divinely implanted in his mind; it is inseparable from his nature, and is interwoven with his being. It is not an acquired precept, but an inborn principle of life. It is the governing principle of all his thoughts, wishes, and aspirations; the primary motive of all his movements. He lives in it and for it. His life is identified with his idea: his existence has only one meaning—the development and realization of his idea. He does not live, as others do, for the attainment of worldly happiness and honours; he does not, like them, pursue a variety of objects in the varied relations and circumstances of life. The peculiar destiny of every great man is to live and die for one idea. This idea is nothing more than a definite plan of the particular reform needed at the time; it is a remedy for the manifold evils of the age.

* * * *

The lives of all such prophets are accepted reverently as God's Revelation in History; various and different they may be in their peculiar features and local adaptations, yet as regards the universal and eternal principles they represent, they are parts of the same divine economy, and subserve, more or less, in the hands of God, the same grand purposes of

revelation and redemption. Each of the prophets came into the world as a messenger of God, bearing a distinct message of glad tidings which he contributed to the cause of religious enlightenment and progress. We must then freely honour all of them, and gratefully accept from each what he has to deliver instead of binding ourselves as slaves to any particular person as the only chosen prophet of God. For at sundry times and in divers manners God spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets.

* * * *

Let sectarianism perish, then. Let denominational and geographical boundaries be for ever forgotten, and let all nations unite in celebrating a universal festival in honour of all prophets, regarding them as the Elder Brothers of the human race.

Inspiration Universal

The lecture on 'Great Men' is of abiding interest for another reason. It gives a lucid exposition in masterly language of another principle on which Keshub laid stress throughout his life, namely, the universality of inspiration—the naturalness of seeking and finding guidance direct from the Ever-present Guide. There must be no mediator, nothing to stand between God and man. In this lecture he viewed the revelation of God in its threefold aspect—the revelation of God in Nature; the revelation of God in history, being the mode in which God manifests His purpose and sends His message of saving grace through great men; thirdly, inspiration or God's revelation in the soul. "The highest revelation, then," says he, "is inspiration where spirit communes with spirit face to face without any mediation whatsoever." That he definitely claimed this 'the highest revelation', accessible to all and not restricted to a few only, is clear from the lecture on 'Great Men,' and also from his anniversary lecture of 1873 on 'Inspiration'. Indeed, between 1865 and 1884 almost every public

or private utterance of his on the subject, whether in English or in Bengali,—nay, his whole spiritual outlook—was imbued with the fact of Inspiration and its concomitant, namely, the effacement of the self or its mergence in the Purpose of the Greater Self. Let us turn to a few of the key passages in order to understand the exact ambit of the doctrine and of the meaning and function of Inspiration in spiritual life:

Nothing can bear comparison with the almighty power of Inspiration—the direct breathing of God's spirit—which infuses an altogether new life into the soul, and exalts it above all that is earthly and impure. It is the more powerful, being God's direct and immediate action on the human soul, while the revelation made through physical nature and biography is indirect and mediate. In these latter modes of divine manifestation truth is received at second hand ; God is seen as reflected in a mirror, and often, alas ! refracted through its imperfections. Divinity is represented in the world of matter—in flowing brooks and stupendous mountains in the radiant sun, the serene moon, and the vast starry convex ; it is also represented in the thrilling precepts and the quickening deeds of great men. But in inspiration the Supreme Soul is presented to us in our finite souls and His saving light falls directly upon the eye of faith. * * * The highest revelation then is inspiration, where the spirit communes with spirit face to face without any mediation whatsoever.[22]

The influence of inspiration is absorbing, not partial ; it is not superficial and skin-deep, but like leaven it leaveneth the whole life.

* * * *

As inspiration is the gift of divine grace, it is not the proud heart that can claim it, but the humble, prayerful, seeking, striving soul alone that may deserve it:

Divine life can only be secured by divine grace—it comes pouring into the soul from Him who is its source. This is

[22] See Lecture 'Great Men', pp. 89-90—Cassel's Edition.

inspiration, it is the direct action of the Holy Spirit. It is God's free gift, not man's acquisition.

It comes not through our calculation or reasoning, not through our industry and struggle but through prayerful reliance on God's mercy. It cannot be purchased by our wisdom or our good works. The Merciful God vouchsafes inspiration unto the heart which panteth after it.[23]

* * * *

This is true spiritual baptism—baptism, not with water, but with fire.[24]

* * * *

But is it true that God has excluded us from direct communion with Him? Are we to depend wholly and exclusively upon human agency for revelation and inspiration.

* * * *

Is it true that inspiration is altogether unattainable by men and women in this age, and that we must drink of the dry wells of theology, while our ancestors drank of the Living Fountain of eternal life? Against this anomaly the entire economy of Providence solemnly protests.

* * * *

Our God lives—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We do not and cannot believe that the God of the modern world is a sleeping or a dead God. No, He lives. He is always I AM. 'In Him we live and move and have our being'—is as true of men to-day as it was in ancient times. We too like our ancestors, have been made in the image and likeness of our Father. His inspiration is as fresh today as it was yesterday. The light of His face and his power of His voice may be as

[23] See pp. 91-92—Cassel's Edition.
[24] See Cassel's Edition, p. 92.

fully perceived and felt in the depths of our inner consciousness as they were in the so-called age of inspiration. I say emphatically, inspiration is not only possible, but it is a veritable fact in the lives of many devout souls in this age.[25]

Then is man said to be inspired when God breathes into him His holy spirit, and enkindles in him the fire of divine life as a response to his earnest prayers. Inspiration and prayer are both perfectly natural phenomena of the mind, facts as simple and plain as noon-day, for whose verification we need not solicit the elaborate proofs of theology or philosophy. Prayer and inspiration are the two ends of the axis round which, I may say, the sphere of man's spiritual life revolves. They are only two sides of the same fact. Man prays and God hears; God speaks and man listens and obeys. Again, man speaks and God hears. Thus a sort of union is established and kept up between the created soul and the Great Creator. This union is the essence of inspiration, and is a fact natural and simple. Man prays unto God as little children cry for bread and milk, spontaneously and under the irrepressible instincts of nature. Nobody ever taught us to pray; nobody ever taught little children to ask for bread and milk. As soon as we become conscious of our moral life we see, with eyes wide open, the shortcomings and infirmities which are incident to our nature, and also actual transgression of God's law too numerous to count. And the more we look into our actual sins the more we are over-borne by a sense of our weakness and the necessity of having immediate recourse to God for help and guidance.[26]

Prayer and Inspiration

The following passages from the Lecture on 'Inspiration' bring out beautifully the fact that prayer and Inspiration are only two aspects of the same spiritual phenomenon:

Prayer and inspiration are the two ends of the axis round which, I may say, the sphere of man's spiritual life revolves.

[25] See Lectures, Cassel's Edition, p. 163.
[26] *Ibid.*

They are only two sides of the same fact. Man prays and God hears ; God speaks and man listens and obeys. Again, man speaks and God hears.

True prayer is not the language of prayer. It is not words, it is not bodily posture. When properly analysed it will be found to represent simply a peculiar attitude of the soul—a Godward attitude, a heavenward attitude. True prayer is the unexpressed and hidden spark of heavenly aspiration which rises in the soul and is seen only by God Almighty. The unspoken language of true prayer no ear hath ever seen. An attitude of reverent humility and self-consecration, an attitude of child-like trust and meekness, an attitude indicative of a deep consciousness of weakness and a strong sense of the necessity of Divine aid—such an attitude is prayer. Prayer may be defined as the human soul in a kneeling posture, with its eyes of faith and trust looking up towards God.

* * * *

Directly the soul assumes this position towards heaven, directly it comes into the latitude and longitude of the spiritual world, the rays of the Eternal Sun of Righteousness fall upon it and enlighten it. Thus are prayers offered, and thus they are granted.

* * * *

And as in the physical world so also in the spiritual world, you have only to look up and turn your face towards heaven, in order to receive the full measure of light. Stand with your face towards the great luminary of the day, and a flood of light instantly descends upon you.

* * * *

This very relative position of the eye renders the perception of light inevitable. So it is with the soul. To look up to God in prayer is to receive His holy light ; the one is the necessary consequence of the other.

* * * *

Friends, all that we need do then is simply to place ourselves in that position of prayerful dependence towards our merciful Father which will enable us to receive the light and wind of Heaven, and fill our hearts with the descending showers of eternal life. This is the whole philosophy of prayer. It is as plain, as clear as crystal. There is no mystery overhanging this doctrine. You thirst for salvation, and reverently kneel before the alter of your Father, and His light and peace flow into your soul. 'Blessed are they who hanger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'

Prayer and Universal Inspiration

Where there is prayer, there must be inspiration; where man cries, God's inspiring voice is sure to be heard.

* * * *

It cannot serve the purpose of universal redemption if He has spoken only once or twice in the world's history, or if a select few have been inspired by Him. He must continually reveal His light unto all His children, or they will perish in darkness and sin.

* * * *

If such be the object and the end of inspiration it must be frustrated unless God should vouchsafe to inspire mankind eternally and universally.

* * * *

There can be no doubt that He is hourly teaching us precious lessons, and sending us in various ways and through manifold channels wise counsel for our guidance. The worldly man does not understand this, but the spiritually-minded perceive the truth and dare not question it.

* * * *

The effect of inspiration is to merge the human will in Divine will:

You know how in the physical world there is a tendency in water to maintain a uniform level. It naturally goes downward, but it is sure to rise again to its former level if it can find its passage in that direction. So when the genial current of Divine grace descends into the reservoir of the prayerful soul it ascends again in the shape of higher aspirations and longings ; again it comes down that it may rise again.

* * * *

Thus we gradually ascend from the lowest point of communion to its higher stages till we attain that state of inspiration in which the human will is almost wholly lost in the Divine. Blessed is he who has realized this but once in his lifetime.

* * * *

Merger of Self in Supreme Self

For then self is completely lost in conscious godliness, and you feel that you can do nothing of yourself, and that all your holy thoughts, words, and actions are only the breathings of the Holy Spirit. So the great prophets of earlier times thought and felt. They felt strong in God's strength and pure in God's purity ; and to Him they ascribed all honour and glory. Not an iota of the truth they taught or practised did they claim as their own. Do you consider this to be arrogance? Is it pride thus to put on Divinity? Assuredly not. It is the very reverse of pride. Self-assertion is certainly ambitious. But self-denial argues nothing but humility. To think of my truth, my righteousness, is arrogance and pride ; but we see unfeigned lowliness and meek humility in him who, however truthful and righteous he may be, takes no credit unto himself, but believes that all that is good in him is the Lord's.

The universality of inspiration consists not only in the fact that it is open to all but also in that it extends to all spheres of life. In essence it is the mergence of human will in the

Divine, without destroying the duality between the individual and the Supreme Soul:

* * * *

Some may construe what I have said into Pantheism. But is the doctrine I have expounded really Pantheistic?

* * * *

Perish Pantheism! Thou hast dishonoured God and ruined man by sapping the foundations of religion and morality. In exhorting you to seek union with God by sacrificing humanity and putting on Divinity. I am for from advocating the horrors of Pantheistic deification. Between man and God there is an eternal distinction. No sophistry, no delusive fancy can convert the duality into a unity. I do not speak of an imagined transformation of self with all its sins into God: but the real casting away of animal life and the actual growth of the soul in heavenly purity. I am speaking of an actual conversion—a reality which you cannot misstate or doubt.

* * * *

In such a state of mind the very conception of a will as contra-distinguished from that of God becomes impossible, for one will alone reigns—that of God, and into that the will of a man has merged. In Pantheism man, with all his impurity, fancies he is God. In Theism the human will is purified, and so attuned to the Divine will as to become one with it.

* * * *

The light of inspiration will come to you and to all mankind in God's own time. Then we shall cease to be satisfied with mere theories and dry dogmas of inspiration or narratives of other men's inspiration, but shall be enabled, through Divine grace, to realize it directly in our respective lives. Let us pray to Him without ceasing, earnestly, humbly, and sincerely. With deep faith let us cry for His redeeming mercy. And if I am sure of anything I am sure of this, that He will speak to each

of us and breathe into us His holy spirit. His voice shall be heard even in the midst of the din and bustle of modern civilization, and in spite of all its discouragements and opposition. He will speak unto us in the town hall, the bank, the library, and the school, as well as in churches and chapels. In the streets and in our own homes will the Lord reveal Himself to us. Your trade and commerce, your studies and your ceaseless industry will not in any way interfere with the action of God's spirit. For all honest and useful work and all science will be sanctified as God's work and God's truth. Even our lowest worldly pursuits will become hallowed when consecrated to His service. As you study other science, go and study the science of inspiration, and as you investigate the laws of the physical universe, investigate likewise, in a devout and inquiring spirit, the laws which govern the spiritual worlds. There is law everywhere in the amplitudes of God's creation ; even in prayer and inspiration there is science.

CHAPTER XVII

CAUSES OF THE SCHISM

There would hardly have been any occasion for such long excerpts from Keshub's utterances as those given in the last chapter but for the fact that it seemed necessary to lay before the reader what exactly was his teaching, and even what was the exact vehicle of language through which the truths relating to Divine Providence or Dispensation, and the part played therein by Great Men, were preached by him.[1]

Great Men: Dispensation: Inspiration

Singularly enough, notwithstanding frequent expositions, in English and Bengali, by Keshub himself, his attitude towards great men was subjected to much misrepresentation. Why was it that great men who, in Keshub's estimation, were great instruments for the unfolding of Divine purpose, appeared to some within his own fold to be full of evil omen to the Samaj? The three so-called 'doctrines' of Dispensation, Great Men, and Universality of Inspiration were roundly attacked by them as thoroughly obnoxious. Why did they find these simple truths incomprehensible?

From the Upanisads to the Bhāgavat

The answer is: Because their outlook was different from Keshub's. From the intellectual plane of the Upaniṣads, Keshub had long since moved on to the fertile fields of the Purāṇas and the Bhāgavat, which to the others were

[1] These utterances, though of 1866 and, therefore, of the period just following the actual separation, faithfully represent Keshub's views before he separated from the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, and after.

forbidden ground. Nay more. He beheld and bore witness to a transfigured Bhāgavat. From the vantage-ground of this New Bhāgavat he beheld the hand of Bhagavān (Providence) in the history of nations and in the lives and doings of great men. Every time Keshub discoursed on great men he touched on the universal—the universal in Divine Dispensation. The message of the New Bhāgavat which he preached dwelt on the ever increasing purpose of Providence unfolding itself through great men, His message-bearers, in *all* ages and in *all* lands.

Opposition from Within

Now within the Brahmo Samaj there were not wanting men who had a positive dread of personalities. They were obsessed with the idea that any stress laid on the outstanding personality of great men and, particularly, on their Divine mission would side-track the Brahmo Samaj, and plunge it in the quagmire of incarnationism (avatārism), supernaturalism, man-worship and what not. Devendranath himself and Rajnarain Bose, his trusted co-adjutor after Keshub left him, were not free from this obsession. Indeed, the gravamen of their charge against the so-called 'doctrine' relating to great men, as preached by Keshub, lay in the fact that it was based on the idea of Divine intervention, and savoured of the supernatural or supra-normal and hence, as they thought was alien to the spirit and principles of the Brahmo Samaj. In his lecture, 'Great Men', in 1866, Keshub spoke of great men and their mission with special reference to what he called the three-fold Revelation of God—(1) Revelation in Nature, observable by all, (2) Revelation in the Soul through inspiration, which is open to all and, (3) Revelation in History which is but the unfolding of God's universal Providence through the onward march of events and through the messages revealed through great men, answering the special spiritual requirements of different ages and different lands. When

the homage paid to great men thus came to be viewed as a natural outcome of the idea of Divine Dispensation or Vidhāna and, further, when the religion of the Brahmo Samaj itself came to be viewed as a Vidhāna or Dispensation of God, having its own place in the scheme of Providence, the protest became all the more vehement and the warnings all the more persistent. They thought that the Brahmo Samaj was drifting too dangerously near incarnationism (avatārism) and supernaturalism. To form a correct estimate of the opposition which was slowly gathering strength and making itself felt, it would be necessary to peruse some of the published criticisms in their original. We propose to do so while dealing with a later stage when, in the course of a few years, a fairly voluminous literature[2] grew up setting forth the grounds of opposition, such as they were, and reflecting the prejudice and misrepresentation which played no inconsiderable part in the controversy. For the moment, let us pause and appreciate the exact content of the so-called 'doctrine' of Dispensation (*Vidhāna*) and the place of great men in it, so that we may better understand the lines of attack directed against it, in the contemporary literature on the subject.

Deism *versus* Theism

What is faith in Divine Dispensation but faith in Providence, which is the foundation of Theism? Every devout Theist must believe in the ever-increasing purpose of Providence which manifests itself in and through creation—in external nature, in the soul of man, in the events of history. Without this faith in Providence, religion must necessarily dwindle to a belief in an extra-cosmic God—One who, no doubt, created the universe, with all its laws, but who, since then, has no concern with it,—it goes on as it were automatically by virtue of its own laws. This attenuated faith, which is no more than belief in a primal

[2] See *infra*, Chaps. XXIV and XXV.

force; is Deism and not Theism. Deism or Rationalism, howsoever you choose to call it, does not believe in dispensations or in that Special Providence which goes forth to meet the special and peculiar needs of individuals and of nations, arising out of diverse occasions or exigencies in their lives. Indeed, Deism does not recognise dispensations as facts of spiritual life. In the eye of Deism the function of dispensation, if any, has ended with the primal creation, and the Creator since then is *functus officio*. It is now a reign of laws only. There is no room in this deistic belief for most of the things which are of vital concern to the Theist—such as, prayer and response to prayer, yoga and bhakti, contact and communion with God, revelation of God's nature and purpose through inspiration or revelation through great men as God's message-bearers. All these come within the scheme of daily, hourly Dispensation (Vidhāna), and they flow from the very nature and attributes of the Deity in whom the Theist reposes his faith, namely, the Ever-Present, Ever-active Providence who is the fountainhead of all knowledge, all love and all holiness; who is the source and spring of all that is True (*Satyam*), Good (*Śivam*) and Beautiful (*Sundaram*); and who reveals Himself and His purposes by a perpetual process of creation, dispensation, or ministration.

Perennial Creation and Dispensation

The insufficiency of Deism or Rationalism is tested by its very conception of creation. With the Deist creation is a thing of the past. With the Theist creation is self-revelation of God; hence it is ever-active, incessant, never-ending, even as God himself is Ever-present, Ever-revealing, Never-ending. Indeed, the whole universe is but the unfolding of His Divine purpose. Whether in external nature or in the inner sanctuary of the human soul, in the life-history of individuals or of nations, in the past, present and future, it is the same purpose that is ceaselessly revealing itself as

the new, the newer and the newest creation. It may not be given to us always to discern this unfolding of Divine purpose, this revelation of Divine will, but it is constantly unfolding itself all the same. It is the Divine Idea which is being made manifest for ever and for evermore in Nature, in the Soul and in History. When time and circumstances demand that some precious truth bearing on the higher destinies of man, some special message of love, sacrifice or renunciation, be revealed to the world, there appears on the scene a great man divinely commissioned to bear witness to it and, if need be, to seal it with his life blood. His appearance thus is not an accident. It has its own special place in the scheme and purpose of Providence. Indeed, every one of these messages is a Divine Dispensation, a Special Dispensation, if you choose so to call it, announcing the advent of new truths and higher destinies in the life of man; and the message-bearers are but willing instruments in the hand of Providence for working out His holy purpose.

What is there in this view of creation, or dispensation, that can warrant the charge of the superstitious, or the supra-normal, being levelled against it? Is not purposeful activity inherent in all acts of creation, great or small? To compare small things with great, what do we understand by creation with reference to human creativity? Think of the masterpieces of creation of the great sculptors, painters or poets—of Leonardo da Vinci, of Titian, Raphael, Dante, Milton, Kalidas, or Shakespeare. Wherein consists their creative art? There is an idea in the mind of the artist, one that comprehends many forms and figures, many tints and shades, all of which the artist projects or plants, as it were, on canvas, marble or paper according as he is a painter, a sculptor or a poet. Can it be that the idea underlying it, the great idea that runs through it, was not in the mind of the creative artist in its entirety before he reproduced it on the canvas, marble or paper, as the case may be? The stupendous works of sculpture in Java or Sumatra, Ajanta or Ellora—were they created by adding

one bit to another, without plan or purpose? Or, was not the whole of the production in the mind and soul of the creative artist in its entirety? It was the soul of his soul. It was part of his very being; and when he put it forth on canvas or marble, he only bodied forth an idea which was of his inmost essence. Take, again, the poet, writing a sublime piece of poetry. Does he fitfully add one bit to another, write line by line and verse by verse, without a ruling purpose? Or, is it not the fact that he had the whole of it in his mind and soul, as a part of himself? The picture is really the artist turned inside out, and the sculpture is the sculptor turned inside out. Similarly, the poem is but the inner mind of the poet taking concrete shape in his production.

If such be the case with human creativity, what is to be said of Divine creativity? Is the creation of the Divine Dispenser fitful and purposeless? What must we say of the universe—the verdure of the earth and the azure of the heavens, the glory of the waters and the majesty of the mountains and the manifold wonders of creation? Was it bit by bit, by atomic accident, brought into existence? Or, was it not all in the mind of the Creator? Has not the Divine Idea made itself manifest in the wonders of nature and of History, yes, even in the fall of a sparrow? Is it not revealing itself in the scripture of each individual life,—howsoever lowly and insignificant? Our ancient Rishi fathers and the wise ones of all lands have magnified the Om, the Logos, the Word as the very counterpart of Divinity. That is because the Word is *par excellence* the Idea made manifest. So is the universe, the idea of the Creator made manifest. So too history, the record of all our strivings. It is not a record of accidents or adventitious happenings. In our uprising and downsitting there is a Divine will that overcomes evil with good and leads us, despite our shortcomings and transgressions, to the path of perfection which is our goal. Surely, it is not in outward nature only that God reveals Himself. In the history of

nations as well as in the life history of individuals, He is revealing Himself and His will even unto the present moment and will so reveal Himself for all time to come. Every such revelation is a dispensation or ministration of Providence.

The Great Religions of the World

'All Religions are True'.

