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SAINTS AND SAGES OF INDIA

By

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NEW BOOK SOCIETY OF INDIA
DEVNAGAR, KAROLBAGH, NEW DELHI

By the same Author

Religions of the World **Price Rs. 3/12/-**

DEDICATED

TO

MAHATMA GANDHI

who, by his saintly life
and noble character raised
India in the eyes of the
world.

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FOREWORD

I have gone through Professor Pritam Singh's book 'Saints and Sages of India.' The learned author has taken good deal of pains in making his book as comprehensive as possible. He has accomplished his task in a broad-minded spirit as he has included in his book saints and sages of all communities—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees and Christians. The accounts given are very brief but they give the essential features of the views and teachings of all the persons included in the book. He has also added a number of appendices dealing with Mysticism, New Theism, Yoga and Yogis, Dangers of Spiritism and in his last appendix he has given his personal views on Religion.

His view regarding the ancient Aryans being polytheistic is not likely to find favour with the Hindus, particularly with the members of the Arya Samaj, as they believe that this view about the Vedas, the Scripture of the Aryans, is really due to a mis-understanding as to the correct interpretation of the expressions used in the Vedas. The names of so-called gods which one meets within the Vedas according to the strict etymological interpretation simply represent the various aspects and powers of the One Supreme

Deity. According to this interpretation the Aryans were the first to assert and preach Monotheism. This is apparent from the well-known verse of the Rig Veda, admittedly the most ancient book in the World's library, which says :

" He is one, sages call Him by many names *e.g.*, Agni, Yama, Matarishvanan, etc. *Rig Veda* 1, 164, 46. This should really be conclusive on the point and should be taken as the key to the interpretation of all apparently polytheistic expressions in the Vedas.

This view which was revived by Swami Dayanand has been accepted by an independent thinker, philosopher and saint like Aurobindo Ghosh, who has forcibly scouted the view of Western writers on the Vedas.

In the same way there is room for difference of opinion regarding some other matters discussed by Professor Pritam Singh but this does not detract from the value of the book as a bird's eye view of the achievements of the various Saints, Sages, Savants, Scholars and Social workers dealt within this book. I have no doubt that it would be read with interest.

Mussoorie, G. C. NARANG
June 7, 1948.

PREFACE

The study of Religion has been a passion with me from very early life. The lives of the great sages, saints and mystics of India—the land of ancient Rishis who have left a wonderful spiritual heritage for us—have been inspiring the lives of millions in the past and will continue to do so in future also.

Saints and sages have arisen from all classes of people. Ravidas the Chamar, Kabir the Weaver and Namdev the Calico-printer rose from among the depressed classes. Mirabai—the woman saint was a Rajput princess. Among saints I have also included Sadhu Sunder Singh who was devoted to Christ and Mehr Baba who is a Parsi Mystic. The Sufi saints of Sind have also been included. At the suggestion of Mr. N. B. Sen, I included the Reform Movements in Hinduism, such as Radha Swami Mat, Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society in this book. I have also included all the Brahmo Samaj leaders and the Vedantists like Rama Krishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekanand and Swami Ram Tirath who present Hinduism as a Universal Religion. A few Appendices have also been attached.

My object has been to show that the Bhakti Movement which has many phases is the real

religion for the ordinary man to follow. It is, as a matter of fact, the culmination of the true religious spirit which transforms the life of a person and takes him Godward.

My thanks are due to the Editor of the "Khalsa" Lahore, for permitting me to reproduce some of the articles published in that paper.

The Publisher Mr. N. B. Sen has taken special pains in examining the final proofs and in making many useful suggestions for which I am obliged to him.

I am very grateful to Dr. Gokul Chand Narang for writing a very valuable Foreword to this book.

Amritsar,
June 10, 1948.

PRITAM SINGH

In Srimad Bhagwat, Book XI, Chapter VI, Lord Krishna says:

"Spiritual discrimination, virtuous deeds, sacrifices, study, austerity, repetition of the sacred Mantras, resort to places of pilgrimage, righteous conduct—all these are aids to spiritual unfoldment, but the greatest help is the society of the holy. In serving the saints and associating with them one cuts asunder the roots of ignorance and attachment. Many have attained the highest illumination, not by the study of the Vedas, nor yet by the practice of austerities but merely by loving and serving the men of God."

RELIGION

. . . Thus Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more.

—*Shakespeare*

Religion is, in fact, the dominion of the Soul; it is the hope, the anchor of safety, the deliverance from evil.

—*Napoleon*

I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality.

—*Gandhi*

New Outlook on Religion

I

The whole of the phenomena of religion had evolved gradually and slowly through the ages and new discoveries had been made in the domain of religion as much as in other branches of knowledge. The primitive man worshipped the elements and the forces of nature and his worship was based on feelings of awe and fear. He could not understand the meaning of rain, storm, thunder or lightning and not finding an explanation, he thought there was some magical or supernatural power working behind the phenomenal world. The rising and the setting of the sun; the regularity with which the day follows the night; the coming of the spring after autumn and of summer after winter; the starry heaven; the waxing and waning of the moon; the eclipse—all these must have shown even to the primitive man that there was a universal law—the law of regularity and of causation—working at the back of this universe. We call these laws now under the general name of "laws of nature."

Long before the theory of evolution was postulated, man could see that the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human kingdoms had to be differentiated in terms of consciousness or of life, the mineral being the least conscious and, therefore, non-living, while man was the most

conscious of all created beings. Judging from that point of view, the smile on the face of a child was more significant than the sun which was the centre of the universe; the animal life was more conscious than the vegetable and the vegetable more conscious than the mineral. But these truths dawned on human race in course of centuries. Man had to pass from the worship of trees and stones, snakes and spirits to the worship of elements and forces of nature and to invest them with some mysterious power before he could understand the workings of nature. For the primitive man the greatest mystery and enigma, however, was the phenomenon of death and after —a mystery which remains unsolved even upto this day. As a result we find springing up in the dawn of history a pantheon of gods and goddesses and a mytholcgy which is fantastic. This is true of Greeks and Romans and Aryans when they were a primitive people. Then we find a type of dualism projected by Zoroaster in ancient Iran, according to which the phenomenal world was viewed in terms of opposites—light and darkness, evil and good, and Satan and God. As a matter of fact, darkness has no positive existence nor has evil or sin. Satan is a myth. Daulism of this type has to be met with in all the historical faiths of which the records have come down to us. It ultimately, however, evolved into monotheism, which in its turn grew up into pantheism or monism, that is to say, the belief that one universal consciousness pervaded the whole universe. It should be noted, however, that this development was spread over many centuries and

the process of change from animism to pantheism was very very slow.

II

The view entertained by some students of religion that there had been interchange of ideas among religions of the olden days was not correct. To say that religions like Zoroastrianism and Hinduism or Christianity and Buddhism owed many of their doctrines to one another, was to assume that regions so far apart as Iran, India and Palestine were in close communication with one another. None of the great founders of religion, however, were contemporaries. Moses lived about 1,500 to 1,800 years before Christ, Buddha about 500 years before him. Zoroaster never knew anything about the Vedic Rishis and no date had till now been assigned to Sri Krishna, the author of *Bhagvad Gita*. As a matter of fact, in every age and clime the religious genius had discovered independently and, shall we say, intuitively a certain truth or aspect of truth and the results tallied. The fundamentals or assumptions being the same, it appears as if the process of interchange had taken place. As a matter of fact, it did not. The countries of the world in those days remained separated from one another and as there were no means of inter-commnnication, ideas could not have travelled from one place to another. Conditions of life were static and they had become dynamic only lately, say in the nineteenth century. What had really happened was this: the philosophy and metaphysics and ethics of Buddhism, for example, stood rooted in Hindu-

ism, and similarly religions that were born in Palestine, such as Judaism and Christianity, had many points of contact one with the other and since their foundations were common, the superstructure could not but be alike. No doctrine could be exclusivly claimed to have been discovered by one particular religion. The claim of Islam, for example, to have discovered the idea of the Unity of Godhead could not stand because long before the tribes of Israel under the leadership of Moses had been familiar with Jehovah and the prophets of Israel who came after Moses were thoroughly acquainted with the idea of the Oneness of God. We read, for example, in the Psalms of David sentiments which may well be ascribed to the medieval saints of India, like Kabir and Guru Nanak. Here is Psalm 146 which says :

> Praise ye the Lord, praise the Lord, my soul
> While I live, will I praise the Lord. I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
> Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help
> Whose hope is in the Lord, his God.
> God made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is.
> The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind, the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down, the Lord loveth the righteous.

Parallel passages could be quoted from the Scriptures of other faiths. Again read the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament and you will find a remarkable similarity and agreement in the teachings of Christ and Buddha although the latter lived 500 years before the former. No Buddhist monk had ever travelled to Palestine so far as we know. The theory of 'give and take'

therefore falls to the ground. The chronological succession of different streams of evolving religious thought explains both the similarities and the divergences in the different historical faiths. Every historical faith was born and nurtured in an environment all its own, and hence it was necessarily coloured with the height of development that that age had reached and that the people of those times had attained. Faiths were localised so to say.

That there has been evolution in religious thought is amply borne out by the following extract from the New Testament. Says Jesus Christ :

> " Think not that I am come to destroy the Law of the prophets : I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. (Math. v-17).
>
> " Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth : But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Math. v-38.39).
>
> " Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of judgment. But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." (Math. v-21.22).

From the teachings of Moses to those of Christ is a great step in advance and the same general principle applies to other faiths as well.

III

The chronological order in which historical religions can be placed is as follows :—Hinduism is approximately about five to six thousand years

old and is the oldest faith extant. Zoroastrianism the ancient faith of Iran is about 3,000 years old. Judaism or the religion of the Jews is about 3,500 years old. Next in order comes Buddhism which is about 2,500 years old and then comes Christianity which is less than 2,000 years old. The youngest historical faith is Islam which has been in our midst for more than thirteen centuries. So we are to-day the inheritors of the accumulated wisdom of about 6,000 years. What a heritage! No less than five languages—*viz.*, Sanskrit, Pali, Hebrew, Arabic and Persian have been the vehicles in different times of history, of this great storehouse of wisdom. We naturally infer from this that God had spoken to man through many tongues and at different times and had revealed Himself, as Keshub Chander Sen had put it, "in nature, in the consciousness of man and in human history." Robert A. Millikan says: "No more sublime conception of God has ever been presented to the mind of man than that which is furnished by Evolution, when it represents Him as revealing Himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for man and in the age-long in-breathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his God-like powers." The Revelation of God is, therefore, progressive, continuous, infinite and eternal.

Behind the diversity, that we see, there is a uniformity which is astonishing. The credit of discovering this uniformity must be given to the religious genius, that is to say, to the founders of the great historical religions of the past. There

is a universal law which is eternally working. "Nature has neither perception nor intelligence, but it is under the power of an Eternal Almighty who holds it within accurate regulations and laws and rules over it. God is the ruler of the world of nature. How can this great universe which is endless be self-created and come into existence from the action of the matter and elements?" (*Abdu'l Baha*). It is the *Pursha* or universal consciousness that animates and illumines *Prakriti* or nature.

IV

The study of comparative religion also reveals a disparity and a diversity in many directions which must be accounted for. The only explanation is in the fact that the evolution of the human mind has gone on and on, so that many old theories and doctrines which had the sanction of one faith or the other, had to give place to new doctrines and the process of the '*survival of the fittest*' had been in operation both in nature as well as in ideas and ideals. Many theological doctrines were by common consent regarded as exploded theories. To mention a few, idolatory, sacrifice of animals, ancestor worship, belief in the existence of ghosts, spirits, angels, etc., had entirely been given up by the thinking men. Faith in magic, in witchcraft and in miracles, in fact, in anything that was supernatural (but not metaphysical) had disappeared.

The accumulation of religious merit in terms of counting the beads, turning of prayer wheels,

ceaseless repetition of scriptural texts, were no longer regarded as religious acts of piety. They did not touch the soul of man. Again, asceticism, yogic practices, renouncing the world, retiring into jungles, taking vows of celibacy and of poverty were no longer considered as essentials of religion. The shooting of birds and slaughtering of animals were acts of sacrilege and, therefore, implied negation of all religion. In short, old ways of looking at religion were fast disappearing and a new outlook was dawning and steadily gaining ground.

Let us take, for example the question of cosmogony or creation. The created universe around us, as we all know, has been in existence for millions of years and to speculate about its beginning or end would be fruitless. No day was coming when the world would come to an end and the Day of Judgment will overtake us. Our ideas about the world to come, which the imagination of man had peopled with all sorts of beings, had undergone a complete change. The same was true about heaven and hell and the spirit-world where the departed souls resided and a similar fate awaited the belief that the souls migrate from body to body. All these ideas had rested on a kind of self-deception or delusion and were mere hypotheses and not truths that could be demonstrated. The seeing of visions and all that went by the name of clairvoyance, telepathy and hypnotism had been proved to be the echoes of sub-conscious self. As a matter of fact all such knowledge was not at all helpful in solving the problems of life which religion must solve. Belief

in miracles was a superstition, since there w nothing supernatural and everything was subject to what we now know as natural laws. Moral laws were as much natural as natural laws.

V

Dean Inge in his *Outspoken Essays* divides the phenomena of religion into three classes, *viz*, the *ritual*, the *institutional* and the *mystic* in religion. Under ritual we must include all such ceremonials as baptism, initiation, *yagoupavit*, circumcision and the like which, of course, relate to the external in religion or conventional religion. That is what we call the formal in religion. Conversion, for example, meant a change in the outlook of man. The competitive spirit among religions with a view to gain in numbers was no longer considered desirable and renouncing one faith and taking up another was nothing short of hypocricy. Emphasis in our times was on the spirit and not on the form. The spirit of religion no doubt worked through some kind of institution, but where the spirit was absent institutions begin to decay and die. That is what has happened, for example, to the institutions like *varnashram*, monasticism and the like. Systems have their day and are no more. "Old order changeth yielding place to the new, lest one good custom corrupt the world." Where are the Buddhistic and Christian monasteries of old? We have instead schools, colleges, universities and hospitals. What religious value do we attach in our times to pilgrimages and to *Kumbh Melas?* Like idolatory, sacrifices of animals, ancestor worship and belief

in the influence of stars on human destiny, a faith in the miraculous and in the supernatural, we are abandoning those institutions that have lost their value and have become obsolete and antiquated. The plane of spiritual values in our days has been lifted up. The mystic or the ethical in religion is true religion. It is the kernal or the essence of religion. Take for instance such generalizations as " Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love," (*Lord Buddha*) or " We should do unto others as we would be done by," or again, " Love your enemies do good to them that hate you and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you," (*Lord Christ*); we have to live these principles in our life in order to see their results. We will find the inexorable law of retributive justice working in our lives as well as in the lives of the nations. Every action has a reaction and every cause has an effect. 'As we sow, so shall we reap' is an eternal unchanging truth, except that this justice is tempered with mercy always.

VI

The light of science has illumined today the dark recesses of our understanding. We can no longer go on harbouring our narrow insular prejudices born of stupidity and ignorance. Everything that is old is not necessarily true. We have to change with the changing times. For example, by peace today we should not understand only the absence of armed conflict, but peace between religions, races and classes. The roots of all antagonism, prejudice, strife and competition

have to be removed from the hearts of the people. Religion today must be in accord with science and reason. No man should take things on trust. He must examine every proposition for himself and arrive at truth by his own efforts. All that is false and untrue must be rejected and our faith should stand rooted in truth. There is no religion higher than truth. " Religion must be embodied in an institution. Religion implies an organic change in the structure of the present-day society. It calls for the reconstruction of the whole civilized world and of its life, its political machinery and its spiritual aspirations." (*Shoghi Effendi*) It should give us freedom from the shackles of falsehood and superstition and prejudice and make us breathe the free air of wisdom which is greater than mere knowledge. Prof. Radha Kamal Mukerjee writing about the New Social Order says:—" True religion alone can impart into human society the all-important attitude that love and justice are the very essence of self, and religion will implement by collective endeavours man's inherent desire and right to establish harmony with the entire social environment." The question is how can any one of the existing faiths take up such a big programme of social regeneration. Moses and Christ; Krishna and Buddha; Muhammad and Zoroaster did that work in their own times. Their teachings are with us, but unless the Spirit of Truth reincarnates in a dynamic human personality we are afraid much will not be done. We have, therefore, to prepare men and women who would change their outlook on this all-important subject of religion

and then with their help work out a definite programme of reconstruction laid down for us by such a dynamic personality. But, alas, as Rabindranath Tagore has said: "Our intellect and our will are forcibly attracted outwards and our soul is left dormant in a world of emptiness. Owing to our absorption in the external we have not even the time to realise the gaping disproportion between our inner and outer life. Such religious activity as still remains to us represents the inertia of habit; it continues because we ignore it by our conformity which is too lethargic to question itself." Tagore has put his finger on our ailment. But who is to prescribe a remedy? We conform and go on believing and practising what we have been traditionally taught to believe and practice. Rarely if ever we sit down to think for ourselves and formulate our own religious principles. We drift like a rudderless boat on the sea of life. But whither, we know not!

It is for us, therefore, to determine whether we shall sink or swim. The gates of heaven are as much flung open for us as those of hell. There are three gates to hell, lust, greed and anger, says Sri Krishna in the *Bhagwad Gita*. But he warns us also and says: "Enter ye not." Make a heaven for yourself right on this earth. Now is the accepted time. Let us all pray together so that the Kingdom of Heaven which was sought to be established on this earth by Christ may dawn and we may look to a second Christ coming down from heaven, "riding on the clouds of glory" and establishing a New Jerusalem in our midst.

The Bhakti Movement in India

The powerful influence which Shankracharya's Advaita Philosophy had on the minds of Hindus is shown by the large majority of Hindus who accept his doctrine and the large body of literature that has grown round it and also in opposition to it.

The central principle of Shankracharya's teaching is (1) that the eternal, impersonal Absolute which the Upanishads call Brahman and of which we can have no knowledge is the only ultimate Reality, (2) that Maya is the power by which the Absolute without undergoing any change in itself appears to us as the changing universe under conditions of time and space. (3) That the spirit in man is identical with the Supreme Spirit as indicated by the Upanishads. (4) This identity should be realised and such illumination is the result of meditation or Yoga.

The idea that Shankracharya taught that the world was unreal and illusory like a dream is not right. The great philosopher never taught that doctrine. He only held that a saint in his rapt moments of meditation experienced the Reality or the Absolute as it verily is. In this experience Being and Knowing are one. As the Upanishad says: "He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman."

Such mystics and saints have existed in India and their number is very large. Ramanuja, as we shall see, laid the foundation of Vishishtadvaita and his commentaries on Vedanta Sutras known as *Sri Bhasya* have become classical. He is a commentator on *Bhagwat Gita* also. Ramanuja's emphasis was on Bhakti which later became the creed of all medieval saints and is the creed of modern saints also. He was the first to make clear the relation between God, the world of matter and souls. He recognised three ultimate realities—God, soul and matter. But he said that the last two—soul and matter—were absolutely dependent on the first. They are originally connected with Him and are inseparable from Him as attributes are from substance. According to him Bhakti-Yoga is higher than Gayan-Yoga, because it is accompanied by love for God for the purpose of realising the soul's relation to Him. This kind of self-surrender to God is the easiest and the quickest path to God.

