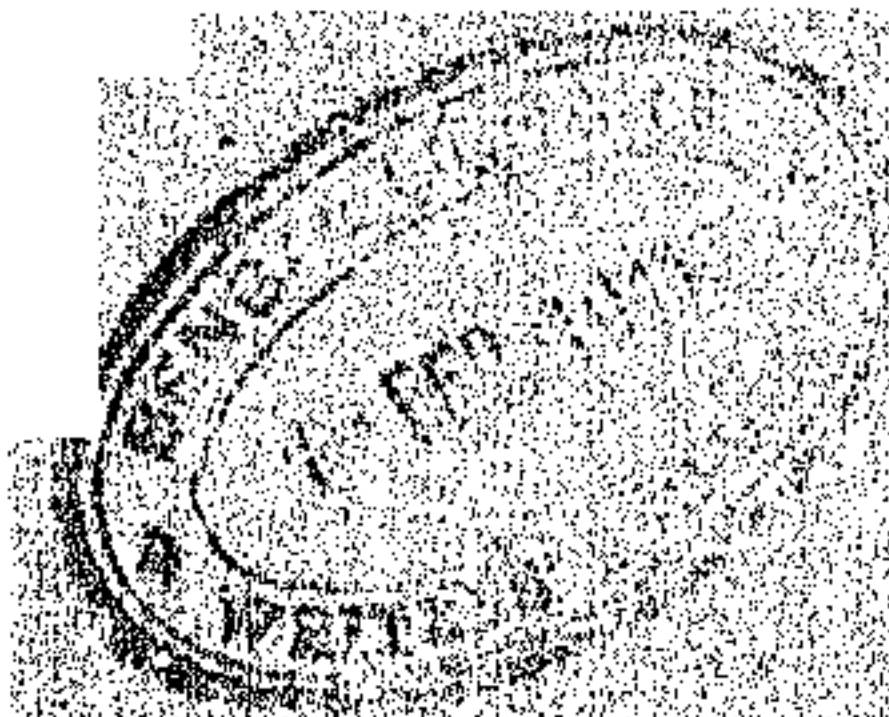


A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE BRAHMC SAMAJ
SUGGESTED BY
Dr. P. K. RAY's
PAMPHLET
ON SPIRITUAL EDUCATION
AND
RELIGION OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ.

BY
AN OLD BRAHMO.



CALCUTTA:

Printed and Published by H. C. Das Gupta.

1911.

Mohes Press, Calcutta

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE BRAHMO SAMAJ
SUGGESTED BY
Dr. P. K. RAY'S
PAMPHLET
ON SPIRITUAL EDUCATION
AND
RELIGION OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ.

BY
AN OLD BRAHMO.