Are the great religions of the world then man-made products, or are they Heaven-sent dispensations? Are they not parts and parcels of one entire scheme of Providence? Each one of them has its own special truth, its special message, and hence its own special place in Divine economy. Each one of the great men who have been instruments in delivering these truths is indispensable to us, even as those truths themselves are indispensable. If we are to grow to our full spiritual stature we cannot do without any of them. Was the message of Nirvāna that Gautama Buddha delivered meant only for the land of his birth, or for the whole world? Was the message of Lā ilāhā il-Allah which the Prophet of Arabia delivered, meant only for his country, or for the whole world? Was the message 'Thy will be done' the message of sonship to God—delivered by Jesus for Israel only, or for all humanity? And the sweet message of Bhakti, preached and practised by Sri Chaitanya,—was it only for his own country and his own times or for all the world and for all time? The fundamental truth that forms the core of each religion transcends the limits of time and space, and comes as a special dispensation of God for all time and for all men. It may be that temporal or local factors will often conspire to create conventions, superstitions, yea, unrealities, which gather round it and well-nigh conceal the real truth from view. It is for the devout truth-seeker to throw away the chaff and accept the kernel. But the undying essence of truth is there always. Viewed in this light, it is clear that "All Religions Are

True', because the underlying truth of every religion is firmly established on the verities of Divine economy, apart from such adulteration as may from time to time enter into the daily practice and profession of it. It is this which constitutes the highest message of the Brahmo Samaj of which Keshub was the message-bearer, later on called by him the New Dispensation, which beholds all dispensations as parts of one integral, organic whole.

The maxim "All Religions Are True" has been subjected to much misrepresentation, even to the extent of making it appear absurd and unintelligible. Yet the truth that it embodies is so simple, so self-evident. Rightly does Dr. V. Rai observe: "Keshub Chunder Scn is a much misunderstood religious teacher, misunderstood not only by others but also by his immediate followers." He gives a full and true account of the uncalled-for controversy which has raged round this simple doctrine. For the sake of clearing up the misunderstanding it is worth while reproducing his observations here:

"In the Sunday Mirror of October 23rd, 1881, he contributed an article under the heading 'What is the Eclecticism of the New Dispensation?', and in it he explained his doctrine—All Religions Are True. I do not find it dealt with by his biographers, P. C. Mozoomdar and Gour Govind Roy. Śiva Nath Śāstri criticises it adversely in his 'History of the Brahmo Somaj'; but while he quotes two most important sentences from the article, he leaves out an equally important one which limits the whole proposition. I quote below the essential portions of the article, and the sentences left out by Śāstri in Italics. Keshub wrote:—

Our position (the position of the New Dispensation) is not that truths are to be found in all religions, but that all the established religions of the world are true. . . . That there are truths and, therefore, as a matter of course, untruths in all religions, is easily intelligible, but it is a position the establishment of which is of no practical interest to a devout soul. . . It

(the New Dispensation) delights in God's things and beholds God in the littlest of things. Should it find any but God in the vast established religions of the world? No. It tells us, therefore, not that there are truths in every religion but that all religions are true. Christianity and Hinduism are true ; they are both dispensations of God, come to teach us something about God. Both are divine and God-sent ; and as such they deal with truths. *If there are untruths they are grafted on them by men, they cannot be God's, and we have nothing to do with them.* The question is : Are the things related to God, preached by the august founders of these religions—founders who were inspired and who brought special messages from heaven, false? . . . . All religions are dispensations of God, sent to the world at special times for the salvation of humanity. That they have benefited the world, that they have given human communities a lift from the original position of degradation, that they brought men one step nearer to God, that they have been the source of peace and consolation to millions, are facts borne out by history. That the founders of them were extraordinary men, sincere, devout, humble, honest, single-minded men, men who fearlessly declared their mission and preached truths not hitherto known is another fact which none can or ought to gainsay. The New Dispensation admits these facts ; it therefore accepts them all as coming within the scope of divine providence. If then we insist that these religions are dispensations, we must infer that they are true.

It is clearly seen that Keshub confines the meaning of the word 'Religion' to what is God-given, and excludes from it what is man-made. The following from Martineau will show that Keshub is not singular in attaching such a meaning to the word:

In the history of mankind it is long before critical reflection breaks up the complex mass of impressions that gather round the nucleus of religious feeling, so as to throw off what is really foreign to it ; and while this wild and rude growth lasts, the root which nourishes the tree feeds the parasite as well, and both rise and live and bloom together as apparently one organism and present the look of a single sample of religion.

First the skilled observer, then perhaps the believer himself, detects in leaf or fruit the intruding species which clings to a support and steals a life that is not its own, and when it is untwined and cast away, calls it a superstition. False undoubtedly it is but as it never really belonged to the religion it did not make a false religion. The two uses of the word 'religion' as a class name for all human mythologies in their unanalysed state and as an abstract name of the essence when disengaged, need to be carefully discriminated. It is the latter sense alone which designate the object of the following 'Study' which enables me to trust 'religion' as one thing everywhere ; which relieves me from the necessity of pursuing all the phenomena covered by the word in the other sense ; and imposes on me the obligation of looking behind the facts of human psychology to the Divine Realities which they express.

If Keshub's 'All religions Are True' means nothing more than that the God-given portions of all religions are true, is not this a useless truism? No, it has several beneficial uses. I shall name only a few. It helps us follow intelligently the course of evolution in religion. As all truths harmonize with one another it incites the believer to strive for this harmony by living the several truths in his life. It helps the believer to feel that he belongs to the great body of *Bhaktas* of all ages and countries, and of all religions. God is one, religion is one, and the body of *Bhaktas* is one.

Eka eva paritrātā, eka dharmastathaivacha:
Bhaktanam dalamekam Brāhmairevaṃ prakīrtate.

* * * *

I venture to hope that all sincere and thoughtful men, who had no first-hand knowledge of Keshub's article, will think twice before accepting such charges against the greatest religious teacher of Modern India."[3]

[3] 'Keshub As Seen By His Opponents', by G. C. Banerji, pp. 68-72; see also 'The Indian Messenger' of July 29, 1923; 'The World and the New Dispensation' of August 9, 1923, in which it was first published.

No Mediator

It follows that we must try not only intellectually to understand but spiritually to assimilate the truth embodied in the lives and teachings of Great Men. This we can best do by cultivating spiritual fellowship with them. It is this form of collective spiritual culture (Sādhanā) which, later in 1880, Keshub practised with his fellow-believers by means of what he called 'Pilgrimage to Saints and Prophets' or *Sādhu-samāgama*. As God reveals Himself and His purpose, so does He reveal the great man and his message. He alone can bring us into real and living contact with the saints and prophets, the great men of all times and of all countries. There is no mediator to stand between God and man. Far from great men being mediators, it is God Himself who is the intermediary. It is through Him, through prayer and inspiration, through the Holy Spirit, that we can understand and assimilate the truth underlying the distinctive life and message of every great man. God is the Pilot to whom we must resort for guidance in this behalf. Through Him we know each other in spirit and in truth; and through Him we know the saints and prophets as parts and parcels of that one great family in which we all are necessary and component parts.

> Without Thy grace, O Lord,
> How may I, sinner as I am,
> Truly know the saints (*sādhus*) and
> devotees (*bhaktas*)?[4]

This hymn characteristically sums up the position, and ought to convince any critic that there is no room, in this 'doctrine' of great men, for mediatorship, incarnationism (avatārism) or man-worship.

[4] তব দয়া বিনে, এ পাপ জীবনে, সাধু ভক্তজনে কেমনে চিনিব ?
তুমি ভক্ত প্রাণ, প্রেমিক প্রধান, তুমি না দেখালে কেমনে দেখিব ?

DEVENDRANATH'S DIFFERENCES

To a certain section of Brahmos of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj this view regarding great men and their distinctive messages made little or no appeal. On the contrary, it was regarded as full of danger. The principal of these was Raj Narain Bose whose rooted antagonism seemed often to react unfavourably on Devendranath. On questions of reform, such as renouncing the Brahminical thread, abolishing caste distinctions, encouraging widow remarriage or inter-caste marriage, to use Satyendranath Tagore's words, "my father yielded so far as his conservatism would permit, but when he thought that Keshub's disciples were going too far he drew back in alarm".[5] Indeed, the extracts given elsewhere[6] from Devendranath's private correspondence show that his views on these questions were at one time very much the same as those of Keshub, his young co-adjutor, and that, in his letters to Raj Narain Bose, Devendranath never made any secret of that fact. Raj Narain always put himself forward as the bulwark of the conservative Brahmo faith, and urged that yielding on those vital points to the young firebrands would spell danger and destruction to the Brahmo Samaj which must, for its very existence, always conform to Hindu social usages and customs. Eventually, Devendranath also came to hold that view. He had already renounced the Brahminical thread. But he went back, and, a few years later, he invested his two youngest sons Jyotirindranath and Rabindranath with the *yajñopavīta* (sacrificial thread).

DEVENDRANATH ON GREAT MEN

A similar change seems to have come over Devendranath in regard to his views on great men. In the earlier years of their collaboration there was scarcely any difference

[5] See Chap. XVI.

[6] Autobiography of Devendranath Tagore, English Translation—Introduction, pp. 14-17. See *supra*, Chap. XVI, beginning, also under head 'The Separation'.

between Devendranath and Keshub on the divine mission of great men. The following extract from one of his earlier expositions[7] will serve as an example:—

"God is drawing all souls to Himself. As he has planted in every soul the seed of His idea, so does He also send here, now and then, great (*tejasvī*) men to help in the development of that idea. Those beloved sons of His, by the light of His own goodness, spread His love all the world over. The seed of the Divine idea is innate in every soul, but, it is by the example and precepts of His beloved devotees that it develops. * * * By sending these good ones God draws to himself thousands and thousands of people. For the good of all, God throws his beloved sons into various misfortunes ; they, on the other hand, gladly bear their troubles and receive training thereby. How immeasurable is God's kindness to us, how immeasurable His love !"[8]

Again—

"What is the characteristic of the *sādhus* (good men) ? * * * As soon as they receive a new truth, their tongue would go to preach it before all the world. They are not satisfied with enjoying the company of God alone. They defy every obstacle thrown in the way of their shedding the delights of devotion on thousand other souls ; the fear of the world does not, in the least, deter them, they are not afraid even to lay down their frail body. Why is their goodness (*sadhubhāva*) like this ? Because the goodness of the good comes from God who is All-Good. From this goodness turn your mind to the contemplation of the infinite goodness of God. Is it not the object of His creation to spread the joy that He has in Himself, over all the world ? Are not these creatures created for the manifestation of His love" ?[9]

There is little affinity between the view above expressed and the answers given by Devendranath to the questions on the subject of great men put to him by Pandit Bejoy Krishna Gosvami.[10] Indeed, they appear to be polar

[7] *Brāhmo Dharmer Vyākhyāna*, No. 12, translated by Prof. Dvijadas Dutt in 'Behold the Man' (1930).
[8] See *Behold the Man* (1930), p. 24.
[9] *Brāhmo Dharmer Vyākhyāna*, No. 14 : translated and quoted by Prof. Dvijadas Dutt in 'Behold the Man' (1930), p. 24.
[10] See Chap. X.

opposites. For facility of comparison, perhaps it is permissible to repeat them here.

Goswami's question: "If people through mistake worship great men as Incarnations, how are the latter to blame for it? If the example of their lives purifies the mind, should not such example be gratefully accepted?"

Devendranath's reply:

"The answer to this question at once raises both sorrow and pain in our minds—sorrow, in speaking ill of those who have as great men (incarnations) obtained the respect and homage of different denominations; pain, in remaining inactive in the matter of removing such errors and untruths as have stood between God and man. That any one is born as a great man, or is great in a special sense is a belief to which we cannot at all with a candid mind subscribe. Howsoever man may by effort and training advance on the path to progress, he still remains a man, there is no doubt about this. He possesses the same nature, the same impulses, the same soul, the same heart, as other men do. The only difference is that whereas in the others, the innate noble qualities may perhaps lie dormant in the absence of direction and care, in those whom we wish to revere as great those qualities have through favourable circumstances greatly developed, or have by their brilliance attracted general attention. Who is great (*sādhu*)? Is this term relative or absolute? If complete freedom from sin be another word for greatness (*Sādhutā*) then, there is no *sādhu* in this world beyond *Brahma,* who is pure and untouched by sin. If, on the other hand, greatness (*sādhutā*) has only a relative significance, then all men in this world are partially good (*sādhu*) and partially not (*a-sādhu*).

I do not consider it necessary to waste words on the question as to whether those who have been accepted by the world as incarnations, and have shared with God the reverence and homage of human hearts, which are the dues of Divinity alone, have striven by words and deeds to establish the fact of their incarnation. The history of the world will bear witness. The lives of Moses, Christ and Mohammad, will furnish proof. We

do not call them deceivers of men, yet we cannot help calling them voluntary victims to their own error. Perhaps, under the influence of their erroneous belief that unless they established their own incarnation they would not be able to obtain, for the religion which they preached, the world's faith and homage, they misused the blind reverence of men. Whatsoever is good in their teaching and in their example, we cordially accept, but we do not believe them in any respect to be different from other men, or to belong to a special class. To proclaim their names along with the name of God, or to establish the necessity of paying homage to them, along with that of paying homage to God, we do not by any means consider to be consonant with *Dharma.*"[11]

If is unfortunate that the great men whom the Maharshi mentioned for illustrating his view namely, Moses, Mohamed and Christ were particularly inappropriate, as, on a proper reading of their message, it should be clear that they not only never laid claim to being incarnations of God, but firmly repudiated any such suggestion by others. It almost seems that the above observations are on a par with Rammohun's early utterances in the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin against all "centres of the circles of faith".[12]

Mendicant Attitude in Spiritual Culture Deprecated

The dread of incarnationism (*avatāravāda*) seems ultimately to have got the better of Devendranath. It appears from Rajnarain Bose's writings in English and Bengali[13] of this period and of a slightly later period that he acted as the spokesman of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj and carried on a vigorous campaign against the pernicious effects, as he thought, of Keshub's teachings and example. These writings, as well as the correspondence [14] between Devendranath and Rajnarain, point to the fact that the latter had

[11] See Ajitkumar Chakravarti's Life of Devendranath (in Bengali).
[12] Cf. *supra*, Chap. III.
[13] See *infra*, Chap. XXIV.
[14] See *Patrāvali*, also *supra*, Chap. XII.

perhaps not a little to do with Maharshi's subsequent change of attitude. Keshub's two lectures 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia' and 'Great Men', though of a date[15] subsequent to his actual separation from the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, represent the views he held prior to, and at the time of, the separation. Devendranath and Rajnarain were in no mood to look complacently on those views and the way in which they were reacting on the Brahmo Samaj of the day. In the matter of worship, and spiritual discipline (*sādhanā*) they thought that there was enough light and guidance to be derived from our own scriptures and from the examples and precepts of the good and great men of our own country. Why need the Brahmo Samaj put on the mendicant's garb and go forth to beg for spiritual food from saints and prophets of other lands? In the estimation of Devendranath as well as of Rajnarain Bose, his lieutenant in this fight, the Brahmo Samaj could very well do without Christ or Muhammad or Zoroaster. The influence of these foreign prophets, he thought, would be uncouth and uncanny, foreign to the spirit of the Brahmo Samaj which was in their view, after all, a revived form of Hinduism. The following passage will show how strong the views held by them were, in 1869:—

What would they think of a Brahmo minister who would quote on the Vedi sayings from the Bible? Would they not, from that time, conceive an intolerable hatred towards Brahmoism and everything Brahmo? If quoting a sentence from the Bible or Koran offend our countrymen, we should not do so. Truth is as catholic when taken from the *śāstras* as from the Koran or the Bible. True liberality consists, not in quoting texts from the religious scriptures of other nations but in bringing up, as we advance, the rear who are grovelling in ignorance and superstition. We certainly do not act against the dictates of conscience if we quote texts from the Hindu *śāstras* only and not from all the religious scriptures of all the countries on the face

[15] Date of secession 26th February 1865, and dates of lectures, 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia' 5th May 1866 and 'Great Men' 28th September 1866.

of the globe. Moreover, there is not a single saying in the scriptures of other nations which has not its counterpart in the *śāstras*. There are innumerable religious and moral sayings in the Hindu *śāstras*, some of them announced with sublime simplicity and others with the greatest beauty and felicity of expression. The Hindu śāstra is a vast ocean containing gems without number ; search and you will find. Being the sons of wealthy parents, we need not go begging for the motto of a religious discourse at other men's doors. If the śāstras can satisfy the highest aspirations of the soul, there can be no objection to the adoption of a book of texts containing selection from the śāstras and the śāstras only. On our principle, a Christian theistic reformer should adopt a book of texts containing selections from the Christian scriptures only to propagate Theism among his countrymen. After the different nationalities have been, we repeat what we have already said before, moulded into a theistic shape of different thoroughly national preachers, then would be the time to effect a common union among them by all such means as the promulgation of a book of theistic texts containing selections of the scriptures of different nations.[16]

Nay, even Buddha and Chaitanya would in their estimation be foreign to the spirit of the Brahmo Samaj,—the former by reason of the supposed atheistic or agnostic elements in his system, and the latter by reason of incarnationism and emotionalism being characteristics of Bengal Vaiṣnavism. The following from the pen of Rajnarain Bose will serve as an illustration of the estimate which he and others of his group in the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj formed of the Vaiṣnava movement:

An erroneous opinion now prevails in the Brahmo church that spiritual excitement is true religion. A principal member of our Church has declared the highest religious state to be a state of "passion or frenzy". * * * True spiritual progress consists in the cultivation of steady and sustained divine love. The God-animated man is superior to the God-intoxicated man. A state of intoxication is transient. The love of God should be

[16] 'Brahmic Questions of the Day Answered by an old Brahmo' (Rajnarain Bose) 1869, pp. 9-11.

natural to us as breath. An attempt to keep the soul in a continual state of spiritual excitement is not only ineffectual in the nature of things but is also a bar to spiritual progress. * * * Constant silent communion with God is the best means of promoting spiritual growth ; we should constantly drink life from the Life of life and thereby grow in spiritual strength. * * * We should not allow our love of God to remain always immature by nourishing its excitable character but should try to make it steady and sedate. A continual seeking of spiritual excitement without self-nurture keeps our love in an immature state and thereby proves a bar to our spiritual progress. Occasional excitement we cannot avoid ; nay, it is a source of great spiritual felicity but let there be excitement upon life and not excitement —galvanic excitement—without life. If spiritual excitement is followed by spiritual vacuity, where then is life? If, in the state of excitement in life, excitement leaves us, there is life to fall back upon, else all is blank and dreary. * * * Excess of spiritual excitement or, in other words, frenzy, besides not being an index of true spiritual progress, leads us also to commit acts which, like those of the men who took part in the Irish Revivals, lower the dignity of religion in the eyes of mankind and thereby prove injurious to its cause. *Procession through the public streets after the fashion of the Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavas of this country is an act of this character. Such acts should be avoided by our brother Brahmos. It should be always kept in mind that our religion is a religion of calm dignified enthusiasm. * * * We should not lower the dignity of our exalted religion by acts like those just now adverted to.*[17] As means of conversion also, they are quite ineffectual. * * *

Attack on homage paid to Great Men

Here is a specimen of the violent attack on homage paid to great men and, incidentally on *sankirtans* and on *utsavas,* nay, on all forms of collective spiritual exercise:—

I am sick of the excessive glorification of great men. Brahmo brethren ! let us cease altogether for a time from glori-

[17] This has reference to the *sankirtan* after the manner of the Vaiṣṇavas adopted and introduced by Keshub among the progressive Brahmos. Happily, the true spirit of *sankirtan* has survived these tirades. The italics are mine.

fying great men. Let us now only glorify the great God to our heart's content. Let us cease altogether for a time from seeing God manifest in the flesh. Let us now see him only as manifest in Himself. I do not at all deny the utility of speeches, lectures, festivals and the assistance to be derived from spiritual teachers. But this I maintain that we should depend more upon ourselves and the grace of God than upon external aids. Nothing can be a greater proof of the extreme dependence of some of the present Brahmos upon external aids than the doctrine lately enunciated by the editor of a Brahmo journal that, unless all the members of the Church be saved, none can be saved. In this dogma, the doctrine of external dependence is carried to a ridiculous extent. * * * I cannot but notice an erroneous doctrine which has been introduced into it. It is this that, unless we venerate visible man, we cannot venerate the invisible God. I think this doctrine has an injurious tendency. If it be allowed to prevail, men, knowing that the best way of venerating God is venerating man, would in their anxiety to venerate God, venerate man more than he deserves and would be gradually led to the degradation of hero-worship. It is one thing to say that we should venerate our spiritual teachers more than other men and another thing to say that, unless a man venerates his spiritual teacher, he cannot venerate God, and thereby place him with regard to veneration in the same class with God but only a little lower. One step more and the *Gooroo* is exalted to the rank of God. The pernicious tendency of the doctrine referred to was manifested in certain practices which lately prevailed among some of the Brahmos, strongly smelling, of *avatārism* and hero-worship. Who knows when the sore will break out afresh?

How the Breach Widened

The bogey of avatarism and man-worship, they felt, loomed large before every religious movement, specially in India. Why invite it closer and disturb the serene atmosphere of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj? The above, in brief, sums up the attitude of Devendranath and the elders of the Samaj on questions of spiritual discipline and social

reform[18] on which it differed from Keshub and his young associates. The two leaders tried for quite a long time to avert the final separation. Several attempts were made at rapprochement, but without success. The conservatives thought that the best interests of the Brahmo Samaj would be served by conforming in all essentials to the Hindu social usages and customs, and thus maintaining intact the Hindu character of the Brahmo movement; whereas the progressives thought that such conformity would necessarily sacrifice the universal character of the Brahmo faith and, moreover, would result in the triumph of untruth and hypocrisy as, for instance, by retention of the Brahminical thread without belief in caste distinctions. Meanwhile, the progressives proceeded with their measures of social reform, such as inter-caste marriage, widow re-marriage, etc.,—measures too revolutionary for Devendranath to countenance, far less to encourage. Then, again, serious trouble arose over the question of ministration from the *Vedi* (pulpit). It had been the practice in the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, since the days of Rammohun, for thread-bearing Brahmins to sit on the *Vedi* (pulpit) of the Mandir, and conduct the weekly divine services. The younger members now demanded that the sacred thread, which was the badge of caste superiority should receive no recognition whatsoever but that, on the contrary, as a qualification for ministry, the renunciation of the thread should be the *sine qua non*. They deemed it moral suicide to preach universal brotherhood and practise caste discrimination by bearing on one's person the Brahminical thread. On the other hand, Devendranath's constitutional conservatism would not permit of such a severe test being adopted for the choice of men who were to serve as ministers. The older members had made their own sacrifices in their day and had suffered persecution for giving up idolatry and joining the Brahmo Samaj. If they were not able to see eye to eye with the young reformers, or to keep pace with the latter's rapid

[18] See Chap. XII, *supra*.

advance, that was no reason why they should be deposed from the pulpit. "For the sake of the hesitant and the pusillanimous," said Devendranath, "let us refrain from laying down severe tests for ministry or membership. Let not the go-aheads petulantly break away from the lag-behinds, in a haughty spirit of impatience. Let them do their best to keep together, so that the conservatives, who are slow of movement, may pick up speed from the progressives. Otherwise, there is always the risk that those who are lagging behind today will lag behind forever." Such was Devendranath's fatherly advice and appeal to Keshub and the younger members. In his eagerness to avoid separation, he forgot that it was impossible to pour new wine into old bottles. Keshub himself was as loth to separate as was Devendranath. Yet the separation was bound to come, as neither Keshub nor his young associates were prepared to compromise on matters of principle. The catholic and universal character of Brāhmo Dharma, as they understood it, they were not prepared to barter away for the so-called 'nationalism' in religion, which was but another name for sectarianism. Nor were they in a mood to be terrified by the menace of excommunication or isolation. They knew they were in a minority but it was the minority of the right and that was all they cared for.