It is, however, remarkable that these two streams of Advaita and Vishistadvaita meet in the Theistic systems of later date and we find their fruition in the Bhagwat Puran. Many schools of Bhakti arose but most of them centre round Sri Krishna—an incarnation of Vishnu and had won the heart of the common people all over India. The Krishna of Gita teaching Arjuna on the battlefield is identical with the Avatar of the Bhagwat which is enshrined in loving hearts of millions of men and women of India.

While this conflict between Advaita and

Vishishtadvaita was going on in the South a great Bhakti movement began in Northern India with the result that there was outbrust of devotional literature in the vernacular languages. This movement is connected with the names of Ramanand, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Tulsidas, Tukaram, Mirabai and many others. It splits itself into two streams—the worship of Rama and the worship of Krishna, the two most important incarnations of Vishnu. It may be noted in passing that the Muslim invaders came with a powerful and militant religion which was alien in character and therefore incapable of assimilation by the Hindus. That stream has flown independently for centuries but the Hindus have listened only to their own teachers and have clung to their old ideals.

Rajputana, Gujerat, Maharashtar, the Punjab, the United Provinces and Bengal have all richly contributed to the Bhakti movement and enriched the religious life of the common people. The sages and saints of India have arisen from all classes and castes and given the message of pure theism, drawing people to the heights of moral and spiritual regeneration.

Some of the common features of Bhakti movement may be briefly described as under :—

1. Belief in one Supreme God of Love and Grace.

2. Belief in the individuality of every soul which is nevertheless part of the Divine Soul.

3. Belief in salvation through Bhakti.

4. The exhaltation of Bhakti above Gayan and Karma.

5. Extreme reverence paid to the Guru.

6. The doctrine of Holy Name.

7. Initiation through a Mantra.

8. Relaxing of the rules of caste, sometimes even ignoring all caste distinctions.

9. Religious teaching through the vernaculars.

PART I

ANCIENT PERIOD*

I. Dhruva

Dhruva was the son of King Uttanapada and of Suniti, his first wife. The second wife of the King was Suruchi whom he loved deeply. One day King Uttanapada and Suruchi were sitting together playing with their little son Uttama. Dhruva was five years old at that time and he wanted to join the play. But the King paid no attention to him. This pleased Suruchi who had no love for her step-son. Turning to Dhruva she said, "you must not aspire to this kingdom since it must go to my son."

Dhruva made no reply to Suruchi but turned to his father for some comfort. Finding no response he turned to his own mother (Suniti) and burst into tears. She took him in her arms, kissed him and soothed him and said :

"O my son, let not the words of your step-mother affect you so deeply. Through grace of God everything is possible. God, my son, is our only refuge and comfort."

"Tell me, mother, who is God and where shall I find him ?" asked Dhruva.

* The accounts of Dhruva, Ajamil and Prahlad are based on Shrimad Bhagwad.

"He is said to be "lotus-eyed" answered Suniti. He alone can wipe out all miseries and fulfill all desires."

Narada the great sage went out to meet Dhruva and wanted to test him. He said to Dhruva, "My boy you are very young, you should enjoy life and the pleasures of the world. The path of God is hard to follow. Return to your home and live a good life."

Dhruva replied: "I desire the highest realization, the supreme goal of life—I wish to find God."

Narada then initiated him in the path of Yoga and of meditation and taught him to meditate on Vishnu, the God of Love. Dhruva was then advised to go to a place known as Madhuvana on the banks of river Jumna to practise meditation.

Narada then went to visit King Uttanapada and finding him sad asked the reason of his grief. The King replied that his heart was torn with anxiety and yearning for his beloved son Dhruva. Narada comforted him and told him that Dhruva was alive and well.

Dhruva would go into Samadhi and have the mystic experience of the presence of God in the form of Vishnu. He then journeyed back to his kingdom. The meeting of the king with his son was pathetic and there was great rejoicing in the city. King placed Dhruva on the throne and with the permission of his subjects he retired into solitude to spend the remainder of his life in the contemplation of God. After a peaceful reign of few years Dhruva renounced the throne in favour

of his son Utkala and went to the Himalayas. He thus became the "polar star"—the guide of all mankind in every age.

II. Ajamil

Ajamil was a Brahman. In early youth he was a good and devout man. He was well versed in the Scriptures, self-controlled, truthful, pure and a friend of all. He was married and had ten sons, the youngest was named Narayan and was very dear to Ajamil.

One day while in the woods gathering flowers for worship he chanced upon a young couple engaged in amorous play. He lost control over himself and became attracted to the woman who was of low caste and possessed of evil habits. Because of her Ajamil forsook his lawful wife and gave up the pure life that he had been living. He wasted all his fortune in order to please this woman. And when everything was gone he took to dishonest living. Many years of his life passed in this evil way.

He was lying on his sick bed when the Angel of Death appeared. Ajamil terror-stricken called his youngest son Narayan to his bed-side. As he uttered the name "Narayan" (Lord of Love) he became unconscious. It is said that Vishnu appeared to him in this state and asked the Angel of Death to go away.

The Angel protested by saying that Law must take its own course. As a man sows, so must he reap. But Vishnu said "This Brahman has expiated all his sins by uttering the name of God—

and by surrendering himself to Him. One however sinful, who loves God and surrenders himself to Him becomes His and is saved.

When the name of God and God's love have purified the heart, then indeed all sins are completely destroyed. God has the power to save even the most depraved."

Ajamil regained his consciousness and gradually got back his health. Then he thought within himself: "Truly a great blessing has been vouchsafed to me. I have lived a wicked life, yet through the infinite mercy of the Lord I have been granted the vision of Vishnu. I feel that I am purified. My whole life seems to be transformed."

Thereafter evil ways had no attraction for him. He gave up all attachment to his wife, his children, his home and went to live by the Ganges to practise Yoga. He attained control over his senses and meditated for many years till his mind became firmly fixed in the thought of God—the Highest Self.

By chanting the name of God and meditating upon the Lord of Love, Ajamil had attained to sainthood. Verily nothing is more purifying than the Holy Name of God.

There are references to Ajamil in the Holy Granth (sacred scripture of the Sikhs) and Guru Nanak says:

Moot paliti kapar ho,
De sabun luye oh dho
Bharyae mut papan ke sung
Oh dhope navin ke rung.—Japji.

III. Prahlad

Harnakshap was the King of Daityas who were at war with the Devas. There are three worlds according to Hindu mythology—the middle world is inhabited by men and animals; the heavens are inhabited by gods or Devas and the nether world is inhabited by Daityas.

Harnakshap declared himself to be the God of all the three worlds and began to demand worship for himself alone and strictly enjoined that no one should worship Vishnu.

Harnakshap had a son called Prahlad who was from his infancy devoted to Vishnu. Prahlad's father wanted to drive away this evil from the world, so he sent his son to be taught by two teachers, Shanda and Amarka, who were strict disciplinarians and had injunction to the effect that Prahlad should never hear the name of Vishnu mentioned.

Prahlad would not study but would go on telling his classmates all the time about Vishnu. The teachers were frightened and they told this fact to the King who was greatly enraged. He called the boy to his presence and tried to dissuade him from the worship of Vishnu but the boy would not listen. The anger of the King knew no bounds and he ordered the boy to be immediately put to death.

Various diabolical means were adopted to kill the boy. He was ordered to be trampled under the foot of an elephant but that did not work. He was ordered to be thrown over a precipice, but he was not hurt, because Vishnu

was protecting him. Several other methods such as fire, poison, starvation were tried but to no effect. At last the King ordered him to be tied with mighty serpents and from the nether world he was thrown into the bottom of the ocean and became unconscious. Vishnu came to his rescue every time.

When Harnakshap found that all methods had failed, he was at a loss to know as to what to do. The boy was brought a second time before his father and was gently told to give up the worship of Vishnu. He was again sent to his old teachers but this time too Prahlad would not attend to his lessons and continued telling his school-mates about Vishnu.

When his father came to know about it he was filled with rage and calling the boy before him abused Vishnu and threatened to kill Prahlad. But Prahlad still persisted in maintaining that Vishnu was the Lord of the Universe. Then the King roared in fury and ordered him to be tied to a pillar. If Vishnu is God Omnipresent, said the King, why does he not come out of this pillar? The King struck the pillar with a sword and instantly Vishnu issued forth from the pillar in the form of Narsingha—half lion and half man. All Daityas ran away terrified but Harnakshap gave him a fight and was vanquished and slain.

Thus blessing Prahlad, Vishnu disappeared and Prahlad was seated on the throne of his father to reign for a long time in peace.

PART II

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

IV. Shankracharya (788 A.D.—828 A.D.)

Shankracharya was born in an obscure village named Kaladi near Cochin in South India. The exact date of his birth has not been ascertained, but probably he lived at the close of the eighth century. Maxmuller puts the date of the birth of this great Guru at 788 A.D. Shankra as a boy manifested extraordinary intelligence. He was invested with the sacred thread at the early age of seven and was sent to a Guru to learn the Vedas and Vedanges. He then returned home as a youngman after having completed his education. He did not marry and renounced the world and became a Sanyasi while very young. He chose as his Guru one Govinda and stayed in a hermitage on the banks of the Nermada. There he learnt Philosophy at the feet of his Guru. A contemporary writer locates the hermitage in the Himalayas and Shankracharya is represented as telling his Guru: "I am the son of Sivaguru a Brahman of Kerala. My father died in childhood and my mother brought me up. I have had a fair course in Shastras." There is a temple built in Badri Narayan (Himalayas) in memory of the days Shankracharya spent in this hermitage as a

full-fledged *Sanaysi*. How long this course of discipline lasted we are not in a position to tell but it must have been a fairly long time.

Soon after Shankracharya left the hermitage and went to Benares where he received pupils and began to write his works and propagate his philosophy. Among his works we may mention commentaries on the Upanishads, Gita and Vedanta Sutras. He would thus live alternately at Benares and Badri Naryan free from the bustle of busy life and busy writing and revising his works in the light of criticism. The cardinal point about Shankra's philosophy is the expounding of the truth of the formula " Thou art That." He went about preaching his doctrine and his fame and influence spread all round. He first stopped at Allahabad and met Kumarila Bhatta a great protagonist of Vedic Hinduism. Next he had a controversy with Mandana, the Chief Pandit, who lived at Mahishmati. Mandana had a wife by the name of Bharati who was an accomplished and a learned lady and she was appointed an umpire. The stipulation was that whosoever was defeated he would take upon himself the role of life adopted by his opponent. In other words Shankra if defeated agreed to marry and become a householder and Mandana if defeated had to become a Sanyasi. She put two garlands round the necks of the two disputants with a declaration that he whose garland should begin to fade first should consider himself defeated. It so happened that Mandana was defeated and had to become a Sanyasi and the umpire also had to follow her husband as a *Sanyasin*. But strangely enough

Bharati interposed and begged the favour of a controversy with herself, because Shankra had defeated only one half of Mandana, herself being the other half. He objected to arguing with a woman but she quoted precedents and Shankra had to agree. The controversy went on for 17 days and failing to defeat Shankra, Bharati tried the science of Love which proved ineffective. Mandana and his wife both became disciples of Shankracharya. A *Mutt* was established at Sringeri and Mandana who was named Surewarcharya was placed at its head as a successor of Shankracharya.

Having done his work at Mahishmati, Shankracharya left with his disciples for South India and passed through Maharashtra preaching his doctrines wherever he went. The Sringeri Mutt of today is the most richly endowed and the most widely honoured of South Indian religious institutions.

Shankracharya once again returned to his native village Kaladi to see his ailing mother who died shortly after his arrival. Returning to Sringeri he set out sometime afterwards with a large number of followers on a tour through the Eastern Coast, stopping in important centres of learning, at the capitals of Kings and places of pilgrimage to preach his doctrines. He established a *Mutt* at Puri. Every where he attacked the centres of immoral and unholy religious rites and pleaded for purity and righteousness.

Shankracharya left for the North and passing through the Berars, he stopped for sometime in

Ujjain and then went to Dwarka where he established a *Mutt*. He then travelled along the Ganges and is said to have gone to Kashmir also. His last controversial victory was at Kamrup in Assam where he defeated the great Sakta commentator Abhinava Gupta. His last days were spent in Badri Naryan where he established a *Mutt*. He retired to a place nearby known as Kedarnath and passed away in 828 A.D. at comparatively young age.

Shankracharya gave a common basis to the most prevalent forms of Vedic religion and reconciled all these to a co-ordinated single idea—that of Pantheism which sees the great First Cause, the Essence of Intelligence every where about us and in us. With the help of this doctrine supported as it was by many Vedic texts, it was easy for his master mind to show that the current religious sects were all narrow and illogical.

His doctrine may be stated as follows:—

He started with the hypothesis of Maya or Avidya—an ignorance which is objective. Nothing really exists but the Supreme Spirit so that what is commonly called nature is but an illusion and a dream caused by this ignorance which surrounds the Supreme Spirit and "hides it even as the smoke that rises from the fire hides the blaze for a time." The business of life is to cast off these sheaths that surround the Spirit within us and to realise its identity with the Supreme Spirit. The chief means of attaining this end is the study of Vedanta and the incessant contemplation of its teachings.

Shankracharya also recommended the less difficult paths of Salvation for such people as were not fitted for that kind of self-realisation. Shankra's mission was to fulfil and not to destroy, because he never advocated the suppression of outward acts of devotion. In his time there were five sects and bulk of people worshipped these—Vishnu, Siva, Sun, Sakti and Ganpati and Shankracharya did not disapprove their worship. His emphasis on Gayan Yoga as contrasted with Bhakti Yoga did not appeal to the mass mind and so his followers would mechanically repeat the formula "I am Brahman" and hence the reaction which soon set in and is represented by Ramanuja and his disciple Ramanand.

V. Ramanuja (1017 A.D.—1137 A.D.)

Ramanuja is the founder of the Vishishtadwait School of thought which stands in contrasta with the Adwaita School as postulated by Shankracharya, the well known philosopher and scholar of South India. This School believes in the existence of a God with attributes as contrasted with the other school which regards God as the only Reality and the rest of manifestation as unreal or impermanent. According to Adwaitins the one Brahman is without attributes. Ramanuja regarded the attributes also as real and permanent and subject to the control of the one Brahman in all their modifications and evolutions.

Ramanuja was born in 1017 A.D. in a village

near Madras and was brought up by his uncle named Sailapurna. The boy was invested with the sacred thread at the usual age and after preliminary studies in Sanskrit took up the higher courses. When Ramanuja started the study of Upanishads he began to differ from his teachers whose interpretations were taken exception to by this young scholar. When his own Guru Yamunacharya passed away he met Mahapurna who was a Vaishnavite and got his Mantra from him. He pursued his religious studies with his new Guru. Ramanuja then renounced the world and became a Sanyasi and soon attracted many followers. He then joined Srirangam *Mutt* and began to teach the doctrine of Vishishtadwaita or qualified Monism, as it is called. Ramanuja then began to compose philosophical works and wrote a commentary on the Vedanta Sutras. He also wrote a commentary on Bhagwad Gita. He then travelled and visited many places in the South and at last went to Dwarka and Muttra—places connected with the name of Sri Krishna. He travelled upto Badrinath in the Himalayas and also visited Kashmir.

A dispute was raging at the time of Ramanuja's return to the South as to whether God was Vishnu or Siva. His life at Srirangam Temple was remarkable. Hundreds of Sanyasis attended his discourses. When he was at the height of his popularity he was summoned to king's court, and was asked to subscribe his faith in Siva as the Supreme Lord. Ramanuja left Srirangam for fear of persecution and reached Nilgiri Hills. He then settled in Mysore and succeeded in creating a large community of Vaishnavites. It is remarkable that Ramanuja by his learning overpowered both the Jains and the Buddhists and convinced them about his own doctrine. He lived upto the age of 120 and passed away in the year 1137 A.D. His life was very simple and saintly. He was entirely devoted to God. His writings show the keenness of his intellect and the sincerity and seriousness of his character. His religious activity bore fruit even beyond the South and his message spread in the North through Ramanand who preached Vaishnavism and Bhakti to his followers. As a matter of fact Ramanand is the Founder of the Bhakti movement in India.

VI. Ramananda (1299 A.D.—1410 A.D.)

Ramananda was a disciple of Ramanuja and advocated the Vishishtadwaita School of thought like his Guru. He was born at Prayag now called Allahabad. His father was a high class Brahman. Ramananda as a boy was very precocious and was, therefore, sent to Benares to study religious philosophy. One day he met Raghavananda, a prominent teacher of his times. He was admitted into his school and initiated into the secrets of his creed. That means he became a Vaishnavite.

It may be noted that only high class Brahmans were initiated into the Vaishnava Church and strict discipline was enforced with regard to food. As Ramananda returned from his travels, he was expelled from the brotherhood on the

plea that he must have broken the caste rules. A controversy between his Guru Raghavanand and himself resulted in momentous consequences. Ramananda by his expulsion from his brotherhood cast aside the idea of caste exclusiveness and began to recognise the equality of all men in the eyes of God, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Dr. Grierson says that the most striking point about Ramananda's teaching is that so long as man or woman has a genuine living faith in the Supreme, his or her caste or position are matters of no importance. The Vaishnavas used to admit only high class Brahmans into their Order. Ramananda declared, that :—

Jati panti puchchai nahi koi,
Hari ko bhjae so Hari ka hoi.

" Let no one ask a man's caste or with whom he eats. If a man is devoted to Hari, he becomes Hari's own."

Among his disciples we have saints like Kabir, a weaver, Sena, a barber by caste, Dhanna, a Jat and Ravi Dass a Chamar. To Ramananda belongs the honour of developing this spirit of broad-mindedness among the Vaishnavites. He is, as a matter of fact, the founder of the Bhakti movement in Northern India. This rendered the Hindu religion more catholic and a perennial fountain of delight and inspiration. Ramananda and his successors all taught that love and worship should be directed to God and that He is the Father of all mankind and we are all His children.

In order that his gospel may appeal to all alike and be widely diffused, he adopted the

medium of vernacular for his teaching. The hymns he composed were in Hindi. The literature of Hinduism which was hitherto the monopoly of learned Brahmans found expression in the mother tongue of the people. This enriched the vernaculars as well as opened the floodgates of spiritual life for the common people.

The recognition of a Unity behind the Diversity is true theism which was emphasised by all the medieval saints of India. The relation between man and God was clearly defined by Ramananda and his successors. The abiding interest of the Bhakti movement in India lies in its affirmation of the claims of the human heart and in the moral and spiritual uplift to which it has supplied a stimulus.

VII. Kabir (1440 A.D.—1519 A.D.)

Among the medieval reformers, such as Chaitanya in Bengal and Guru Nanak in the Punjab the name of Kabir stands out pre-eminent. His outspoken views and spirit of protestantism, his fearless advocacy of pure and ennobling doctrines and above all his profound mystic poems make him the most eminent figure among the saints of India. He has been immortalised in the translation of his hymns by Rabindra Nath Tagore (See *Hundred Poems of Kabir*).

The date of Kabir's birth is uncertain but all authorities agree that he was born in 1440 A.D. He was found, as legend says, as a child in a lake called Lahar Tolao near Benares. Niru a childless Mohammadan weaver saw it, took it home

and adopted it as his child. A Kazi was called to give the child a name. On opening the *Koran* the word Kabir was the first that presented itself and that name was given to the child. He seems to have been of Hindu parentage, but was brought up as a Mohammadan.

We know very little of his early training, but it appears he had a mystic turn of mind. He learnt his trade perfectly and when asked by a learned Pandit about his caste, he replied that he was a weaver and later he defines a weaver as follows:—

"No one knoweth the secret of the weaver.
God hath woven the warp of the whole world.
He has stretched the warp so long.
He made the Earth and Firmament his workshops.
He has set the Sun and Moon in alternate motion.
Says *Kabir*—with such a weaver I have blended my thread."