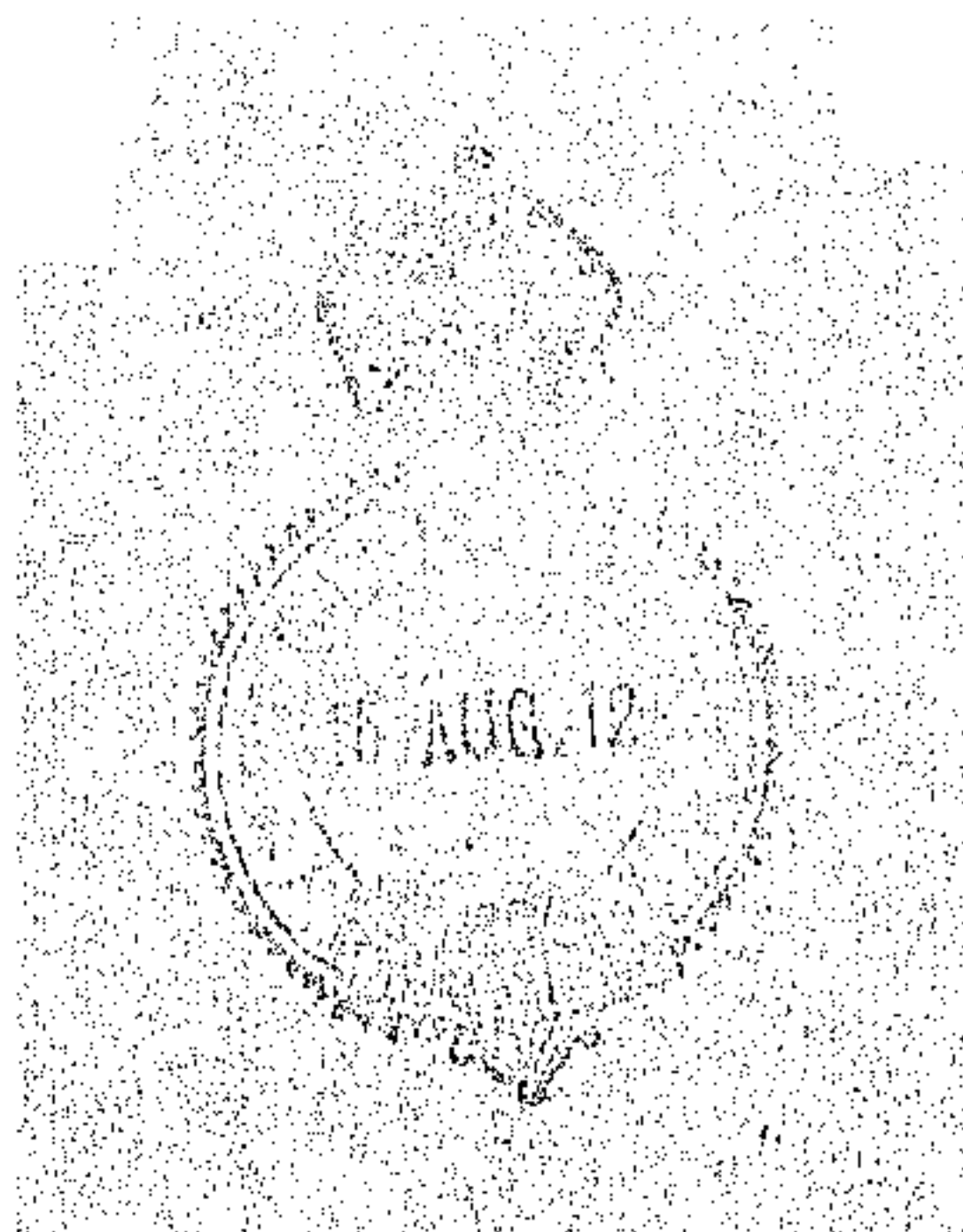


CALCUTTA:

Printed and Published by H. C. Das Gupta, & Co.

1911.

Mohes Press, — Calcutta.





A few thoughts on the Brahmo Samaj

SUGGESTED BY

Dr. P. K. Ray's

PAMPHLET

On Spiritual Education and Religion of the Brahmo Samaj.

DEAR DR. RAY,

I have read with the greatest pleasure your pamphlet—"Spiritual Education and the Religion of the Brahmo Samaj," containing three addresses to the Brahmo Community with Notes at the end.

• What interested me most is your reference to "the ancient spiritual and religious life,"—"the spiritual insight of our ancient ancestors being universally admitted"—and your belief that "in our sacred literature, we have abundant evidence of the extraordinary development of spiritual powers" and your exhortation "to study our Sacred Books along with those of other countries and nations."

You justly say—"this (the study of Sacred Books) was a practice in the early days of the Samaj, but it has "nearly disappeared in the course of the last thirty years." But the question is—how? Allow me to address myself first to this question before discussing the other grave points you have raised in your pamphlet. In replying to this question, I must briefly refer to the history of the Brahmo Samaj, (so far as this question is concerned), which I joined more than half a century ago, and in the later development of which I took some part, however insignificant.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who had thoroughly studied the scriptures of the different nations and races of the

History.

world in their originals, found Bengal steeped in idolatry and superstition, a prey to pernicious customs and usages, sapping the morality and the manhood of the people, and their spiritual life entangled in the web of *degrading rites and ceremonies* under the mistaken view that the Vedas (the fountain source of all the scriptures called the Dharma Shastras) countenanced the worship of idols and sanctioned such rites and ceremonies. To destroy such erroneous and pernicious impression as also to prove to the world that the East could boast of a pure theistic faith which could satisfy all our spiritual cravings and lead us to heavenly *bliss*, he culled from the Upanishads, the *beej* (seeds or fundamental principles) of such a Religion, for the worship of the invisible, omnipresent, and omniscient Creator of the Universe. He formed a coterie of friends and disciples, who accepted those principles, which were not new but as old as the world. This raised a storm of controversy among the orthodox pandits of the time, who gave him the nick-name of a Brahmo, for his promulgating the worship of One without a Second. Hence he himself and his band of followers were called Brahmos and the place of their worship, the Brahmo Samaj. Brahmoism, therefore, in its inception was mere Protestant Hinduism, as Protestant Christianity arose out of Roman Catholicism.

I am inclined to believe (though I may be mistaken) from the fact of his taking the seeds of his faith from the Hindu Scriptures and of his living and growing among the Hindus and retaining his holy thread up to the last that he never intended to divorce himself and his adherents from the Hindu community at large, but that his sole object was to reform the Hindu Religion and the Hindu Samaj by separating the 'chaff' from the wheat, —by removing the encrustations of idolatry, superstition

pernicious customs, rites and ceremonies which had subsequently gathered round the theistic Hindu Religion and degraded the Hindu Samaj. By irony of fate, it was then the Hindus who drove him away from their fold, but now his followers studiously keep aloof from the Hindus and even repudiate the great Hindu name. At this distance of time, our Hindu brethren are finding out the real worth of the Rajah and flock in numbers to bless his memory at the anniversary of his death. He never ceased to be a Hindu, but such was the Universality of his faith that the Christians claimed him to be a Christian and the Jews claimed him to be a Israilite, and the Mahomedans took him for a Muslim. He framed the ritual or form of Service for the Samaj, with copious extracts from the Upanishads. The *beej* (seeds) that he compiled, were the cardinal principles of all religions, such as Hindus, Mahomedans and even Christians could accept for worshipping God ; or in other words, he laid the foundation of an Universal Church.