MAX MÜLLER ON CAUSES OF THE SCHISM

It is interesting to examine what Max Muller, who always watched the progress of the Brahmo Samaj with true interest and sympathy, thought of the causes of separation. Writing in the year 1884, on receipt of the news of Keshub's death, Max Muller observed[19]: —

What were the exact causes of the breach, between Devendranath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen, it is difficult to say. They were hardly doctrinal as any one may see who

[19] *Chips from a German Workshop*, Vol. II, *Biographical Essays*, *Monograph* on Keshub Chunder Sen, p. 63.

compares these two confessions.[20] They were not personal, for the two friends, though outwardly separated, remained united by mutual feelings of love and veneration. They were, so far as we can judge, such as arise when practical measures have to be discussed and decisions have to be taken. Then interests seem to clash, misunderstandings become inevitable, misrepresentations are resorted to, and newspaper gossip makes retreat from untenable positions very difficult. So far as I can judge, Devendranath and his friends were averse to unnecessary innovations and afraid of anything likely to wound the national feelings of the great mass of the people. They wanted before all to retain the national character of their religion. "A so-called universal form", they said, "would make our religion appear grotesque and ridiculous to the nation". They pleaded for toleration for Hindu usages and customs which appeared to them innocent. "If a progressive Brahmo" they argued, "requires a conservative one to reject those portions which the former considers to be idolatrous, but the latter does not, he denies liberty of conscience to a fellow-Brahmo".

No wonder Max Muller thought that doctrinally there was no difference between Devendranath and Keshub Chunder. He said so on a comparison of the two declarations respectively setting forth the principles underlying the faith of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj and of the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Samaj. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the immortality and the eternal progressiveness of the soul, the common worship in spirit and in truth by all humanity of the One Only God without a second,—the Perfect and Infinite, the Creator of all, Omnipresent, Almighty, All-knowing, All-merciful and All-holy—these were the fundamental items of faith, common to both. The divine mission of great men, the place of every religion in the scheme of Divine Providence, the

[20] By the 'two confessions' Max Muller means (1) the summary of the doctrines of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj as accepted by Devendranath Tagore and as found in the 'Brief History of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj from 1830 to 1867', published in 1868, p. 17, and (2) Statement of rules and principles of Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Samaj read out by Keshub at the opening of the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Mandir on August 22, 1869. See Biographical Essays, Vol. II by Max Muller, p. 63.

universality and immutability of prayer and inspiration were perhaps regarded by Max Muller as subsidiary. From this point of view, Max Muller was not in error when he said that the differences between Devendranath and Keshub "were hardly doctrinal. * * * They were, so far as we can judge, such as arise when practical measures have to be discussed and decisions have to be taken". Moreover, it will be remembered that, in regard to the divine mission of great men, Devendranath held different views at different times and expressed himself accordingly. Towards the middle of the sixties, an exaggerated fear of incarnationism (*avatārism*) brought on an attitude which was definitely inhospitable, if not hostile, to great men. As regards Keshub's views regarding Christ, Muhammad and other 'foreign' prophets or saints, Devendranath came to regard them as being out of keeping with the correct Hindu nationalistic outlook which he prescribed for the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj. Indeed, towards Christ Devendranath developed an attitude which might be called "Christophobia". He himself described the danger which, as he thought, faced the Brahmo Samaj of the day as the bogey of Christ (Christo-*bibhīṣikā*). Add to all this his great fear that the Brahmo Samaj might deviate into denationalized ideas of reform and reconstruction owing to the universalistic view-point of Keshub and his young associates. Thus there were enough points of conflict on which misunderstandings and misrepresentations might thrive and eventually bring about either a deadlock or a schism. After Devendranath, Rajnarain Bose assumed the office of President of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj and further accentuated this essentially Hindu standpoint. This is how the latter stated the position: —

Although Brahmoism is a universal religion it is impossible to communicate a universal form to it. It must wear a particular form in a particular country. A so-called universal form or religious denomination among whom it is intended to be propagated and would not command their veneration. In conformity with

such views, the Adi Samaj has adopted a Hindu form to propagate Theism among Hindus. It has, therefore, retained many innocent Hindu usages and customs and has adopted a form of divine service containing passages extracted from the Hindu Śāstras only; using a book of theistic texts containing selections from those sacred books only, and a ritual containing as much of the ancient form as could be kept consistently with the dictates of conscience. * * It leaves matters of social reformation to the judgments and tastes of its individual members. It reckons those who have taken a part in social reformation as well as those who have not, to be all Brahmos if they profess themselves to be so. It only lays greater stress upon renunciation of idolatry and purity of conduct than upon social reformation. The national Hindu Theistic Church, according to the principles laid down above, receives only Hindus. It reckons those progressive Brahmos only as its members who call themselves Hindus not only in race but in religion also on the ground that true Hinduism is Theism. If it be asked why should such social distinctions as caste be observed at all, the reply is that the world is not yet prepared for the practical adoption of the doctrines of levellers and socialists.[21]

The Brahmo Samaj of India, 1866.

The narrow interpretation above given of Brahmoism, as a universal religion did not commend itself to the progressive section of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj. Hence the advent of the Brahmo Samaj of India. Informed by its new spirit of catholicism, the new Brahmo Samaj took birth on the 11th November 1866. Its membership included every race and community, all men and women who might wish to join it. Its scriptures comprehended, besides the Hindu Śāstras which had hitherto been the sole repository of wisdom for the Brahmo Samaj, all that was to be found for spiritual sustenance in the Hindu Śāstras, the Qoran, the Bible (the Old and New Testaments), the Zend-Avesta, the Granth Sahib—indeed in all scriptures of all nations

[21] Rajnarain Bose's Works.

and all ages. An anthology of texts culled from various scriptures was published under the title *śloka-sangraha*[22] (collection of texts) for devotional purposes. A motto in Sanskrit was composed by Pandit Gour Govinda Roy embodying the wider ideal in the following terms:

सुविशालमिदं विश्वं पवित्रं ब्रह्ममन्दिरम्।
चेतः सुनिर्म्मलन्तीर्थं सत्यं शास्त्रमनश्वरम्॥
विश्वासो धर्म्ममूलं हि प्रीतिः परमसाधनम्।
स्वार्थनाशस्तु वैराग्यं ब्राह्मैरेवं प्रकीर्त्यते॥

This wide universe is the holy temple of God. The heart is the shrine for pilgrimage. Truth is the scripture everlasting. Faith is the root of religion. Love is its supreme realization. Asceticism (Vairagya) is the death of self. So declare the Brahmos.

The above motto appeared on the title-page of the *Śloka-sangraha* as also of the *Dharmatattva,* the Bengali organ of the Brahmo Samaj of India. With this all-embracing catholic view of individual and national life, and with his little band of self-consecrated workers, Keshub started on his new career of Re-construction.

The momentous meeting at which the Brahmo Samaj of India was incorporated was held on the 11th of November 1866 and was presided over by Babu Wooma-

[22] The following interesting account of how it was received by different sections appeared in the Brahmo Year Book: "Some curious controversies attended the publication of this volume. One leading conservative Brahmo thought that 'if quoting a sentence from the Bible or the Koran offend our countrymen, we should not do so'. Another speaking at the Conference when the compilation was first proposed, pleaded that 'there was all the truth which we require in the Hindu scriptures and we need not, therefore, borrow anything from others. When we have eaten enough, do we feel hunger?' Whereupon the Chairman (Babu Wooma Nath Gupta) asked the gentlemen who did not feel any hunger for truth to hold up their hands. Not a hand was raised! This was in November 1866. The work must have rapidly attained popularity, for an enlarged reprint of it was issued in 1867. A third edition followed in 1869 and a fourth, again enlarged, in 1876". Miss Collet's Brahmo Year Book, 1877, p. 33.

nath Gupta, one of the missionaries. The meeting commenced with Divine Service, consisting of prayers, hymns, scripture readings and a sermon by the Chairman, after which Keshub moved the first resolution speaking as follows: —

"We have met here to discharge a most important duty ; a duty which we owe to ourselves, to our Church, and to India. Our present object is simply to organize and incorporate the Brahmo community, to establish such enduring bonds of sympathy and union among the several members of our community as are essential to their individual and common welfare, to the consolidation and growth of our Church and to the effectual propagation of Brahmo-Dharma. For this purpose God has gathered us this evening. May He enable us to achieve it ! * * * We see around us a large number of Brahmo Samajes in different parts of the country for the congregational worship of the One True God, and hundreds upon hundreds of men professing the Brahmo faith ; we have, besides, missionaries going about to all directions to preach the saving truths of Brahmo-Dharma ; books and tracts inculcating these truths are also being published from time to time. To unite all such Brahmos and form these into a body, to reduce their individual and collective labours into a vast but well-ordered system of unity and co-operation— this is what is sought to be accomplished at the present meeting. Professing a common faith it is our duty to combine for common good and not to remain isolated from and be regardless of each other. We must endeavour to realize, so far as lies in our power, the true ideal of the Church of God ; we must form a truly Theistic Brotherhood, a family of God's children of which He is our common Father and Head ; that holy Kingdom of Heaven of which He is the Eternal King.

Without further remarks, I beg to read to you the resolution I have in hand :—That those who have faith in Brahmo-Dharma be incorporated into a Church, for their mutual benefit and the effectual propagation of Brahmic worship and knowledge under the name of 'The Brahmo Samaj of India'."

APPENDIX I

MISS CLARA COLLET'S LETTER

13, South Hill Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W. 3,
9th November, 1933.

Dear Dr. Sen,

The 'Continuator' of my aunt's *"Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy"* was the late Rev. F. Herbert Stead, who was for several years a Congregationalist minister at Leicester, then editor of the *Independent and Nonconformist* (1890-92), and shortly after my aunt's death in March, 1894, the Warden of the Robert Browning Settlement at Walworth.

Mr. Stead's main reasons for insisting on his anonymity can be inferred from his prefatory 'Note' to the volume. Miss Collet's message "was sent to one whom she had never so much as seen, who had taken no part in the movements which she had most at heart, and who had only the vaguest knowledge of her hero. The work was not at all along the line of his main pursuits. But to a request of this kind, uttered on the threshold of the eternal world, he felt there could be only one answer. It came to him as a mandate which he could not disobey,—a mandate none the less imperative because wholly unexpected and unprepared for. In undertaking the task, he has endeavoured simply to complete the author's work! Of the immense mass of material which he used, almost all had been collected by her during long and laborious years of patient research: there was scarcely a source he drew from which she had not indicated. Her general impression of Rammohan's character he has verified and followed.

It will be observed that Mr. Stead "verified" Miss Collet's view of Rammohan's character. This he would have done by reading the evidence for and against it collected by her. An ardent supporter generally exposes the weak spots in the character of a client especially when submitting to cross-examination. Having satisfied himself of the intrinsic greatness of Rammohan Roy, Mr. Stead simply set himself to work as the

amanuensis of the historian, using his journalist's experience and skill in cutting down and selecting his material. The last pages (148-157 in the 1st edition) are admittedly Mr. Stead's own summary of the impression left on him at the end of his survey of the life and character of his subject. But the work in conception, outline, materials, and in all but concluding literary execution is and remains Miss Collet's.

I am very glad to have this opportunity of acknowledging the admirable and unselfish devotion shown by Mr. Stead in his execution of what you rightly call his signal service in presenting the *Life* as its author had conceived it.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) CLARA E. COLLET.

APPENDIX II

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH[1]

My Dear Friend,

In conformity with the wish, you have frequently expressed, that I should give an outline of my life, I have now the pleasure to give you the following very brief sketch.

My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order, and, from time immemorial, were devoted to the religious duties of their race, down to my fifth progenitor, who about one hundred and forty years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisement. His descendants ever since followed his example, and, according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various success, sometimes rising to honour and sometimes falling; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes excelling in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have up to the present day uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances

[1] Miss Mary Carpenter thus introduces this Autobiographical Sketch into her book, 'The Last Days in England of the Rajah Rammohun Roy (London, Trubner, 1866) :—

"The following letter from Rammohun Roy himself first appeared in the (London) Athenaeum, and in the Literary Gazette; from one or other of which it was copied into various English newspapers. It was written just before he went to France. It was probably designed for some distinguished person who had desired him to give an outline of his history; and he adopted this form for the purpose. The letter may be considered as addressed to his friend, Mr. Gordon of Calcutta."

Miss Sophia Dobson Collet in her "Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy", (London, 1900) calls it "the spurious autobiographical letter published by Sandford Arnot in the Athenaeum of October 5, 1833", though she does not give her reasons for the statement.

Prof. Max Muller in his Biographical Essays (London, 1884) writes :—

"There is a letter, supposed to have been written by Rammohun Roy shortly before he left England for France, and addressed to Mr. Gordon of Calcutta. It was first published after the Rajah's death in the Athenaeum, Oct. 5, 1833, by Mr. Sandford Arnot, who had acted as the Rajah's Secretary during his stay in England . . . Whether the Raja wrote or dictated the whole of it may be doubted, but to reject the whole as a fabrication would be going much too far."

and devotion, preferring peace and tranquillity of mind to the excitements of ambition, and all the allurements of worldly grandeur.

In conformity with the usage of my paternal race, and the wish of my father, I studied the Persian and Arabic languages, these being indispensable to those who attached themselves to the courts of the Mahommedan princes ; and agreeably to the usage of my maternal relations, I devoted myself to the study of the Sanskrit and the theological works written in it, which contain the body of Hindu literature, law and religion.

When about the age of sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindoos. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindoostan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my father recalled me and restored me to his favour ; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants ; and I enjoyed the confidence of several of them even in their public capacity. My continued controversies with the Brahmins on the subject of their idolatry and superstition, and my interference with their custom of burning widows, and other pernicious practices, revived and increased their animosity against me ; and through their influence with my family, my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me.

After my father's death I opposed the advocates of idolatry with still greater boldness. Availing myself of the art of printing, now established in India, I published various works and pamphlets against their errors, in the native and foreign languages. This raised such a feeling against me, that I was at

last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and the nation to which they belong, I always feel grateful.

The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it ; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons, both among my own relations and others, began to adopt the same sentiments.

I now felt a strong wish to visit Europe, and obtain, by personal observation, a more thorough insight into its manners, customs, religion, and political institutions. I refrained, however, from carrying this intention into effect until the friends who coincided in my sentiments should be increased in number and strength. My expectations having been at length realised, in November, 1830, I embarked for England, as the discussion of the East India Company's charter was expected to come on, by which the treatment of the natives of India, and its future government, would be determined for many years to come, and an appeal to the King in Council, against the abolition of the practice of burning widows, was to be heard before the Privy Council ; and his Majesty the Emperor of Delhi had likewise commissioned me to bring before the authorities in England certain encroachments on his rights by the East India Company. I accordingly arrived in England in April, 1831.

I hope you will excuse the brevity of this sketch, as I have no leisure at present to enter into particulars, and

I remain, etc.,
RAMMOHUN ROY.

APPENDIX III

RAMMOHUN ROY ON INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

The three letters printed below were published for the first time, in the Modern Review for October, 1928. In the communication to the Foreign Minister of France, the reader will find an enunciation of the principle and a clear statement of the programme for a comity of Nations.

I

To

T. HYDE VILLIERS, ESQ.,
Secretary to the India Board.

SIR,

India having providentially been placed under the care of the Board of Control, I feel necessarily induced to have recourse to that authority when occasion requires. I, therefore, hope you will excuse the intrusion I make with the following lines.

I am informed that for the purpose of visiting France it is necessary to be provided with a passport and that before granting it, the French Ambassador must be furnished with an account of the applicant.

Such restrictions against foreigners are not observed even among the Nations of Asia (China excepted). However, their observance by France may, perhaps, be justified on the ground that she is surrounded by Governments entirely despotic on three sides and by nations kept down merely by the bayonet or by religious delusion.

In the event of my applying to Prince Talleyrand for a passport I beg to know whether I shall be justified in referring to you in your official capacity as to my character. All that I can say for myself is, that I am a traveller and that my heart is with the French People in their endeavours to support the cause of liberal principles.

Sir Francis Burdett, at Mr. Byng's, liberally and spontaneously offered to give me a letter of introduction to General Lafayette, but this will not, I think, serve my purpose on my first landing in France.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Rammohun Roy.

London,
48, Bedford Sq.
Decr. 22nd, 1831.

II.

To
Hyde Villiers, Esqr.,
Secretary to Board of Commissioners
for the Affairs of India.

Sir,

I have the honour to receive your letter of the 27th instant and I beg to offer my warm acknowledgements to the Board for their attention to my application of the 23rd of this month.

I beg to be permitted to add that, as I intimated to the Board my intention of eventually applying to the French Ambassador resident in London for a passport for France, I now deem it proper to submit to you, for the information of the Board, a copy of an intended communication from me to the Foreign Minister of France, the result of which I shall await before I apply to the French Ambassador.

Unless I have the honour to hear from you that such an address would be irregular and unconstitutional, I shall forward it to a friend in Paris to be presented in due form.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
RAMMOHUN ROY.

London,
December 28th, 1831
(Endorsed)
28th December, 1831.
Rajah Rammohun Roy.

Transg. copy of an intended communication to the Foreign Minister of France.

III.

To

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of France,

Paris.

Sir,

You may be surprised at receiving a letter from a Foreigner, the Native of a country situated many thousand miles from France, and I assuredly would not now have trespassed on your attention, were I not induced by a sense of what I consider due to myself and by the respect I feel towards a country standing in the foremost rank of free and civilized nations.

2nd. For twelve years past I have entertained a wish (as noticed, I think, in several French and English Periodicals) to visit a country so favoured by nature and so richly adorned by the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and above all blessed by the possession of a free constitution. After surmounting many difficulties interposed by religious and national distinctions and other circumstances, I am at last opposite your coast, where, however, I am informed that I must not place my foot on your territorry unless I previously solicit and obtain an express permission for my entrance from the Ambassador or Minister of France in England.

3rd. Such a regulation is quite unknown even among the Nations of Asia (though extremely hostile to each other from religious prejudices and political dissensions), with the exception of China, a country noted for its extreme jealousy of foreigners and apprehensions of the introduction of new customs and ideas. I am, therefore, quite at a loss to conceive how it should exist among a people so famed as the French are for courtesy and liberality in all other matters.

4th. It is now generally admitted that not religion only but unbiassed common sense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race.

5th. It may perhaps be urged that during the existence of war and hostile feelings between any two nations (arising probably from their not understanding their real interests), policy requires of them to adopt these precautions against each other. This, however, only applies to a state of warfare. If France, therefore, were at war with surrounding nations or regarded their people as dangerous, the motive for such an extraordinary precaution might have been conceived.

6th. But as a general peace has existed in Europe for many years, and there is more particularly so harmonious an understanding between the people of France and England and even between their present Governments, I am utterly at a loss to discover the cause of a regulation which manifests, to say the least, a want of cordiality and confidence on the part of France.

7th. Even during peace the following excuses might perhaps be offered for the continuance of such restrictions, though in my humble opinion they cannot stand a fair examination.

First. If it be said that persons of bad character should not be allowed to enter France: still it might, I presume, be answered that the granting of passports by the French Ambassador here is not usually founded on certificates of character or investigation into the conduct of individuals. Therefore, it does not provide a remedy for that supposed evil.

Secondly. If it be intended to prevent felons escaping from justice: this case seems well-provided for by the treaties between different nations for the surrender of all criminals.

Thirdly. If it be meant to obstruct the flight of debtors from their creditors: in this respect likewise it appears superfluous, as the bankrupt laws themselves after a short imprisonment set the debtor free even in his own country; therefore voluntary exile from his own country would be, I conceive, a greater punishment.

Fourthly. If it be intended to apply to political matters, it is in the first place not applicable to my case. But on general grounds I beg to observe that it appears to me, the ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the Parliament of each: the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by

both nations and the Chairman to be chosen by each Nation alternately, for one year, and the place of meeting to be one year within the limits of one country and next within those of the other ; such as at Dover and Calais for England and France.

8th. By such a Congress all matters of difference, whether political or commercial, affecting the Natives of any two civilized countries with constitutional Governments, might be settled amicably and justly to the satisfaction of both and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation.

9th. I do not dwell on the inconvenience which the system of passports imposes in urgent matters of business and in cases of domestic affliction. But I may be permitted to observe that the mere circumstance of applying for a passport seems a tacit admission that the character of the applicant stands in need of such a certificate or testimonial before he can be permitted to pass unquestioned. Therefore, any one may feel some delicacy in exposing himself to the possibility of a refusal which would lead to an inference unfavourable to his character as a peaceable citizen.

My desire, however, to visit that country is so great that I shall conform to such conditions as are imposed on me, if the French Government, after taking the subject into consideration judge it proper and expedient to continue restrictions contrived for a different state of things, but to which they may have become reconciled by long habit: as I should be sorry to set up my opinion against that of the present enlightened Government of France.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
RAMMOHUN ROY.