(Shri Guru Granth Sahib).

He says:

"Who was the painter who painted
The stars which appear in the skys?
Say, O pandit, to what is the sky attached?
Fortunate is the wise man who knoweth this.
The Sun and Moon diffuse light;
God has extended himself in everything,
Saith *Kabir*, He shall know this
In whose heart is God and in whose mouth is God."

Again he says:

Kabir merey jat kau sab ko hassnehar.
Balihari iss jat kau jeh japeeo Sirjanhar.

"Every one laughs at my caste, but blessed is the caste which enabled me to worship the

Creator." Kabir was a married man and his wife's name was Loui and he had a son called Kamal. He was against renouncing the world and becoming a Sanyasi and he denounced all accretions in religion. Since he lived in the very centre of Hindu orthodoxy, he met the opposition of the learned Pandits. At that time the fame of Ramananda (a disciple of Ramanuja) who had come to stay in Benares was at its height. Ramanand held that all men who served God were equal and he admitted disciples of all castes. He called his disciples the "Liberated" ones (Avadhutas) and they did not observe any caste restrictions.

Kabir was in search of a Guru, but doubted if a Hindu saint would accept him as he was a Muslim. He hit upon a strange devise. One day rising early morning he hid himself on the steps of the Ganges *ghat* down which Ramanand used to go for his bath in the river. As it was dark, Ramanand unknowingly trod upon Kabir and exclaimed Ram! Ram! Kabir at once got up and fell at Ramanand's feet and said. "Thou hast given me the word of initiation (Guru mantar) and I have become thy disciple." Of course he was accepted as such by Ramanand. Kabir then became the centre of great attraction in Benares and he went about giving his discourses and singing the hymns composed by him. Then began his persecution and he was sent for by the Emperor, Sikandar Lodi, on the complaint of leading men astray. He did not go and the Emperor considering him to be a Sufi saint let him go free. He was, however, exiled from Benares and moved

about many cities in Northern India. At an advanced old age in, 1518, A.D. he passed away at Maghar near Gorakhpore. The legend about his death, when Hindus wanted to burn and Muslims to bury his body, is only symbolical and shows the spirit of unity that he preached and practised while he was alive. He describes the yearning and love for God in thousand and one ways and puts that in varied metaphors and similies taken from Hinduism. His contribution to Hindi literature and poetry is unmatched.

VIII. Tukaram (1607 A.D.—1649 A.D.)

Among the saints and sages of India the name of Tukaram stands out prominent. He was not only a saint but a great poet also. His father was one Boloji, a village grocer. Tukaram was born in 1607 A.D. in a village near Poona. As a young boy he was assisting his father in his work but when his father and mother died he became very poor. Tukaram then devoted himself to a religious life. He would give away everything that he had to others. Once when his wife was taking a bath he gave her clothes away to a beggar. The wife wanted to give a fresh start to Tukaram, so she borrowed 200 rupees from her father and bought some goods and sent him out with some hawkers. On the way he met a poor Brahman driven from his home by his creditors. He at once paid the Brahman's debts by handing over his stock in trade. When he came back to his village, people thought he was mad. He was mounted on a donkey and with a string of onions round his neck he was paraded in the streets of his village. He fled from his village and hid himself in the hills. His younger brother went in search of him, found him, and brought him home. After some time he ran away again to the hills. This time his wife went in search of him and found him. She would take meals for him daily. One day a thorn entered her foot and faint with pain she took to her husband his food as usual. Out of pity for his wife Tukaram went to his village.

Tukaram was a great favourite with Sevaji who became his devoted follower but later turned back to his kingly duties. Sevaji, however, did not lose touch with Tukaram and would listen to his *Katha* (discourses). His poems were devotional. On one occasion the Brahmans who disliked him threw his writings into the river but they floated and were saved. Tukaram himself was drowned in the river Indrayani. He was deeply mourned by his loving wife and his numerous followers. His native village is visited every year by thousands of pilgrims. The following verses are from his pen:

"A gold dish filled with pudding is put before a dog: a necklace of pearls is put round a donkey. Musk is smeared on a pig. A scholar preaches wisdom to a deaf man. What good comes of all this? *Tuka* says that only a saint knows the greatness of devotion."

IX. Guru Nanak (1469 A.D.—1538 A.D.)

Guru Nanak the Founder of the Sikh Faith,

was born in 1469 and died in 1538. There is no contemporary account of his life and all we know of him is from records written half a century or so after his death. Even in those early records, which are scrappy, a lot of myth has been mixed up with facts and they are not free from supernatural touches here and there. The only reliable account is to be found in Mohsin Fani's *Dabistan*, a book that was written in the times of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind, the 5th and 6th Gurus. According to *Dabistan*, Guru Nanak was born in Talwandi now known as Nankana, a village 35 miles south-west of Lahore. His father's name was Kalu. Guru Nanak held a job for some time under Daulat Khan Lodi at Sultanpur where he made that significant observation that there is 'no Hindu and no Musalman,' meaning thereby that he was to reform both the religious systems.

He was married and had two sons and possibly also daughters. From early life he showed signs of renouncing the world and his father Kalu tried him for different occupations but with no result. He was working as a storekeeper of Daulat Khan Lodi when one day he suddenly disappeared. He would pass all his time in the company of mendicants and faqirs. The stories that Guru Nanak visited Ceylon, Baghdad and Mecca seem to be so mixed up with the miraculous, that they become mere fables. His visit to Sayyidpur, now known as Emnabad, is indeed a historical incident and it occurred during the third expedition of Babar and must therefore be placed in the year 1524, when Guru Nanak was about 55 years old. His biographers also tell us that he

revisited his home after 12 years as was the custom among Hindu Sanyasis. It is also interesting to note that during the earlier days of Sikhism animal diet was not tolerated.

The writer of *Dabistan* says: "Having prohibited his disciples to drink wine and to eat pork, he (Nanak) himself abstained from eating flesh and ordered them not to hurt any living being." After him, this precept was neglected by his followers, but Arjunmal, his successor, renewed the prohibition to eat flesh and said, 'This has not been approved by Nanak.' (See *Dabistan* Vol. II page 248).

Regarding the Guru's visit to Ceylon, Trumpp (the translator of Sikh Scriptures) wrote: "It is based on altogether erroneous suppositions; the King and the inhabitants of Ceylon being represented as common Hindus, the Sikh author being quite unaware of the fact that the popular religious belief there was Buddhism. That Nanak founded there a 'Sangat' (congregation) the order of whose divine service, even as detailed, contradicts all history and is an invention of later times." As a matter of fact, Sikhism never spread in South India.

Nanak's visits to Baghdad and Mecca appear to be inventions also. Dr. Bannerjee, the author of the *Evolution of the Khalsa* observes 'that Nanak's meeting Babar, though not impossible is not very probable.' Guru Nanak of course visited many places in the Punjab and among those particularly mentioned are Pakpatan, Depalpur, Kanganpur, Kasur, Patti, Goindwal, Vairowal, Jalalabad and Kiria (Kari Pathandi) near Amritsar.

At the close of his life he settled in a place known as Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak) and passed away having appointed Lahina, a Khatri by caste and a resident of the village Khadur, as Guru and called him Angad or his own 'limb.' Dr. Bannerjee, the author of the *Evolution of the Khalsa,* observes: "The sweetness of his character and the simple truth behind his teachings made him an object of love to all and even today he is remembered as:

"Guru Nanak Shah Fakir
Hindu ka Guru, Mussalman ka Pir."

Guru Nanak's message was one of truth and of peace and was very simple. Repetition of the *Nam* with devotion led to salvation. The externals in religion were decried and emphasis was laid on the spirit of religion. The hymns and compositions of Guru Nanak are replete with the idea of greatness of God and the comparative insignificance of everything else. 'Ritualistic practices are of no avail', says he. He makes purity a supreme test of religious life. But this purity had little to do with outward practice; it was primarily a matter of inward devotion and consisted in abandonment of egotism and selfishness. Guru Nanak tried his best to break the shackles of conventionalism and wanted his disciples to come face to face with the Supreme Spirit. The *Japji* and *Asa di War* are the two principal prayer books composed by Guru Nanak and every Sikh recites them early in the morning, or listens to them being recited accompanied with music. As a matter of fact, the Sikh reform as inaugurated by Guru Nanak was a replica of the Bhakti movement.

sponsored by the medieval saints like Ramanuja, Kabir and others. Granth Sahib also contains the hymns of Jaidev, Namdev, Ramdas, Pipa, Sadna, and Farid. The sacred books of the Hindus are mentioned in the Granth Sahib. Kabir says, "Say not that the Hindu and Musalman books are false; false is he who reflecteth not on them." As a matter of fact, the Sikh scriptures reinterpret the Hindu sacred books in the popular language of the people of those days. Dr. Bannerjee says:—

"It appears that there is no satisfactory evidence to contend that Guru Nanak denounced almost everything that he had found in existence and that it was his object to build an entirely novel structure on the ruins of the old. The Sikh movement is indeed a protest, but it is a protest against conventionalism and not against Hinduism."

X. Ravidas Chamar

That an outcast among the Hindus should attain to the status of a saint and a teacher is really remarkable. The Bhakti movement in medieval India occomplished its supreme achievement when it gave birth to a Chamar Saint whose memory is still cherished by the masses of this country.

Ravidas was like Kabir a follower of Ramananda. He came from a Chamar family and when young started the business of shoe-making. It is said that he would make beautiful shoes for the mendicants. Many of his compositions are to be found in the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. One is particularly instructive and we give it below:—

If Thou art a Hill, then I am Thy peacock;
If Thou art a Moon, then I am Thy Chakor;
If I break with Thee, whom shall I join?
If Thou art a Lamp, then I am Thy wick;
If Thou art a Place of Pilgrimage, then I am Thy Pilgrim;
I have joined true love with Thee,
Joining Thee, I have broken with all others;
Wherever I go there is Thy Service.
There ls no other Lord like Thee, O God,
By Worshipping Thee, Death's noose is cut away
Ravidas singeth to obtain Thy Service."

Ravidas was a strict monotheist and he held that the soul differs from God in that it is encumbered with a body. God is everything, is gracious to all and is accessible to all. He alone can save men from all evil passions and should be worshipped with all the devotion that man is capable of.

Ravidas's permanent work survives even to this day and there is an important sect known as Ravidasis which has a large number of adherents among the tanners and shoe-makers of Northern India. The community ranks in numbers next to the Ramanandis and Kabirpanthis. Among the Vaishnavites there are two sects. Some worship Krishna as the incarnation of Vishnu, the Preserver, and others worship Rama the hero of Ramayana the ideal King, the ideal husband and the ideal brother and also an incarnation of Vishnu.

Ramananda, Kabir and Ravidas belong to the latter school of thought. Ravidas's followers are to be found in the United Provinces. For all practical purposes they are Hindus and are no longer considered as untouchables. Of course intermarriages and inter-dining with higher Hindu castes is not permitted. They call themselves Adi Hindus. How men of God raise their fellowmen to the highest heights of spiritual life ls indeed a miracle.

XI. Tulsidas (1532—1623 A.D.)

As a result of the teachings of those great saints and sages there was inaugurated a great reform movement in Hinduism. Religion became the property of all from the lowest to the highest and men from all conditions and castes came together under the shadow of the new gospel. While some still adored the older divinities of the land—Krishna and Rama, others took refuge in *Nam* or Shabad or "word" as it is sometimes called. This phase of Hindu religion was represented in Hindu poetry, with its two dialects—the Eastern and the Western. Poems of Kabir and the hymns of the Sikh Gurus form the high watermark of a rational and protestant faith culminating in Monotheism of the highest type.

The more orthodox expression of it took form in the poetry of Tulsi Das who rendered that remarkable Epic Poem, Valmiki's Ramayana, into Hindi poetry and did it in a manner that captivated the imagination of every Hindu and the book became the Bible of the common folk. All the various sects considered Ramayana to be the Gospel of the Supreme and the Transcendent Being who is to be approached in love and in faith. Tulsidas was born in a Brahman family of priests in 1532 A.D. and as the family was very poor the

parents abandoned the child and he was picked up by a Sadhu and brought up by him. As an orphan he lived and wandered with the Sadhu and learnt from him and his associates the story of Rama. His original name was Ram Bola and the name Tulsi Das seems to have been given to him by the Sadhu. He studied Sanskrit and married and had a son.

After some time he abandoned home and family ties and wandered about as a worshipper of Rama. He went to Ajodhya and then made Benares his home. He visited Mathura, Brindaban, Kurukshetra, Prayag and other sacred places.

He commenced writing the Ramayana in Ayodhya in 1574 A.D. when he was 42 years old and completed it several years after at Benares. The object which Tulsi Dass had in mind in composing this great epic was not merely to tell in beautiful verse a wonderful story but to use it as a vehicle preaching the supreme value of the worship of Rama. He believed in a Personal God which he identified with Rama the incarnation of Vishnu.

He held that we can know Him through His incarnation only. Bhakti according to him was the outgoing of one's whole being to the Supreme God. Tulsi Das founded no new sect but his Ramayana has been the most potent factor in making Vaishnavism the accepted cult of the vast majority of Hindus in North India today. Tulsi Das helped in shifting the centre of gravity of Vaishnavism from Sri Krishna to Rama. That was a great achievement indeed.

XII. Ram Das (1608 A.D.—1681 A.D.)

Ram Das lived in the times of Sevaji and was a contemporary of Tuka Ram the well known saint of Maharashtara. Ram Das was a Brahman and was born in 1608 A.D. He was the son of Suryaji the village accountant of Jambgaon in the Nasik District. The real name of Ram Das was Narayan and he took up the new name later in life as he was a worshipper of Rama the incarnation of Vishnu. As a matter of fact Ram Das means the "Slave of Rama". The fame of Ram Das spread over the Deccan and reached the ears of Sevaji who ruled Maharashtra at that time. Sevaji was anxious to adopt a teacher or a spiritual guide and he found one in Ram Das.

Ram Das did not like to marry but the parents forced marriage on him. When the ceremoney was taking place the priest uttered the words *Savadhan* (Be on your guard) so as to warn the future husband about his responsibilities as a householder. Ram Das interpreted the word in a different sense. He ran from the room and hid himself in a pipal tree and escaped discovery for several years. His married life was thus ended before it began, and he left his parents and home to wander about and visit the holy places. It is recorded that he visited Benares, Ayodhya, Mathura, and Prayag and went south as far as Rameshwaram (Ceylon). After his wanderings he settled down at Chaphal in the Satara District. Sevaji paid him a visit in this place and not finding him there went to Shringwadi where Ram

Das was busy writing something under the shade of a tree.

Sevaji asked Ram Das to accompany him, but he would not agree. So Ram Das was given a residence at a place known as Parali six miles from Satara and the place was renamed Sajjangarh (Fort of a Saint).

An interesting incident is narrated by the biographer of Ram Das. "One day Sevaji met Ram Das at a temple not very far from Satara. The saint asked him for alms. Sevaji wrote some words on a piece of paper and dropped it into the sage's lap. Ram Das picked it up and read in it a grant of the entire kingdom. The saint affected to accept the grant and that for the whole day. Sevaji having no longer any property acted his servant. At the end of the day Ram Das asked Sevaji how he liked the change from kingship to service. Sevaji replied that he was quite happy, provided he was near his teacher. Ram Das gave back the grant and said, " Take back your kingdom."

Ram Das passed away at Parali in 1681 A.D. and his ashes were taken to Chaphal.

XIII. Mira Bai

Mira Bai has rightly been compared to a moth that burnt itself in the candle of love for Sri Krishna and thereby immortalised herself as a great devotee. Her renunciation and self-surrender stand unequalled in the history of the Bhakti movement in India. Like other saints and sages she sang in sublime Hindi poetry her faith and devotion to her Lord. Her hymns have become

very popular and here is one reproduced below for the reader:

"Mine eyes ache for a sight of Thee,
Since Thou hast left me, my Lord, never have I found rest.
My bosom heaves at every sound,
Thine voice sounds so sweet.
I have fixed my sight on Thy path and await Thy return, the night seems a half year.
O, to whom shall I recite the tale of the pangs of separation!
When will Thou meet me, O Lord of Mira, who art the bestower of joy and allayer of pain."

Mirabai was a princess born in a village in Marwar (Rajputana). Her father was Rao Rattan Singh and as a little girl of five while she was peeping through the windows of a balcony and observing a marriage procession, addressing innocently her mother said: "Mother and where is my bridegroom." The mother smiled and replied (pointing to the little lovely idol of Lord Krishna that stood in the temple and was so much loved by the child), "Girdhar Gopal is thy bridegroom." Since that day Krishna became a subject of fascination for Mira. She spent all her time in bathing and dressing the idol. She worshipped it. In due course Mirabai was married to the eldest son of Rana Sanga, the well known Rana of Chitor. Her husband's name was Bhojraj. This handsome young Rajput was proud of his lineage and Mira proved to be a good wife. Her heart, however, had been dedicated to Krishna. The sister of Bhojraj turned against Mirabai and began to defame her. The dame rumour went

round and said that Mira had started mixing freely with the Sadhus.

It is interesting to note that Mira Bai had adopted Ravidas the Chamar as her Guru. From the point of view of the orthodox Rajput Hindus this was absolutely unwarranted and the husband was enraged.

The news of the devotion of Mirabai for Krishna spread far and wide so much so that Emperor Akbar and his chief musician Tansen wanted to pay a visit to Mira. They disguised themselves as mendicants and started incognito to Chitor. They went to the temple of Mira and witnessed her devotion with their own eyes. Her dance and songs were captivating and kept the Emperor and Tansen transfixed. Akbar rose from his seat and entreated her to accept a little present of a necklace, which she would not, but when the Emperor insisted saying that it was an offering made at the lotus feet of Sri Krishna, she did not refuse. The news spread like wild fire and Bhojraj knowing that the Emperor had touched the feet of Mira was greatly enraged. The husband went to Mira and reprimanded her for having allowed a Muslim to enter the Temple and said " Drown thyself in some river and henceforth never show thy face to the world." The story goes that like a true Hindu wife she resolved to jump into a river and give up her life. Mira stood on the bank, in a meditative mood. It was evening and she heard the temple bells ringing at a distance calling people to prayer. She went back and prayed and Lord Krishna appeared to her in a vision and said "Your life with your

mortal husband is over. Now you are mine, go now and henceforward seek Me in my Kingdom—in the bowers of Vraja and in the lanes of Brindaban."

So she started for Brindaban in search of her Lord—the Flute-Player.

The husband died soon after but Mira's brother-in-law continued persecuting her. The new Rana was busy inventing new forms of torture for Mirabai. Once he sent her a basket of flowers with a poisonous snake in it. Another time he sent her a cup of poison saying it was nectar, a third time a bed of nails, but to no effect.

Mirabai addressed a few lines to a renowned contemporary Saint Tulsidas the author of Ramayana who advised her not to leave the Path of Devotion she had chosen. This is how Mira lived. She gave herself completely to Lord Sri Krishna. Mira lost herself in the Lord as the colour loses itself in the water.