“Maharshi Debendia Nath Tagore, upon whom the mantle of the Rajah fell on his death, stuck to his leader's form of Service ; and his sermons elucidating the grounds of his faith by texts from the Upanishads and other Sacred Books of the Hindus, prove beyond all doubt and cavil that he had not studied our scriptures in vain. The fountain source of his deep and unquestioned spirituality may be traced to those books. He had drunk to inebriation the nectar of spiritual truths from those springs and earned the title of Maharshi from his admiring adherents,—a title far more honorable than a Knighthood, or Grand Commander of Knights, or even a Rajah or a Maharajah or Rajadhiraj Maharaj. He engaged a lot of pandits well-versed in Sanskrit lore and whose occupation was to dive deep into the sea of

Adi Samaj.

our ancient scriptures and gather priceless pearls of spirituality. The atmosphere he breathed became saturated with the inspiration of the ancient Rishis, and shewed him the true path to salvation. Immersed in spiritual culture and devotion, he had very little time left to attend to mundane affairs, except his own vast estate which he managed efficiently and generously, with advantage not only to himself but to his tenantry who worshipped him as a God. This left him still little time to devote his attention to social and political questions. So fully and firmly was he convinced of the greatness of Hindu scriptures, of the ancient Hindu civilisation and of the Hindu name that he stoutly refused to be a party to the marriage Act containing a declaration that Brahmos were not Hindus. He took a pride in calling himself a Hindu, and observed all the family and social ordinances of the Hindus as regards births, marriages and deaths, cleansed of the idolatrous and superstitious parts; and for all these, no body could say he was not a Brahmo by religion.

Among those who sat at the feet of the Maharshi to learn spiritual truths, and who helped him considerably in the propagation of his faith, was a young enthusiast of considerable powers of persuasion and towering intellect who had made Western literature and philosophy the subjects of his serious study, but who had no knowledge of, or acquaintance with our ancient literature, philosophy or Sacred Books; and who with all his educated countrymen was a little bit iconoclastic, and looked down upon the Hindu Samaj as fallen. It was not until he came in contact with the Paramhansa of Dakhineshawr that Hindu spirituality made any impression on his life, and then he called himself a Hindu.

In the middle of the 18th Century, a mighty wave

of Western civilisation and enlightenment crossed the Indian Ocean and burst upon the shores of India, spending its force on the coast of Bengal, bearing on its crest new ideas, sentiments and thoughts, on the social manners, customs and religious beliefs, antagonistic to our old cherished oriental ideas, and inundated the land of our birth. In the 19th Century, it had washed away and carried into the deep sea all the land-marks of our own civilisation. We were simply charmed and dazzled by the glamour and outward polish of this foreign civilisation. When we were at school in the early fifties and sixties English language, besides our own vernacular, was the only language taught in the schools, and our classics were at a discount. Sanskrit was not then encouraged by the University which was then just founded. So complete was the mastery and fascination of this civilisation, that we were not even aware of the existence of the mental, moral and spiritual treasures of our own country. We had not then the faintest idea that we once had a civilisation, scriptures, philosophy and literature of our own, as rich, if not richer, than the invading civilisation. We were educated at Government schools where English literature, history, geography were taught in English. We were taught that there was only one holy Book in the whole world worth studying and that was the Bible. We were, consequently, obliged to take a plunge into the sea of western literature, philosophy, history, arts and sciences and grew up in complete ignorance of our own sacred books, classics and philosophy. No wonder then, that we began to despise every thing oriental.

Brahmanand Keshub Chunder Sen, the young enthusiast above referred to, belonged to this class of educated Hindus, a creature of the 19th Century

— nent. Rich in intellectual attainments, but lacking, in my humble opinion, the Maharshi's deep spirituality, Keshub Chunder began to make his influence felt in the Somaj, culminating in the schism with the Adi Samaj, in which I was one of his followers. •

Bharatvar-
shiya Brahma
Somaj.

He ultimately founded the Bharatvarshia Brahma Samaj, afterwards called, the Church of New Dispensation. The first act of ruthless mutilation, I was going to say, vandalism, was the omission from the ritual of certain Sanskrit texts and the substitution of Bengali translations, in the place of the original texts. And then the expatriation of readings from the sacred books and their exposition in the vernacular, and putting in their place sermons of the minister's own coinage—a system which is sedulously followed up to the present day by our ministers. I suppose they act in the belief that their spiritual culture and insight are at least equal, if not superior, to those of the old Rishis whom they set at naught.

Axe at the
root of Sans-
krit Texts.

Reply to the
main question
why study of
of Sacred
Books has
disappeared.

This is how the practice of the study of Sacred Books has "disappeared in the course of the last thirty years." Further more, the second schism which laid the foundation of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, and in which I took some active, though humbler part, did not improve matters in this respect. The organisers of it were "chips of the old block," equally ignorant of the old treasures; and the leaders, perhaps, a little bit more westernised in their education, thoughts, manners and sentiments, to think even of eastern literature, philosophy and sacred books. Everything western captivated their minds, enthralled their imagination and appealed most strongly to their senses. They trimmed their sails to the western breeze, along with the rest of their educated countrymen. They thought in English,

wrote in English, spoke in English; dressed, dined, disported themselves, and even coughed, blew their noses and sneezed *la mode Anglais*. Except in colour and physical courage and many other manly qualities, they became veritable Sahebs. Where was there any room for the study of Sacred Books, or the literature and philosophy of their own country? This state of things continues, more or less, even up to now; and you are the first westernised Bengali, who lament over the cessation of readings from sacred Books, and think that the study of such Books should be encouraged "to bring their (youths') minds through them in direct touch with spiritual and moral truths." I am glad you feel the want now; probably your philosophical researches have led you into the eastern wilds. But 'better late than never.'