APPENDIX IV

THE TRUST DEED OF THE BRAHMO SOMAJ.[1]

THIS INDENTURE made the eighth day of January in the Year of Christ one thousand eight hundred and thirty BETWEEN DWARKANAUTH TAGORE of Jorasankoe in the Town of Calcutta Zumeendar, KALEENAUTH ROY of Burranugur in the Zillah of Havelly in the Suburbs of Calcutta aforesaid Zumeendar, PRUSSUNNOCOOMAR TAGORE of Pattoriaghatta in Calcutta aforesaid Zumeendar, RAMCHUNDER BIDYABAGISH of Simlah in Calcutta aforesaid Pundit and RAMMOHUN ROY of Manicktullah in Calcutta aforesaid Zumeendar of the one part and BOYKONTONAUTH ROY of Burranugur in the Zilla of Havelly in the Suburbs of the Town of Calcutta aforesaid Zumeendar, RADHAPERSAUD ROY of Manicktullah in Calcutta aforesaid Zumeendar and RAMANAUTH TAGORE of Jorasankoe in Calcutta aforesaid Banian (Trustees named and appointed for the purposes hereinafter mentioned) of the other part WITNESSETH that for and in consideration of the sum of Sicca Rupees Ten of Lawful money of Bengal by the said Boykontonath Roy, Radhapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore to the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy in hand paid at and before the sealing and delivery of these Presents (the receipt whereof they the said Dwarkanauth Tagore Kaleenauth Roy Prussunnocoomar Tagore Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy do and each and every of them doth hereby acknowledge) and for settling and assuring the messuage land tenements hereditaments and premises hereinafter mentioned to be hereby granted and released to for and upon such uses, trusts, intents and purposes as are hereafter expressed and declared of and concerning the same and for divers other good Causes and Considerations them hereunto especially moving they, the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy Have and each and every of them Hath granted, bargained, sold,

[1] This is a faithful reprint of the original. It was also published in *the Tattwabodhini Patrika for Magh, 1772 Sak.*

aliened, released and confirmed and by these presents Do and each and every of them Doth grant bargain sell alien release and confirm unto the said Boykontonauth Roy, Radhapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore their heirs and assigns ALL that brick built messuage (hereafter to be used as a place for religious worship as is hereinafter more fully expressed and declared) Building or Tenement with the piece or parcel of Land or Ground thereunto belonging and on part whereof the same is erected and built containing by estimation four Cottahs and two Chittacks be the same a little more or less situate lying and being in the Chitpore Road in Sootanooty in the Town of Calcutta aforesaid butted and bounded as follows (that is to say) on the north by the House and Ground now or formerly belonging to one Fooloorey Rutton on the south by the House and Ground formerly belonging to one Ramkristno Kur since deceased on the east by the House and Ground now or formerly belonging to one Fooloorey Rutton on the south by the House and Ground formerly belonging to one Ramkristno Kur since deceased on the east by the House and Ground now or formerly belonging to one Radamoney Bhamonney and on the west by the said public Road or Street commonly called Chitpore Road or howsoever otherwise the said messuage building land tenements and hereditaments or any of them now are or is or heretofore were or was situated tenanted called known described or distinguished and all other the messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments (if any) which are or are expressed or intended to be described or comprised in a certain Indenture of bargain and sale hereinafter referred to TOGETHER with all and singular the out houses, offices, edifices, buildings, erections, compounds, yards, walls, ditches, hedges, fences, enclosures, ways, paths, passages, woods, under-woods, shrubs, timber, and other trees, entrances, casements, lights, privileges, profits, benefits, emoluments, advantages, rights, titles, members, appendages and appurtenances whatsoever to the said messuage building land tenements, hereditaments and premises or any part or parcel thereof belonging or in any wise appertaining or with the same or any part or parcel thereof now or at any time or times heretofore held, used, occupied, possessed or enjoyed or accepted reputed deemed taken or known as part parcel or member thereof or

any part thereof all which said messuage building land tenements hereditaments and premises are now in the actual possession of or legally vested in the said Boykontonauth Roy, Radapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore by virtue of a bargain and sale to them thereof made by the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy for Sicca Rupees Five Consideration by an Indenture bearing date the day next before the day of the date and executed previous to the sealing and delivery of these Presents for the Term of one whole Year Commencing from the day next preceding the day of the date of the same Indenture and by force of the statute made for transferring uses into possession and the remainder and remainders reversion and reversions Yearly and other rents issues and profits thereof AND ALL the Estate Right, Title, interest, trust, use, possession, inheritance, property, profit, benefit, claim and demand whatsoever both at Law and in Equity of them the said Dwarkanath Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy respectively of into upon or out of the same or any part thereof Together with all deeds Pottahs evidences muniments and writings whatsoever which relate to the said premises or any part thereof and which now are or hereafter shall or may be in the hands possession or custody of the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy their heirs executors administrators or representatives or any person or persons from whom he or they can or may procure the same without action or suit at Law or in Equity. TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said Messuage Building land tenements hereditaments and all and singular other the premises hereinbefore and in the said Indenture of bargain or sale described and mentioned and hereby granted and released or intended so to be and every part and parcel thereof with their and every of their rights members and appurtenances unto the said Boykontonauth Roy, Rada Persaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore their heirs and assigns but to the uses nevertheless upon the trusts and to and for the needs intents and purposes hereinafter declared and expressed of and concerning the same and to and for no other ends intents and purposes whatsoever (that is to say)

TO THE USE of the said Boykontonauth Roy, Radapersaud Roy, Ramanauth Tagore or the survivors or survivor of them or the heirs of such survivor or their or his assigns UPON TRUST and in confidence that they the said Boykontonauth Roy, Radapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore or the survivors or survivor of them or the heirs of such survivors or their or his assigns shall and do from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter permit and suffer the said messuage or building land tenements hereditaments and premises with their appurtenances to be used occupied enjoyed applied and appropriated as and for a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever and that no graven image statue or sculpture carving painting picture portrait or the likeness of any thing shall be admitted within the said messuages building land tenements hereditaments and premises and that no sacrifice offering or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage building land tenements, hereditaments and premises be deprived of life either for religious purposes or for food and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for the preservation of life feasting or rioting be permitted therein thereon and that in conducting the said worship and adoration or object animate or inanimate that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognized as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching praying or in the hymns or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said Messuage or Building and that no sermon preaching discourse prayer or hymn be delivered made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe to the promotion of charity morality piety benevolence virtue and the strengthening the bonds of

union Between men of all religious persuations and creeds and also that a person of Good repute and well known for his knowledge piety and morality be employed by the said trustees or the survivors or survivor of them or the heirs of such survivor or their or his assigns as a resident Superintendent and for the purpose of superintending the worship so to be performed as is hereinbefore stated and expressed and that such worship be performed daily or at least as often as once in seven days PROVIDED ALWAYS and it is hereby declared and agreed by and between the parties to these presents that in case the several Trustees in and by these present named and appointed or any other succeeding Trustees or Trustee of the said trust estate and premises for the time being to be nominated or appointed as hereinafter is mentioned shall depart this life or be desirous to be discharged of or from the aforesaid Trusts or shall refuse or neglect or become incapable by or in any manner to act in the said trusts then and in such case and from time to time as often and as soon as any such event shall happen it shall be lawful for the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy during their joint lives or the survivors or survivor of them after the death of any or either of them jointly and in concurrence with the Trustees or Trustee for the time being and in case of and after the death of the survivor of them the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy then for the said Trustees or Trustee by any deed or writing under their or his hands and seals or hand and seal to be attested by two or more credible Witnesses to nominate substitute and appoint some other fit person or persons to supply the place of the Trustees or Trustee respectively so dying desiring to be discharged or refusing or neglecting or becoming incapable by or in any manner to act as aforesaid and that immediately after any such appointment shall be made all and every the messuage or building land tenements and hereditaments premises which under and by virtue of these presents shall be then vested in the Trustees or Trustee so dying desiring to be discharged or refusing or neglecting or becoming incapable by or in any manner to act as aforesaid shall be conveyed transferred assigned and assured so and in such manner that

the said shall and may be legally fully and absolutely vested in the Trustees or Trustee so to be appointed in their or his room or stead either solely and alone or jointly with the surviving continuing or acting Trustees or Trustee as the case may require and in his or their heirs or assigns to the uses upon the Trusts and to and for the several ends intents and purposes hereinbefore declared or expressed concerning the same and that every such new Trustees or Trustee shall and may act and assist in the management carrying on and execution of the Trusts to which they or he shall be so appointed (although they or he shall not have been invested with the seisin of the Trustees or Trustee to whose places or place they or he shall have succeeded) either jointly with the surviving continuing or other acting Trustees or Trustee or solely as the case may require in such and the like manner and in all respects as if such new Trustees or Trustee had been originally appointed by these presents PROVIDED LASTLY and it is hereby further declared and agreed by and between the said Parties to these presents that no one or more of the said Trustees shall be answerable or accountable for the other and others of them nor for the acts defaults or omissions of the other or others of them any consent permission or privity by any or either of them to any act deed or thing to or by the other or others of them done with an intent and for the purpose only of facilitating the Execution of the trusts of these presents notwithstanding nor shall any new appointed Trustees or Trustee or their or his heirs or assigns be answerable or accountable for the acts deeds neglects defaults or omissions of any Trustees or Trustee in or to whose place or places they or he shall or may succeed but such of them the said Trustees shall be answerable accountable and responsible for his own respective acts deeds neglects defaults or omissions only AND the said Dwarkanath Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomer Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy do hereby for themselves severally and respectively and for their several and respective heirs executors administrators and representatives covenant grant declare and agree with and to the said Boykontonauth Roy Radapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore their heirs and assigns in manner Following (that is to say) that for and notwithstanding any act deed matter or thing what-

soever heretofore by the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy or any or either of them had made done committed willingly or willingly omitted or sufferred to the contrary they, the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy at the time of the sealing and delivery of these presents are or one of them is lawfully rightfully and absolutely seized in their or his demesne as of Fee in their or his own right and to their or his own use of the said messuage building land tenements hereditaments and premises mentioned and intended to be hereby granted and released with the appurtenances both at Law and in Equity as of in and for a good sure perfect and indefeasible estate of inheritance in fee simple in possession and in severalty without any Condition Contingent Trust Proviso power of limitation or revocation of any use or uses or any other restraint matter or thing whatsoever which can or may Alter Change Charge determine lessen encumber defeat prejudicially affect or make void the same or defeat determine abridge or vary the uses or trusts hereby declared and expressed and also that they the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy (for and notwithstanding any such act deed matter or thing as aforesaid) or some of them now have in themselves or one of them hath in himself full power and Lawful and Absolute Authority by these presents to grant bargain sell release and assure the said messuage land tenements hereditaments and premises mentioned and intended to be hereby granted and Released with the appurtenances and the possession reversion and inheritance thereof unto and to the use of the said Boykontonauth Roy Radapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore and their heirs to the use upon the Trusts and to and for the ends intents and purposes hereinbefore expressed or declared of and concerning the same according to the True intent and meaning of these presents AND FURTHER that said messuage or building land tenements hereditaments and premises with their rights members and appurtenances shall from time to time and at all times hereafter remain continue and be to the use upon the Trusts and for the ends intents and purposes herein before

declared or expressed concerning the same and shall and lawfully may be peaceably and quietly holden and enjoyed and applied and appropriated accordingly without the let suit hindrance claim demand interruption or denial of the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy or any or either of them or any or either of their heirs representatives or of any other person or persons now or hereafter claiming or to claim or possessing any estate right title trust or interest of in to or out of the same or any part or parcel thereof by from under or in trust for them or any or either of them and that free and clear and clearly and absolutely acquitted exonerated and discharged or otherwise by the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohon Roy or any or either of them their or any or either of their Heirs executors administrators and representatives well and sufficiently saved harmless and kept indemnified of from and against all and all manner of former and other gifts grants bargains Sales Leases Mortgages uses wills devises rents arrears of rents estates titles charges and other incumbrances whatsoever had made done committeed created suffered or executed by the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohon Roy or any or either of them or any or either of their heirs or representatives or any person or persons now or hereafter rightfully claiming or possessing any estate right title or interest at Law or in Equity from through under or in trust for them or any or either of them or with their or any or either of their consent privity or procurement or acts means of defaults AND MOREOVER that the said Dwarkanauth Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prussunnocoomar Tagore, Ramchunder Bidyabagish and Rammohun Roy or their heirs and representatives and all and every other person or persons whomsoever now or hereafter lawfully equitably and rightfully claiming or possessing any estate right title use trust or interest either at Law or in Equity of into upon or out of the said messuage land tenements hereditaments and premises mentioned or intended to be hereby granted and realised with the appurtenances or any part thereof by from under or in trust for them or any or either of them shall and will from

time to time and at all times hereafter at the reasonable request of the said Boykontonauth Roy, Radapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore or the survivors or survivor of them or the heirs of the survivor of their or his assigns make to acknowledge suffer execute and perfect all and every such further and other lawful and reasonable acts things deeds conveyances and assurances in the Law whatsoever for the further better more perfectly absolutely and satisfactorily granting conveying releasing confirming and assuring the said messuage or building land tenements hereditaments and premises mentioned to be hereby granted and released and every part and parcel thereof and the possession reversion and inheritance of the same with their and every of their appurtenances unto the said Boykontonauth Roy, Radapersaud Roy and Ramanauth Tagore or other the Trustees or Trustee for the time being and their heirs for the uses upon the Trusts and to and for the ends intents and purposes hereinbefore declared and expressed as by the said Trustees and Trustee or his or their counsel learned in the Law shall be reasonably devised or advised and required so as such further assurance or assurances contain or imply in them no further or other Warranty or Covenants on the part of the person or persons who shall be required to make or execute the same then for or against the acts deeds omissions or defaults of him her or them or his her or their heirs executors administrators and so that he she or they be not compelled or compellable to go or travel from the usual place of his her or their respective abode for making or executing the same IN WITNESS whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto subscribed and set their hands and seals the day and Year first within written.

Dwarkanauth Roy Tagore.
Callynauth Roy.
Prossonnocoomar Tagore.
Rammohon Roy.

Boycontonauth Roy.
Radapersaud Roy.
Ramanauth Tagore.

Sealed and Delivered at Calcutta aforesaid in the presence of

J. Fountain.
Atty. at Law.
Ramgopaul Day.

APPENDIX V

MAHARSHI DEVENDRA NATH TAGORE'S

Reminiscences of Rammohun Roy

Report of a conversation with the Maharshi held in September 1896. Rendered into English and published soon after in the journal 'Queen' by the interviewers.

"I used to go very frequently to Raja Rammohun Roy's garden house", said the Maharshi. "It was in Maniktala. I was a student in Rammohun Roy's school at Hedua (Cornwallis Square). His son Rama Prasad was a class-mate of mine, and I used to go to see him with Rama Prasad, almost every Saturday, after school hours. The Raja had a swinging cot hanging from one of the trees in his garden. Rama Prasad and I would swing there. Sometimes the Raja would come and join us, and having helped me to swing for some time, he would himself get on the cot, and ask me to help him, saying, 'Biradar, push me now' ".

On our enquiring after the Maharshi's age at the time, he said, "I can't exactly say how old I was then. I was a mere school boy, and you can guess my age. I must have been about 8 or 9 years".

Continuing to relate his recollections of the Raja, the Maharshi said, "The Raja liked me, and I had free access to him at all hours. Sometimes I would peep in during his breakfast. It usually consisted of bread and honey, and I remember him telling me one day, as I went in during his breakfast, 'Biradar, here I am eating pure bread and honey, but people say I eat beef'.

Sometimes I would go in as the Raja came out for his bath. He was a curious bather. Before bath he would literally get himself steeped in mustard oil, which would run dripping from all his bare limbs. He was a stout man, broad-chested and muscular, and the sight of his bare body dipped in oil, with one small piece of cloth tied round the waist, struck awe into my boyish heart. He would, in this dress, come down with

heavy steps, uttering Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic verses, and jump into a huge tub of water. He would remain in this tub for more than an hour, all the while muttering his favourite verses, and evidently absorbed in them. I could not understand anything of what he muttered so devoutly, but it appears to me now that that was the Raja's Upasana or Prayer.

Rajaram, the Raja's adopted son, was very naughty ; and he used to play all sorts of tricks on the Raja, but all this could never disturb the equanimity of the Raja's temper. In fact, Rammohun Roy had the sweetest temper that I have ever seen in any man. One day I went in when the Raja was taking his mid-day nap. He was lying on a cot, on his back, in deep slumber. Rajaram called me, saying, "Will you see some fun ? Then come". I went to him, and he quietly walked up to the Raja's bed, and all of a sudden pounced upon him, falling flat on his breast. Nothing disturbed, the Raja awoke, saying 'Rajaram, Rajaram', and locked him in his embrace.

One day Rama Prasad and I went up to the Raja. He was in his sitting room. There was a cot in this room. As soon as we went near him, he asked Rama Prasad to sing one of his favourite Sanskrit hymns, *Ajaramasokam, jagadalokam,* Rama Prasad got exceedingly nervous. He could neither sing properly, nor from fear of his father refuse to obey him. So he quietly slipped underneath the cot, and from there began to repeat in a most plaintive tone, *Ajaramasokam, jagadalokam.*

The Raja used now and again to come to our house. My father was a great admirer of the Raja. He was in his early days a staunch believer in the popular religion of the country. But contact with the Raja gradually landed him in a general want of faith in these practices, though he never became thoroughly posted in the truths of theism as preached by Raja Rammohun Roy. In the early days of his friendship with the Raja, my father was in the habit of performing his *puja* or worship, with flowers and other materials, every morning ; and he used to do all these things with really devout feelings. But his regard for the Raja was even greater than his devotion to these pious offices ; and it oftentimes happened that while he was engaged in these devotions, the Raja would come to see him. As soon as the Raja would enter our lane, informa-

tion would be sent to my father, who would immediately get up from his *puja* and come out to receive the Raja.* Such was the influence that the Raja exercised over his friends.

You see, I cannot talk of the Raja without talking of my father. So far as I was concerned, my recollections of the Raja are intimately bound up with those of my father. I hope you don't mind it.

Once I went to invite the Raja to the festivities of the Durga Puja at our place. I went as the representative of my grandfather, and in the usual way I said, 'Rammoni Thakur begs to invite you to his house, to take part in the festivities of the Puja'. The Raja cried out with his usual earnestness, 'Ask *me* to the *Puja*?' That voice is still ringing in my ears. He was not offended with me,—by no means. To me he was as sweet as usual. But he expressed his wonder that inspite of his crusade against idolatry, people should still ask him to the Puja. But he seemed at once to have felt that it was merely a social function that he was asked to perform, so he wanted me to go to Radha Prasad, his eldest son. Radha Prasad had no objection to the religious practices of our people, and he accepted the invitation, and treated me to some sweets and fruits.

Talking of fruits, I am just reminded of the fact that the Raja had good many fruit-trees in his garden at Maniktala. These would often tempt me there. The lichies were a great attraction to me. I would often go to eat lichies. Whenever the Raja saw me roving in the fearful sun of May and June among the lichie trees, he would call me to him, saying, 'Biradar, come here. I shall give you as many lichies as you want. Why do you walk in the sun?' and would ask the gardener to bring the ripest fruits for me.

Once he asked me, I remember, if I ate meat: and advised me to tell my father to give me a little meat during dinner every day. 'The plant', he used to say, 'must be watered, or the tree will not grow to its proper stature. So it is with this body. You must feed it well, and that up from your youth'.

* It has subsequently been pointed out by Mr. Kshitindra Nath Tagore, a grandson of the Maharshi, that what the Maharshi's father Dwarkanath would leave unfinished in order to come out and greet the Raja, was not the *puja* proper, which could not be left unfinished, but the *japa*, which could be completed in instalments—Commemoration Volume of the Rammohun Roy Centenary Celebrations of 1933.

He took great care of his health himself, looking upon the body as a precious gift of God.

Rammohun Roy had the characteristic humility of all great men in him. There was no end of visitors to his house. Many would go to hold theological disputations with him, but few indeed of these were foemen worthy of his steel. They would mostly bore him by their irregular and irrelevant talk. But he could never ask any one to leave him. He would listen to all with due courtesy. When, however, he felt that he could not bear the foolish talk any more, he would propose a stroll in his garden, saying,—'What do you say to our taking a walk in the garden?' And once he was upon his legs, his visitor would find it hard to keep pace with him,—he was such a wonderful walker,—and would soon be forced to take leave of him.

Talking of the Raja's garden, I may just tell you that it was laid out by his Mali, Ram Das. He was very much attached to the Raja, and went with him to England. You may be interested to know that this Ram Das served me also for some time. On his return from England, he served the Maharaja of Burdwan for many years, as the Head Gardener of the Maharaja's Golap-Baug. He also laid out the garden of my Santiniketan at Bolpur.

The Raja had something in him by which he could draw all sorts of people unto him. He exercised a most mysterious influence over me. I was then a mere boy, and necessarily had little opportunity of talking to him. But his very face had an attraction for me, such as no other face ever had. The Raja had a carriage. It was a poor, rickety thing. The horse had no regular trappings, and ropes would oftentimes do duty for harness. Sometimes, as the Raja drove out, the horse would get off from the carriage, and the carriage would be divorced from its compass ; and occasionally the whole thing would go to such pieces that its famous owner and occupant would have to leave it in the presence of large crowds of sight-seers. On one occasion, I remember the Raja telling me, as he came by one of these misadventures, that his horse and carriage had made a clown of him.

I used to drive with the Raja now and again in this carriage. No words passed between us generally during these drives. I

would only sit in front of him, looking on his beautiful face, which had such a deep attraction for me. In fact, for the greater portion of these drives I would be almost absolutely absorbed in the contemplation of the Raja, being insensible to all that might be going on on the roadside. I would sit as quiet as a doll, looking only at the Raja, and my heart would overflow with a deep but indescribable emotion. There evidently was some mystic relation between the Raja and myself, I was always so powerfully drawn by him.

I have told you of the incident that occurred when I went one day to invite him to the Puja festivities. The way in which he cried out—'Ask me to the Puja',—and the words that he uttered, his countenance aglow with deep emotion,—these have had a wonderful influence upon me all my life. Those words became to me even as the *mantra* of a spiritual master, as my *Guru-vakya,* and led me to give up idolatry. Those words are still ringing in my ears, and they have been my guide all through this long life.

When the Brahma Samaj was established, I used now and again to go there, but always stealthily. Bishnu used to lead the choir then as now. Bishnu had an elder brother, Krishna by name, who also sang with Bishnu in Rammohun Roy's Samaj, while a Mahommedan, Golam Abbas, used to play on the *Pakhoaz.* One of the most favourite hymns of the Raja was that commencing with the words *vigata-viśesaṃ.* Bishnu used to sing it in his sweet voice. The dear old tune is still ringing in my ears.