XIV. Jaidev

Jaidev was a poet as well as a saint. He wrote in Sanskrit and his poem *Gitgovind* has become classical. It is a love song describing the love of Sri Krishna for Radhika. Sir Edwin Arnold has put *Gitgovind* in English verse. Jaidev was born in a village known as Kenduli in Lower Bengal. He became one of the five most distinguished poets of the Court of Raja Lakhshman Sen the King of Bengal and was counted among the five jewels. Very little is known of the early life of the poet but he was a gifted Sanskrit

Scholar. He renounced the world and wandered about in many places with a *Kamandal* and tattered clothes. He would not sleep for two nights in succession under the same tree. He, however, after some time withdrew from ascetic life and married the beautiful Padmavati the daughter of a Brahman. The girl was originally meant as a *devdasi*. Jaidev built for her a hut and set up an idol in it and applied himself to worship it. It was about this time that Jaidev started writing *Gitgovind*. The poem is not only exquisite poetry and music, it is an elaborate religious allegory. The author of *Bhagat Mala* commenting upon the poem says : " Radhika the heroine is heavenly wisdom. The milkmaids who divert Krishna from his allegiance to her are the five senses. Krishna represented as pursuing them is the human soul and the return of Krishna to his first love is the return of the repentent sinner to God which gives joy in heaven."

After the completion of the poem Jaidev went to travel and visited Brindaban and Jaipur. It is narrated that in his travels he met a party of *thugs* to whom he gave all that he had. He said to them : " Wealth is the basis of sin, gluttony produces disease, love of the world purchaseth pain, so it is proper to discard all three". They thought he was only pretending and they wanted to kill him, but they cut off his hands and threw him into a well.

The king passed by that way and caused Jaidev to be taken out of the well and took him to the city and kept him in comfort. Jaidev would

not tell him that *thugs* had cut off his hands, but the mystery was soon cleared.

When Jaidev wanted to leave the palace, the king brought his wife Padmavati and the queen was required to look after her. After some time however both returned home and transferred their love for idols to the love and homage for One True God.

The following hymn gives us an insight into the state of mind of Jaidev :—

He says in the Holy Granth, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs :

> " Before all things was the Being who is unrivalled and endued with permanence and similar attributes.
> Who is supremely wonderful, distinct from nature, incomprehensible and pervadeth creation.
> Repeat only the beloved God's name which is ambrosia and the essence of all things. . . .
> God is equally in the present, past and future, imperishable and supremely happy."

XV. Namdev

Namdev was the son of a tailor and later in life entered the profession of his father. His mother was also the daughter of a tailor. His father finding that Namdev made no progress in the profession decided to put him in commerce. Capital was borrowed and to the great surprise of his father Namdev spent the money in feasting the Brahmans. This distressed the father and enraged the mother who remonstrated with their son to no purpose.

When Namdev grew up to manhood he had a

reaction and he joined a gang of dacoits and looted many and killed some innocent people. He, however, later on repented of his wicked deeds and came under the ennobling influence of a saint named Vishoba. This saint in order to test Namdev assumed the appearance of a leper and put his feet on a lingam—the emblem of Siva. When Namdev saw this he raised the old man's feet and turned them to different direction. Namdev every time found the lingam under the feet of the leper. On enquiring about Saint Vishoba, Namdev was told by the leper that he was Vishoba. Vishoba then proposed to Namdev to take him outside the temple. On reaching there Vishoba asked Namdev to close his eyes. Namdev did so and on opening them saw no longer a leper but a saint in perfect health and beauty. Namdev became his disciple from that time onwards.

Namdev composed hymns both in Marhati and in Hindi and his compositions have been incorporated in the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. Namdev being a Bhakta repudiated Vedanta or pantheism. At first he thought that God and his idol were one and the same but this involved him in difficulties and he made a retreat into monotheism. He and his companion Gyandev, the Vedantist travelled together. They visited Benares, Gaya, Mathura, Gokal, Brindaban, Jagannath and Dwarka. Then they both went to Rameshwaram in the extreme south of India and returned home after a long time. Namdev had married and had children. He was not a recluse. He was an idolator first and then became a devotee of One God. Here is one of Namdev's

hymns which illustrates his deep devotion to God :—

"God the Searcher of hearts,
Like a body reflected in a mirror
Dwelleth in every heart ; nothing produceth an effect or impression on Him.
He is free from all entanglements and devoid of caste,
When one looketh at one's own face in the water, the water can produce no impression on it.
So nothing can produce an impression on Nama's Lord."

XVI. Vallabhacharya (1479—1531 A.D.)

Acharya of course means a philosophic thinker but Vallabha was also a saint. He was a Vaishnavite and was the son of Lakhshman Bhatt, a Telingana Brahman. At the age of six Vallabha was placed under a tutor named Narayna Bhatt. He was very intelligent and soon acquired a complete knowledge of Sanskrit which he studied at Benares, the great center of Sanskrit learning. He displayed great learning and genius and won in disputation the ablest Advaitists of the day. He was thus awarded the title of an Acharya and was known as such. He was from South India but he travelled much in the North visiting Maharashtar and Rajputana and then returned to Benares and also went to Hardwar and Badri Narain in the Himalayas.

Vallabhacharya was married and like other saints believed that marriage was no hinderance to religious life and he set an example himself. He divided his time by living partly at Benares and

partly at Brindaban. He defeated the Vedantists at Benares and he came into great prominence as a scholar, a thinker and a person of great sanctity and piety.

Vallabhacharya spent the last years of his life at Benares surrounded by his family and disciples and wrote some valuable philosophical and devotional treatises. These works embody his explanations of Vaishnavite philosophy. His works are to be found both in Sanskrit as well as in Brij Bhasha and thus form a great contribution to the literature of the time. He passed away at Benares at the age of 52. A *mutt* sacred to his memory still exists in that city.

His teaching was as already stated based on Vaishnavism and centered round the conception of a Personal and a Beneficient God and laid great emphasis on the doctrine of Grace and Devotion (Bhakti). He believed that Brahman or the Absolute Reality manifested itself in the universe round about us. The individual soul was itself the same substance as the Supreme Soul. The relation between the two was that of identity but the individual soul was of two kinds; (1) going through the circle of life and death and (2) delivered from the trammels of life. The first was subject to a delusion and second was liberated or free.

Vallabhacharya however regarded Krishna as Purshottama—the Perfect Being who had all the attributes that belonged to God. God according to Vallabhacharya was Unmanifest as well as Manifest. He also believed in the Hindu Trinity

of Brahma (Creator) Vishnu (Preserver) and Siva (Destroyer).

This kind of Bhakti later on degenerated into mythological worship leading to idolatory and amounted merely to Guru worship. The Bhakti of Personal God was the greatest gift of Vaishnavism to Medieval India but it unfortunately ended in temple and image worship and that in spite of Vallabhacharya and other saints. The necessity of a pure and virtuous life, of high ethics and culture of emotions was lost sight of and in their place came showy and meaningless worship of images and idols.

XVII. Farid (1173 A.D.—1266 A.D.)

Shaikh Farid's grandfather migrated from Kabul to the Punjab in 1125 A.D. Farid was born in Kothiwal near Dipalpur in 1173 A.D. When he was a few years old his mother taught him to pray. The boy asked what was gained by prayer. His mother replied ' sugar '. Consequently he was nicknamed Shakarganj or a treasury of sugar.

Farid was sent to school very early where he learnt the Quran by heart. He with his tutor then left for Mecca and visited Medina also and on his return he went to Kabul to complete his education in Theology and then returned to Multan where he met saint Qutub-ud-din and became his disciple. He then visited Bukhara and finally returned to his old teacher Qutub-ud-din who enjoined on Farid the following four

rules—sleep little, eat little, speak little and associate little with the world.

After having lived in Hansi and Delhi for some time Farid settled in Pakpattan where he afterwards died and where his shrine still exists. Pak Pattan means the holy ferry becuase in the canal that passed by the town, visitors used to wash their hands and feet before going to meet Farid.

It is worthy to note that Farid retired into forest and remained there for 12 years but found his penance profitless and returned home. It is said that Nizam-ud-din Aulyia a great mystic met Farid and was struck by his piety. Farid is said to have married the Emperor's daughter who became his disciple and followed him everywhere like a faqir.

He was a remarkable poet and his poems have become classical in the Punjabi language. He says :

"The eye which looketh not towards God had better be blind ;
The tongue which uttereth not His name had better be dumb ;
The ear which heareth not His praises had better be deaf ;
And the body which performeth not His service had better be dead ! "

It is not surprising that a man of Farid's sanctity and piety should make many converts among the Hindus also. There is a remarkable couplet ascribed to Farid which has become classical.

"Farid, if men beat thee with their fists, beat them not in return,
Nay, kiss their feet and go home."

Again he says :

"Farid revile not dust, there is nothing like it
When we are alive it is beneath our feet, when we are dead it is above us."

—*Slokas of Farid.*

Farid was indeed a great saint. His successor known as Farid the Second met Guru Nanak the Founder of the Sikh Faith. The slokas of Farid incorporated in the Sacred Scripture of the Sikhs are the compositions of the First Farid.

XVIII. Madhvacharya (1199 A.D.—1271 A.D.)

Among the great religious teachers who have influenced the Hindu mind, the name of Madhvacharya stands out prominent. Shankracharya founded the Advaita system which is believed in by millions of Hindus and is expressed by the simple phrase "Thou art that" or there is only one Absolute Reality which can be realised by the knowledge of the fact that the soul of man is identical with the Supreme Soul.

Ramanuja another South India philosopher and thinker postulated what is known as Vishishtadvaita or "modified" Advaita which meant that the path of devotion or Bhakti enabled the soul of man to realise his true relation with God who manifested Himself in the Perfect Man in the form of a Krishna. Ramanuja founded the Bhakti school of thought known as Vaishnavism which ultimately developed into pure Theism or Monotheism as we know it now. Ramanand,

Kabir and Guru Nanak were therefore Theists in the true sense of that word. Theirs was pure and unadulterated Bhakti or Devotion to God.

Madhvacharya went still further and a great scholar as he was, he laid the foundation of a scientific school of thought known as "Dwaita" or Dualism. This implied the search for "Truth" —that is seeing things as they were both in their gross forms and in their subtle and ultimate state. The knowledge of "Truth" was what he aimed at. He held that religion to be stable should stand on reason and logic.

Madhvacharya was born in 1199 A.D. His real name was Vasudeva. He was sent to a village school in his village known as Belle, six miles from the town of Udipi in South India. He was not regular or attentive at school and gave great trouble to his teacher by asking questions.

At the age of 25, Vasudev now known as Madhvacharya renounced the world and by that time he had thoroughly mastered the Vedas and Vedangas and all the Hindu Shastras including grammar and dialectics and the like. The act of renunciation was not simple since he was the only son of his parents and was dearly loved by them. He then saw the weak points in the Vedanta Philosophy as enunciated by Shankracharya and gradually drifted to his new way of looking at religion. South India was at the time steeped in Vedantic thought and was indulging in useless hair-splitting and wrangling. Discourses were dry as dust and purely academic. The Jains and Buddhists were being made a target of the learned Pundits of the time.

Madhvacharya was determined to break the strength of Vedanta and with this intention he set out on a tour of the South first and of North India next. He visited Trivandrum and then went to the stronghold of Vedanta (Sringeri) where there was a *mutt* or monastery sacred to the memory of Shankracharya. Collision took place at Rameshwaram. The net result of this tour was a further breach which became unbridgeable. Then Madhvacharya wrote his commentaries on Bhagwat Gita and on the Vedanta Sustras.

After sometime he set out on his travels in the North. He visited Benares. He had to face many Moslem Divines and so he learnt Persian and Urdu and met them on their own ground. He visited Hardwar and preaching his faith everywhere returned home once again. One of the great reforms he introduced was the stopping of animal sacrifices in the Temples. His persecution started. His valuable collection of books was forcibly appropriated by the Vedantists and obstructions were put in the way of his mission. After sometime, however, the books were restored to him by the dynasty that was on the throne at the time. The exact date of his death has not been determined, but probably he died at the ripe old age of 79 and that would be in 1278 A.D. The fundamentals of the Faith of Madhvacharya are as follows:—

It is Vaishnavism in essentials but with the following modifications:—

He held that (1) The phenomenal world was real and eternal.

(2) The Supreme Spirit or God was the First Cause, the Moral and Intelligent Governor of the Universe.

(3) The Law of Karma was working like the laws of nature and was inexorable.

Madhvacharya's outlook had made a very deep impression on many Hindus and his work known as *Yamaka Bharata* stands on a footing of equality with the Ramayana of Valmiki and the Mahabharata of Vyasa. He was a great religious reformer—one of the greatest that India has produced. His learning and piety won for him a great following.

XIX. Dadu (1544 A.D.—1603 A.D.)

Dadu was born in Ahmadabad of Brahman parents. His father was a merchant. Before Dadu, Kabir and Guru Nanak had started the work of reform among the Hindus. They had fought idolatory and superstition and many had listened to them with earnestness and sincerity. Dadu was strongly influenced by their teachings and started the work of reform in North India from Ahmadabad to Delhi. He lived for a time in Sambhar where his monument is and where his sandals and clothes are still worshipped as relics. Dadu was originally from Amber—the old capital of Jaipur but he went about preaching the message of Bhakti or devotion to God all over North India.

His teachings are embodied in the *Bani*—a book of 5,000 verses with 37 chapters, dealing

with religious subjects such as Truth, Virtue, Faith and Prayer. He taught of man, God and salvation. His hymns like those of the Sikh Gurus were set to music and he condemned as the Sikh Gurus did, ritualism and formalism, corrupt priesthood, caste system, idolatory and pilgrimages. He also held that all rebirths of man took place in man's life on this earth and that he was rewarded or punished according to his *karma* right here. He was bold enough to say that evil did not exist, but a bad man made it evil by allowing it to lead his mind away from God.

"Worldliness and not the world is evil" said he.

Again and again he says—"I am not a Hindu nor a Mussalman, I belong to none of the six schools of philosophy. I love the merciful God." His doctrines are clear from his hymns which we give below.

He says: "I have found that God is the unchangeable, the immortal, the fearless, the self-existent, the almighty, the pure, the unimaged, the unseen, the infinite and the incomprehensible. Worship is due to Him and Him alone."

Dadu's disciples are called Dadupanthis and they are divided into two classes :—

(1) The laymen who can marry and lead a householder's life and follow a profession or a trade.

(2) The priests who devote themselves to a religious life and to teaching the *Bani*.

The head of Dadupanthis at present lives in Jaipur but they have now split up into many sects and many of them have reverted back to

orthodox Hinduism, some have become idol worshippers and others Vedantists.

Sayings of Dadu would interest the reader. He says:

> "As the opium-eater longs for the opium, the hero for war, the poor for wealth, so longs my soul for God."

Again he says:

> "When will He come? When will He come my Beloved! Sweet will He be to me. I will embrace Him. Without Him I must die. Body and soul will find joy when God reveals Himself."

Dadu was indeed a great *Bhakta* ranking almost as great as Kabir and Ramananda.

XX. Chaitanya (1485 A.D.—1534 A.D.)

Chaitanya was a contemporary of Vallabhacharya, and was leading the Vaishnavites in Bengal. He was born in Nadia in 1485 in a Brahman family. Chaitanya was the name he assumed when he became a Sanyasi. As a child he was known as Nimai and he was a very mischievous child indeed. The spirit of revolt was in him from very early years. He studied Sanskrit at Nadia which was the great seat of learning in those days. He was young, ardent, joyous and handsome. Later when he went to Gaya, a new emotional life awakened in him and he would go into a Smadhi (trance). When he regained consciousness he would say "Leave me, I am no longer fit for the world. Let me go to Vrindavan to find out Krishna my Lord and Law of the Universe." Chaitanya recognised no caste distinctions and consequently orthodox Brahmans stood up against him. He renounced his home at the young age of 25 and became a sanyasi and took up the new name.

Travelling further and further East, Chaitanya reached Puri. Here he won a great victory against the Vedantists who identified creation with God. A Shudra became his disciple, as well as the King Pratapa Rudra. Then Chaitanya breaking from his disciples took a trip to the South with only Govinda as his companion. He went to the extreme south upto Cape Comorin and then came upto Dwarka—Krishna's famous city. Those days travelling was not an easy task and Chaitanya had to encounter many difficulties and dangers on the way. He went over 4,000 miles in twenty months and then returned to Puri. He visited Mathura and Vrindavan once again and while there acted like Krishna. It is remarkable that he would sing and dance and these ecstatic dances had a great appeal for many. A flower, a cloud, a ripple, displayed to Chaitanya the love of God and would throw him into ecstacy. The last 18 years of his life were spent in Puri where he died worn out with excitement and exhaustion in 1534.

Pure faith characterised him and he is said to have an impassioned religious consciousness and a vivid sense of the personal presence of God in the form of Vishnu or Krishna. He had a conviction that the whole world was the scene of divine love. He left no written works behind him.

Chaitanya held that Krishna's name alone

washed away all sins. His favourite book was Bhagwad Purana. He has been regarded by some of his devoted followers as the incarnation of Sri Krishna, which belief of course was due to the intensity of his devotion. He promoted among his followers the virtues of charity, gentleness and sympathy. He occupies a high place among Vaishnavite Bhaktas.

Saivite Saints

The characteristics of Saivaism are the exaltation of Siva (Shiva) above all other gods and it implies the highly concrete conception of the deity and the intensely personal relation between him and his devotees. There is an Upanishad known as *Svetasvatara* which resembles Bhagvad Gita in declaring the supremacy of Siva Bhakti over the Theism of Vaishnavism. Siva is identified with the Absolute. Local variations, however, led to the formation of different sects and schools of thought. Saivism spread rapidly in all parts of South India and from there travelled to the Islands of Eastern Archipelago and to Java. Saivism also travelled to the North as far as Kashmir.

There is an extensive literature in Tamil on Saivism. Tamil songs are intensely theistic and devotional and centre round devotion to Siva.

The gross minded worshipper takes Siva to be the God of destruction dwelling in the lovely mountains or on the cremation ground. But to the evolved devotee He is the embodiment of renunciation and the destroyer of evil. He is

besides, the personification of contemplation and divine consciousness. Saivism insists on knowledge as essential to Salvation.

There have been many Saiva Saints in Tamil country, but the most important of them are Appar, Sambandha, Sundramurti and Manikkavachka. They all belonged to the 7th or 8th century and their hymns have been collected in a book called *Tirumurai*. These hymns with their intimate personal appeal to Siva as the Lord, the Father and the Lover of the human souls rank very high in the devotional literature of India.

An important off-shoot of Saivism is known as Vira Saivism of which the founder was a Brahman named Basava the Prime Minister of a King at Kalyan. He condemned sacrifices and other ceremonies current among the Saivites and insisted on Bahkti and the worship of one God—Siva. His followers are known as Lingayats or wearers of Lingam—an emblem of Siva. They are strictly a puritan monotheistic sect and they are all strict vegetarians and total abstainers.

In conclusion it may be noted that the Vaishnavite and Saivite Saints of South India fought Buddhism and Jainism and drove away these religions out of the South. Shankracharya fought these faiths with Gayan and Kumarila on the ground of Karma. Buddhism and Jainism could not withstand these onslaughts from all sides of Hinduism.

XXI. Saint Manikkavachka

Saint Manikkavachka stood up for the

worship of one God, the Supreme Lord and declared that scriptural texts, fasts and penances, rites and ceremonies, logic and metaphysics and utmost exertion of the human self could not by themselves take the soul to the footstool of the Almighty. The most efficacious way of making the Infinite reach its hand to the finite was the way of love—pure unselfish love welling forth from the depths of one's being.