Now, to the subjects discussed in your lectures. I better begin with the Preface. As President of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, you, of course, naturally addressed the Brahmo Community, which is a microscopic body when compared with the other religious communities of India. Your observation that the Brahmo Samaj is "a body *representative* of religious liberals in India" cannot be founded on fact, but the wish has been the father of the thought. The population of India (except the Native States) is 294,361,056 according to the last Census. Of these, 207 millions are Hindus and the number of Brahmos has grown from 3051 in 1891 to 4050 in 1901 in the course of ten long years. Is it correct to say that 4050 represent even 207 millions of Hindus, far less the vast millions of India? Like the Brahmo Samaj, many an attempt has been made in this country to break through idolatry, superstitious usages and the rigidity of the caste system (as for instance, Vaishnavism, Sikhism) but the

result has been the formation of only a Sect of Hinduism.

Brahmaism hitherto has been still sectarian in its views and doctrines, as I shall show hereafter ; and so long as it remains so crippled, crumbled and 'maimed', as it were, there is little chance of its being the Religion of the Future as you so piously hope, and in which I heartily join.

I fail to see, having regard to your observations in your last lecture from which I have quoted, why, in wishing that "the teachers of the Brahmo Samaj should co-operate with the teachers of Free Christianity and Liberal Religion in the West to unfold the secrets of man's spiritual nature, to unfold the laws of the spiritual world," you do not also ask them to co-operate with the spiritual teachers of your own country, both of the past and the present, especially when you speak of the "spiritual wealth of ancient India " (p. 26). I find that whenever there is a reference to moral and spiritual education, you always advise seeking help from the West, as if the East has nothing to teach you. This I can only ascribe to the natural bent of a westernised intellect. The dress, and the aping of English mannerism of which I said something before are very trivial things and of no consequence, compared to the westernisation of the mind, the feelings and sentiments of educated Bengalis ; and this has led to endless economic disasters as I hope to prove before I finish. But in this connection (of spirituality) I wish to ask you one question, and I hope you will not take it amiss or consider it impertinent, because my object is to gain knowledge. Has the West much to teach us spirituality ? Of course, it depends upon our respective ideas on the subject. I understand it (spirituality) —and it is the oriental idea,—to be a desire, a hankering

for entering into the Infinite—a realisation of “the everlasting Yea” of Carlyle, wherein all contradiction is solved, wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him”; the attainment of the consciousness that God and I are one,—whether the *Jivatma* (Human Soul) and the *Paramatma* (Divine Soul) are one and the same or different, the better opinion being it is the same,—that He dwells in me and I in Him; the realisation of perfect peace and contentment called *Mukti*; and the finding out of the way to such attainment. It stands to reason that those who believe that their salvation has already been secured for them by the sacrifice of Christ, whom they call the Redeemer, should not have wasted much of their valuable time in meditating on the means of attaining that which has been vicariously vouchsafed to them; or speculate and philosophise on the subject of the Soul; or care to know whether the Human Soul and the Divine Soul are one and the same or distinct; or to solve the many complex problems of transmigration of the Soul, or rebirth, predestination, &c., which troubled the Rishis of this country. I am not a scholar but I have made some enquiries on these subjects from scholars who have studied both the Eastern and Western philosophy and theology; and I am assured that the old school in the West, since the birth of Christ, never discussed these subjects from the standpoint of *Mukti* or Salvation and the modern school is just turning their attention to serious subjects like these. Whether my information is correct or not, you are the best judge and are fit to illumine me. The ancient Rishis who spent almost their lifetime in contemplation and meditation, laid down divers methods for obtaining Salvation,—the *Karma Yoga*, the *Bhakti Yoga* and the *Jnan Yoga* to suit all classes of people, the literate and the illiterate; but I do

not know whether the Western sages attempted anything in these lines. In the East, the belief is that there is or can be no royal road to Salvation but the West believes there is, in accepting the Crucifixion of Christ and acting up to his precepts. In the East, there can be no *Mukti* without *Sadhana*, and the rule and regulation laid down are very rigid and disciplinary. I do not know if the West has made any such demands on our patience, endurance and self-sacrifice. If you wish "to discover (or rather obtain a knowledge of) the laws of the Spiritual World," it is my firm belief founded upon long experience, that you must apply to the East, and not to the West, for such knowledge.

Religion of
the Brahmo
Samaj.

You say—"the religion of the Brahmo Samaj has already become the religion of the advanced and cultured members of all religious denominations of the world." Quite so, but why? What is the religion of the Brahmo Samaj? Is it not the pure Theism of the Upanishads propounded by Raja Rammohun Roy, or the primitive religion of the Aryans purged of idolatry and the crusts of other degrading customs and usages which subsequently found their way into it, *minus* its divine origin or revelation? If you mean by it not that, but a religion consisting of truths taken from all sources and established religions, Hindu, Budhistic, Christian and Islamic, then the Brahmo Samaj has no religion peculiarly its own, and it is a misnomer to call it the religion of the Brahmo Samaj.

The worship of One without a Second, "of the infinite and perfect Being whose essence is Truth," as you say, is the common ground of all systems of Religion. The Omnipresence and Omniscience of that Being, His Love, Justice, Impartiality, Grace and Mercy and other Divine attributes are admitted by all established religions.

Even the Orthodox Hindus believe that He whom they worship, is not the idol before them but *Brahmo*, the Supreme Being, the idol before them being only a means to the end.