Talking of the Brahma Samaj,—in those days there were no benches and chairs in the Brahma Samaj. People going there would squat in right national fashion on carpets covered with white cotton sheets. The Raja would sit on a small bamboo-and-cane stool,—a *mora.*

On the day of the Samaj the friends of the Raja would meet in his garden house at Maniktala ; and then they would all walk in a procession to the place of worship in Jorasanko, The Raja had peculiar feelings on the subject. He used to say, 'When a man goes to a holy place, he does not, in this country, go in a carriage. Why should we, then, when going to the Holiest of the Holy, go in carriages? We must walk'. But

though he would walk to the Samaj, he would not use ordinary *dhoti* and *chadar,* but put on court-dress on all such occasions. The Raja had a great regard for the externals of Moslem civilization. His idea, again, was that God being man's King and Master, in going to His court, one must dress oneself properly, and must appear before Him as one fit to be present at the court of the Prince of Princes. He had imbibed this idea also from the Mahommedans. So all his friends would go, duly dressed, like himself, to the Samaj. My father, however, formed an exception. He would always go to the Brahma Samaj in *dhoti* and *chadar.* The Raja did not quite like it, and would look askance at my father, sometimes even disparagingly pointing him out to his friend and disciple Babu Annada Prasad Banerjee (Zemindar of Telinipara). Babu Annada Prasad was on very familiar terms with the Raja, and would oftentimes reply to his signs and gestures, by telling him in plain language, that if he had not the courage to speak directly to my father on the subject, he had better not trouble himself about it. Babu Annada Prasad would, however, draw my father's attention to the subject of his dress. But my father would invariably reply,—'Having to spend the whole day in my office dress, I cannot again put myself to the trouble and inconvenience of using it in the evenings, especially when I have to come to worship God, to whom we should always appear in the simplest and humblest garb'.

Reverting once more to his personal relations with the Raja, the Maharshi said, "There was some mystic affinity between the Raja and myself. He did not instruct me by words: I was much too young, in fact, to receive any such instruction from him. But still, as I have already said, he exerted a most mysterious influence upon me. I got my inspiration, to work for the cause for which he himself had lived and laboured, from him. When going to England, the Raja came to pay my father his farewell visit. All the members of our family and a large number of our neighbours had gathered in our spacious court-yard to bid goodbye to the Raja. I was however, not there. And though I was then a mere stripling, the Raja wanted to see me very particularly, telling my father that he could not leave the country without shaking hands with me. So I was sent for, and the Raja shook hands with me, and then

left for England. That kindly grasp had a force and a meaning in it which I realised in my later life.

When the news of Rammohun Roy's death came, I was by my father, and he began to weep like a boy ; I, too, was moved with a deep emotion. For though I had but little fellowship with him, and though I got no instruction from him in words, his face and his whole personality were deeply engraved on my heart. He was my inspiration.

He lived only for a year in Calcutta after the establishment of the Samaj. The fire that he had kindled was, however, kept up by Pandit Ram Chandra Vidyavagis. He, too, was a most extraordinary man. He had love for God, and love for Rammohun Roy. The two loves were closely intertwined, one with the other, in the heart and character of Ram Chandra Vidyavagis, and this accounts for his unrivalled loyalty to the Brahma Samaj at a time when its very life was despaired of. In those days the Brahma Samaj had hardly any congregation. If the weather was bad, Ram Chandra Vidyavagis would combine minister and congregation both in himself. The rich people that had gathered themselves round the Raja's banner in his lifetime, dispersed directly the news of his death got to Calcutta. A few middle-class men attended the Samaj, whose weekly congregation would mostly be made up of straggling wayfarers, some of whom would peep in with their bazar baskets, and others with their pet parrots. Ram Chandra Vidyavagis would sit on a broad wooden stool—a *takhtaposh*,—while his little congregation would squat on the floor, on carpets and sheets. I mean to re-establish it in the Samaj as soon as the present repairs are completed. I wish to move back to the ways of Raja Rammohun Roy in these matters. We have converted the Brahmo Samaj into an English Church ; this must be corrected. People must leave their shoes off during prayers. It is not proper to convert our Samaj into an English Church".

APPENDIX VI

THE BRAHMO SOMAJ OR THEISM IN INDIA.

RAM MOHAN ROY*

(By Keshub Chunder Sen)

It is a truth which the world's history has well verified that great men represent certain great ideas, the realization of which constitutes the very destiny and mission of their existence. In fact, this is the grand peculiarity of men of genius which distinguishes them from ordinary men. The latter, justly called the "anonymous beings of the human species," live and act for self and under the iron sway of circumstances, and, when they close their career, leave not a vestige behind to serve as their memorial. Great men, on the contrary, live for the world, and not on their own account, they rise superior to circumstances, and, by force of manly will and in the face of the stoutest resistance, stamp on the age the noble ideas of their soul, leaving an everlasting and priceless heritage to posterity and to all mankind. They "live and move and have their being" in those ideas. The power and influence they exhibit are not their own ; they belong to those ideas entrusted to them by Providence as their sacred errand on earth. They are missionaries of great truths and, therefore, not unfrequently prove martyrs in the cause to which their very lives are inviolably pledged. The biography of great men should, therefore, be studied with special reference to the ideas which they represent in the stage of history, and for which they receive endless glory from mankind as their tribute of gratitude.

Among India's great men Ram Mohun Roy holds a high rank. Like all great men he brought into the world his own idea and devoted his life to its realization. That idea was *catholic worship*. Whoever has deeply studied his life and carefully looked into his speculations and movements, cannot but admit this to have been his guiding principle. That he was a

* Fortnightly *Indian Mirror*, 1865. See also collected 'Discourses and Writings' of Keshub Chunder Sen, published by the Brahmo Tract Society, 1904.

religious reformer of India is universally admitted, and as such he is universally admired. He is also reputed as an extraordinary theologian. He knew English, Arabic, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and his writings bear testimony to his vast and varied learning. He it was who abolished the obnoxious custom of Suttee ; he was one of the foremost pioneers of native education, and his name also figures in the valuable suggestions he offered in furtherance of the reforms which took place in the early political administration of this country. But such compliments to his great mind do not mark the real secret of his excellence : they do not point to the ruling principle of his mind which constitutes his greatness. His name shines in undying glory not only in India but in England and America for the valuable theological works which his master mind indited, and religious and social reforms which his philanthropic heart promoted ; but the real mission of his life, his peculiar ideal, so far as appears to us on careful analysis, was to give to the world a system of catholic worship. This, as we shall presently show, was prominently exhibited in the establishment of the church or place of worship which was subsequently designated the Brahmo Somaj.

From his very early days, Ram Mohun Roy's mind manifested a strong and unmistakable religious tendency, while yet a boy he appeared to be a staunch follower of Vishnu, and his first duty every morning was to recite a chapter of the Bhagabat. But his giant mind was not to be long in fetters, born as it was for the noblest type of religious independence. When about the age of sixteen he composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of Hindu idolatry, and thereby boldly and distinctly avowed his renunciation of the religion of his forefathers ; the result was, as might be anticipated, disagreement with his near relatives. To use his own words : "This together with my known sentiments on that subject having produced a coldness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels". He travelled through several places of Northern India, cultivating theological studies and making theological researches, and spent three years in Thibet where also his anti-idolatrous proclivities excited the anger of the worshippers of Lama. On his return he was taken back by his father and restored to his favour. But his obstinate and un-

flinching aversion to superstition and superstitious practices soon rekindled the spirit of persecution ; and he was again deserted by his father and his near relations. The death of his father, which took place in the year 1803, furnished an impetus to more independent and bold movements in carrying out his cherished ideas. His opposition to the advocates of idolatry was now open and fearless and he at once commenced a series of publications in the native and foreign languages against the pernicious errors and absurdities of idolatry. His publications are numerous and abound in singularly cogent and lucid arguments and one has merely to read them to be convinced of their value.

His Persian work *Tuhfut-ul-Muwahhideen* (a present to Unitarians), his three Appeals to the Christian public, his work on the Vedanta and discussions with eminent Brahminical Pundits are masterly treatises which shew the uncommon and varied theological erudition of the author. He spared no system of idolatry. He directed his able pen in exposing and denouncing, in no measured terms, the idolatrous prejudices of Hinduism, Mahomedanism and Christianity. But at the same time he culled together passages from these scriptures inculcating Monotheism. Thus he proved a friend and foe to each of the three principal religious systems of the world.

An unsparing and thorough-going iconoclast, he yet failed not to extract the simple and saving truth of monotheism from every creed with a view to lead every religious sect with the light of its own religion to abjure idolatry and acknowledge the One Supreme. He went through the Hindu, Mahomedan and Christian scriptures with indefatigable perseverance, and set forth the unity of God from the teachings of these books, while he argued away with unsurpassed ingenuity and erudition all doctrines inculcating polytheism. A careful study of all his published writings will clearly show this two-fold policy of his theological argumentation. Thus while he evinced respect for every creed and aversion to every form of idolatry, and thereby excited and dis-armed in turn the antagonism of his adversaries, his real faith lay shrouded in a vale of mystery which made it wholly unintelligible to them. Hence conflicting opinions were put forth as to the creed which he professed. The Mahomedans claimed him as one of their sect, and gave

him the title of Moulvie ; some regarded him as a Christian ; others a Hindu of the Vedantic and primitive type. And yet nothing is more obvious than that Ram Mohun Roy was neither a Hindu, nor a Christian, nor a Mahomedan, although he partially identified himself with each of these denominations ; else why the bitter invectives and thundering fulmination which were heaped upon him from all sides, and the grave charges of atheist, *mlechcha,* free-thinker and infidel which were laid at his doors? To this day his creed is a standing mystery, and the world seems to be hopelessly disagreed as to what his real convictions were. His published writings—those stupendous monuments of his theological attainments—far from throwing any light on this complicated problem, show grave anomalies and inconsistencies which serve only to aggravate the difficulties of the problem. Nor do those of his enlightened contemporaries and friends who are still living, seem to possess any definite ideas on the subject. To us it appears strange that the real creed of such a great reformer and extraordinary theologian, should be a subject of such wild surmises and conflicting opinions and even of severe criticism, especially when we recollect that scarcely a third of a century has elapsed since his demise, and his writings and doings are still in the possession of the present generation with all the weight of historic evidence. It is no less a matter of regret that many are led, in the absence of a satisfactory solution of the problem, to infer that Ram Mohun Roy had no positive religious convictions whatever, that he was simply a free-thinker and a roving adventurer in the domains of theology ; that all that he desired or was able to do was to protest against this or that system of idolatry, and that he studiously concealed his real faith from the public eye with a view to win the esteem of all religious denominations, instead of exciting opposition by a manly and defiant exposition of his heterodox and unpopular views.

Verily the grand idea of Ram Mohun Roy's mind has eluded the observation of his shrewdest critics, and prejudices and unwarrantable inferences have resulted from a partial research into his speculations. In that idea all seeming anomalies must blend together in a sublime consistency, and all discrepancies find a harmonious unity. So long as the real secret of his mind is not apprehended in all its comprehensiveness and greatness,

his theological speculations will continue to be an intricate problem. It is only when the central truth is discovered that all the apparent divergences and wanderings may be harmonized together and perfected into consistency and integrity. As we have already remarked, the ruling idea of his mind was *to promote the universal worship of the One Supreme Creator, the Common Father of mankind.* This catholic idea, while it led him to embrace all creeds and all sects in his comprehensive scheme of faith and worship, precluded the possibility of his being classified with any particular religious denomination. His eclectic soul spurned sectarian bondage ; it apprehended in the unity of the God-head the indissoluble fraternity of all mankind. He belonged to no existing sect, nor did he seek to found a new sect or originate a new creed, however refined and unexceptionable. His great ambition was to bring together men of all existing religious persuasions, irrespective of the distinctions of caste, colour or creed, into a system of universal worship of the One True God. Thus his catholic heart belonged to no sect, and to every sect ; he was a member of no church and yet of all churches. He felt it his mission to construct a Universal Church based on the principle of Unitarian worship. His earlier controversies and discussions with the different religious sects exhibit but partial glimpses or dim forebodings of that grand scheme which was subsequently matured and perfected in his mind. Its fullest development and final realization was consummated, in the fulness of time, in the establishment of that institution which bears the name of the Brahmo Somaj and which stands as a memorable monument of the founder's real creed—*Ram Mohun Roy's grand idea realized.* The trust-deed of the Somaj premises contains, we believe, the clearest exposition of his idea and will, it is hoped, if duly appreciated, settle all contested points regarding that illustrious man's religious convictions. It provides that :

"The said messuage or building land tenements hereditaments and premises with their appurtenances should be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied and appropriated as, and for, *a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction* as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious and devout manner *for the worship and adoration of the eternal unsearchable and immutable Being Who is*

the Author and Preserver of the universe not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for, and applied to, any particular being or beings by any man or set of men whatsoever and that no graven image, statue, or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises and that no sacrifice offering or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments, and premises be deprived of life either for religious purposes or for food and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for the preservation of life) feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon and in conducting the said worship and adoration no object, animate or inanimate that has been or is, or shall hereafter become, or be recognised as an object of worship by any man or set of men, shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching, praying or in the hymns or other mode of worship that may be delivered, made or used in the said messuage or building and that no sermon or preaching discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and *the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds*".

Accepting this as the highest and the final expression of the religious nature of Ram Mohun Roy, we find in it a clear view of both the negative and the positive side of his faith—his aversion to idolatry and sectarianism and his strong attachment to monotheism and catholicity. In language at once plain and unmistakable he herein directs that people of all "sorts and descriptions without distinction" should be allowed to congregate in these premises for the worship of the supreme "Author and Preserver of the Universe", in spirit and in truth, excluding every external ceremonial and symbol, and every deified thing or man, and that divine service should be conducted in such a way that not only should no offence be given to any sect but every means should be resorted to for the promotion of brotherly

feelings among "men of all religious persuasions and creeds". Who can contemplate, without emotion, the grandeur of such a universal church—a church not local or denominational, but wide as the universe ; and co-extensive with the human race, in which all distinctions of creed and colour melt into one absolute brotherhood? Who can look without wonder and profound reverence upon the moral grandeur of that giant mind which conceived and realised such a church? The philanthropic heart interested in the welfare of all mankind cannot, in its highest aspirations, wish anything more ; nor can the ambition of the greatest religious reformers fail to be satisfied in finding in it a realization of their ideal of the church of the future. It is not a church of Jesus or Mahomed ; but is emphatically GOD'S CHURCH. It is not a church of Hindus or Christians, it is the church of all mankind. It is not a church of Bengal nor of India ; it is the church of the world. In the conception of this universal church the heart, lost in immensity, would exclaim—who can measure the length and breadth, the height and depth of this universal and eternal church! Heaven and earth met in this sublime conception, and time and eternity kiss each other. Built upon the imperishable and immutable principles of absolute religion and upheld by the everlasting arms of that Great God to whose glory it has been upreared, it will continue to bless mankind through endless ages. Blessed child of God! Thy name shall live embalmed in the enduring gratitude of mankind for the legacy thou hast conferred on them!

We have reviewed the general features of Ram Mohun Roy's creed as intended for all mankind and as related to the various specific systems of faith extant. We now proceed to consider specially its Hindu aspects and study its bearings on Bengal and Hinduism. We have seen him as the founder of a system of catholic and universal prayer for men of all sorts and persuasions ; we have now to canvass his pretensions as the religious reformer of his country—as the leader of the great Brahmo Somaj movement in India. For it must be remembered that though the scope of his mission comprehended all mankind, his immediate field of action was his own country and his labours were directed chiefly to Hinduism. Though he had for his mission to realize a grand ideal of universal

worship by ignoring all partitions between sect and sect, the actual execution of his project was affected by his surroundings, his relations to his idolatrous countrymen, and the prevailing customs and convictions through which he had to fight out his way. Besides from the peculiar character of Ram Mohun Roy's ideal as set forth above it may be clearly inferred that his object was not to give the world or his countrymen a complete creed of reformed doctrines but simply a general scheme of monotheistic worship. It would not therefore be quite correct to state that he was the founder or even promulgator of that system of religion* which is known at the present day as Brahmo Dharma. For its rise and progress we must look to a later date. All that Ram Mohun Roy aimed at for the religious amelioration of his country was the reformation of the prevalent system of idolatrous worship. This he did not seek to achieve by his personal authority. He did not profess himself to be the originator of a new creed, but the reviver of an old one. He appealed to the Shastras in his protests against idolatry: he sought the overthrow of Puranism on the authority of the Vedas which he held up to his countrymen as the real standard of Hinduism. He declared his object to be the restoration of Hinduism to its primitive purity, and in all his anti-Brahminical controversies he drew his arguments invariably from the Vedas. In this his mission was analogous to that of Luther. Dr. Duff, who was intimately acquainted with him and for several years co-operated with him in the cause of native education, observes on the testimony of the Raja's own statements:—"As Luther's design was to destroy Popery, the corruption of Christianity, by simply resuscitating genuine old Christianity as revealed in the New Testament; so his (Ram Mohun Roy's) mission was to destroy popular Puranic idolatry, the corruption of Hinduism by resuscitating genuine old Hinduism as propounded in the ancient Vedas".

From this it is evident that Ram Mohun Roy far from endeavouring to overturn the gigantic system of Hinduism by revolting against the very authority of the Vedas, merely aspired to displace its idolatry by what is regarded as the primitive faith of the founders of Hinduism. He thus professed

* See Maharshi's 'My Experience of Twenty-five Years of the Brahmo Samaj', and his Autobiography.

himself a Hindu—not a Puranic but a Vedic Hindu, and his religious movement was not the organization of an absolutely theistic church but simply the revival of primitive Hinduism. We must not however rush to the extreme of supposing that Ram Mohun Roy was a thorough Vedantist, and that he offered implicit obedience to the authority of the Vedas as the infallible scriptures of God. All that we could gather from his published writings tends to prove that his idea of revelation was catholic, that he measured the inspiration of the so-called scriptures by the truths which they inculcated. Hence he attached great value and importance to the Christian scriptures, and he published a compilation entitled "The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Happiness," for the welfare of his countrymen. We are therefore led to the inference that Ram Mohun Roy availed himself of the authority of the Vedas for emancipating his countrymen from the yoke of Puranic idolatry, not from an absolute belief of those ancient books having come from God himself, but on account of the sublime truths they set forth with all the weight of acknowledged authority on the unity of the Godhead and the spirituality of true worship. Taking his stand on the vantage ground of these truths of Vedic theology he called upon his Hindu countrymen as a Hindu and on the very authority of Hinduism to eschew polytheism and become worshippers of one God. Hence his constant appeals to the Vedas in deciding theological disputes, and refuting the arguments of his adversaries ; hence too the eminently Hindu aspect of the service conducted in the church established by him. It is a fact, however singular it may appear to be, that not only was the divine service at the weekly congregation of the Somaj composed mainly of recitations and expositions of Vedic texts, but the readings of the Vedas took place in a private room attached to the hall where only Brahmins were allowed to congregate, men of other castes being strictly excluded from hearing the sacred words and who were only allowed the benefit of the subsequent portion of the ceremony which consisted of the delivery of a sermon by the chief minister and the chanting of hymns. This clearly demonstrates the almost orthodox reverence in which the Vedas were held in the church of Ram Mohun Roy and the Hindu aspect which he gave to his reformed movement.

We have given a general outline of Ram Mohun Roy's ideal of catholic worship as finally developed and embodied in the Trust Deed of his church, and have also noticed the Hindu aspect which this church assumed owing to the exclusive character of its ritual and especially the rigid and systematic exclusion of all but Brahmins from hearing the recitation of Vedic texts. This Hindu aspect forms an important incident in the history of the Brahmo Somaj and deserves our careful considerations. Whether it is justifiable on the ground of nationality or what is usually called reform policy is a question which does not concern us in our present inquiry. But there can be no manner of doubt that it is a great anomaly and inconsistency in Ram Mohun Roy's church and that it militates with the essential principles of the Trust Deed. For while on the one hand this memorable legal document distinctly set forth the catholic character of the church, and declared its real object to be to unite "all sorts and descriptions of people" in the worship of the Supreme Creator, and to "strengthen the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds", the actual proceedings of its meetings bore such an exclusive Hindu character as to render it virtually a *sectarian* Hindu church. And hence is it that instead of becoming the universal church of all mankind which we were led to expect from the ideal of the founder, and for which he as a servant of God stood pledged to the world, it assumed the form, and also acquired in some quarters the appropriate name of—the "Hindu Unitarian Church". This is indeed to be deeply regretted. We have already offered the tribute of our warmest gratitude and admiration to the illustrious Rajah who as an eclectic theologian, a bold reformer, a mighty leveller of the distinctions of caste, colour and creed, and a messenger of peace, goodwill and brotherhood, summoned all mankind, and his countrymen in particular, to lay down polytheism and the evils of sectarian bigotry and discord, and to unite in the worship of their common Father, the One only without a second, and thus inaugurate a movement of catholic monotheism. We have now to deplore and deprecate that narrow policy which, whether based on notions of expediency or Brahminical predilections, tended to bias this great movement, so as to crib and confine it among a limited section of the Hindu

community, in spite of the contrary provisions of the Deed which ostensibly lies at its basis and forms a standing protest against all manner of sectarianism. It is doubtless of great importance to understand the character and tendencies of these two elements, the one—catholic, the other sectarian, which entered into the constitution of the Brahmo Somaj, as they served to determine to a great extent its future history.

The foregoing observations place us in a position to ascertain readily and clearly the relation in which the Brahmo Somaj of the present day stands to Ram Mohun Roy as its acknowledged founder. We have said that he did not found the Brahmo community, nor did he promulgate any system of religion whatever. Monotheistic worship only he founded, and from that has grown up the mighty institution in which we now so heartily rejoice in having found shelter. To Ram Mohun Roy we owe neither Brahmo Dharma nor the Brahmo community, and yet the germ of both. All that he did was to found a church for the congregational worship of the One True God, where all sorts of people, whatever their denomination or creed, could assemble, where Hindus, Mahomedans and Christians were all alike welcome to unite in the adoration of their Supreme and Common Father. The creed was of no consequence, unity in faith was not demanded except only in the idea of the Godhead: community of worship was all in all. Such a baseless and incomplete system cannot last long: worship must be sustained by knowledge and faith and love, congregational worship must find its life in community of dogmatic faith. This is an inevitable moral necessity. It was therefore left to time, the perfecter of all things, to develop this system of worship into a church of faith, and make the wandering band of worshippers settle together on the ground of common faith and religious brotherhood. It was also left to time to decide whether in such development the Hindu element would so far preponderate eventually as to make the provisions of the Trust Deed mere dead letter, or whether the local and the sectarian would merge into the universal and the absolute and thus make the church of Ram Mohun Roy a veritable church—not of India only but of all mankind.