Manikkavachka was born of Brahman parents in the village of Vadavur near Madura. He had a great reputation for scholarship and piety and rose to the position of a chief minister. When he was on his way to a place called Tiruppundurai to buy horses he met his Guru and spent the government money in building a temple for him and was dismissed from his position. He wandered about in search of God, composed beautiful hymns in praise of Siva, the Eternal Lord of the Universe. His immortal work *Tiruvachakam* has been the fountain-head of all later devotional poetry in Tamil land. It combines the highest philosophy with the deepest outpourings of love. It sets forth in sublime poetry the various stages of the soul's progress from a life of ignorance and sin to the ultimate realisation of God.

XXII. Saint Trunavakkarsu (Appar)

Saint Appar was born about 600 A.D. in a rich family in South Arcot. He lost parents at an early age and was brought up by a widowed elder sister. He made rapid progress in his

studies and had a great desire for finding Truth. He came into touch with the Jain scholars, but soon turned away from them and became devoted to Siva. He was also a poet. His Jain friends tried their best to reclaim him and he went through terrible persecution. He met another Saivite Saint Sambandha and they became friends and went about together as father and son. According to tradition Saint Appar lived for 81 years. He lived a severely simple life. A loin cloth was his only dress and his property a hoe with which he cleared the temple precincts. His journeys were always made on foot. He always denounced hypocricy and cant and was gentle like a child.

XXIII. Saint Sambandha

Saint Sambandha also known as Gayan Sambhandha (one associated with divine wisdom) was born of Brahman parents of Shayali. When young he travelled from village to village singing hymns to God. He went in the company of an untouchable couple who were good singers. An attempt was made on his life by setting fire to his cottage but it proved unsuccessful. He denounced Jainism and Buddhism as atheistic. He has been regarded as a foremost Saiva Saint.

XIV. Saint Sundramurti

He was born in Tamil land like Saint Appar and came from a family of priests but was brought up in a palace. He travelled from place

to place praising God in sweet hymns. He married a non-Brahman maiden who was a great devotee of Siva. The two together led a life of spiritual bliss. It is said that all his needs were supplied through the grace of God. He passed through great suffering but ultimately attained to peace. His hymns breathe a sense of freedom and intimacy in relation to God and are often enlivened with humour.

All the above four Saints discouraged the worship of minor deities and both by example and precept taught the worship of one God whom in His personal aspect they called Siva who takes numerous forms and names in His work of redeeming mankind. His impersonal or unmanifest aspect, however, is never left out and these Saints speak from direct knowledge and do not quote Scriptures. Their hymns are full of Vedic and Puranic stories.

PART III

MODERN PERIOD

Introductory

Hindu culture has been at a very low ebb for about a hundred years i.e. from 1750-1853. This period may be called a dark period in the history of Hinduism. There was decay of art and culture and the country was passing through a chaos. For the first time in history the Indian mind was thrown off its balance. So far Hinduism had held its own under the Turkish and Moghul rulers, but with the advent of the British the spiritual isolation of the Indian mind was broken up and it was brought into contact with Western Science, Literature and History. There was great expansion of ideas and new forces moved us silently towards a great Renaissance. As a result *sati*, infanticide, enforced widowhood, child-marriage, untouchability purdah and caste system began to lose their rigidity and many reformers arose who were determined to purge Hindu society of all its evils. Christian missions started their onslaught on Hindu society and its time-old institutions and in the educational institutions they started at the time, they gave the new knowledge mixed up with Christianity which was taught as the only true religion. After a time the innate reality of Hinduism asserted itself and with the help of

Orientalists like Sir William Jones, Monier Williams and Maxmullar was revealed the glory of the ancient Hindu faith. There arose saints and scholars who separated the essentials of Hinduism from its non-essentials, and confirmed its ancient truths by their own experience. The Hindu religion, however, outlived these onslaughts and it was able to meet any of the world religions on equal terms as their friend and ally. We will, in this part, give a short account of the life and work of the great teachers who have made this Renaissance one of the glorious movements in the history of Hinduism.

XXV. Raja Ram Mohan Roy

(1772 A.D.—1833 A.D.)

A note of universalism in religion was struck by Raja Ram Mohan Roy who has rightly been regarded as the inaugurator of the Renaissance movement in Hinduism and the "Father of Modern India."

He was born in a village Radhanager, Burdwan District, Bengal, in 1772 A.D. His father Ram Kanta Roy was a Brahman Zamindar. As a boy Ram Mohan Roy learnt the elements of Bengali and Persian in his own native village. He was then sent to Patna which was a seat of Muslim learning and there he learnt Persian and Arabic to qualify himself for some employment. He learnt all about Sufism and began to entertain a violent prejudice against idol worship. He was turned out of his home and wandered about for four years and is said to have visited Tibet and

got a first hand knowledge of Lamaism. There too he entered his protest against Lamaism. Returning from Tibet he came to Benares and learnt Sanskrit and studied the Hindu Scriptures.

He wrote his first book in Persian with a Preface in Arabic in 1803 A.D. The book bore the title *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahidin* which meant a "Gift to Monotheists." It was a protest against idol worship and superstition and an attempt to base religion on the unity of Godhead. Ram Mohan Roy then served in many capacities and finally retired in 1815 and settled down in Calcutta. He served under Mr. Digby the European Collector and picked up English very quickly. He secured the abolition of the inhuman custom of *Sati* (burning alive of widows) in 1829.

Christian Missionaries had settled in Serampore at the time and Ram Mohan Roy came into conflict with them with regard to the doctrines of Trinity and Atonement. The object of Ram Mohan Roy was to wean his countrymen from the evils of orthodox Hinduism and draw their attention to the original purity of the teaching of that Faith. He established in Calcutta first the Atmiya Sabha which later came to be known as Samaj. The programme consisted of the reading of Upanishads and singing of a few hymns. Raja Ram Mohan Roy then left for England in order to represent to the King of Great Britain the grievances of the titular Emperor of Delhi and he was granted the title of a Raja on that account. Raja Ram Mohan Roy passed away in Bristol in 1833. He was a great social and religious reformer and he took his stand on the ancient

scriptures of the Hindus, though he had studied other scriptures in original. He knew Hebrew and Greek in addition to Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. He came to the conclusion that the best means of securing religious satisfaction was through Bhakti or devotion to the Supreme.

As a matter of fact, he lays down in the Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the building of the Brahmo Samaj.

Theism as we know is no new thing in Hindu spiritual thought. On the contrary it is a continuous stream flowing from the ancient times through Bhagwad Gita and through the teachings of Ramanuja, Madhava, Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Kabir, Guru Nanak and a host of other saints and singers.

Brahmo Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy was therefore a Theistic Movement which corresponded to the Bhakti Movement of the earlier times with the difference that it was based on pure unadulterated Monotheism.

XXVI. Maharshi Devandranath Tagore (1817 A.D.—1905 A.D.)

Devendra Nath Tagore latterly known as Maharshi or a saint was born in 1817 A.D. He was the son of a very wealthy magnate—Dwarka Nath Tagore—who was an orthodox Hindu. Devendra Nath had a happy childhood and was brought up in comfort and luxury. When he

attained manhood a great change came over him. In 1839 he established a Tatwa-bodhni Sabha whose meetings were held at his house where discourses on religion were delivered. The Sabha started a monthly journal known as *Tatwa-bodhni Patrika.* After some years the Sabha was incorporated into the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. On joining the Brahmo Samaj, Devendra Nath Tagore devoted himself with zeal and energy to its re-organization and introduced a regular form of worship and an initiation ceremony for members. In 1844 was established a Theological School for the teaching of Religion to young people and in the following years four students were sent to Benares for higher studies. As a result Devendra Nath Tagore and other Brahmos renounced their faith in the infallibility of the Vedas and the Upanishads and regarded Reason and Conscience as the supreme authority.

A text book known as *Brahmo Dharam Grantha* was compiled by Devendra Nath Tagore and this served as a valuable theistic manual of religion and ethics. The following were laid down as the cardinal principles of the Brahmo Faith :—

1. God is the Creator of the universe.
2. He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, Eternal and All-prevading, the One without a second.
3. In His worship lies our salvation in this world and the next.
4. Loving Him and doing that which He loveth constitute His worship.

The Brahmo movement spread beyond Calcutta to Midnapur, Burdwan, Dacca, Rangpur,

Krishanagar and several other places in Bengal.

The father of Devendra Nath passed away in 1846 leaving a large debt which was paid off by the son. This made him very happy because he felt that he had done his duty by the creditors. It was indeed a great *Yajna* or renunciation of all worldly goods. Maharshi writes in his Autobiography: "what I had desired came to pass. I wanted to renounce the world and the world left me of its own accord. What a singular coincidence! I had prayed to my God, "I desire nothing but Thee" and the Lord in His mercy granted my prayer. He took away everything from me and revealed Himself unto me. My heart's desire was fulfilled to the letter."

The strangest thing is that the creditors after two years relinquished the estate and gave it back for management to Devendra Nath Tagore. All the same the debts were paid to the last farthing by judicious management and extreme self-denial.

Maharshi then started on his travels. He visited many places in Bengal and went to Lahore, Multan, Amritsar and Rangoon, preaching and proclaiming the Brahmo doctrine and establishing Brahmo Samajes where practicable.

He spent a year and a half among the mountains near Simla and retired into solitude, absorbed in intense study and contemplation and returned to Calcutta once again. Here he was occupied in delivering the great message of Theism or Bhakti in the form of sermons which were taken down and published afterwards. To Maharshi ancient India was the cradle of all that was great in religion and morals. *Brahman* of

the Upanishads was the God of his worship and direct communion of the human soul with the Supreme Spirit was the most salient point of his teachings. He held that we see God face to face and hear His voice in the innermost depths of our heart. The Divinity of Christ or the only Mediator and Saviour of mankind—such doctrines did not appeal to him. With regard to social reform also he was for adopting a slow and a cautious policy. Devendra Nath Tagore's work in religion was constructive and not destructive. "He was a builder-up and not a puller-down." He laid anew the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj of India in 1868 which later on took the new name of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. At this stage Maharshi retired from the Brahmo Samaj work and settled down in a retreat known as "Shanti Niketan" or "Abode of Peace" near Bolepur where we have now a University started by his son, the Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. Here he had a house, a garden, a mandir and a library and all conveniences for retirement and study. During this period of retirement Maharshi visited Kashmir and even went to Hong Kong and ultimately settled down in Calcutta—his home town. He passed away in January 1905 surrounded by his sorrowing children and grandchildren.

Maharshi completed his *Autobiography* just before his death. Its value consists in its being a record of the spiritual struggle of a noble soul—the struggle of a soul striving to rise from empty idolatrous ceremonial to the true worship of one living God—the Creator, the Sustainer and the Governor of the Universe.

XXVII. Keshav Chandra Sen
(1838 A.D.—1884 A.D.)

Keshav Chandra Sen who was strongly influenced by Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore transformed Hindu Theism into a Universal and Cosmopolitan ideology. He joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1857 as a youngman and was its very zealous worker. He was a man of faith, a devotee and aspired after an emotional communion with God. He started the Sangat Sabha which met weekly at his residence and later he was ordained as a Minister of the Brahmo Samaj of which Maharshi was the President. With the help of Maharshi he started the fortnightly *Indian Mirror* which first became a weekly and then a daily. It advocated social, religious and political reform. Keshav Chandra Sen then started a society of Theistic Friends and went about all over the country visiting East Bengal, Bombay, Calicut, Poona, Madras, N. W. F. P. and Punjab, giving the message of Brahmoism.

Keshav Chandra Sen had revolutionary views on religion and Maharshi could not go along with him the whole length, so there was a split. The younger party sided with Keshav Chandra Sen and they started a new Samaj named as the Nav-Vidhan or New Dispensation. Keshav Chandra Sen proceeded to England in 1870 where he was warmly received by all classes of people. He visited fourteen chief towns of England and Scotland and lectured there to large Christian audiences. On his return he established an Indian Reform Association. By his efforts a Marriage

Act was passed in 1872 which is now known as the Civil Marriage Act in which a negative declaration of one's faith is necessary. This made Keshav Chandra Sen very unpopular and many Brahmos left him and formed themselves into another Samaj known as the Sadharan or Universal.

Keshav Chandra Sen in early youth came into contact with Christianity and Christian Missionaries and imbibed Christian ideas and adopted Christian modes of life. This alienated him all the more from other Brahmos who were attached to Hindu ideology. He was of the view that a Brahmo should not conform to idolatrous rites, should eschew all caste distinctions and discard other Hindu practices such as caste and untouchability. Keshav Chandra Sen, as we have seen, had Christian leanings and he reconstructed the Brahmo Samaj on new lines. When all hopes of reconciliation with the older party were lost Keshav Chandra Sen seceded and gave a twist to Brahmoism. He believed in the special revelation of God to His Prophets who formed a chain so to say. He regarded all religions as divinely inspired and held that in the New Dispensation all the old dispensations were harmonised. His eloquence and enthusiasm carried the day because his appeal was unlike the appeal of Ram Mohan Roy and Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore not only to reason but also to intuition or inner religious experience. His leanings were therefore more to Vaishnavism of the medieval times with its centre shifted from Krishna to Christ. The Brahmo Samaj services were modified and *Kirtan* was introduced with the help of musical

instruments. New hymns were composed on the line of Vaishnava saints like Chaitanya and saints and sages like Guru Nanak, Kabir. Keshav Chandra Sen began to be looked upon by some as a mediator and saviour like Christ. His orations in Bengali as well as in English were listened to with rapt attention. His language though simple was highly ornate and poetic, appealing to the cultured and the uncultured alike. He produced a vast literature which has been published and he remains a model religious teacher of unique power and piety. He is known as Brahmanand Keshav Chandra Sen.

XXVIII. Pratap Chandra Mazumdar (1840 A.D. to 1905 A.D.)

Pratap Chandra Mazumdar was a great writer, orator and religious reformer. He was a disciple of Keshav Chandra Sen but his sympathies were very wide and his literary and missionary activities far-reaching.

He was born in 1840 in a village near Calcutta and early in life came under the influence of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshav Chandra Sen. He joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1859. He served for a short time in the Bank of Bengal and then devoted himself entirely to religious work. He seceded from the Adi Brahmo Samaj and joined the group headed by Keshav Chandra Sen which advocated radical reform in Hindu society.

Pratap Chandra Mazumdar became the Secretary of the new Samaj and also its Minister and began to preach the Brahmo creed. Since he was

an able and an eloquent speaker his influence began to be felt. He then began to edit the *Theistic Quarterly Review* which later became a monthly and then a fortnightly. His first book—a collection of his public addresses and contributions to periodical literature—appeared in 1882. He was a man of faith and held the Prophets of different faiths in great regard. He held that Prophets can never be comprehended apart from God and God can never be comprehended apart from His Prophets. "Each Prophet," said he, "is different from the rest, yet not one of them can be disregarded with impunity. All of them together make up the heaven in which the human soul lives here, and hopes to live hereafter."

Mr. Mazumdar paid his first visit to England in 1874. He revisited England in 1883 and extended his tour to America. He returned to India by way of San Francisco and stopped in Japan for a short while His experiences are recorded in his interesting book "Sketches of a Tour Round the World." His third visit to the West was in 1893 where he attended the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago and where he read a paper on the "World's Religious Debt to Asia." His lectures delivered in Boston have been published in a book form under the name of Lowell Lectures.

In 1883 Mr. Mazumdar published his famous books "Oriental Christ" and "Heart Beats." He also wrote a book called "Spirit of God" which has been compared by Dr. Barrows to "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a' Kempis. His path was, however, that of Bhakti Yoga and not of Gayan Yoga and although he appreciated Hindu modes

of spiritual culture, he was afraid of the Vedantic doctrine of Unity. His emphasis was on Bhakti or love and service of God.

Pratap Chandra Mazumdar passed away in 1905 in Calcutta deeply mourned by his many admirers. Like Keshav Chandra Sen he was strongly influenced by Christian thought.

XXIX. Anand Mohan Bose

(1840 A.D. to 1905 A.D.)

Anand Mohan Bose had a brilliant University career both at Calcutta as well as at Cambridge. He took the M. A. degree in Mathematics and became a wrangler in the same subject at Cambridge. He also qualified for the Bar and practised as a lawyer for some time. His work as an Educationist is also well known. He started the City School which became the City College of Calcutta and a school for girls started by him became the famous Bethune College for girls. He was however a great Brahmo leader and a born preacher and religious teacher.

He joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1869 and like Pratap Chandra Mazumdar came under the influence of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore as well as Keshav Chandra Sen. He rose quickly to power and influence among the fellow Brahmos at Calcutta and when there was a split among them on account of Keshav Chandra Sen, he became the first Minister in the newly organized Brahmo Samaj known as the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. His guidance year after year preserved the dignity of the Samaj. His wisdom and moderation saved

many ugly situations. His personal relations with Keshav Chandra Sen were not affected in spite of difference in views. He built up the new constitution of the Samaj, he raised educational institutions connected with the Samaj and created a colony of Brahmos and set a fine example of energy and piety by his nobility of character.

He visited England in 1897 and presided over the Sessions of the Indian National Congress in 1898 at Madras. His health began to fail and he passed away in 1906 at the age of sixty. Anand Mohan Bose used his rich gifts of head and heart in the furtherance of the cause of religion and worked for the welfare of his people. He lived a life of piety, charity and noble endeavour and was a great Bhakta in the true sense of that word.

XXX. Pandit Shiv Nath Shastri

(1847 A.D.—1925 A.D.)

Pandit Shivnath Shastri was born in 1847 near Calcutta. He studied in a Pathshala in his village and then went to a school in Calcutta and thereafter studied Sanskrit and English in the Sanskrit College Calcutta where his uncle was a Professor. Shivnath's father was also a great Sanskrit scholar.

Shivnath came into personal contact with the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj early in life and he used to attend the Brahmo Samaj services in spite of the protests of his father who was an atheist and an orthodox Hindu. Shivnath then started a campaign of vigorous social reform and at first was attracted by the conservatism of

Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore but later he joined the young party which was headed by Keshav Chandra Sen and was charmed by his *Kirtan*, although he did not like the Vaishnava way of Bhakti. Shivnath was, however, at first, initiated into the progressive section of the Brahmo Samaj then known as the Brahmo Samaj of India which replaced the Adi Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta. He discarded the sacred thread as every Brahmo had to do at that time and was persecuted on that account also.

Shivnath Shastri took his M. A. Degree in Sanskrit and received the title of Shastri in 1872 and received training under Keshav Chandra Sen as a Brahmo Missionary. He lived a life of great renunciation and self-sacrifice but what troubled him most was the doctrine of *Adesh* or (inspiration) and although Shivnath tried to reason with Keshav Chandra Sen on the point, he failed to convince him. The schism brought about the establishment of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 1878 by the efforts of Pandit Shivnath Shastri. He drafted the constitution of the Brahmo Samaj and put it on democratic lines. He was then ordained as the missionary of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. In that capacity he made extensive teaching tours visiting Assam, Behar, U. P., Punjab and Sind, also Bombay Presidency and Malabar Coast, Orissa, Central India, Mysore and Madras. He went all over India without funds, always trusting to Providence for the means of his further progress. The result of his life-long exertions was the spread of Brahmoism to the remote corners of the country. Pandit Shastri

had a large hand in building the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir of Calcutta. He wrote the history of the Brahmo Samaj in two volumes which is indeed a monumental work. Pandit Shivnath Shastri was universally respected for his pure and noble character and for his self-sacrificing labours in the cause of religion. The credit of producing Bhaktas of the modern period in India must go to Bengal from where were produced not only great intellectual giants but also Bhaktas whose Bhakti was illumined and who showed to us that religion and science could be reconciled. As a matter of fact the Brahmo Samaj was the most progressive religious movement in India and had a bright future before it—since pure monotheism is true religion.