The only differentiating principles are (1) Disbelief in Revelation, (2) Disbelief in Incarnations or Avatars, (3) Non-observance of the caste system. I do not mention Idolatry separately, because Theism excludes it, and the founder's sole object was to declare a war against idolatry. As regards the first, (revelation), you rightly observe, "the modern discoveries of science have demolished the belief in the infallibility of the prophets, seers, sages and sacred Books even in the West." So this separating element disappears from its specialty. As to the second (incarnations), there is no suggestion of it in the Upanishads from which our seeds of faith are taken, whether they are inspired and infallible or not. It is the subsequent *Samhitas* that brought in this idea. But what is this idea after all? Paramahansa Ramkrishna explained this idea, according to our Shastri Mohashaya, (November issue of the Modern Review) in the following way: "Take the case of the ocean. It is a wide and almost infinite expanse of water. But owing to special causes, in special parts of this wide sea the water becomes congealed into ice. When reduced to ice, it can easily be manipulated and applied to special uses. An incarnation is something like that. Like that infinite expanse of water, there is the infinite Power emanent in matter and mind, but for some special purposes, in special regions a portion of that infinite Power, as it were, assumes a tangible shape in history; that is what you call a great man, but he is properly speaking a local manifestation of the all pervading Divine Power, or in other words, an incarnation of God. The great-

ness of great men is essentially the manifestation of Divine energy." Our Shastri had to admit that he too believed "that the greatness of the great teachers of humanity was a divine communication, and in that sense they were incarnations of a Divine Idea." We should always look to the principle of a thing and not to the form of it, or be scared away by popular acceptance of any terms. But have we been altogether free from this idea? We hear of 'ascensions,' celebration of the birth and death days of our great men, and in time, who can say, these great men will not be looked upon as incarnations by our posterity?

Castehood.

The third specialty of our religion is that we do not believe in caste or observe it. But the Vedas also did not sanction it. There is no trace of it in the Vedas; and I have the authority of a profound scholar like Professor Goldstücker in my favor. "The institution of caste, however, seems to have been at the time (of the Vedas) unknown; for there is no evidence to prove that the names, which at a later period were current for the distinction of caste, were employed in the same sense by the poets of those hymns (Rig Veda). (Literary Remains, 271.) Therefore, what has become the 'religion of the advanced and cultured members of all religious denominations' is not the distinctive religion of the Brahmo Samaj, but universal truths which are parts and parcels of every religion of the world which I would call the Universal Religion, or the *Sanaton Arya Dharma*, which Raja Ram Mohan Roy intended to establish, at once undenominational and unsectarian, accessible to, and acceptable by all religious denominations. Very little credit is due to the Brahmos for such Universal truths being accepted by "the advanced and cultured members of all religious denominations,"

nor are they accepted as the religion of the Brahmo Samaj.

But whether the Samaj remains sectarian and denominational, confined to a few thousand, or develops itself into an Universal Church, as I piously hope it will, I agree with you in what you say about its President, executive officers and workers. The question of raising competent teachers, developing spiritual faculties and giving moral education to our boys and girls, falls under the heading of education with which you fully deal in your second and third lectures and about which, though not an educationist, I intend to say a few words later on. But before I do so, I wish to say that I fully agree with you about the minister, the congregation and the service in the *Mandir*.

Duties of the President, executive officers and workers.

The minister must be a man of liberal education and well read in the scriptures of the East and West, and well versed in the philosophy and theology of all religious denominations. He must above all be pious. His visions must be vast and his sympathies world-wide. He must be an embodiment of all the virtues, self-sacrifice, meekness, humility, charity, selfless love, justice, impartiality; he must regard "men of all religions and of no religion with the same impartial spirit, with all freedom from doubt and with perfect equanimity. He must train his mind in strong impartial and gentle thoughts, train his heart in purity and compassion, train his tongue to silence and to true and stainless speech; so living without seeking to convert, he will convince; without arguing, he will teach; not cherishing ambition, the wise will find him out; and without striving to gain men's opinions, he will subdue their hearts." He must be one who has conquered his lusts, his errors, his opinions and prejudices; yielded up that

Qualification of a minister.

self—that personality that men mostly love and to which they cling with fierce tenacity ; and “ has left behind him all perplexity and entered into a simplicity so profoundly simple as to be looked upon by the world as foolishness.” He must have realised his oneness with the Infinite. This is the Asiatic ideal of a spiritual *Guru*, and I hope you will admit that it is a lofty, proper and true ideal. The ideals, sentiments, spiritual and moral aspirations of a congregation are leavened by what they hear from the lips of the minister and by what they see in the life he leads. This very much conforms to your ideal of a minister, though you have cast him in western mould ; you would wish him to be Bishop Weldon or Dr. Arnold, while I wish him to be a Yajnavalkya or a Sankaracharya.

Congregation
and Sermons,

As regards the congregation, I do not know what you mean by “an ideal congregation.” The congregation must consist of people of different inclinations, hopes and aspirations, different training, mental and moral culture and spiritual development. In the religious world you cannot expect to find people of the same bent of mind or of the same ‘receptivity’ of moral and spiritual truths. Whether they may not be welded into a homogenous whole would depend upon the ministers, in the way he conducts the service and upon his sermons. In order to attract the attention of the congregation, the ministers would bear in mind that he is not addressing Brahmans only, but people of all persuasions or of no persuasion at all. The service should therefore be well thought out and always written and the texts taken from the sacred Books of all countries and should be such as may touch the life, conduct and character of all present, be they Hindus, Mahomedans, Christians, Budhists or of any other religious denominations, or even