Having discussed the religious views of the founder of the Brahmo Somaj, we now proceed to describe the circumstances

which led to its establishment and recount the important events in the first period of its history.

In the Bengali year 1737 (1816 A.D.) Rajah Ram Mohun Roy established a society in his garden house at Manicktolah under the name of *Atmiya Sabha*—Intimate Association, for the purpose of spiritual improvement. Its proceedings consisted simply of the recitation of texts from Vedas, and the chanting of Theistic hymns, and were conducted respectively by the Raja's Pundit Shiva Prasad Misra and a paid singer Govinda Mala. The meetings were not quite public, and were attended chiefly by the Rajah's personal friends. Among these may be mentioned Dwarka Nath Tagore, Brojo Mohun Mozumdar, Hollodhur Bose, Nundo Kissore Bose and Raj Narain Sen. Some meetings of this society were also held now and then at the house of Rajah Kally Sunkar Ghosal of Bhukailas, and of Brindaban Chunder Mitter of Calcutta. A special discussion meeting was convened on 17th Pous (December 1819) at the house of one Behary Lall Chowbay, where Rajah Radha Kant and a large number of learned Pundits were present, and where Ram Mohun Roy is reported to have accepted the challenge of Subrahmanya Shastri, and carried the palm by an eloquent and masterly vindication of his views. A violent agitation had by this time commenced in Hindu society, and stirred up the champions of idolatry to a sense of their danger, owing to the numerous anti-idolatrous publications of the Rajah, and the more public and determined attitude of antagonism which he had now assumed against popular polytheism. The enmity towards the Rajah increased to such an extent that the *Atmiya Shabha* itself languished away, and many of his friends deserted him and apostatized one after the other, leaving him to fight his battle almost single handed. The only means now left for the propagation of his views was the publication of books and tracts, and this he carried on with greater vigour and earnestness exposing manfully the absurdities of Puranic idolatry and supporting Monotheism by endless quotations from the ancient Hindu scriptures.

In 1749 (1828 A.D.) Rev. W. Adam, a Protestant Missionary, who had been converted to Unitarian Christianity through the influence of Ram Mohun Roy, used to hold meetings and deliver lectures on religious subjects once every week in a room attached

to the *Bengal Harkaru* newspaper office. The native portion of the auditory consisted of the Rajah, two of his relations, and Tara Chand Chuckerbutty and Chunder Shekur Dey. One day while they were returning home as usual, the two latter happened to remark that it was a matter of great regret and humiliation that they were compelled to attend meetings of foreigners for the benefit of their souls while they had nothing similar of their own, and suggested the desirableness of a purely native public meeting for the study of the Vedas and other devotional purposes. The suggestion was promptly and heartily agreed to by the Rajah and he felt peculiar interest and gratification in being thus called upon to carry out his cherished idea on an extended scale for the benefit of his countrymen at large. The matter was subsequently referred to some of his friends, and Dwarka Nath Tagore, Prosunno Coomer Tagore, Kally Nath Roy and Mathura Nath Mullic came forward with liberal offers of support. Active measures were taken to purchase a piece of ground for the proposed church building, but owing to inadequacy of funds, a house at the Chitpore Road was temporarily engaged, and in Bhadra 1750 (1828 A.D.) public prayer meetings began to be held there every Saturday evening. The Service consisted of four parts—recitation of Vedic texts by two Telegu Brahmins, readings from the Upanishads, by Uthsabananda Vidyabagish, a discourse by Ram Chandra Vidyabagish, and lastly hymns. The funds having soon swelled to a desirable extent Ram Mohun Roy and his coadjutors were enabled to purchase the present building and the Church was formally inaugurated there on the 11th Magh 1751 (January 1830 A.D.), in the very same year in which through the patriotic exertions and influence of the Raja the obnoxious practice of Suttee was prohibited by the Legislature. Babus Romanath Tagore, Boyconto Nath Roy Chowdry and Radha Prosad Roy were duly appointed Trustees of these premises to use them for the purposes and according to the provisions and directions set forth in the Trust Deed. The sum of Rs. 6,080 was kept in the custody of the late well-known firm Messrs. Mackintosh and Company, as a permanent fund from the interest of which the ordinary expenses of the church were to be met. The service continued essentially the same as before,

the time of meeting was only changed from Saturday to Wednesday.

Only a year after the establishment of his church, Ram Mohun Roy left Calcutta for England where he lived for 18 months and died in Aswin 1755 (1833) in the sixtieth year of his age.

APPENDIX VII

TO THE PORTRAIT OF RAM MOHUN ROY IN THE ALBERT HALL

By KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

"Noble countenance! Beaming eyes! O thou illustrious progenitor of a new race! India's pride! Long may thy hallowed memory dwell in thy country's grateful heart! Half a century ago thy genius bright, under heaven's guidance, opened a new world of thought, a new Church, to thy ignorant countrymen. Alas! little did they know what untold treasure thou gavest them. They were unworthy of thee. Thy figure did tower above them, and thy soul was a giant among pygmies. A great idea, wide as the world, high as heaven, thou gavest them. Its height and depth they comprehended not. To millions sunk in gross idolatry and superstitution thou didst boldly preach the One God. Nay, in their midst, and in the face of fierce opposition, thou didst raise a tabernacle unto His glory. And while ten thousand idol-shrines were filling the air with the deafening din of idolatrous praises and *mantras,* from this small temple of the Living God, a very mustard seed in the vast ocean, there rose the solemn hymns and prayers of a handful of thy followers. How this small band has developed into a mighty community scattered all over the country, thou, Great Reformer, has not lived to see. Thou didst sow the seed, we reap the harvest. Thy original mind did not merely attempt a revival. Thy hand was mainly employed in clearing the jungle of polytheism, and restoring the ancient monotheism of the Vedanta. But thou didst not remain satisfied with this. Boldly didst thou cull truth from a foreign faith, and commend it to thy countrymen. With a view to put into their hands an unimpeachable moral code, thou didst republish "The Precepts of Jesus: a Guide to Peace and Happiness." It argued uncommon heroism to present Christ to the Hindus. But thy heart shrank not. Thy eclectic genius commingled in that early stage of Indian reformation, the monotheistic theology

of primitive Hinduism with the high standard of Christian life and holiness enjoined in the Gospel of Christ. These parallel streams of conviction and character, belief and life, devotion and conscience, have flowed ever since through the life of educated India. Honour, all honour to thee, India's illustrious benefactor. Heaven-sent teacher, at thy feet we sit to learn the eclectic truth and devotion which thou camest to teach. May thy loud protests against idolatry, which those lips seem to be still uttering with heavenly enthusiasm, roll backward and forward throughout the land! May thy public spirit animate the hearts of the thousands of young men who gather in this Hall from time to time! May young India accept thy eclectic faith, cast off idolatry, go back to the earlier scriptures, and honour Christ! May the wisdom, courage and enthusiasm which characterized thee find a place in our character! Blessed patriot, benefactor of thy race, light of India, speak, speak continually unto us thy new gospel of Theism. Our teacher and our leader, may thy soul prosper in the realm of light and joy!—So prays grateful India."

APPENDIX VIII

A LECTURE ON THE LIFE AND LABOURS OF RAM MOHAN ROY (1838)

By W. ADAM, ESQ.,

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The following Lecture,[1] of which the original MS. was obtained by me from the Author in 1862[2] in London, is presented to the public for the first time in a printed form. I owe an apology to the venerable Author for falling so far short of his expressed hope, that everything should be done in the getting up of the essay, so as to show respect to the memory of Rammohun Roy. The defects of the present edition, for which

[1] Addressing an audience at Boston U.S.A.

[2] See also R. D. Halder's "The English Diary of an Indian Student", published, Dacca, 1903, p. 38. Mr. Halder got the MSS. of this lecture of Mr. Adam in London, 1862.

I alone am responsible, could only have been remedied with more leisure at my command ; but I feel confident that the lecture, even in its present shape, will amply repay perusal.

R. D. H.

Ranchi,
Chutia Nagpur,
1st September, 1879.

LECTURE ON THE LIFE AND LABOURS OF RAM MOHUN ROY.

Asia is usually and justly considered as the cradle of civilization.[1] Even if we limit our attention to what is called the profane or secular history of that quarter of the world ; even if we exclude all reference to the records of our religion—to the personages whom they bring to our view, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles—and to the sacred and salutary power which they have exerted upon mankind by their examples in life and in death, by their writings, by their labours, and by their sacrifices ; we shall not only perceive the vast influence, which, by means of commerce, emigration, colonization, and conquest, it has exerted on the destinies of the human race, but we shall also discover, by a still more minute survey, numerous individual examples of almost every description of moral and intellectual excellence. If military genius is deemed an excellence, Asia, in comparatively modern times only, has her Mahmood of Ghazni, her Chenghiz Khan, her Timurlane, and her Nadir Shah, who conquered countries and committed atrocities enough to eclipse the exploits of Alexander and Napoleon. If the love of liberty exalts a people in their own esteem and in that of the world, nowhere are impatience of restraint, and personal independence stronger and more indomitable than among the Arabs of the desert, the tribes of Central Asia, and the Rajputs of India. If it is honourable to an age, or a nation, to have produced reformers of philosophy and religion, what merely human influence can be compared either in extent or in potency with that which has been exercised by Confucius in China or

[1] In the East is the source of day! From the East light has shone upon the world.—Author.

by Mohammad over the multitudinous nations and tribes that have embraced his religion? If the possession of high intellectual powers, if devotedness to intellectual pursuits, if the encouragement given to learning, if the honour and admiration bestowed on those who cultivate it, are characteristics of an advanced stage of civilization, then nowhere in Europe or America are these characteristics found in a higher degree than in the Mohammadan countries of Asia where the endowed establishments of learning are numerous and wealthy,—in Hindustan, where amongst Hindoos as well as Musalmans, there exists a large class of men, set apart from the rest of the community, and professionally and permanently devoted to the pursuit of learning from the early dawn of youthful intelligence to the decreptitude of old age,—and in China, where literature is expressly patronized by the Government, and where literary acquirement is by law and regulation, the passport to social considerations, and to political office, honour, and emolument. Again, if the prevalence of the domestic and personal virtues throws a grace and a beauty over human life, and constitute the source of much of human happiness, and the substance of much of human excellence, then is that excellence possessed in no mean degree by the civilized nations of the East, amongst whom, temperance, hospitality, and the mutual respect, affection, and kindness of relatives are largely practised and are everywhere venerated and upheld by the force of public sentiment.

But, while the claims of Eastern nations to our respect are on many grounds unquestionable, there is a class of virtues, and a class of good and great men belonging in an eminent degree to Christian countries, of which scarcely any examples are found in the countries of Asia. Philanthropy,—a self-sacrificing philanthropy—that pure, generous, and lofty enthusiasm, which inspires the soul, and teaches and enables a man calmly to put aside the seductions of pleasure and the smiles of the world, and to live, to act, to think only or chiefly for the benefit of others with whom he has no personal, domestic, social, or even national ties—this is a virtue which seems almost exclusively of Christian growth, and the very conception of which appears foreign to most Asiatic minds. Self-sacrifice is common both in idea and in act, but self-sacrifice

for the good of others—to seek out the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed, the despised, the enslaved, and by active exertion and self-denying labour, to relieve, to instruct, to elevate, to rescue these objects of compassion, and to train the mind by a noble discipline, to respect even the lowest and most degraded forms of humanity—this is a virtue which at least does not abound in Asia, and of which I must acknowledge that I have not met with many examples. She has no Howards to visit the manacled prisoner putrifying in his loathsome dungeon ; no *Abbé de l' Epees* to pour light into the darkened and secluded mind of the deaf mute ; no Wilberforces to expose the horrors and crimes of the slave-trade ; no Anthony Benezits to devote their labours and their means for the improvement of a degraded population. This is a class of virtues, to which Asiatics have not as yet in any eminent degree attained. This is a class of great men of which Asia has not been remarkably productive. If the examples are few, it is the more important that we should prize and honour those who trampling under foot all personal considerations, and tearing asunder all social entanglements, have dared in the midst of prevalent apathy and selfishness, and in opposition to low and mean interests, to vindicate in the face of the world the universal and inalienable rights of truth, justice, and humanity. I accordingly propose to request your attention on the present occasion[1] to a brief sketch of the philanthropic labours of Rammohun Roy, whose name probably is not unknown to most of you, and who, I hope to show you, was one of those men who by devoting themselves to the welfare of others, contribute largely to increase the sum of human happiness, to promote the cause of improvement and civilization, and to give a character to their age and country. I must warn you that I do not profess to give you a complete view of his character ; that I purposely exclude whatever can be deemed in a Christian country of sectarian or limited interest ; that I embrace only those of his labours that contemplated the improvement of the general condition of society, and that even of these, I shall be able to give only a most imperfect account within the brief time to which I must confine this address.

1. The first object of benevolent exertion to which Ram-

[1] The author was addressing an audience, in the city of Boston in America.

mohun Roy directed his attention, and of which he never lost sight during the whole course of his life was to convince his countrymen of the evils of idolatry and to stimulate them to throw off its yoke. This was not the effect of sectarian zeal, for he attached himself to no sect exclusively, and united cordially with all, whether Hindoos or Musalmans, Jews or Christians, who united cordially with him in promoting this common object, but it was the effect of a deep inwrought conviction early acquired, and matured by observation and reflection, that idolatry was not only inconsistent with the truth of God and the laws of nature, but that it was, as all violations of that truth and those laws must be, a fruitful source of degradation, vice, and misery, personal, social, and national. No one was more competent to form a sound judgment on such a subject, and no one could arrive at this conclusion less exposed to the imputation of interested motives. He was born a Brahman, and brought up as an idolator. His family ancient and honourable in its own right, was connected by marriage with other families equally ancient and honourable, and still more sacred in their character, the very props of Hindooism in Bengal. He had thus the amplest opportunities of witnessing, and the unquestioned right to exercise all the arbitrary powers, all the spiritual tyranny with which Hindooism invests the Brahmans, its twice-born favourites ; while in the hundreds and thousands of cringing, crouching serfs by whom he was surrounded from his earliest youth, obedient to his nod, proud of the slightest notice from him and incapable, or if capable, not permitted to exert a single independent thought of their own—in these, he saw the depth and extent of the degradation to which the religious system, of which by birth he formed a part, condemned the inferior castes composing the large majority of the community. His father[1] was a man of strenuous orthodoxy : of an acute mind, he early perceived the budding infidelity of his younger son ; and of an affectionate heart, he deeply lamented it. He died, as Rammohun Roy himself informed me, with the most religious devotion, and trust, calling on the name of the God in whom he believed.[2] His mother was equally

[1] Ramkant Roy.—*Editor.*

[2] Ram! Ram! Ram! This is usual with all devout Hindus, who die without the loss of consciousness.—*Editor.*

earnest in the religious faith in which she had been educated, and when the death of Rammohun Roy's elder brother[1] made him the head of the family, she instituted suits against her son both in the King's and Company's Courts, with a view to disinherit him as an apostate and infidel which according to strict Hindoo Law excludes from the present, and disqualifies for the future, possession of any ancestral property, and even according to many authorities, of any property that is self-acquired. She was defeated in this attempt, and afterwards being reconciled to her son, although not to his errors, she died in the performance of menial services in the temple of Juggunnath in Orissa to which she voluntarily subjected herself as a penance.

Educated under such personal, domestic, and social influences, Rammohun Roy's powerful mind burst asunder the bands of pride and prejudice, interest and ambition, and early perceiving the withering and degrading effects of idolatry, he sought with a bold but skilful hand to overthrow the spiritual tyranny of which his countrymen are the victims. The Koran of Mohammad and the communications he held with Musalmans first threw a flood of light on his mind, but Mohammadanism exists in India under two forms ; one very corrupt, and the other more pure, and attaching himself to the latter, he was amongst them also made an object of persecution. From this, he took refuge in Calcutta, where he associated largely with Europeans, generally of comprehensive and enlightened minds, whose communications probably tended still further to expand his views, and to open up to him the duty and the prospect of awakening and enlightening his Hindoo countrymen.

The means that he employed for this purpose will admit on the present occasion to be but barely mentioned, without extended illustration. He revived a comparatively pure form of Hindooism well known in the West and South of India, but which had long become nearly extinct in Bengal. From this vantage ground, under the protection of many of the weightiest and most ancient Hindoo authorities, he was able to direct many a vigorous attack against the strongholds of modern Hindooism. Of the Veds, the most sacred books of the Hindoos, he republished in the original text, and with vernacular tran-

[1] Ramtanu Roy.—*Editor.*

slations and comments, several of those portions most remarkable for the elevation, purity and devotional character of their contents, and constituting the source from which the ancient and pure form of Hindooism draws its proofs and authorities. He republished also several of the works of Sankaracharya, an ancient and celebrated Hindoo Reformer, besides several other ancient Hindoo writings, tending to promote the pure worship of God, and to shake Brahmanical authority. He formed the small but intelligent body of Hindoos who gradually started around him into a religious society[1] which held regular meetings for worship at which he himself often presided, and for which he composed a collection of devotional hymns[2] as well as a series of discourses or sermons that were delivered by the learned assistants in attendance. His publications called forth the opposition of learned Brahmans through the press both in Calcutta and at Madras, and he promptly met in the field of argument the supporters of idolatry in both quarters of the country and effectually silenced them. His most valuable controversial publication, however, is one, not directed against any individual adversary, but against the entire system of Hindu idolatry, which he analyzes, refutes, and exposes with a cogency of reasoning based on a thorough acquaintance with the highest authorities, and with the actual condition of the Hindoo religion, and enforced by a keenness of satire judiciously addressed to the known susceptibility of his countrymen to ridicule.[3] Ram Mohun Roy did not merely seek to overthrow: he also endeavoured to build up. Nor was he content to build only on the foundation of the Veds: he made his countrymen acquainted with the heavenly teachings of Jesus Christ, which he selected from the gospels, and published for the benefit of his followers, as a means of leading them to a holier and more spiritual morality than that which their own writings inculcated.[4] His selection of the precepts of Jesus for

[1] The Brahma Sabhā now called the Adi Brahma Samaj.—*Editor.*

[2] These are favourites nowadays even with the orthodox Hindus. —*Editor.*

[3] The author here probably refers to the publication entitled the *Pauttalik prabodha,* the authorship of which had been screened by a pseudonym.—*Editor.*

[4] The original publication in Bengali not having been procurable, a fresh translation into that language was made by the present Editor and published, at the cost of the Revd. C. H. A. Dall, in 1859.—*Editor.*

publication with this view was by no means intended to cast any disparagement on the remaining portions of the gospels ; for about the same time he zealously engaged with two Missionaries[1] in a design to translate the whole four gospels into Bengalee.

The effects of Ram Mohun Roy's labours in this department, on the moral and religious character of the Hindoos of Bengal cannot be fully estimated by any external appearance which they may present, because his friends and followers, unlike converts to Christianity, instead of standing apart from Hindoos, and Hindooism, have remained amongst them, and within its pale, and are endeavouring gradually to impregnate the whole of Hindoo society with their views. My opinion is that the system of Hindoo idolatry can scarcely yet be said to be shaken by any of the direct religious influences employed for that purpose in Bengal ; but I am at the same time convinced that the only serious shock that it has sustained is not that which has proceeded from foreigners from without, but that which has proceeded from within, from Ram Mohun Roy and his adherents, who alone possess the qualifications that can enable religious reformers to address alike the cultivated intellect and the popular sentiment of native Society.

2. When Rammohun Roy's mind was fully opened to a perception of the evils of idolatry, one of the most horrible and appalling forms of the superstitions prevailing among his countrymen was the burning of widows on the funeral piles of their deceased husbands. This practice early arrested his attention, excited his compassion, his indignation, and his shame, and called forth his most anxious and unwearied exertions for its abolition. To show you in connection with this subject the extent of the service which he rendered to the cause of humanity, I must go into some details in explanation of the practice.[2]

The condition of the female sex in India is most degraded. In youth, they are denied the benefit of instruction ; in marriage, they are the menial servants of their husbands ; and in widowhood, they were expected to show their devotion to their deceased lords by submitting to the most painful death.

[1] *Vide* addenda.—*Editor.*
[2] *Vide* addenda.—*Editor.*

The husband of the woman who should consent thus to sacrifice herself even although he may have been guilty of the murder of a Brahman, the very acme of human guilt, or of any inferior crime, has his sins expiated and is saved from hell by her act; her husband's, her father's, and her mother's progenitors are all beatified, and she herself is delivered in a future birth from the degradation of the female form. If she clings to life, a life of austerity, of self-denial, and of subjection, is her portion. The hardships imposed on Hindoo widows of pure caste are so severe and degrading that women of high spirit often preferred the funeral pile, while others submitted with patience and acted as menial servants to the female relatives of their late husbands decked in the ornaments of which they had been deprived: and others, at once to preserve life and to escape this harsh and contumelious treatment, renounced the restraints of caste and modesty, and sunk to the lowest depths of female degradation. The extent to which human life was annually sacrified may be estimated from the returns made by the police to the Bengal Government for a single year. Those returns show that in the year 1823, the number of widows who burned on the funeral piles of their husbands within the Bengal Presidency, was of the Brahman Caste 234, of the Khatree Caste 35, of the Vaisya Caste 14, of the Sudra Caste 292, total 575. Of this total, 340 widows thus perished within the limits of the Calcutta Court of Circuit, which shows that the returns were given with accuracy only for the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta, and suggests the inference that the number sacrified beyond that limit was much greater than that actually reported; besides that, the returns profess to extend only to the Bengal Presidency, leaving entirely out of view the two other Indian Presidencies, where, although the practice was certainly not so prevalent as in Bengal, it was by no means wholly unknown. The ages of the different individuals are also included in the returns to which I have referred, and they exhibit another feature of this horrible picture. Of the 575 victims of 1823, 109 were above sixty years of age; 226 were from forty to sixty; 208 were from twenty to forty, and 32 were under twenty years of age. Thus the tenderness and the beauty of youth, the ripened years and affection of the venerable matron, and the feebleness and

decrepitude of old age alike fell victims. I have not in my possession at this time the official returns for any other year than that which I have quoted, but I have no reason to suppose that those of any other year, if they were within my reach, would exhibit a less number of victims. I believe that I speak strictly within the bounds of truth, when I assert, that at least from five to six hundred were annually sacrified, and occurring as these atrocities did from day to day, and in the open face of day, there must have been on an average about two such murders perpetrated every day under the very eye of the British Government and its public functionaries, ever since the British obtained the sovereign power in Bengal in 1765.