PART IV

MYSTIC SAINTS OF INDIA

XXXI. Ramakrishna Parmahansa (1836 A.D.—1886 A.D.)

The Ramakrishna Mission has now about 100 centres in all parts of the world. The Founder Ramakrishna Parmahansa was a great saint and a mystic and Professor Radha Krishnan rightly observes about him :

> "He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition which runs right through the religious history of the country from the days of the Vedic Rishis. This tradition may sometimes have been overcome by a ceremonial piety or by a rationaisitic dogma, yet it always reappears faithful to its original pattern. Its characteristic tendencies are those set forth in the Upanishads."

The centrel teaching of this great mystic saint is the realisation of God. Any kind of *sadhna* therefore whether it is Vaishnava way of Bhakti or New Theism of the Brahmo Samaj or the Gyan Marga of the Gita and the Upanishads is welcomed by Hinduism. It is really remarkable that in early stages of realisation Ramakrishna laid stress on intense devotion to the image of the Divine Mother in the form of Kali and like Shankra and Chaitanya

he was an image-worshipper at one time. But he gave it up later on.

Again Ramakrishna speaks like Christ in parables and his views on the problem of the existence of evil are really remarkable. He uses the simple language and says evil exists as poison in a serpent." So evil is evil only from the point of view of man. There is no evil from the absolute standpoint. But relatively speaking evil is a terrible reality and has a vital function in the spiritual economy of the world.

When asked "When shall I be free." He gave the pithy answer, " When "I" shall cease to be." This is in the nutshell the teaching of this great mystic.

Ramakrishna was born in 1836 A.D. in a village in the Hoogly district of Bengal. His father was a poor Brahman priest. As a young boy Ramakrishna went to Calcutta to help his elder brother in the work of a temple priest. Four miles from Calcutta was a temple of Kali known as Dakshneshwar where he became a priest. Of his early experiences he has left a record which is very interesting.

He was anxious to have a vision of the Divine Mother. He became so impatient that he wanted to put an end to his life when he says " the Blessed Mother revealed herself to me and I fell unconscious on the floor." Everything vanished from his sight and he was face to face with the "limitless, infinite, effulgent ocean of consciousness or spirit." That was the strange mystic experience Ramakrishna had and this was repeated in many forms. The saints of Southern India experienced the

vision of Siva. The singers of Maharashtra call it Krishna. St. Paul calls it Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ calls it his Father. Ramakrishna calls it his Mother Kali. Ramakrishna fell many times into trance.

Later on Ramakrishna became the disciple of another mystic woman-saint who became his spiritual guide. Under her guidance Ramakrishna went through certain tantrik *sadhnas* and then through other Yogic practices. He had a vision of Sri Krishna. But nothing would satisfy him till one day came an itinerant monk Totapuri to the temple of Dakshneshwar who initiated Ramakrishna into the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. On the very first day Ramakrishna went into what is called *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and remained in that state for three days. This monk was with Ramakrishna for eleven months and taught him the Advaita philosophy in detail. Ramakrishna thus became both a *bhakta* and a *gyani*. He compares the two and brings out their relationship very clearly.

His health broke down under the stress of these *sadhnas* and he was advised a change. He went to Benares and Brindaban and it was about this time that he made the acquaintance of men like Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen who were following the *Bhakti Marga*. He reaffirmed his faith in the old ideals of *Vairagya* or renunciation, *Vivek* or discrimination, *Yoga* or fellowship with God through Karma (action) Bhakti (devotion) and Gyana (knowledge) and Samadhi or attainment of Divine Consciousness.

He had many disciples who came to him and he had informal talks with them. He was unlettered so he left no book behind him and some of his sayings were recorded by his devoted disciples as they fell from his lips and these have been collected and published in a book form as the "Sayings of Ramakrishna" which have been translated into English by Maxmuller. His favourite disciple was of course a youngman Narendra Nath who afterwards became famous as Swami Vivekananda. Ramakrishna passed away in 1886 A.D. One of the most distinctive features of Hinduism is that it does not coerce all minds into the pigeon hole of a single creed. The spirit of Hinduism however fosters individual growth and that is what Ramakrishna did for his disciples. "It was not new truths," says Swami Vivekananda "that Ramakrishna Paramahansa came to preach though his advent brought old truths to light. In other words he was the embodiment of all the past religious thought of India." His emphasis was on realisation which he regarded as the essence of religion. For him all religious paths led to the same goal. Although he held that both *Gyana* and *Bhakti* lead to the same goal but the path of *Bhakti* he held was easier as compared with the path of *Gyana*.

XXXII. Swami Vivekananda

(1863 A.D.—1902 A.D.)

Swami Vivekananda whose real name was Narendra Nath Datta was born in Calcutta in 1863. He was only 17 years old and a student in

the College when he came under the influence of Ramakrishna Parmahansa. As a student he was fond of boxing, wrestling, swimming and riding and in studies he was devoted to Philosophy and Poetry. The Principal of his College once remarked :

> "Narendra Nath is really a genuis. He is bound to make his mark in life."

Before Narendra Nath met Ramakrishna he was a member of the Brahmo Samaj and for a time was satisfied with the devotional atmosphere of this organisation and shared its zeal for reforms and its antagonism to caste, polytheism and image worship. But Vivekanand's heart was after seeing God. He put that question to Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and did not get a satisfactory answer. On putting the same question to Ramakrishna, the reply was " Yes I see Him just as I see you here." And he went on " God can be realised. One can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you." From the moment that this great question was answered, Narendra Nath's illumination began. Ramakrishna had a spiritual magnetism which touched the very being of this young aspirant. Thence forward he was initiated into Vedanta and was known as Swami Vivekananda.

Two years after Ramakrishna's passing away the youthful Swami began his life of wanderings. He left Calcutta and passing through Benares, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Agra and Brindaban reached the Himalayas. On his way at Hathras he made one disciple who became a Sanaysi and accompanied him. At Ghazipur he met a Yogi and had a mind to learn Yoga, but he gave up the idea and returned to his monastery at Baranagore. After a short stay he set out again on his wanderings and went to Nainital, Almora and many other places. He wandered mostly on foot and went through Central and Western India and through Kathiawar and Bombay presidency, visited Mysore, Cochin and Travancore and also went to Ceylon. Undaunted by hardships and difficulties he led the life of a true Sanyasi and consecrated his life to the service of his motherland and to mankind as well.

Then Swami Vivekananda went to America and attended the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893. He went by way of Colombo, Penang, Singapore, Hongkong and Canton and reached the Japanese port Nagasaki. He visited Yokahama and Tokyo and other towns on the way. Then he set sail for America and first went to Vancouar and then to Chicago. He had some difficulties in becoming a delegate but his faith in God came to his assistance. At the Parliament he said these memorable words :

> "It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world ; and I thank you in the name of the mother of religions ; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects."

There he also made the memorable declaration :

> " We believe not only in universal toleration, but we

accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth."

Quoting Bhagwad Gita he said :

"As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their waters in the sea, so O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear—crooked or straight—all lead to Thee."

Swami Vivekananda was listened to with profound respect wherever he went in America and Europe. Among his most devoted followers was Miss Margerete Noble, who afterwards was known as Sister Nivedita and who wrote the well known book "The Master as I saw him."

He organised the Vedanta Society of New York in 1896 with the object of preaching Vedanta and applying its principles to all religions. His lectures on Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Gyana Yoga have been published in book form and he had many American disciples who became Sanyasis and went about giving the message of Vedanta. On his returen to India he established an Advaita Ashram at Almora. "Among his numerous triumphs" observes one of his biographers, "One of the greatest was the conversion of his countrymen from the individuatistic to the national idea of religious life in which public spirit and service to fellowmen occupied a prominent place."

It is really remarkable that in the closing years of his life a reaction set in and he retired into silence at Belurmath which is now the permanent Headquarters of the monks of the Order. In 1899 he once again visited Europe and America and on

his way back to India addressed the Congress of the History of Religions held in Paris on August 1, 1900. He passed away peacefully on 4th of July 1902 at the monastery at Belur.

Swami Vivekananda emphasised the following five characteristic features of Vedanta (1) its universality (2) its impersonality (3) its rationality (4) its catholicity and (5) its optimism.

XXXIII. Aurobindo Ghosh

(1872 A.D.—)

The movement of Neo-Hinduism started by Ramakrishna Parmahansa and implemented by his disciple Swami Vivekananda has been gaining strength and a new interpretation of the same is now to be found in the Volumes of the "Life Divine" written by that well-known living thinker Aurobindo Ghosh. This book is based on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita and is marked by great philosphical depth and subtlety and is deeply metaphysical in thought and expression.

Aurobindo is a poet as well as a seer and he has no patience with those who want to escape from life and seek refuge in pure spirit nor with those who crucify the flesh in order to realise the spirit within. According to him multiplicity or diversity is as real as unity. In truth they co-exist, says he. The evolution of man was unending and Divine life could be realised according to him right on this earth and in this body.

It may be noted that Aurobindo Ghosh is not a mere idealist and a visionary. He is like a true Yogi who has discovered the ways and means of realising his dream. In fact the practical part of his teaching is more important than the theoretical part of it. The Ashram founded by him at Pondicherry has become a place of pilgrimage for many true seekers.

Aurobirdo Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1872. He was educated in England from the age of seven to the age of 21 and he returned to India after completing his education in London and Cambridge. While there he learnt Greek and Latin, French and German and qualified himself for the Indian Civil Service examination. For some time he was a Professor in Baroda College and in 1905 he led the agitation against the partition of Bengal and became a nationalist. He started the two well known Journals known as " Bande Mataram " and the " Karma Yogin." He was the first to start the boycott or the swadeshi movement and he indicated that Swaraj was the goal of India. He was imprisoned and while in Alipur Jail he saw a vision which transformed his life and a voice told him that his life work was of a different kind. In obedience to this call from above which was probably the objectification of his own mind he retired from public life in 1910 and settled down in Pondicherry and has remained there ever since.

In 1914 Aurobindo Ghosh started a monthly known as the " Arya " and began to devote himself to writing and produced his *magnum opus*

known as the " Life Divine." Among his many other works we may mention " Renaissance in India " which is a remarkable book.

Aurobindo Ghosh, as already observed, is against quietism or illusionism of the Vedantist and believes in integral spiritual ideal as given in Bhagwad Gita. In short he gives nothing new, he only reinterprets the old with a force and an emphasis that is invincible.

How far Aurobindo Ghosh has succeeded in his practical aims it is difficult to say but his influence seems to be spreading. His solitude and inaccessibility is regretted by many but Aurobindo's reply to his critics is significant. He says :

> " To be ourselves liberated from ego and realise our trueselves is the first necessity, all else can be achieved as a luminous result, a necessary consequence."

He is the greatest living Yogi that India had for many centuries and he should be regarded as a great mystic saint.

XXXIV. Raman Rishi

(1879 A.D.—)

Raman now known as Maharshi was born in 1879 in a village about thirty miles away from the town of Madura in South India—a town noted for its temples.

Raman came from a high class Brahman family and eventually went to Madura to carry on his education and it was here that he picked up English from American Missionaries. At

first as a boy Raman was fond of wrestling, boxing and swimming. He suffered from somnambulism or sleep-walking sickness. In this a psycho-analyist may find the secret of his mystical nature which he developed later. At the age of 17 he suddenly left his studies and disappeared from Madura to the chagrin of his relatives and teachers. An idea crossed his mind that this body of ours was not "I." Like Parmahansa Ramkrishna he would often fall into a trance or state of *Samadhi* and become merged into the very source of self-hood, the very essence of being, whatever it may mean. Raman emerged from these experiences an utterly changed man. He tried to be alone as much as possible and sank into meditation and introspection. His father was dead and he had a brother who would trouble him. Leaving his mother, Raman left Madura for Arunachal where there was a temple in a forest retreat. He left behind a little farewell letter which ran as follows:

> "I have in search of my Father and in obedience to His command started from here. This is only embarking on a virtuous enterprise. Therefore none need grieve over this. To trace this out no money need be spent."

With three rupees in his pocket he left for an unknown place in the interior of the South. On reaching the temple he sat at first quite naked, but then took a loin-cloth which he wears till now. Later when people began to flock round him and he wanted seclusion he moved to a quiet shrine some distance from the village and remained there for about a year and a half. He was satisfied with the food that was brought to him

by the people visiting this shrine. Throughout this time he would never speak to any one, not because he had taken a vow of silence but because he wanted to concentrate all his energy and attention upon the development of his spiritual life.

Two years after his disappearance Raman's mother came to know of his whereabouts and she set out with her eldest son to Arunachal and pleaded with him to return home. Raman refused. More people began to visit this young Yogi and he shifted to the Hills of Holy Beacon and made his residence in a cave where he lived for many years. It is interesting to note that when plague spread in the neighbourhood of Arunachal and every one left, Maharshi stuck to his cave and all kinds of wild animals would pass by him and not disturb him.

The next change in Maharshi's life came when an illustrious Brahman Pandit Ganpati Shastri visited him and got his difficulties resolved and became his disciple. Then many people from Vellore (the home of Pandit Ganpati) went to Arunachal and built there a cottage for Maharshi to live in. His mother spent the last six years of her life in this cottage with her son and served as a cook all the time.

Maharshi then moved to the foot of the hill and stayed there with his disciples and is still living there. The place is known as Arunachal Ashram. He handles no money. Once the dacoits visited the home of the Maharshi and finding no money roughly handled the Maharshi,

who offered them a meal before departing.

Maharshi gives no systematic teaching to those who go to see him. He blesses every one. The gist of his message is :

" Pursue the enquiry " Who am I," relentlessly. Analyse your entire personality. Try to find out where the ' I—thought ' begins. Go on with your meditations. Keep turning your attention within. One day the wheel of thought will slow down and an intuition will mysteriously arise. Follow that intuition, let your thinking stop, and it will eventually lead you to the goal."

The sublime spirituality of the Maharshi's atmosphere has a great effect on his disciples. He simply puts forward a way of self-analysis which can be practised irrespective of any ancient or modern theories or beliefs—a way that will finally lead to true self-understanding which according to Maharshi is self-realisation.

XXXV. Swami Ram Tirath

(1873 A.D.—1906 A.D.)

Swami Ram whose real name was Tirath Ram and who was also known as Ram Tirath was born in the village Muraliwala in the District of Gujranwala (Punjab). His mother passed away when he was but a few days old and he was brought up by an old aunt. After leaving the village school Tirath Ram joined the High school at Gujranwala. He passed the Matriculation examination in 1888 and then joined the Mission College at Lahore and after getting his B.A. Degree passed the M.A.

Examination in Mathematics in 1893. He was hardly 20 years old at that time. He occupied the Chair of Mathematics in the Mission College Lahore and was for a time a Reader in Sanskrit in the Oriental College Lahore. In 1898 he started a Periodical called " Aliph " in Urdu and the Journal was full of poems from his facile pen.

He renounced the world in 1900 and retired into the Himalayas. He visited Gangotri, Jamnotri Kidarnath, Badri Narayan and at Mathura he presided over the Parliament of Religions organised by Swami Shivguna Acharya. In 1902 he left for Japan and after 2 years' residence in the United States he returned to India in 1904.

Raja of Tehri had arranged for Swami Ram's visit to Japan. His disciple Swami Narayan accompanied him there. Every evening people gathered round him, the Indians and the Japanese and listened with rapt attention to what he said. A lecture was delivered by Swami at the Tokyo College of Commerce on the " Secret of Success " which was very well received.

His next visit was to the United States of America. He visited many Universities in that country among them California and Sanfransisco and delivered the message of Vedanta to the people of America.

On his return to India he took his residence in Vyasa Ashram on the banks of the Ganges. His last years were spent at Vashishat Ashram and one day when he was taking his bath in the Ganges it seems he lost his foothold and was drowned. Before his death he wrote in pencil :

"O Death! take away this body if you please! I care not. I have enough of bodies to use, I can wear those divine silver threads, the beams of the moon and live. I can roam as a divine ministrel putting on the guise of hilly streams and mountain brooks. I can dance in the waves of the sea. I am the breeze that proudly walks and I am the wind inebrieated. All these shapes of mine are wandering shapes of changes. I came down from yonder hills, raised the dead, awakened the sleeping, unveiled the fair faces of some and wiped the tears of a few weeping ones. The *bulbul* and the rose both I saw and I comforted them. I touched this, I touched that. I doff my hat and off I am. Here I go and there I go, none can find me."

Thus ended the life of this young Sanaysi who has left his mark in history as a great Mystic Saint.

Addressing an audience in the Unitarian Church in America on the "Expansion of Self," Swami Ram Tirath observed, says a Press report:

"To illustrate the expansion of self, the Swami commenced by drawing four circles, one within the other having a common horizontal tangent at the top. These circles were shown to represent the four grades of moral and religious life, *viz.*, mineral, plant, animal, man and God-life in human form. Self-centred, sensuous people were pathetically shown to be no more than minerals in human form. Rather humorously Nero, Tiberius and other Caesars were represented as precious minerals, but not men, their life and activity being comparable only to the moving equilibrium or dead motion of a spindle. People of a wider circle of love, embracing their families, creating all their activities in domestic life were proved to be

plant-men in human form. They might be flowers, fruit trees, oaks and cedars in the form of man, but to the dignity of man they could not lay a valid claim. Yet their existence was proved to be just as necessary in the economy of nature as that of plants in the physical world.

Next the animals in the human garb were treated who have expanded their self and identified themselves with the sect, creed or community which they represent. Their circle includes many small circles of the first and second kind. But it was pointed out that just as a husk may be useful for the development of the seed for a time, after a period it becomes the choking prison to the seed; so sectarianism is all right in so far as it helps our growth, but becomes a distinctive element when it shuts out the broad light outside its walls.

Man-life in the human dress was dwelt upon. People whose orbit of activity focusses round the good of the whole nation, whose self has expanded into the self of the country, without regard to class, colour or creed were represented as real men in the body of men.

Lastly, the God-man was depicted, whose self is the world, and from whom love flows toward each as naturally as light radiates from the sun. This is the Christian man, the man of nations, the man of ages, the Universal man."

The short meteoric life of Swami Ram—of only thirty three summers—is a tragic tale of the sufferings of the great who crucify themselves for the good of the world. Swami Ram was a saint who trampled in dust under the feet the lower

self and identified himself with the Higher Self whom we may call God.

XXXVI. Sadhu Sunder Singh

Sadhu Sunder Singh was born at Rampur, a Sikh village in Patiala State. His father Sardar Sher Singh was a rich landlord and some of the senior members of his family held good positions under the Patiala Durbar.

Sunder Singh had a very devout mother and being the youngest child was very much loved by her. She often told Sunder Singh, "You must seek peace in your own soul and love religion and then some day you will become a Sadhu."

The Sadhu tells us "It was the Holy Spirit that made me a Christian but it was my mother who made me a Sadhu." He writes :

> "My mother brought me up in a religious atmosphere. She prepared me for the work of God. Whenever I think of her, I thank God for such a mother. She had a wonderful amount of Light. I have seen many Christian women but none of them came up to my mother."