of no religion who frequent the church "not for the doctrine, but for the music there"; they should be calculated to expand the moral and spiritual vision of the audience, and broaden their hearts, opinions and convictions, at least set them a-thinking about spiritual and moral truths and of Him to whom these truths lead. The higher flights of imagination into unknown regions in which the ministers sometimes soar and the practice of occasionally indulging in eulogy of Brahmos and of their creed, their performances and sacrifices should be religiously avoided in public worship. Revd. Voysey's or the late Revd. Fletcher William's Sermons (I have not heard Stopford Brooke or other distinguished preachers in the west) should serve as good specimens, being practical and not speculative or theoretical. This is the way to attract those who are faltering between faith and unfaith, who are knocking at the gate of our Temple but dare not enter; and to enlist their sympathy and co-operation. There are persons, and their number is legion, who, though born Hindus, Mussulmans, Christians or Budhists, do not in reality profess the creed of their forefathers, and would like to put off the shackles of sectarianism and accept something higher and nobler, wider and universal than their creed-bound life; and who frequent churches of all denominations to find their ideal; and the minister should capture these persons and give them what they are in search of.

I fully agree with you that the children or youths not sufficiently trained, should not be allowed to join the service with the aged; and that they do not understand the meaning of words used, nor can they have any conception of the Formless and Shapeless Infinite to join in the worship. I go still further and say that there should be no service for them until the training, I speak

Children
should be
excluded from
the service,

of, is completed. The belief that the son of a Hindu should necessarily be a Hindu, the son of a Christian should be a Christian or that the son of a Brahmo should be a Brahmo, is very mischievous and necessarily leads to evils. Spiritual truths cannot be perceived second hand. It is not without a special spiritual training (of which I should like to say something hereafter) that an idea of the Infinite can be formed. Where there is no proper conception of the object, there can be no offering of the heart. Mere parrot-like repetition is utterly useless. It is better that the child should grow into a boy without preconceived ideas, and should then grow into a man after receiving proper training and then chose his own religion and join any church or denomination he likes.

Spiritual and
moral educa-
tion of boys.

The question of the spiritual and moral education of our boys and girls is a very important and withal a very difficult question, and the *method* of imparting such education is still more complex. I have already given you a glimpse into my idea of spirituality ; and in my humble opinion, the metaphysical division of the spiritual into Æsthetic, Moral and Religious senses does not help us much towards spirituality. Ideals of Truth, Justice, Love, Mercy, Goodness are abstract ideas not very well understood by boys or girls. The most acceptable ideal would be the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God. The highest ideal of *Anandam* may also be to some extent put before them, as they may very well realise *Ananda* (joy). This is the ideal of the *yogis* who say with one accord that when they realise His Presence, there is nothing but Ananda—joy and bliss, the utter negation of all the senses (*Indrias*). But before the training begins, you must solve some pertinent problems relating to the spiritual world and arrive at defi-

nite conclusions. I have already hinted at some of these, *i.e.* whether the Divine and human Souls are one and the same. Is the Divine Spirit to be regarded as a School Master standing apart, and directing the operations of the human Soul, as if by a magical wand? Rebirth or transmigration of the Soul and kindred subjects. If there is Rebirth, is it inconsistent with the immortality of the Soul? How to reconcile the fact of one man being born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and another man grovelling in misery, with the Justice and Impartiality of God; why are persons born deaf, dumb and blind? Is there any truth in the doctrine of Predestination? What is Death? Is there any hereafter? If so, where and how do we live and grow there? Is there any truth in the Christian doctrine of a Heaven and a Hell, or of Original Sin? These are questions which spiritual students are likely to ask, and the *guru* must be prepared to answer, before assuming the role of a spiritual teacher. I should very much like to know whether Western philosophers and theologians have essayed to grapple with, and answer, these questions. You know better, and should be in a position to enlighten me on the subject. But I know Indian sages have tried to solve these problems, but with what success requires investigation. I have not heard any of our ministers or preachers descant on these subjects.

You say and rightly too, that "we cannot regard any scriptures or any prophets and teachers as infallible or final;" that "we accept the truth not on any personal authority, but on the authority of the spiritual faculty inherent in us," and you make "the human soul itself to be the ultimate authority in moral and spiritual matters." But is there no difficulty in the way? The first question that arises is—Is the Soul 'a faculty' of the

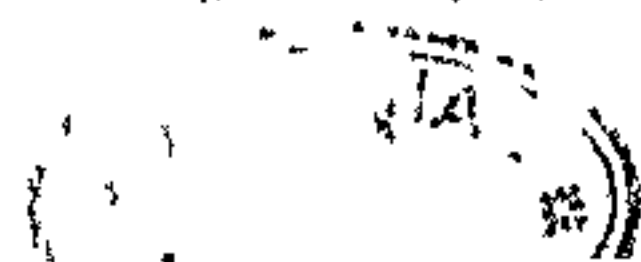
mind? then is the Soul infallible? Unless you treat it as a part and parcel of the Divine Soul, can it be infallible? If it is a faculty of the mind and not a part of the Divine Soul, "whether it is called Conscience, Moral Sense, Moral Reason, Practical Reason or Spiritual Sense,"—all metaphysical terms, Is that infallible? Otherwise, how can it be the ultimate authority? This is the question which all Revelationists would ask. A man may lose his mental faculties for a time as lunatics do, or during mental aberration, as in delirium. He may be utterly unconscious for days in case of concussion of the brain. The mind is fickle, unstable, fluctuating—how can it be the arbiter between truth and falsehood? The Indian sages and seers have answered this question by treating the Soul as an integral part of the Divine Soul, and by keeping the mind separate from the Soul. It is an essence of the immortal spirit, and not of the mind at all. Mind is not the same as spirit. In proportion as this immaterial essence is developed by culture (*Sadhana* they call it,) we advance towards, to use your own words, "the Central Light of the spiritual world." For this reason, as you say, "it is evident that the vision of God admits of degrees and is very different in the different stages of progress of the Soul." In my humble opinion, we do not realise the Infinite and the Perfect in our *Mind*, but in the *Soul*, though it may be through the mind as a channel of communication. The divine element you speak of exists in the Soul. This makes all the difference between Western and Eastern ideals of spirituality, and we have gone in for the former. The general idea of worship in the West seems to be, (so far as we can gather from the books) "eat, drink and be merry," as Sardanapalus said; but at the same time, open the Bible, read a few