Without previous experience, no one could have supposed that a Government calling itself civilized would have so long tolerated such an enormity ; but in the early stages of British power in India, conscious weakness dictated prudence and stifled the voice of humanity. Travellers in India recorded the facts of these widow burnings, but no one had the courage to protest against the toleration of such crimes, as far as I am aware, until Dr. Johns, an able and intelligent Baptist Missionary, published a pamphlet on the subject. The answer to his appeal was, Do you mean to overthrow the British Government in India by interfering with the religion of the natives? The reply was, Do you, a British, a civilized Government, mean any longer to tolerate deliberate and systematized murders perpetrated under the cloak of religion? The appeal was in vain. Other missionaries seem to have been afraid to raise their voice against the practice, since that would have been to raise their voice against the Government, at whose pleasure they might legally be instantly deported from the country, as Dr. Johns actually was, although for another reason. With few exceptions, the public functionaries including the highest, the most learned, and the most religious, counselled the toleration of the practice, on the plea that the British were bound not to interfere with the religion of the natives, and in the distant hope that the progress of education and general enlightenment would gradually put an end to it. Such was the state of public opinion on this subject amongst Europeans in India, when Rammohun Roy arose, himself a

native and thoroughly acquainted with all the details of the practice, and the motives of the perpetrators—a learned native and intimately conversant with the sacred authorities on which it was made to rest. In a series of publications, which were extensively circulated both in India and in England, and in India, both in English and Bengali, i.e., for the information and conviction both of English rulers, and native subjects, he exposed the villanies that were practised and tolerated under the name of religion. He showed that it was to obtain possession of the property to which the widow was legally entitled that her death was sought, and that the officiating Brahmans, the instruments whose authority was employed to obtain the consent of the widows, were sharers of the spoil. He showed that the consent was often wrung from her while she was in the paroxysm of grief for the loss of a beloved husband, or in the delirium of intoxication produced by herbs purposely administered to her, or under the exhaustion of inanition from want of food purposely withheld, and consent once obtained was irrevocable. He showed the illegality of the practice of binding down the victim with ropes to the pile which prevented her escape, instead of being permitted in a state of freedom to enter the flames as a voluntary sacrifice which Hindoo law requires. He showed that the highest authorities of the Hindoo religion instead of rendering it imperative on widows, as idolatrous Brahmans alleged, to burn in the funeral piles of their husbands, left it optional to them to do so, or to lead a virtuous life and even gave the highest honour to the latter alternative. His arguments on these and other collateral topics were irresistible and public opinion in the European community gradually changed, until at last, an energetic and benevolent nobleman, Lord William Bentinck was sent to exercise the powers of Government in India, about 10 years ago and he, in consultation with Rammohun Roy and other friends of humanity, but not without much opposition and many forebodings from some of his own countrymen belonging to a class who are the friends of every abuse, because they are the enemies of all change, finally prohibited and abolished the murderous rite throughout the whole extent of the British dominions in India.[1] It is still practised in some native states,

[1] Regulation XVII of 1829, Bengal Code.—*Editor.*

contrary to the earnest reclamations of the British Government; but throughout the British dominions, it has not only been prohibited under the severest penalties, but I am happy to add that it has been effectually suppressed, and the suppression submitted to without a murmur, except in the form of one or two petitions from interested brahmans who had the audacity to solicit permission to continue with impunity to imbrue their hands in the blood of their innocent countrywomen.[1] The abolition of these inhuman sacrifices was a great triumph to the cause of humanity, and for his bold, fearless, unflinching exertions in this cause, Rammohun Roy's name deserves to be held in everlasting remembrance.

3. Although in a case like this in which the rights and obligations of humanity were openly trampled on and violated, Rammohun Roy was unwilling to leave the redress of the evil to the slow operations of a progressive civilization and of more enlightened sentiments arising from improved education, he was by no means insensible to the value and importance of education as a means of elevating the character and purifying the manners of his countrymen. I shall briefly advert to his most prominent exertions in the cause of education. In July 1823, in conformity with a provision contained in an Act of the Imperial Parliament, a General Committee of Public Instruction was constituted in Calcutta by the Government of India, for the promotion of the education of the natives. This Committee was composed exclusively of men holding high official employments, without having any practical experience in the business of education; or of men distinguished for their intimate acquaintance with the recondite learning of the Hindus and Musalmans. These gentlemen, not unnaturally gave too partial an attention to the promotion of that sort of learning in which they were themselves adepts, without much reference to its practical utility or to the wants of the millions, who were and are destitute of the very elements of knowledge. Rammohun Roy early saw the devious path in which the Committee was treading, and in the name of his countrymen, early in 1823, addressed an able and spirited remonstrance to the Government of Lord Amherst, then Governor General of Bri-

[1] It would have been of some service at the present day to have known who these pious Brahmans were.—*Editor.*

tish India. Extensively conversant himself with native learning, he earnestly protested against the almost exclusive appropriation of the educational fund to the mere encouragement of the study of its grammatical niceties, its metaphysical distinctions, its mystical philosophy, and its ceremonial theology, pouring contempt, in no measured terms, even on the Vedant system of doctrines, of which he has been mistakenly deemed a special advocate, as being abstruse in its speculations and unnatural in its tendencies, and soliciting on behalf of the Hindoo people, a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences. This document was handed over to the Education Committee, and by the Secretary of that body, a profound but self-sufficient oriental scholar,[1] was answered with a few contemptuous remarks as if the deliberate sentiments of such a man as Ram Mohun Roy could be put down with a sneer. His opinions were published to the world, and continued with other causes to work on the minds of the community, until the return to Europe of the oriental scholar above referred to, who was the *primum mobile*, of the Committees' operations, when the Committee was displaced and their system abandoned. At this moment, the very branches of education which Rammohun Roy recommended are actively and ably taught in the Government Colleges in India, although with too exclusive a use of the English language to the neglect of the vernacular dialects, the languages of the ignorant many—a neglect which he would never have approved.

It was not to the effecting of this important change that he limited his educational exertions. He built school houses, and established schools in which useful knowledge was gratuitously taught through the medium both of the English and native languages. He gave ardent and most zealous support to the missionaries of the Scottish Presbyterian Church in establishing in Calcutta a seminary in which Christian as well as general knowledge, is daily and gratuitously taught to five or six hundred native youths by missionary instructors ; and following his example, one of his wealthiest friends and adherents gave still more liberal pecuniary encouragement to

[1] *Vide* Addenda.—*Editor.*

a similar school established by the same missionaries in the interior of the Jessore District in Bengal. No one saw more distinctly than Rammohun Roy the importance of cultivating the vernacular language of his countrymen as the most effectual medium of conveying instruction to them, and of influencing their sentiments principles and conduct; and in consequence all his most important controversial writings have appeared not only in Sanskrit for the information of the learned and in English for the information of foreigners, but in Bengali also, that the body of the people might be enlightened. In this, he showed the just and accurate view which he took of the means of influencing the minds of a whole people and his superiority to the *prejudices* of his learned countrymen who disdain to compose their works, except in Sanskrit; and look down upon their mother-tongue with contempt as unworthy to be employed for the communication of knowledge. Rammohun Roy's writings in Bengali are models of composition, a necessary effect of his comprehensive and logical mind, and correct and manly taste. It was not only in this indirect and accidental way that he sought to improve his native idiom, he also wrote and published a grammar of the Bengali language, which, although several grammars of that tongue have been written by Europeans, is the only one worthy of the name; and he has thus by the example he set in his own multifarious native compositions, and by the theoretical rules which he has laid down in his grammar, contributed to rescue from contempt and neglect, and bring into deserved repute, a language possessing very rich materials, spoken by twenty-five millions[1] of human beings, and destined to be the medium of communication on all the subjects of literature and science, philosophy, and religion interesting to a people in a state of progressive civilization.

4. I should be doing injustice to the memory of Rammohun Roy, if I were to conclude without adverting to the deep interest which he took in the progress of good government throughout the world. His inquiries respecting this country[2] were frequent, earnest, and minute; and as far as

[1] At the present day, the number exceeds thirtyseven millions.—*Editor.*

[2] The United States of America.—*Editor.*

he knew or understood, he admired its institutions, and loved and respected its people. When information reached Calcutta of the insurrection of the Isla de Leon in 1821, and of the consequent establishment of constitutional government in Spain, he gave a public dinner in the town hall of Calcutta, in honour of the auspicious event. Within the period of my own acquaintance with him, I well recollect the enthusiasm with which he heard of the similar temporary establishment of constitutional government in Portugal, and the fervent good wishes with which he watched the struggle of Greece against Turkish power. The French Revolution of 1830 was another of those events that gave him very high satisfaction. Connected as India is with England, it was natural that he should share in the anxieties of British politics, narrowly watch the fluctuations of British parties, and endeavour to trace the causes and consequences, of the success or failure of great public questions. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the removal of Catholic disabilities, the accession of the Whigs to power in 1830, and the introduction and success of the Reform Bill which occurred whilst he was in England—all of these were subjects which attracted and fixed his most earnest attention, and called forth his ardent wishes, and in the case of the Reform Bill, his most active exertions.

But it was the politics of British India that he best understood, and in which his exertions were most useful. He established and conducted two native newspapers, one in Persian, and the other in Bengali,[1] and made them the medium of conveying much valuable political information to his countrymen. The freedom of the press was not enjoyed in his days in India, but the ultimately successful efforts made to acquire the liberty of unlicensed printing received his most determined support, although he thereby subjected himself to the frown of rank and office and power. A learned Chief Justice of Bengal, Sir Charles Grey[2] attacked, by one of his decisions on the Bench, the law of inheritance hitherto in force in the province of Bengal, and declared every disposition by a father of his ancestral real property, without the sanction of

[1] See Addenda.—*Editor.*

[2] Subsequently M.P., and Commissioner with Lord Gosford to Canada.—*Author.*

his sons and grand-sons, to be null and void. Rammohun Roy forthwith appeared to the rescue, and published an elaborate essay on the Rights of Hindus over ancestral property, according to the Law of Bengal, in which by a masterly and admirably reasoned legal argument, he showed that the decision in question, if not reversed, would be not merely a retrogression in the social institutions of the Hindu community of Bengal, mischievous in disturbing the validity of existing title to property and of contracts founded on the received interpretation of law, but a violation of the charter of justice, by which the administration of the existing law of the people in such matters, is secured to the inhabitants of India. The decision was reversed by the highest court of appeal, and the people of Bengal continue to enjoy their proper law of inheritance inviolate. In another instance, the Executive Government of India passed a Regulation in 1828 authorizing its Revenue Officers to dispossess the holders of rentfree lands at their own discretion, without any judicial decree having been sought or obtained against the validity of the title to such lands. Rammohun Roy instantly placed himself at the head of the native landholders of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and in a petition of remonstance to Lord William Bentinck Governor General, protested against such arbitrary and despotic proceedings. The appeal was unsuccessful in India, was carried to England, and was there also made in vain ; and at the present moment, if there is one cause more than another producing hatred and disaffection to the British Government in India, it is this measure, against which Rammohun Roy, both in India and England, raised his powerful and warming voice on behalf of his countrymen whom he loved, and on behalf of the British Government to which he was in heart attached, and for whose honour and stability he was sincerely concerned. I will mention only one other direction which he gave to his political labours on behalf of his countrymen. While he was in England, the discussions preliminary to the removal of the East India Company's lease of India for another period of twenty years were in progress. In those discussions, Rammohun Roy warmly engaged ; he was consulted by the British Ministers of the day ; his evidence was given before Parliamentary Committees ; and that evidence was embodied

with some valuable additions in an Exposition of the Revenue and Judicial systems of India, which he published in England and which received much attention. Some of the judicious reforms which he suggested in that publication have been, and others deserve to be, adopted.

In the pursuit of various objects which I have attempted to describe—religious, philanthropic, educational, and political—he was, he would be, free unshackled, and independent. If I may speak of my own experience of human life and observation of human character, I would say that I was never more thoroughly, deeply, and constantly impressed than when in the presence of Ram Mohun Roy, and in friendly and confidential converse with him, that I was in the presence of a man of natural and inherent genius, of powerful understanding, and of determined will, a will determined with singular energy and uncontrollable self-direction to lofty and generous purposes. He seemed to feel, to think, to speak, to act, as if he could not but do all this and that he must and could do it only in and from and through himself, and that the application of any external influence, distinct from his own strong will, would be the annihilation of his being and identity. He would be free, or not be at all. He must breathe an atmosphere of freedom, and not finding one ready made to his hand, he made one for himself. He felt with the old English poet,

MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS,

and from this free domain, he unweariedly directed his attacks against those system of spiritual, social, and political oppression of which by the necessity of circumstances he was part and parcel, either as actor or sufferer, as priest or victim: and most earnestly—to his high honour be it spoken—against that system of spiritual and social tyranny which conferred on himself peculiar and invidious and pernicious distinctions and privileges. Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul—freedom not of the body merely, but of the mind—freedom not of action merely, but of thought. Almost instinctively he tore away and trampled under foot the fetters which the religion of his own people, the usages of his own country, his family, descent, and his personal position, had imposed. If obstacles arose in his path, he fearlessly overturned them. If an attack was made even by

implication merely, on his mental freedom, he resisted it with an irrepressible sense of deep injury and insult. In illustration of this feature of his character, I shall mention a single incident. He was personally acquainted with Dr. Middleton, the first Bishop of Calcutta, who naturally endeavoured to convert him to Christianity ; but not content with the usual arguments drawn from the truth and excellence of our religion, he presented the inducement, at least as Rammohun Roy understood him, of the honour and repute, the influence and the usefulness he would acquire by becoming the apostle of India, the first great promulgator of the Christian doctrine to his countrymen. I think it quite probable that the bishop may have merely expressed the pious but inconsiderate wish that Rammohun Roy might become the apostle and promulgator of Christian truth in India, without meaning to offer a worldly motive which just so far as it influenced his mind, would have rendered the desired conversion worthless. But Rammohun Roy did not so understand it ; and in relating the circumstance to me, spoke in language and with the feelings of bitter indignation that he should have been deemed capable of being influenced by such a consideration or by any consideration but the love of truth and goodness. I do not recollect that he informed me what answer he made to the bishop, but he stated that he had never afterwards visited him. He felt as if the pure and unsullied integrity of his mind, his personal honour, and independence had been assailed by the presentation to him of a low, and unworthy motive and he resented accordingly.

This tenancity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him in religion and politics, and still more remarkably even of those whom the laws of nature and of society subjected to his undisputed control. He employed no direct means, no argument, or authority, no expostulation or entreaty to turn his sons from the idolatrous practices and beliefs, in which they had been educated by the female members of his family and by the Brahman priests whom they consulted and followed. He gave them a good education ; by his personal

demeanour, secured a place in their esteem and affection ; set them an example in his life and writings ; and then left them to the influence of idolatrous associations on the one hand, and to the unfettered exercise of their reason on the other. His eldest son,[1] the hope of his heart, for some time after attaining mature age, continued an idolator ; but before his father's death, with his younger brother,[2] abandoned the superstition of the country, and zealously cooperated with his father ; thus amply rewarding Rammohun Roy for his enlightened confidence in the power of truth and for his self-denying recognition of the mental freedom even of his own children.

The love of freedom, so strikingly characteristic of the man, so strikingly uncharacteristic of the abject peoples,[3] the natives of Bengal, of whom he was one, was not a wild, irregular, violent, and destructive impulse. It was a rational conviction springing from his belief in the noble purpose which a well-regulated and self-restrained liberty is capable of conferring on the individual and on society. He did not seek to limit the enjoyment of it to any class, or colour, or race, or nation, or religion. His sympathies embraced all mankind ; but he never lost sight of the moral and social purposes which are the ends of liberty, and when he looked round on his countrymen, he saw that they were incapable of appreciating and enjoying it to its full extent. They were capable of appreciating more than they enjoyed, and that he claimed for them, and in part obtained. They were not capable of appreciating much that he himself was capable of enjoying, and that he claimed neither for himself nor for them. He saw—a man of his acute mind and local knowledge could not but see—the selfish, cruel, and almost insane errors of the English in governing India, but he also saw that their system of Government and policy had redeeming qualities not to be found in the native governments. Without seeking to destroy, therefore, his object was to reform and improve the system of

[1] Radhikaprasad, who died without leaving male issue.—*Editor.*

[2] Ramaprasad Roy, who lived to attain eminence at the bar of the highest Judicial Tribunal of Bengal, and was the first native Justice elect of the High Court at Fort William tho' he was prevented by death from sitting on the bench.—*Editor.*

[3] This passage is sure to be misunderstood by the thoughtless portion of my countrymen.—*Editor.*

foreign government to which his native country had become subject; and without stimulating his countrymen to discontent or disaffection, his endeavour was by teaching them a pure religion, and promoting among them an enlightened education to qualify them for the enjoyment of more extensive civil and political franchises than they yet possessed. He admitted that his countrymen were unfit for national independence, incapable of self-government, and he joined with some noble-minded, far-seeing Englishmen who have expressed the opinion that the wisest and most honourable course, the justest and most humane, which England can pursue towards India is, by education and by a gradual development of the principle of civil and political liberty in the public institutions she establishes and sanctions, to prepare the natives ultimately to take the government of their own country into their own hands. To cooperate in bringing about such a result, was one of Rammohun Roy's unceasing aims; but those who sow the seed, are not always those who reap the harvest, or enjoy its fruit. In this case, there was no disappointment for the change must be the work of generations, if not centuries. But I hope and trust that the time will come when the natives of India will constitute an enlightened and independent nation of free self-government men; and I venture to predict that the name of Ram Mohan Roy will not then be forgotten.

ADDENDA.

NOTES.

Page 9.—'He zealously engaged with two Missionaries' etc. The two Missionaries were, William Yates and William Adam. Mr. Yates took offence, and withdrew from the connection—Author (1st January, 1878).

Page 10.—With reference to the burning of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands, Mr. Montgomery Martin (Eastern India, London 1838, Vol. 2, p. 130) says 'This horried murder is now totally abolished ; I established in India a journal in four languages, which led to its safe and immediate cessation in 1829'. The passage speaks for itself.—Editor.

Page 17.—'A profound but self-sufficient Oriental scholar' etc. My recollection at this distance of time is somewhat vague ; but I think it was, not H. H. Wilson, but J. C. C. Sutherland the author of some well known translations of law-books from the Sanskrit.—Author (1878).

Page 20.—'Two native newspapers' etc. One of these was the Kaumudi I believe ; of the other, I have not been able to ascertain the name.—Editor.

APPENDIX IX

TRIBUTE PAID TO MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

By KESHUB CHUNDER SEN*

After the departure of Rammohun Roy to England and his subsequent death the spiritual affairs of his church were managed by Acharjya Ram Chandra Vidyāvāgish, and its pecuniary wants were met by the liberal contributions of Babu Dwarka Nath Tagore. Though an old Brahmin innocent of English education, the Acharjya did ample justice to his ministerial duties, and his able and excellent sermons, though written in crude Bengali, as it then prevailed, bear testimony to his good heart, his strong devotional feelings and his faith in the reformed creed of the Rajah. The congregation however gradually decreased in number, and the movement soon ceased to attract fresh interest or draw any new members from the educated classes. All its novelty and splendour had died with its illustrious founder, and though it was upheld for a few years by Vidyāvāgish, it gradually declined. Such untimely collapse of an institution pregnant with the seeds of India's regeneration cannot be sufficiently deplored, and speaks trumpet-tongued against the selfish indifference of those who, though they came forward to co-work with Rammohun Roy with apparent zeal and cordiality, soon betrayed their weakness and seized the earliest opportunity to leave his church to take care of itself. God's will, however, must be done and often is done in unexpected and mysterious ways. Already the elements of its revival were at work elsewhere ; a little band of energetic youths was gathering under the direction of Providence and the leadership of a singularly gifted individual, destined to bring the whole force of their well organized combination to bear upon the resuscitation of the Samaj. The band

* Extract from an article entitled "The Brahmo Samaj or Theism in India" which appeared in the fortnightly *Indian Mirror*, 1865; republished in the "Discourses and Writings" of Keshub Chunder Sen.

was the Tattwabodhini Sabha and that individual Babu Devendra Nath Tagore. That this society lived to do immense good to the Brahmo Samaj and to Bengal, and entitled itself to the enduring gratitude of the nation few will venture to deny. Before we proceed to describe its rise and progress and note the important incidents of its career it is necessary, according to the plan we have laid down, to examine and understand aright the peculiar religious ideas of its worthy founder which fashioned and moulded this institution, and subsequently exerted considerable influence on the Brahmo Samaj for a great length of time. As he is living amongst us, his religious character may be said to be too much within the scope of public observation to need any special advocacy on our part to enlighten the public. Nor do we propose to discuss his general character here. Our present inquiry embraces only that sublime ideal of his religious nature which it was his mission and privilege under God to stamp on the Brahmo Samaj, of which he was called to take the leadership subsequent to the demise of the Rajah. It is this great secret which not only throws light on his entire life and character but enables us to appreciate his true mission in reference to his age and country. And it is the ignorance of this secret, we apprehend, which has led many to do great injustice to him and to ignore altogether his claims to greatness. For it is true of all men, and especially so of extraordinary and gifted minds, that it is impossible to arrive at a just estimate of their character from mere outward facts of life unless we dive beneath and apprehend the ruling principles which underlie them. They mistake and wrong him who failing to discover in him some of the characteristics which they expected, and which great reformers have prominently exhibited, refuse to accord to him the tribute of gratitude and admiration. They do him grave injustice who for some deficiencies and faults in his character refuse to recognise that latent and inherent greatness of his soul to which the whole country is immensely indebted. Of anything like the original genius of a revolutionary reformer he does not boast; to that lofty title he makes no pretensions. Yet he has excellences which the world has yet to appreciate and admire, excellences for which India at least will ever cherish his name with profound gratitude. Imperfections he has and what man

has not? But that he is commissioned by God to fulfil an important mission in the history of his country does not in our opinion admit of the slightest doubt; and for this he has laboured with singleness of purpose and indomitable firmness truly characteristic of great minds. That mission is, so far as we can understand it, the worship of God as a living reality, in spirit and love. For this he lives and labours, and for this his life and labours are precious and interesting to us. In this he displays his greatness as a steward of God, bearing a responsible commission which is identical with his very life. All the rest of his character, its good features and its blemishes, may be his; this is emphatically ours, India's and humanity's. In our estimate of him we forget the former in the latter as we forget the private in the historical man, the personal in the universal, the transient in the everlasting.