The Sikh religion with its daily devotions gave Sadhu Sunder Singh a continual support in his childhood. For some time Sadhu Sunder Singh practised Yoga but he did not attain the abiding peace or the full inner realisation. Then he had a vision. His mother died when he was only 14, he lost also his elder brother. He was overwhelmed with sorrow and then came a rebellion against God. At the same time he began to feel that he must find out the truth that lay behind the veil of human existence. By strange coincidence he had gone to a Mission primary school as a child where he had to read the Christian scriptures. His hostility to Christianity became so great that once he burnt a copy of the Christian Gospels in the courtyard of his own house. A few days later he decided to commit suicide by placing his head on the railway line. He prayed and got the Light. He saw the form of Lord Jesus Christ and heard a voice saying "How long will you persecute me. I have come to save you, you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it." That very day Sunder Singh decided to become a Christian.

As a reaction he was ex-communicated from his ancestral faith and driven out of his home.

Sadhu Sunder Singh was 15 only at the time and he could not be baptized before the age of 16. So he went to Ludhiana and stayed with Christian missionaries. He was taken to Simla and was baptized there on September 3rd, 1905, when he had reached the legal age of sixteen years.

Sadhu Sunder Singh was then sent to the Theological College in Lahore to prepare for Holy Orders. He found himself out of his element and a stranger there. He felt distressed at times, because he wanted to live the life of spirit. He decided to remain unfettered by any ecclesiastical bonds and he observed this principle of spiritual freedom to the very end of his life.

Sadhu Sunder Singh henceforward became a homeless wanderer. He stayed at Kotgarh (Simla Hills) with Mr. Stokes who was following Christ along the pathway of poverty and renunciation, followed by St. Francis of Assisi. He did not join any Order or Church and like a rushing torrent from the pure white snows cut his own course. He would go to the villages, nurse the sick and feed the needy and live the Christian life as Christ had taught. In 1919 Sadhu Sunder Singh set out for Tibet with a Tibetan Christian whose name was Thaniyat. He passed through glaciers and crossed passes which rose to nearly 19,000 feet and were covered with snow. In Tibet he preached the Gospel while going from village to village. He wrote :—

"There is only one comfort in the midst of all these troubles. They are all endured for the sake of the Cross. If I for His sake in order to save souls have left India and have come to Tibet that is no great matter."

Sadhu Sunder Singh set the example of a true Bhakta in following faithfully the way of the Cross and gave an Eastern setting to the Gospels. His visits to Europe, America, Australasia and Far East make an interesting story. He travelled about West and East, out in the world, and saw and heard many things and had varied experiences and finally settled in his Sabathu home in the Simla Hills. In 1929 Sadhu Sunder Singh left again for Tibet and nothing was heard of him after that year. He had one strong conviction of Christ's love which is the burden of his message.

He is one who *knows* Christ ; and one who *sees* Christ face to face.

To the East the Sadhu brought the message that Christ belonged to them no less than to the West and that it was their function to express Him truly as belonging to the East. It is theirs to offer to the West a new vision of Christ as he walked the Eastern road among the lowly and the simple folk in the villages.

XXXVII. Mehr Baba—The Parsi Mystic

Mehr Baba whose real name was Mehrban came of a Parsi Zoroastrian family of Poona. He was born in 1894 and was sent to school at the age of five. He passed the Matriculation Examination at the age of 17 and then joined Deccan College, Poona and received good College education for two years.

He was cycling back from College one day when he passed by the house of the well known Mohammadan woman Faqir known as Hazrat Babajan. She beckoned the boy and as the boy dismounted and approached her she clasped his hands and then embraced him and kissed his forehead. The young Mehrban reached home in a dazed condition and during the next few months his mind was upset. He could not study and bade farewell to his College studies and fell ill. He was taken to various doctors who diagnosed mental break-down and gave him medicine and injections. He recovered but his character was entirely changed.

Mehrban then approached once again the old lady (Hazrat Babajan) for advice about his future and was directed to find a spiritual leader. The young Mehrban then wandered about in search of a spiritual guide and hit upon one in a village temple in Sakori about 100 miles from Poona. Here he came face to face with Upasani Maharaj and felt that he had found his master.

At the age of 27 Mehrban became conscious of his mission and gave out that he was to be a Messiah.

In 1924 Mehrban (now known as Mehr Baba) left India for the first time and went to Persia and visited Teheran. On his return he established a colony in a village called Arangaon near Ahmednagar.

A free boarding school was established with about a hundred pupils. In addition to usual secular subjects instruction was provided in undenomination religion by Mehr Baba himself. His object in starting this school was twofold. First he wanted to break down all racial and religious barriers among his pupils and secondly, he wanted to train a few youngmen to be the ambassadors of his mission. He also opened a hospital and gave free medical treatment. There are some remarkable cures attributed to him but these have not been verified. The colony flourished and Mehr Baba became the centre of the whole picture, but after about a year and a half it was suddenly closed down and all these activities were abandoned.

Mehr Baba then sent out his first missionary disciple Sadhu Leik to tour round India and give the message he was told.

" You have the advantage of a Messiah to work for. Be cosmopolitan and do not run down any religion. Be sure that I will know all about you. Do not be disheartened by the remarks of others. I will lead you and follow none but me."

Mehr Baba has been observing silence now for about 25 years. He uses an alphabet board for expressing his ideas. He says that his silence is for spiritual reasons, but one cannot say as to why he has not broken his silence till now. Paul Brunton who met him at Arangaon as well as at Nasik where Mehr Baba has an Ashram, thinks him to be subject to constantly changing moods and an egoist who demands complete enslavement from his followers. His prophecies as a Messiah have not turned out to be true.

Mehr Baba went to England as well as to America and was in Hollywood for sometime. He has been classified as one of the many saints, but it appears he suffers from self-delusion. Mr. Brunton ends with a shrewd analysis of Mehr Baba's character :—

" He shows on the one hand, all the qualities of a Mystic—love, gentleness, religious intuition and so on but on the other hand he shows signs of the mental disease of paranoia (mental derangement)."

Explaining his ideas Mehr Baba held that ordinary people experienced three states of cons-

ciousness—consciousness, sub-consciousness and un-consciousness—but those who are advanced spiritually experience the fourth state of consciousness that is termed sub-superconsciousness. That means they have consciousness about worldly affairs and at the same time also about inner planes. They are said to have illumined perception of truth and very few experience the fifth state of consciousness, viz., superconsciousness. Here soul becomes identified with the infinite existence and becomes conscious of the whole universe as well as of the inner self.

That was according to Mehr Baba the state of eternal bliss of which he was conscious. That was perfection according to him and that was meant for every one. He believed it was latent in every one and could be manifested.

SUFI SAINTS OF SIND

The Hindus and Muslims of Sind are very much less orthodox than those in other places in India. Sind is free from many pernicious social evils, caste is virtually absent in Sind and Brahmans among the Hindus are only a microscopic portion of its population. Hindu scriptures are little known. The problem of the depressed classes is non-existent. Being an agricultural province the peasantry is thoroughly illiterate and so are the land-owners. The wave of religious revival sponsored by such saints as Kabir and Guru Nanak spread rapidly in Sind. Kabir was a Muslim and Guru Nanak was a Hindu, but the

Muslims also revered the latter and called him Nanak Shah. Kabir was claimed by the Hindus as one of their great teachers. The Bhakti movement initiated by them wanted to weld the Hindus and Muslims. Contemporaneous with this was the liberalising force of Sufism and, therefore, the religion of Sind is Sikhism-cum-Sufism. The influence of Sufism in Sind both on Hindus and Muslims has been tremendous.

Sufism is the mysticism of Islam and Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet has been regarded as the initiator and founder of the mystic School of Sufis. Later the Sufi movement took on the special colour as in Iran. The great Sufis of Iran — Rumi, Jami, Hafiz and many others have shed their glorious and effulgent rays on India and Sind had a full share of this "bread of life."

The spirit of Sufism is completely found in the Vedanta and in the latter day Saints of India, but the Persian Sufis enriched the mystic thought of the Sufis of Sind. The Sufis of Sind are a blending of the Indo-Aryan and the Arabic-Iranian mystic cultures. The Hindu Amils of Sind are Sufis by religion and are attached to the different Sufi centres. The fundamental basis of Sufism is that Truth is one and this idea found a congenial soil in Sind. A Sufi becomes free from Orthodoxy. In Sehwan where Lal Shahbaz, a famous Sufi Saint of medieval times lay buried, an annual fair is held where thousands of Hindus and Mohammadans mix freely and sing the Sufi songs. There are many other Sufi centres

in Sind. The Sufis of Sind sang in the Sindhi language, though the phraseology and imagery are derived both from Arabic-Persian and Indo-Aryan sources. The script also is Arabic. Among the Sufi saints of Sind, Inayat, Shah Latif and Sachal stand out pre-eminent. Short biographical sketches of these three will be found interesting and useful.

XXXVIII. Inayat

Shah Inayat was a great Sufi and was known for his piety and learning. He lived in Hyderabad Deccan for some years and then returned to his native place Jhok in Sind where he had many followers. Shah Inayat was also a great Zamindar and belonged to an influential Muslim family. The orthodox Muslims could not tolerate his growing influence and the Divines gave a *fatwa*. Matter was reported to King Farakhseer in Delhi. Shah Inayat was arrested but he resisted by fortifying himself and erecting a barricade. The fortified village was beseiged and the seige lasted for four months. Then a trap was made ready for Shah Inayat and he was beheaded.

He wrote in Persian a treatise known as *Basir Namah* which is still in existence. Shah Inayat is known as the Mansur of Sind. Like Mansur he gave his life for the Sufi cause fighting against the rulers and the Divines. Jhok is visited by many disciples who go as pilgrims to his Shrine.

IXL. Shah Latif

Shah Latif was the son of Shah Habib, a Sufi. The boy learnt Arabic and Persian early in life and later translated into Sindhi, the Koran, the Masnvi and Gulshan Raz and other books. He renounced the world and lived in a cave carved out of sand and was once found inside the trunk of a big tree carved out by a carpenter friend of his. After the death of his father, Latif retired permanently to Bhit Sharif. His fame as a Sufi saint spread all round and he travelled far and wide thus gaining many disciples.

Shah Latif was a great poet and was an admirer of nature and worshipper of beauty. He was fond of music also. The ruler of the time incited the mullas and moulvis against Latif although he was a good Muslim. He was a vegetarian and never touched wine and led an ideal life. Many anecdotes are given about Shah Latif. It is narrated that Gulam was an extremely beautiful dancing girl. She came to offer her gift of song before Latif to whom many came with such gifts. She was a famous singer. The holy man was much pleased and asked Gulam what she desired. "O holy man!" said the girl with great humility: "Bless me that I may be free from this kind of life and be the wife of a good man." The compassionate Latif blessed her and the girl afterwards married the ruler of Sind. This story illustrates the real nature of a Sufi who does not shrink from contact with people who are called sinners. This great poet of Sind passed away at a ripe old age, leaving the frag-

rance of a holy life behind, a true man, dear alike to the hearts of Sindhis, Muslims and Hindus. Here is one of his poems :

The palace is one
Windows many
Look where I may
The Lord is before me,
Myriad are thy bodies,
Myriads on myriads,
Life is one in every being.
Forms look many apart.
Oh love, how can I speak of Thy ways.

XL. Sachal

Sachal belonged to a village called Daraz in the State of Khairpur (Sind). He is known as Sachal "the intoxicated" or "Sarmust". His future fame was prophesied when Shah Latif passed through Daraz, where Sachal was playing with other children. "Whose child is this little one?" asked the sage. "Of the house of Daraz" was the reply. "Ah!" said Latif, "The vessel I have put on the fire, its lid will be removed by him."

Sachal's original name was Abdul Wahab. Unlike other saints he was a great scholar and was a past master in philosophy. He was a very handsome man with long hair and given to ascetic life from his boyhood. He was married and had a son. He lived to good old age of ninety and lived an austere life. He took no meat and touched no wine, but was music-mad like his contemporary Shah Latif. The ruler of Khairpur was a disciple of Sachal, but the Makhdums of

Halla were bitterly opposed to him. Sachal however did not care. He poured ridicule over the Divines and caricatured them in his poems.

Sachal's poetry is full of pathos and is very sublime. He wrote :

Think not thyself as a slave
Thou art the Lord of the land.
In slavery there is no safety.
Thou thyself, by thyself art beauty.
Thou art the all-knowing He
Why cry Allah! Allah!
Know thou art Allah, Says *Sachal*,
Of this there is not a whit of doubt.

THE SAKTA SAINTS

The concept of Sakti or Divine Power personified as Mother-goddess in the form of Durga or Kali is the foundation of Saktaism which developed in Bengal and gave rise to a mass of literature known as Tantric. The Tantras lay emphasis on the destructive as well as beneficent power of God as the eternal Mother and advocate schemes of Salvation through ritualistic practices. The Saktists believe that ultimately the worshipper of Devi becomes Devi herself.

The *Tantras* may be classified into three groups (1) those which teach the means to knowledge and liberation (2) those which teach the means to power and wealth (3) Those which teach both.

There is of course a pure form of the worship of Devi due to the influence of Shankracharya and

is known as Sri-Vidya, while the impure forms of worship with questionable practices are known as Vamachara. The latter have brought Saktaism into bad repute. The word Tantra, however, means a system, a method or a discipline. The end of Sadhna is of course to attain pure and perfect consciousness. Quite a number of saints and sages professing the Sakta form of worship have flourished in different parts of India. These Sakta Saints have like other saints composed hymns and lyric songs which are in no way inferior to Vaishnava lyrics. The ennobling spirit of devotion and high tone of spirituality imparted by Saktaism have attracted a very large number not only in Bengal but all over India. Of these we may mention a few names.

XLI. Bhaskra Raya

Bhaskra Raya came from Tanjore (South India) and was the author of highly learned works in which he gave an exposition of Sri-Vidya or pure Saktaism. His commentaries on Tantric literature cannot be too highly commended to the notice of the people desirous of getting acquainted with the basic principles of the rituals of the Tantras.

XLII. Ramaprasada

Ramaprasada flourished about two centuries ago and lived in a village near Calcutta. He is famous as thə author of a large number of lyric poems, which bespeak his deep devotion for the

great Mother whose omnipotence is occasionally referred to. These lyrics enjoy a great popularity in Bengal. This spirit of devotion is found to permeate the poetical literature of the Saktas.

Tantra philosophy has effected a mutually helpful and perfecting co-ordination of Karma, Yoga, Gyana and Bhakti. It combines the systematical ritualism of Karma with the inner purifying process of Yoga, the purest Advaita gyana with the pleasant Bhakti and the most passionate yearning and love. Such a synthesis was supplied to us in the two great mystic saints of India—Shankracharya and Rama Krishna Paramhansa.

PART V

REFORM MOVEMENTS IN HINDUISM

RADHA SWAMI MAT

The founder of Radha Swami Mat was one Shiv Dayal Ji of Agra who was a great yogi and had practised Samadhi to such an extent that he could induce it in others. He knew Persian, Sanskrit and Arabic well and wrote a treatise known as "Sar Bachan" which comprises of the doctrines of the Mat and of hymns composed by the founder. He assumed the name of Radha Swami which is one of the many names of God. This sect is known as Radha Swami after the founder. He believed that every one who took to the path of spiritual life needed a living Guru who could induce spirituality into another person. The Post Master General of Agra, Rai Bahadur Salig Ram, fell under the spell of Shiv Dayal Ji and became his disciple. He resigned a lucrative job and succeeded his master. The first Guru was on the gadi from 1861—1878.

XLIII. Rai Bahadur Salig Ram

Rai Bahadur Salig Ram, the second Guru occupied the gadi from 1878—1898. He wrote a

book known as "Radha Swami Mat Parkash" wherein he described the doctrines of the faith in greater detail. He was known among his followers as "Hazur Maharaj."

After Rai Bahadur Salig Ram the centre of activities of the movement shifted to Benares because the third Guru Brahm Shankar Misra Ji, who was an M.A. of Calcutta University and was Accountant General in Allahabad came to live at the time in Benares. He occupied the gadi till his death in 1907 and during his regime a Central Council was established to manage the affairs of the Mat. In the city of Benares a very grand Radha Swami Centre was established and is known as Swami Bagh.

XLIV. Sir Anand Swarup Ji

After the death of Brahm Shankar Misra Ji a dispute arose about the successor and one Kamta Prasad Ji of village Murari in Ghazipur District was nominated to the gadi. He became the fourth Guru but he passed away in 1912 and was succeeded by Anand Swarup Ji (Sahib Ji Maharaj) who laid the foundation of the Dyal Bagh colony in the year 1914. He was Knighted and under his fostering care the community grew rapidly and made great progress. He has now been succeeded by Mehta Gurcharan Das who is at present the head of the Radha Swami Mat and resides in Agra.

One of the followers of Sahib Ji Maharaj settled in Beas (Punjab) and established a Centre there with a colony on the lines of Dyal Bagh of

Agra. The present head of the Beas Centre is Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj. At Agra a beautiful Smadh is being erected over the ashes of the first Guru, the founder of Radha Swami Mat.

Radha Swami Mat is really speaking a theistic movement with emphasis on a living Guru who is the fountain-head of spiritual life. The Radha Swamis believe that the soul of man is immortal and is in essence one with the universal spirit called God. They believe in certain inner powers which according to them can be awakened by a Teacher who is in touch with the source. They believe in listening to what they call inner voice or *Surat Shabad* and think that through certain practices of meditation and repetition of the *nam* they can attain to salvation. They also believe that the human soul merges into the eternal soul after death and if it is purified it never returns to this planet again.

There are no caste distinctions among the Radha Swamis and every one is free to join the Sat Sang or the congregation. They refrain from drinking, smoking and meat-eating and they have like the Sikhs the institution of Langar or common kitchen. The teaching also resembles the teaching of the Sikh Gurus. There is a tinge of Sufism or Vedanta about the Mat. Many Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab and the United Provinces have joined the Mat. They have their devotional prayers morning and evening in public and their greeting is "Radha Swami." The colony at Agra has a girl school, a college, a dairy and several useful and prosperous industrial concerns entirely managed by Radha Swamis.

The Radha Swami Mat is a happy combination of work and worship. It is, as a matter of fact, a co-ordination of Karam, Bhakti and Gyan.

THE ARYA SAMAJ

The impact of Islam on Hinduism gave rise to the Bhakti movement. Just in the same way the impact of the West has given rise to movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj. We have already dealt with the Brahmo Samaj at length. The Arya Samaj takes its stand on the Vedas which are regarded as the first and the last revelation.

The Vedas they say were revealed to ancient Rishis and should be regarded as the "primeval scripture of humanity". The founder, Swami Dayanand gave an interpretation of the Vedas, which is supported by a scholar and a mystic saint like Aurobindo Ghosh, who says in his book "Dayanand the Man and his Work" that there is nothing fantastical in Swami Dayanand's idea that Vedas contain truths of Science as well truths of Religion.

According to Swami Dayanand the Vedas enjoin the worship of one Formless God and, therefore, the movement is purely theistic.

XLV. Swami Dayanand

Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was born in a village in the Morvi State of Kathiawar. His real name was Mul Shankar. It

so happened that while still young Mul Shankar went with his father to a temple. He saw the rats climbing over the image of Siva and was horrified. He never married and soon after left home and went to Benares to study Sanskrit. He was wandering about in search of a Guru when he met Swami Parmanand, who taught him Vedanta. This Swami gave him the name Dayanand. Next he met a very learned Pundit, who was blind and whose name was Virja Nand Saraswati. This Pundit was a great scholar and his knowledge of Vedas and Shastras was perfect. Swami Dayanand studied with him for about two and a half years. When leaving, the Guru advised him to go and preach the gospel of the Vedas and revive the ancient Aryan culture.