texts, close your eyes but keep the mind ready to realise in your consciousness some divine elements corresponding to the different "aspects of God," as you say. For public worship, go to the Church, listen to the sermons and 'the doctrine preached there,' and think your devotion over,—your conscience satisfied; and say your prayers amidst the din of the jarring elements of contending passions and strife, the clash of divergent interests, and the tumultuous noise of busy and clamorous crowds that surround them. Our worship is very much after this pattern.

There can be no doubt that "Prayer is the pathway to God," as you say. "It is the secret of all growth in spiritual life and knowledge," as an eminent eclectic thinker and writer has said. But what is real prayer? "To love God and do his work" as one of our seeds (beej) lays down, which you approvingly quote. But is not that like an Algebraic equation, the simplification of which involves a long and tedious process? It is not an expression of the material wants of the body, a petition for happiness, wealth, luxury and all the necessaries and the good things of this world. "It is an act of the Soul" as you truly say. The key-note is meditation—"the intense dwelling in thought upon an idea, or theme, or both, with the object of thoroughly comprehending it and incorporating it into your very being." The same eclectic thinker on Religion has said, "a mere petitionary prayer without meditation is a body without a Soul, and is powerless to lift the mind and heart above sin and affliction. It is not an idle *reverie*. It is a searching and uncompromising thought which allows nothing to remain but the simple and naked truth." Considered in this light, is the Western mode of worship, which I have described above and which we follow, a reality? You must

Prayer.

meditate on each of the attributes separately to make it a part of your soul. Budha meditated upon Truth (*Satyam*), and when he became *Sidha* he instructed his pupil in five great meditations,—Love, Pity, Joy, Infirmary and, lastly, Serenity. Jesus meditated upon the Divine Immanence and when he became *Siddha*, he realised that he and his Maker were one, and declared—“I and my Father are one.” Chaitanya meditated upon Love, and taught Bhakti as the passport to the Divine Love. Mahomet meditated upon Purity and laid down rigid rules about prayer; and you hear the cry of the Imam at stated hours of the day and night from the mosques. But what is the essence of meditation? Concentration; and concentration is impossible amidst the buzz of the busy world. *Dhyan* or meditation in public worship is simply a mockery. But is it necessary that one should altogether retire from the world into a wilderness, to meditate? No; you must fix a time when your attention is not likely to be distracted by extraneous objects. When the whole creation is lulled into repose, and even the birds do not sing to disturb the serenity of your mind, then is the time for holding your communion with your Maker. “The best time,” says the same writer, “is the very early morning when the spirit of repose is upon everything, the passions, after the long bodily fast of the night will be subdued, the excitements and worries of the previous day will have died away, and the mind, strong and yet restful, will be receptive to spiritual instruction.” Then again, at midnight there is an opening, and devout Hindu worshippers, idolatrous though some of them may be, generally choose this time for the union of the two Souls; for there is hardly any pious Hindu who goes to bed until he has finished his *Tapa* and *Japa*. Of course, the *Yogis*



say that they may concentrate their attention at any moment they like, by some process of holding their breath (*Pranayam*), and at any place however crowded, but such instances are very rare, even if true. But whatever the hour, or the time, or the occasion may be, the pathway is not strewn with roses but abounds with thorns. It must be reached by constant practice and diligent application until it grows into a habit. It must be the result of assiduous endeavour in inward purification—by conquering and purifying all our desires and appetites, by subduing and quieting all our emotions, by preventing the oscillation of the senses and by acquiring perfect poise and equilibrium. To arrive at such a stage, a great deal of training is necessary, and I shall deal with this subject when considering the question of spiritual training.

But what is the test of the reality or otherwise of prayer? Our life. Have we learnt to sacrifice our Self? "Where Self is, Truth is not; where Truth is, Self is not" said Budha. Have we banished all thoughts of suspicion about the motives of others? Have we vanquished envy, vanity, egotism, enmity, hatred, lust and pride? Are we not still self-willed, self-indulgent and self-centred? Have we learnt to return good for evil, gentleness for ill treatment, love for hatred, and to hold our tongue when villified, misjudged, slandered and scandalised? Have we learnt to govern our temper and personal dislikes, our passions and condemnation of others? Have we given up all ostentation and self-praise, lust for power and leadership? Are we fully prepared to put on the 'yoke of lowliness' and 'the garment of humility'? Has our heart become holy, and our life blameless, and "expanded with ever broadening love embracing the whole universe with thoughtful tenderness." Have we ceased to think that our's is the truth and all other religions are

Test of real
Prayer.

full of errors? Have we abandoned the belief that God is attainable by our religion only and that He denies Himself to any other creed? Have we grown tolerant of the opinions of others, however much we may differ from them? Real prayer leads us to, as the Gita *says,—