The very nature of this idea makes him shun noise and ostentatious display. It manifests itself noiselessly in private life and in quiet ministrations, not in uproarious struggles nor revolutionary movements. It shines not in the burning rays of the midday sun before the busy world; its beauty and sublimity resemble the lunar orb, and charm them who, away from the bustle of the world and the influences of the senses, calmly enjoy its light in solitary retirement. In vain would we expect to find Babu Devendra Nath occupying the front ranks of the battle-field of reform, doing desperate battle with absurd usages and institutions, reducing the old castles of error into ruins with single-handed valour and purchasing triumph with hard sacrifices. This is quite foreign to his ideas and his quiet mission. Not war but peace is his watch-word; not action but contemplation. He summons us not to the stirring activities of social battles, but takes us into the closet and beside the altar, and there casts us back upon ourselves that we may look into our inner nature and by spiritual exercises learn contemplation and communion with God. He shuts our eyes to the outward world and opens them inwards to the stern realities within. His mission refers not to external matter but to the unseen Spirit—spiritual reality, spiritual joy and spiritual love. His ministry is a uniform advocacy of the cause of the Spirit and his life is a grand illustration of its truths. Ever since religion first dawned on his soul, his chief resolve, his sole ambition, has been to

behold God in all His living reality in the recesses of his heart, and so to love Him and enjoy His transcendent beauty and tenderness as to live and move in Him all his life, here and hereafter. His deep and diligent studies of Vedantic writings, so full of pantheistic spiritualism, helped his early spiritual development and by constant prayer and meditation he trained himself to concentrate and fix his heart in God. He did not pursue an abstract theological divinity nor did he soar into the regions of mystical reveries and fantastic fits of ecstasy. His spiritual growth was religious. Prayer was his guide, humble and earnest prayer led him to a Personal God and prevented the wreck of his soul on the shoals of Pantheism, Mysticism and "Spiritualism." He not only recognised God as a grand Reality, but he felt Him in his heart as a God of infinite loving-kindness, he perceived the beauty of His love, and he learnt to love Him and worship Him as his father and mother, his friend and protector. Thus God was to him both life and love, his refuge and comfort in the temptations and sufferings of the world. Thus he realized in his life, for his own benefit and the benefit of his countrymen, the spiritual worship of God in faith and love. His life is a standing rebuke to those who represent theism as a dry abstract creed, incapable of influencing the heart, much less of administering comfort and peace to it. Here is a living confutation of their lame assumption, here is a life which shews vividly the influence of theistic faith, its vitality and its joys. What if true religion is entirely a thing of the spirit and is devoid of the external support of book revelation and miracles, of visible deities and tangible ceremonies? Is not faith the "evidence of things not seen and the substance of thing hoped for?" Is it not able to stand on its own basis, firm and immovable? That faith, simple, serene and sweet, yet vigorous and living, has fixed its roots deep in the heart of Babu Devendra Nath and has afforded him sustenance and comfort in life's trials and vicissitudes for nearly a third of a century, and with its aid too has he overcome the temptations of the flesh and achieved the victory of truth in his life. His form is as venerable and majestic as his soul is exalted and sublime; his conversations and manners, his domestic pursuits and social movements, and in fact the speculations and practices which make up his daily life uniformly exhibit the singular spirituality

of his faith. He preaches and practises it with consistency. His thoughts, words and actions are full of it. He lives, verily, in the spirit-world and he loves it too, he engages himself in worldly avocations like ordinary men, but within he seeks solace and delight, strength and peace. The more we enter the secrets of his life, the more we find how profoundly emotional his spirituality is, how thoroughly he feels the influence of its joys and hopes. Contemplation may be said to be his native element; without it he would pine away even though surrounded by all the felicities and luxuries of the world. Irritated by provocation, troubled by doubt, embittered by calamity or depressed by disappointment he returns to his element in quest of that peace which the world cannot give. Hence he is generally in a contemplative mood, and specially so when he feels, harassed and mortified in his dealings with the world. For hours together he is generally found to be alone, deeply absorbed in devout thought; sometimes he would spend a whole forenoon or afternoon in solitude. He prefers loneliness to busy companionship, and the pleasures of retirement to those of society. When to this we add the circumstance that he frequently leaves the bustle of the town and repairs to rural retreats with a view to enjoy uninterrupted solitude and afford complete relaxation to the weary soul, we find in him something so unique and so exalted that we feel not the least hesitation in pronouncing the almost unparalleled spiritual greatness and nobility of his mind. But there has been a yet higher manifestation of his extraordinary spiritual culture. In the year 1857, a little before the great Indian Rebellion, he was so far annoyed by the troubles of his life that he undertook a long and tedious journey to the Simla Hills, and there in a lonely sequestered place spent more than two years in close retirement, studying self, Nature and God with undivided and concentrated earnestness. Is not this too much for ordinary humanity to conceive, much less achieve? And remember that Babu Devendra Nath is the son of the "Indian Croesus", brought up amid fabulous opulence and princely luxuries, the father of many children, and the owner of a magnificent estate; and then fancy such a millionaire for two years in solitary life in the Himalayan retreats, away from family and all the attractions of his opulence, given to prayer and meditation, faith and God. This is indeed enough to show

the marvellous extent of his spiritual development and to stamp him as a great man destined to act as a noble example of the peace and joy of spiritual religion. To the hands of such a man did Providence entrust the management of the Brahmo Samaj and what character it was to assume one might with little difficulty see foreshadowed in the peculiar ideal of his mind. It was since his connection that the Samaj became a mighty and grand engine for turning men's minds from the material realities of Hindu worship to the stirring realities of pure monotheistic worship and teaching them to worship God in spirit and in love. The Vedantic scriptures which had been employed by Rammohan Roy for silencing orthodox Pundits and regularly recited in his church as authoritative texts of theologic weight, Babu Devendra Nath weilded to accomplish a higher purpose—to lead the minds of the congregation to sublime conceptions of God, to burning faith and deep devotion. He introduced regular prayers and animating sermons calculated to establish direct and personal communion between each votary and his God. The raptures of such communion, the grandeur of the spirit-world, the peace of resignation, the beauty of God as the Father and Mother of mankind, the glory of God as the Saviour of sinners, the hopes of a blessed eternity and everlasting companionship of God in Heaven where there is no weeping and no bitterness, where joy alone reigneth for ever have been pictured with thrilling eloquence in the celebrated Vyakhyanas which he has delivered in the Samaj. These sermons, we may say without fear of contradiction, are of masterly kind and outvie any which have been published on similar subjects here or in Europe. In depth of thought, grandeur of sentiment and beauty of style they are excellent and will continue to speak to endless generations of our community of the noble soul whose emanations they are in a more impressive manner than we can possibly hope to do. May his contemporaries learn to respect the life of this tried servant of God, and may the blessings of God and his country's gratitude amply reward his long labours in the cause of truth!

APPENDIX X

SERMONS FROM THE BOOK OF VYAKHYANAS*

I

"Him ye know not who created all this world, Who dwelleth in your souls distinct from all else.

Ye go about the world enveloped in a cloud, engaged in wrangling, addicted to the pleasures of life, and engrossed in ceremonial observances."

O Men, Him you know not, who created heaven and earth and all that is in them. By His will the sun shines and illumines this world ; by His will the moon sheds her ambrosial light by night nourishing plants and trees ; by His will, at the close of the summer-season, the clouds, driven by the wind, pour down welcome showers to allay the heat ; by His will rivers flow from snowy mountains to irrigate and fertilise the earth ; by His will the trees of the forest and the garden put forth flowers breathing delightful fragrance, and bear fruits delicious to the taste ; by His will the mother-earth supports countless beings with her inexhaustible stores of fruitful harvests ; by His will a mother's love, flowing out with the milk of her breast, sustains the life of her infant ; by His will man, endowed with wisdom and righteousness, has risen higher than brutes in the scale of existence ; by His will heaven and earth, the minutes and the hours, the years and the seasons run on smoothly in their several courses. Alas ! you know Him not, though He dwells within your inmost souls.

He dwelleth within you, distinct from all else, in the inmost recesses of your souls. The God who dwelleth within your heart of hearts, you know not ; and how should you know Him, when you go about the world enveloped in the darkness

* Reproduced from "The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore" translated and edited by Satyendra Nath Tagore and Indira Devi, Macmillan & Co.

of ignorance as in a thick cloud, engaged in vain wrangling, allured by pleasures of the senses and spending your days in a round of useless rites and ceremonies. If you wish to know the Highest, the Para-Brahma, you must enrich your minds with wisdom and knowledge, embrace the truth in word and in deed, bring your senses under the subjection of moral laws, and renouncing all desire for reward, pray and strive for true salvation (mukti). Such are the precepts of the Rishis of old. The latter-day sages also speak in the same strain :

Woe to thy life, that thou shouldst not know Brahma, that thou shouldst not worship Him in the sanctuary of thy heart, deeming far off One who is so near.

He, who dwelleth within and pervadeth the sky, the sun, moon, and stars, the air, fire, and water, the light and darkness, and ruleth them from within, whose manifestations they are, and yet they know Him not, He is the Being that dwells within each of you, as your inner soul. This Antaryamin, the Inner Guide, the immortal Being, is in close contact with our souls. He cannot be touched with the external hand, but we can feel Him and realise His presence in our souls. The Yogi, who detaches himself from the world, enjoys the boundless happiness of transcendental communion with Brahma. He is Arupa, without form and without colour. He is neither white nor yellow nor blue nor red ; this formless and colourless Being is by no means visible to the fleshly eye, but to the eye of wisdom He is revealed as the embodiment of joy and immortality. The blessed saint who has seen His form of Truth and Love, remains absorbed in his Beloved for ever and ever. The beauty of that Supreme Love is beyond compare. It knows no increase nor decrease. The resplendent sun and moon, the forest blooming with flowers, the lily of the lake with its multiple petals (satadala), all earthly Youth, Beauty, and Grace, are but faint reflections of that divine Beauty. The love that is fixed on that Beauty never fades. He is without flavour (Rasa), and cannot be tasted as we taste water, fruit, or honey ; but He is Rasa itself, the very essence of sweetness. He who has tasted that essence is blessed with joy ever lasting. He is without odour (Agandha), but the morning flowers are charged with balmy fragrance by coming in contact with Him ; He is without sound (Asavḍa) ; but He dwelleth in the souls of men

and women, and silently conveyeth these Commandments to their conscience:

Speak the Truth. Do the right. Righteousness is the highest of all, and is honey-sweet for all. Thou shalt not earn money by unjust means. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's riches, nor be jealous of his good fortune. Forgive one another's trespasses. Thou shalt not commit adultery, nor indulge in intoxicating drink. Acquire knowledge with diligence. Bear thy burden of duty with patience. Be moderate in food and recreation. Do thy house-work with cheerfulness and wifely devotion. Forbear from quarrelling, wrangling and foolish talk. Be queen of thy household, devoted to good works, and armed with self-control. Obey and honour thine elders. Pity the poor and downtrodden. Give up extravagant and miserly habits. Neglect not thy temporal and spiritual welfare. Shrink not from sacrificing life itself at the call of Duty.

Such are the silent admonitions of the Spirit in every soul. He who performs his life-work in obedience to these commandments conquers death. What though his body be slain? He reaches the immortal regions, bearing the Life of his life within his soul.

This Supreme Spirit cannot be known by fine speech, nor by the understanding, nor by much learning. He alone knows unto whom the Spirit reveals Himself. And knowing Him, he is fired with zeal and enthusiasm to proclaim the glory of his Beloved. And to whom doth He reveal Himself? To him who hungers and thirsts after the Lord, doth He reveal Himself in His infinite Majesty.

O worship Him, the Infinite Spirit, the First Cause uncreate, whose works these are. Let us worship in a tranquil spirit, Him who is Peace and Rest.

II

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

"He who dwelleth in and within the soul, whose image the soul is, who ruleth it from within, and yet it knows Him not; He is the Inner Guide (Antaryāmin), the Immortal." What a blessing it is for us that we are able to sanctify our

souls by worshipping the Holy of Holies, in this sacred morning hour! Holiness, and illumination of the spirit, can only come from His worship. He is enthroned for ever in every soul, and it is His presence that sanctifies it. Whenever the soul strays away from the Supreme Spirit, it is filled with sorrow, stricken with decay, and consumed by unholy desires. But as we cherish God within our souls, we are purified. Where is this Supreme Spirit? He is not far to seek, He is in close contact with every one of us. He is within our souls.

"He who dwelleth in and within the soul and sanctifieth it, whose image the soul is, who ruleth it from within, and yet it knows Him not; He is the Inner Guide, the Immortal." This is the saying of one of our ancient Rishis, the inspired utterance of that brave and high-souled Rishi, Yajnavalkya, and we find it in the white Yajurveda, Madhyandina Sākhā. We cannot find God by travelling in distant countries, or making arduous pilgrimages. Those who seek Him in the external world come away disappointed. Things of the spirit cannot be seen in a visible form in the outer world. He alone sees Him who looks for Him in the inner sanctuary of the soul. If God had fixed His abode in the highest Heaven, far far away from us, how should we have reached Him there? But it is not necessary to travel far and wide in order to see Him. Whenever we bring our minds under control, and turn our eye inward, calm and undistracted, we see Him enshrined in our innermost souls.

We have not to go far to see Him who dwelleth within our souls. As however the body has to exert itself in order to go a great distance, so in the act of self-introspection it is necessary that the mind should strive with energy. Training the mind is a far harder task than mortifying the flesh. Whatever else you may do, the one thing necessary in order to realise God within the soul is self-discipline. One must be calm and serene, patient and self-possessed, in order to attain the desired end. We may arrive at a certain destination by walking hundreds of miles, but though the soul is nearest to us of all, yet it is extremely difficult to reach it, after overcoming worldly distractions. Our attention varies according to the strength of our desire. God's presence within the soul cannot be realised without the utmost desire and concentration of the mind. But the task, however difficult, must be accomplished. Why come to

the house of worship, if you go away empty-hearted, without seeing God? If we should fail to realise His presence in our souls, or turn to Him with love and reverence, our object in coming here is wholly frustrated.

What are the attributes of this soul, wherein dwells the Supreme Spirit? Let us consider the question attentively. We have it in the Vedas, "That which knows 'I smell this,' that is the soul" ; the nose is but the instrument of smelling. "That which knows 'I speak,' that is the soul" ; the tongue is but the instrument of speech. "That which knows 'I hear,' that is the soul" ; the ear is but the instrument of hearing. "That which knows 'I think,' that is the soul" ; the mind is its divine eye, the internal eye by which it sees. The soul is neither hand nor foot, nor eye nor ear, nor is it the organs of smell or speech. The soul is that which sees with the eye, hears with the ear, grasps with the hand, walks with the feet. When, through meditation, we come to know the soul, we become privileged to see the Supreme Spirit. As we cannot see the master of the house without entering it, so we must go into the chamber of the soul before we can see the Lord, its master. It is from the knowledge of the self, the Ego, that we rise to the knowledge of God. Hence it behoves thee, first of all, to know thyself ; the self that sees, feels, hears, thinks, understands.

Now on what does this soul rest? To this question the answer is, that the soul rests in the Eternal, the Supreme Spirit. When the human soul, feeling itself to be homeless, seeks its life's refuge, and calm tranquil, and chastened by discipline, becomes pure and undefiled, then it sees God within, and hears His thrilling, living Voice :

I am Brahma in thy soul. Take refuge in Me and thou shalt be free from sin and anguish.

We cannot hear that soul-stirring voice, that sweet, consoling message with our bodily ear ; but it can be heard when we are absorbed in contemplation and inspired by spiritual wisdom.

O Lord, he alone knows Thee, to whom Thou revealest Thyself. And knowing Thee, he sings Thy praises for ever. The Supreme Spirit dwells within light and darkness, within the sun and moon ; but the light and darkness, the sun and

moon know Him not. He also dwells in the soul of man, and the soul knows Him not, though to it has been vouchsafed the privilege of knowing Him. When by purity of life and spiritual culture the soul attains to a state in which it is filled with a deep yearning after the Lord, so that it cannot do without Him, —to such a pure and devout soul doth the Lord reveal Himself. O seek Him, the Indwelling Spirit, within thy soul, and not in the empty space. As blood and breath are the life of the body, so the life of the soul is God. Blessed is he who hath entered into holy communion with this Brahma. Such fellowship, commenced here on earth, never ends. Even though the body lies here forsaken the soul enters into life everlasting, and attains all its desires in union with the Eternal. Such a union is the crown of our desires, our heaven, our salvation:

This Supreme Spirit cannot be known by fine speech, nor by keen intelligence, nor by much learning. He alone knows, who seeks Him with fervent prayer and unswerving devotion. To such a seeker the Lord reveals Himself, and all his desires are fulfilled. Oh! Arise, awake, hie thee to His door with a humble and sincere heart, and thy prayer will be answered. The temptations and fascinations of the world will come to an end thou shalt have joy to thy right, and enjoyment to thy left; and thy soul shall sing pæans of His love in ecstasy. O! hearken to His low and solemn voice, as dwelling within the finite soul, He uttereth these words: "Aham Brahmāsmi— I am The Brahma."

III

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE HUMAN SOUL.

"The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars,
Nor do these lightnings, much less this fire.
When He shines, everything shines after Him:
By His light all this is lighted."

O master, asked the disciple, how can I know God, the blissful, who has not been defined, whose infinite Majesty cannot be explained by words and is beyond our conception, and yet who is realised by those earnest seekers after truth who are devoted to Him? Who or what is there that can reveal Him?

The guru answered, "The sun, the moon and the stars cannot reveal God, nor these lightnings, much less this fire. In the bright presence of God the sun and the moon lose themselves, and they and every other lesser light become dark. It is only the light of the soul that can reveal the Lord. From the light of the soul you can have a faint idea of that Light of Truth."

But what is this light of the soul? Look into your inner self, with the utmost attention of a mind abstracted from outward objects, and you will realise what the light of the soul is. When the sun is set, when the moon is not visible in the sky, when the fire is extinguished, what is light that remains? It is only the light of the soul that is then visible. Realise this truth, even at this very moment. We have not now the light of the sun, for the sun has set; nor have we here the light of the moon; the only light we have here is that given by fire—the light of lamps. Imagine all these lamps to have been put out; we shall then be in the midst of utter darkness. After the lamps in this hall are extinguished, should one and all present here remain as calm and silent as they are now, they would not know one another, lightless and soundless as this edifice would then be. But though we may all then remain in the midst of darkness and silence, the light within us—the light of the soul—will not be extinguished. Every one present here will then see his own self; the effulgence of the soul will shine the brighter in the midst of that gloom. With the light of the soul that Light of Truth will also reveal itself; with the soul will be manifested its Cause, its Refuge, its Friend, its immortal Lord, who knows all that passes within it. He whom the sun and the moon cannot reveal, is revealed by the light of the soul.

How ignorant is he who seeks Him in the light that illumines the external world. In the external or material universe, we only behold the mere shadow of the Lord's wisdom and goodness; but within us is His light. In the soul of man is He most brightly manifested. When the light of the Divine Sun shineth on the soul, that resplendent sheath of perfection, what happens then? The effect is just the same as when sometimes in the early morning the sun and the moon are found shining together. We then see that the moon is manifested by the light reflected by the sun. So shines the soul of man

by the light of God. The life of the human soul, its piety, its knowledge, its love, are but reflections of the Supreme Soul. He alone stands revealed as the primary cause and sole support of the soul. Can one regard one's self when the sun of the Supreme Soul shineth in the firmament of one's inmost being? Can the moon be bright under the dazzling light of the sun? All our littlenesses are dispelled by the light of the beauty and immaculate purity of the Lord. As our love of God waxes, our love of self wanes. Thus when love, purified by being centred on God, returns to the earth, how beautiful it appears, and what a radiance it sheds! By its contact with the Lord love is sanctified, and comes down on earth, and sweetens all places. The human soul realises how impure is its nature when it dissociates itself from God, and how noble it becomes when it is with Him.

We are so impotent that our minds cannot contain even the momentary revelation of God, but even such momentary revelation has the effect of renewing our life. Like the lightning the Lord shows Himself, and then instantly disappears, but we cherish the hope that although here He offers us His embrace only at long intervals, hereafter we shall be perpetually locked within His embrace. It is indeed not an insignificant earnest of the future that, although we are weak and frail, and burdened by sin, and smarting under remorse, we can yet behold God revealed to us, though only for a few moments. This demonstrates the Lord's beneficent intention to give Himself more freely to us in future. We consider ourselves blessed for the privilege we enjoy at present of beholding God momentarily; but how supremely blessed will be our lot when we shall be able to enjoy this privilege for longer spaces of time! What would we not give in order to attain that condition? When the vision of God granted to us in this earthly life is as evanescent as lightning, and yet mighty enough to induce the absolute upheaval of the whole tenor of our life, then what supreme good shall we not attain when He will shine before our eyes like the sun, without ceasing? "Now we see through a glass darkly," but a time will come when the Sun of Righteousness will shine perpetually over the inner being, and we shall behold Him face to face without a break. And for this divine affinity we are being trained in this life.

We ought frequently to gauge to what extent the Supreme Soul is manifested in our soul, how far our union with God has been consummated, and what sacrifices we have been able to make for Him. We need not be anxious about the riches we acquire, or the honour or distinction or fame we attain. Calculate how much you have hoarded of that treasure which is imperishable. You attain in this life all you covet, when you gain this treasure. Why should we not rejoice at the hope that we are destined to inherit the treasure which is everlasting, to partake of that supreme good which will not pass away? Why should not that enable you to slight worldly adversity and prosperity? What a blessing it is that we shall hereafter behold the Lord, whom neither the sun nor the moon can reveal, manifested as clearly as the sun or the moon! Experience in this world gives us a fore-glimpse of this beatitude when such enjoyment of God becomes a ceaseless and perpetual reality, what then is misery to us, or pang of bereavement? Then we can endure all misery and affliction, and our body, if feeble, becomes strengthened, and our mind, if without vigour, becomes invigorated. Can the hope of this blessedness that is to come hereafter be without any potency, without any influence on our mind? Is it not our guide on the road that leads to the mysterious and eternal future? Where experience harmonises with hope, can the gloom of scepticism linger?

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