Swami Dayanand was a great debator and defeated in argument the orthodox Pundits of his time. He could speak Sanskrit very fluently.

Sometime after Swami Dayanand met the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta, prominent among whom were Keshav Chandra Sen and Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and he also met Madam Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society in Bombay. He had a mind to cooperate with them in the work of social and religious reform, but differences arose and the plan did not fructify. It was at this time that Swamiji founded the Arya Samaj, first in Bombay in 1875 and two years later in Lahore. The two principal items of the creed were a belief in God and faith in the Vedas which were regarded as the scripture of true knowledge. It was the first

duty of an Arya Samajist to read them, teach them, recite them and hear them being read.

The Arya Samaj believes that the caste of a person should be determined by his character and not by the mere accident of birth. The Arya Samajists have been enjoined to follow the Ashram dharma according to which they have to divide their lives into four periods of student life, married life, life of retirement and of complete renunciation. Marriage is regarded as a sacrament and every Arya Samajist is to perform the *havan* daily and recite the *gayatri* mantar (Vedic prayer) morning and evening.

A network of schools, colleges and gurukulas both for boys and girls has been spread all over the country as well as in colonies overseas. The Gurukula University at Hardwar founded by Mahatma Munshi Ram also known as Swami Shraddhanand was the first to adopt an Indian Vernacular as the medium of instruction right upto the degree and post-graduate standard. This university has resuscitated the Vedic and Sanskritic studies and assimilated with them modern arts and sciences. It has succeeded in reviving the time-honoured institution of Brahmacharya, thereby giving morality a first place in the scheme of Education.

The Arya Samaj has also started orphanages and widows' homes and done splendid relief work in times of earthquakes and famines. It has also raised the depressed classes by taking them into the Hindu fold.

Swami Dayanand's greatest work is "Ved

Bhash Bhumka" or introduction to the study of Rig Veda and he also wrote "Satyarath Parkash" in Hindi which is widely read.

Arya Samajes have been established in the Punjab, United Provinces, Central Provinces and Rajputana and they have done very good work in social and religious reform. There are no priests among them and their organisations are run on democratic lines. The founder Swami Dayanand was a dynamic personality and after him his mission has been continued by Mahatma Hansraj (the founder of the D.-A.V. College of Lahore) and Mahatma Munshi Ram (Swami Shradhanand) of Gurukula University of Hardwar.

XLVI. Mahatma Hansraj

Mahatma Hansraj was studying in the College when Swami Dayanand visited Lahore in 1877 and established the Arya Samaj. As a young man he came under the influence of Arya Samaj and proposed to serve the Samaj. He became the Honorary Headmaster of the D.-A.V. High School in 1886. The School was raised to a College and Mahatma Hansraj became the Principal and served the Institution for 25 years till his retirement in 1911. He then became the President of the Managing Committee and served in that capacity till 1918.

The next 20 years (1918—38) were devoted by Mahatma Hansraj to religious propaganda and humanitarian work. His work among the Moplahs of Malabar and Malikanas of United Provinces

and Rajputana who were half-Hindus and half-Muslims is praiseworthy. They were re-admitted into the Hindu fold by the tireless efforts of the Mahatma.

XLVII. Swami Shraddhanand

Mahatma Munshi Ram afterwards known as Swami Shraddhanand had been practising law at Jullundur. He began to lead that Section of the Arya Samaj which was in favour of reviving ancient Aryan culture. With that object in view he started a Gurukula at Kangri near Hardwar. Hindi is the medium of instruction at the University and study of Sanskrit is a special feature. Intimate personal contact between the students and the teachers is another great feature. Students are admitted at the age of 7 or 8 and have to stay in the Gurukula for 14 years among healthy surroundings.

Swami Shraddhanand took *sanyas* in 1917 and left the University and devoted his time to social work. As he was pushing the work of Shuddhi and Sangathan zealously, he excited the envy of a section of Muslims and became the victim of the revolver of an assassin in Delhi. He died the death of a true martyr, in 1926.

Ramsay MacDonald, M. P. afterwards the Prime Minister of England gave his impression of Mahatma Munshi Ram when he visited the Gurukula in 1914.

"When the meal is ended, we go round the School. All is order and happiness . . . In the

cool of the afternoon we walk out into the jungle, Mahatmaji telling us as he goes what is heard. The clothing, the grouping, the pose, the long staff curiously recall the pictures of walks in Galilee which we used to look at on Sundays in our young days . . . The west blazes into the glory of sunset, the half moon already high overhead pales into a silvery brightness . . . The Gurukula is in darkness. But the blaze of fire comes from the dormitory doors in the Centre. Chanting voices fill the guadraugle.

" On mats, on the grass, squat little white figures sitting like Buddha images. They neither move nor take notice of us. They have finished their communal worship and are now alone in silent contemplation."

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

One of the agencies that revived Hinduism and Buddhism and Zoroastrianism in India was the international association which is called the Theosophical Society with its Headquarters at Adyar (Madras).

The Society was founded by Madam Blavatsky, a Russian lady who met Colonel Olcott, an American in New York in 1875 with the object of studying the invisible world and the powers that were latent in man. . This they called Theosophy or Divine Wisdom.

XLVIII. Madam Blavatsky

Madam Blavatsky had first gone to Cairo in

1870, then to Paris and then to the United States of America in 1874. She wrote two wonderful books known as " Secret Doctrine " and " Isis Unveiled " which dealt with occultism. She held that there was a Heirarchy of Adepts or Masters living unseen somewhere in Tibet. She in company of Col. Olcott visited Ceylon and both of them declared themselves as Buddhists. In 1882 they made Adyar as their Headquarters and gathered many enthusiastic workers around them. Col. Olcott always paid attention to the side of organisation while Madam Blavatsky paid attention to the side of Occultism. Madam Blavatsky then left India and settled in London in 1887. There Mrs. Besant met her and joined the Theosophical Society. She was converted after reading the " Secret Doctrine " written by Madam Blavatsky which she reviewed for the " Review of Reviews " edited by W. T. Stead. Madam Blavatsky died in 1891 and Col. Olcott in 1907 and Mrs. Besant became the life-President of the Theosophical Society.

IL. Mrs. Annie Besant

Mrs. Annie Besant came to India in 1893 and became a Hindu in the true sense of that word. She settled in Benares and founded the Central Hindu College which later became the nucleus of the Hindu University. Her best work on behalf of Hinduism was done when she was in Benares. She delivered many lectures on Hinduism, summarised the Ramayana and the Mahabharta and produced a popular translation of the Gita and

wrote helpful text-books on Hindu religion and ethics. She travelled up and down the country besides making voyages to Europe, America and Australia, delivering lectures and rousing Indians to a sense of the greatness of their religion.

Her work in the political sphere is equally praiseworthy. She founded the Home Rule League and presided over a session of the Indian National Congress. After a time her influence in Theosophy began to decline and in conjunction with Mr. Leadbeater she began to explore into the unexplored regions. One such conclusion which has almost ruined the Theosophical Society was the idea of a coming World Teacher in the form of a Christ or Lord Maitreya.

The last years of Mrs. Besant's life were far from happy. The blow came from the Krishnamurti episode which we give below.

L. Krishnamurti

Mr. Krishnamurti whom Mrs. Besant for 18 years had proclaimed as the vehicle of the coming World Teacher and whom she had made the head of the "Order of the Star in the East" stoutly refused the part assigned to him. With great courage he burst his bonds and spoke his mind freely. On August 3rd, 1929, at a big "Star Camp" in his honour in Holland he dissolved the Order of the Star and said :—

"You can form other organisations and expect some one else. With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages, nor decoration

for these cages. My only concern is to set men absolutely unconditionally free."

J. Krishnamurti was born in 1897 at Madanapalle in Southern India. From 1912 to 1922 he and his younger brother lived in England and had the best education under Leadbeater who was a Theosophist. He was originally intended for Cambridge but he was not accepted at the College. The Order of the Star of the East was established in 1921 and in 1925 when time for declaration for him came as the coming World Teacher and preparations were completed, he was disillusioned and dissolved the Order of Star. He broke all connections with the Theosophical Society in 1929.

His teaching can be summed up as follows :—

"Everyone should find truth for himself ; should listen to no one but himself ; should consider unification with happiness as the final goal."

APPENDIX I

WHAT IS MYSTICISM

Mysticism is a phenomena which has appeared in all parts of the world and among all religious communities. It goes beneath the commonplace surface of religion and its search is for the internally born satisfaction and is the inevitable phase of the development of the human mind when it is dissatisfied with a narrow orthodox faith. It may come to a person who is sick of religion and is passing through doubt and agnosticism or even atheism where he remains anchorless for a time. Or it may come through intensity of religious aspiration which leads gradually to meditation and introspection. Mysticism may also enter through the gate of aestheticism, such as beauty of nature or love of fine arts like poetry and music.

Fully developed mystic understands that he is free to follow any particular creed or none. That which he seeks he must discover for himself and from himself by meditative introversion.

The methods used by mystics are many. Physical asceticism or renunciation of the world together with certain yogic practices are the chief of them. Meditation or concentration may be

linked up with a purely religious notion of seeking the presence of God or may be purely psychological one of finding ones own self. The experiences of mystics vary with the individual and cannot be transmitted to others.

The cardinal positions of mystic thought may be described as follows :

1. God is not to be located in a particular place. His spirit is everywhere in nature.

2. God abides in the heart of man as the sun abides in all its myriad rays.

3. It is perfectly possible for any man who will submit to a particular discipline to enter into direct communion by contemplation and meditation with the spirit of God without any intermediary and without utterance of any verbal prayer.

4. That revealed scriptures such as the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran are of not much help to a mystic.

5. Mystics also hold that their practices ultimately lead to extraordinary physical and mental powers as a consequence of their own effort.

We must, however, distinguish the control of mind and the senses from God realisation which mysticism really implies. The former is psychological and the latter has its limitations.

APPENDIX II

NEW THEISM

New Theism of the Brahmo Samaj and the older schools of Bhakti such as Vaishnvaism and Bhakti of the *Nirakar* advocated by Kabir and Guru Nanak differ in the following respects :—

Brahmo Samaj has no faith in any scripture as an authority. It has no faith in Avtars or Manifestations though it respects great Religious Teachers like Christ and Buddha. It denounces polytheism and idol worship as well as caste distinctions and makes faith in the doctrine of transmigration of soul optional. The authority of this new Theism as advocated by the Brahmo Samaj is purely subjective and is based on intuition and reason and not on the words of the scriptures. The old theism was based on experience as well as thought and was kindly and considerate. New Theism being based more on thought than on experience initiated the Western modes of spiritual exercise such as vocal prayer, readings and sermons rather than the Hindu methods of meditation and communion. The mode of worship in the Brahmo Samaj resembles that in a Christian Church to such an extent that it has given rise to the popular saying that Brahmoism is

Christianity minus Christ. Though Brahmo Samaj is a spent force now, it has rendered useful service to Hinduism in three ways. It popularised social reform, it prevented conversions to Christanity and it revived the Bhakti Movement among Hindus.

APPENDIX III

YOGA AND YOGIS

Yoga is a Sanskrit word and means self-discipline involving mental concentration and leading to mystic experience or intuition and a yogi is a person who practices such methods. These methods imply asceticism and meditation and that is about all one can attain. A Yogi becomes indifferent to worldly attractions and gets the powers of control over restless mind. It may be good but it decidedly is not enough. There are other activities in the life of man which require his attention. Yoga, therefore, has its limitations and on that account a yogi develops a one-sided outlook and his life becomes incomplete. He suffers from superiority complex on the supposition that he has the whole truth and is a holy person. A hermit therefore cannot develop to perfection and a synthetic complete culture is necessary for the unfoldment of human personality.

The price one has to pay for this mental poise is very great indeed. Many people practising Yoga had to flee from wife, family, home, property and work and they had to take refuge in *ashrams* caves, monastries, jungles or mountains. They

thus became unfit for the normal daily life and developed a kind of hypersensitiveness which is in most cases harmful.

Besides Yoga only gives us a misty feeling of having reached the truth but it does not give us the knowledge of truth which is un-attainable.

Roughly speaking there are three grades of Yoga. The most elementary group is devoted entirely to physical exercises in concentration. Some of these exercises are for improving the health and strength of the aspirant and also help in curing him of certain diseases. This kind of Yoga is comprised of specific postures, discipline in breathing practices, of looking at a certain point with unwinking eyes and muttering of Mantras etc.

The next stage of Yoga practices rises beyond the body to the higher level of educating the feelings in devotion and training the thoughts in concentration. They lead to what is known as mental poise and the state of Samadhi. The highest stage is reached by the aspirant when with concentrated and disciplined feeling and thought he sharpens the reason and applies it to a guided philosophical consideration of the meaning and nature of the whole world and of all life. He then makes for himself the discovery that the self of man is related to the Universal Soul. Higher than this the human mind cannot go.

Patanjli's Yoga System stops at the second stage and to regard it as final is a mistake. The Yoga of knowledge known as Gyan Yoga in

Bhagwad Gita is the last stage of Yoga—that of Realisation of the identity of the soul of man with the Over-Soul. But this is unattainable.

We must, therefore, learn to differentiate between religion and mysticism and between mysticism and philosophy. If we mistake one for the other, as we usually do, we lose our path and end in bewilderment. We must, however, understand that the one stage of Yoga does not necessarily lead us to the other. The three stages are independent of one another. Body control may help us in controlling the mind but mere control of mind would not lead us to the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality.

In conclusion, we may say that visions, ecstasies and intuitions that are claimed by the Yogis are mere accidents of meditation and constitute its non-essential by-products. The experience of Yogi is personal and since he cannot penetrate into the substance of Reality so he contents himself with an "illusion" which at best is mental.

APPENDIX IV

DANGERS OF SPIRITISM

From the earliest times a belief has existed in a relationship between men yet living and the dead as well as between the former and the immaterial beings known as angels. Even amongst the ancient Egyptians as well as the ancient Jews there were magicians, soothsayers and priests who were known to enter into relationship with the souls of the dead and with beings of the higher order. The ancient Greeks and Romans also believed in the spirits of the dead as well as in demons or evil spirits. Even Christ was accredited with the power of driving out the evil spirits.

The Parsis of India still hold on to the belief that there is a Good Spirit—Ahurmazda. (The Wise Lord) and there is an Evil Spirit known as Aharman corresponding to Satan and they also believe in an hierarchy of angels like the Muslims and the Christians. The Chinese like the Hindus of India worship their ancestors and feed the priests in the name of their dead forefathers. Among the Tibetans the belief is current that the spirit of the Dalai Lama descends into his successor and the Lamas can make that out by a pro-

cess that is mysterious. As a matter of fact magic, necromancy and belief in ghosts and apparitions, etc., are to be found among the primitive people all over the world.

It was, however, in the middle of the 19th century that the advance of science and knowledge condemned the whole phenomena as unreal and non-existent. Spiritism has come to be regarded therefore as an hallucination and an illusion and is considered to be fraught with great danger both to the individual as well as to society. The mental instability and eccentricity and love of the mysterious are responsible for the growth of spiritism in America, France and England.

The first question that arises is as to how can the laws of nature—biological and psychological and physical be broken in any way? Shakespeare was quite right when he said that "from that bourne no traveller has ever returned to tell the tale." Where is the spirit world and how can the disembodied spirits be called, interrogated and even photographed? The fact of the matter is that there is nothing supernatural or miraculous under the sun. The whole universe is governed by certain laws; only some of these laws have not yet been fully discovered. Clairvoyance, telepathy and television have come within the range of scientific experimentation and there are many things buried in the sub-conscious self of man which have not come to the surface yet.

Apart from these considerations faith in a hierarchy which rises upwards from man serves no

useful purpose. This belief too is mythical and unreal. When we have finished our existence on this earth and left our bodies behind in the sensisible world, our spirit ascends. To what regions we know not.! The rest is all speculation and guess work. There seems no substantial difference between the magic and necromancy of bygone days and the spiritism of modern days. A note of warning may, however, be sounded to those who take part in seances, etc. These practices produce a deadening effect on the mental faculties and cause serious and organic nervous diseases. The mediums—or the agency that is used for calling the spirits of the dead—eventually die as insane neurotics or victims of progressive paralysis. Spiritism is always dangerous and harmful and is not only to be condemned but to be prohibited without reserve in all grades and forms.

APPENDIX V

SOME IDEAS ON RELIGION

The first idea that we must imbibe is that this universe has been in existence from times unknown and it will continue to exist without coming to an end. It is made up of four kingdoms—the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human, and they are placed one above the other. The human kingdom which is above these all is the most conscious. This kingdom has got two special characteristics : first, it is endowed with the power of speech and secondly it has got the power of reasoning or discrimination. The idea that there has been evolution from mineral to vegetable and from vegetable to animal and subsequently to man is absolutely unthinkable. All the four kingdoms have been in existence from all times in the past and will continue to exist in this form for ever. No time is coming when the universe will come to an end or when the world will be destroyed.

All these kingdoms are subject to one universal law, *i.e.*, the law of birth, growth, decay and death. We are all governed by the same law of nature. It treats us all alike. Nature is not endowed with intelligence.

Human society, which is the most conscious of all the kingdoms has evolved certain religious ideas during the course of centuries. Evolution of religious thought from the beginning of history is marked by many stages. There was a time when people thought that there was something behind everything that had been created, *e.g.*, a tree was considered to be having a spirit. Similarly a man had a spirit behind his material appearance. This is known as animism. The next stage was that of polytheism. Zoroastrians and Aryans were polytheistic in their outlook. Polytheism consisted in a belief in the forces of nature and the elements that surround us. The third stage in religious thought was dualism, i.e. faith in two powers. For example Zoroastrians believe in the existence of Satan and God at one and the same time.

From dualism religion moved on to monism which meant that this universe was one with the eternal spirit. Monism postulated that existence was an illusion and Brahman was the only Reality. One school of Monism was known as Advaita or Absolute Monism. The other was known as Vashisht Advaita, or Qualified Monism. Both these schools believed that this universe was only a projection of the human mind. Real religion, however, began with Ramanuja's philosophy which said that between the Creator and the creation there was a gulf which could not be bridged over. Creator was something which was transcendental and not immanent. Everything was from Him and He was not everything. The Creator and the creation were different entities and a created

being could not comprehend the Creator. The finite could not merge into the Infinite. Infinite must remain Infinite. So we have to renounce the doctrine of the immanence of God as well.

The next idea is that the Creator cannot make Himself understood to Man except through the agency of man. Every founder of religion had said in the scriptures that he had come to give to mankind the law that had been vouchsafed to him by God. This was the central idea of religion. Religion was something that came from the heart of the God-man who stood between the Creator on one side and the rest of mankind on the other. That was the only meeting point between the Creator and the creation. We may call these intermediaries whatever we like. Call them Prophets, Rishis or Avtars. There is no other way of coming into touch with that power. Such has been the claim of every founder of religion. Even Lord Krishna says in Bhagwad Gita that from age to age it is necessary to lead people to righteousness and I come in human form to do so. True religion, therefore, comes through a human personality which is a special creation. The Prophet or Avatar is distinctly marked from the rest of men. Every man cannot become a Prophet.

Religion truly understood meant following the commandments that had been given to us in the revealed scriptures through the prophets. Religion came to us through the personality of a Prophet and was modified by successive Prophets. It was meant to elevate human society as a whole and there was no such thing as individual salvation.