“Fearlessness, singleness of soul, the will
 “Always to strive for wisdom ; opened *hand
 “And governed appetites ; and piety,
 “And love of lonely study ; humbleness,
 “Uprightness, heed to injure nought which live,
 “Truthfulness, slowness into wrath, a mind
 “That lightly letteth go what others prize ;
 “And equanimity, and charity
 “Which spieth no man’s faults ; and tenderness,
 “Towards all that suffer ; a contented heart
 “Fluttered by no desires ; a bearing, mild
 “Modest and grave, with manhood, nobly mixd
 “With patience, fortitude and purity ;
 “An unrevengeful spirit, never given
 “To rate itself too high ; such be the signs
 “O ! Indian Prince, of him whose feet are set
 “On that fair path which leads to heavenly birth.

(Sir Mathew Arnold’s translation)

Turning the search-light of truth into our habits, actions, speech, secret thoughts and desires, or by close ‘Self-Examination,’ as you say, can we say either of ourselves, or of our community, that we have even approached this standard after praying for nearly three quarters of a century now? This is real Light, all other lights are so many will-o-the-wisps.

Why educated
 people do not
 call them-
 selves Brahmos? ✓

You complain that “at one time all educated men were proud to call themselves Brahmos,” but no longer do so. There is a little bit of egotism in your observation that the “time shall come again when no one will be re-

garded as properly educated who has not adopted the highest ideals of Brahmoism," knowing full well that those ideals are common to all religions. But why do not people call themselves Brahmos now? Truth is sometimes unpalatable, but I will tell you the truth. I have conversed on this subject with several people, who at one time used to come to the Samaj and freely mix with our community; some of them also were members of our Samaj but seceded, and are called renegades. The version they give is that they were attracted to the Samaj by the liberality of its views. They thought that our family life was higher and purer; our brotherhood genuine, our leaders tolerant of other people's opinions and easily accessible; that we were more truthful, honest, trustful of one another, meek, humble, forgiving and charitable; and that we were above petty jealousy, suspicion, envy and hatred. In fact, they thought that, we were an ideal community. They also thought our constitution was real, and our sympathies broader and all embracing. Distance lent enchantment to their view. Coming to our homes what did they find? Torn up with factions, dissensions, petty jealousy; distrustful of one another, full of ungovernable temper, mutual hatred, and ill-feeling. In a household of a few, such a trivial thing as the head or tail of a big fish formed the bone of contention. Petty household affairs raised a storm of strife. They found that our well-to-do people were educating their children, boys and girls, on entirely foreign lines; so that some of them did not even know their mother tongue, could not speak or write it; and as for grown up girls, they considered house-hold work mere drudgery, and menial work, degrading. They also found that some of our homes were not the abode of peace, or of nuptial

fidelity. They did not find our homes a bit better than the homes they had left, or intended to leave. So they turned their back towards our community and returned to their parents, family and community whom they had left, or intended to leave, for the sake of something better and higher.

Our constitu-
tion.

Regarding our constitution and constitutional government, of which you vaunt so much, they found it was a huge delusion. As in the National Congress, all the dishes are cooked by the leading *chefs* and doled out to the guests called delegates, who must eat them whether they relish them or not; where, even the list of the subject committee is prepared before-hand, and then formally put before the delegates, who, after hearing the speakers also selected by the leaders, merely lift up their hands in approval; where those who are not in the charmed circle of the leaders (or rather the cabinet) or in their confidence, are not allowed to take any prominent part in the discussion of the subjects or resolutions put before them; so it happened in the constitution of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. I am, of course, speaking of the time when the constitution was inaugurated. At the annual meetings, when Brahmos came from the mufasil Samajes, and tried to speak and express their opinions on subjects of general importance to the community, up stood some of our leaders to talk and the outsider had to sit down. They were not given any opportunity to speak out, the talking and speechifying being confined to prominent local members and leaders. Ministers and missionaries came, but were not requested to take any leading part on the 11th Magh—the Utsav day. Resolutions passed at a meeting of the Executive Committee in the absence of the leaders were vetoed at the next

meeting if the leaders disapproved of them, or any of them. I assure you, I say all this from personal experience. I once belonged to the Executive and General Committee, and also attended annual meetings. I once drafted the annual Report of the Samaj in which I did not spare our defects and shortcomings, but the Executive Committee did not approve of it, because of the plain speaking indulged in it. It was not all hallelujahs in praise of the Samaj and its work. Things may have improved since, and I hope they have. Nothing will give me greater delight than to hear that they have improved since I left, which I did in disgust. Before the starting of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, educated people were rather shocked at the sight of licking the dust of the feet of the Minister, which led another leader to rebel and a sort of hero-worship prevailed. As a matter of fact, very few outsiders were admitted into our inner Council. I am inclined to believe that such people will never re-enter our fold, until we put our house in order, and place it on a higher spiritual and moral plane, and manage it on more liberal principles.

I now come to the question of education, the most Education. important of all dealt with by you. I entirely agree with you on the necessity of a College and a School, and of a Theological Institution, for the intellectual, moral and spiritual education of our boys and girls; but I disagree with you on the method of imparting such education. First, as to intellectual or general education.

We live to learn. A history of Hindu Chemistry by Intellectual. two renowned Bengali Scholars, seems to have drawn your attention to, and convinced you "that the ancient Hindus were not merely an emotional, imaginative and contemplative people.....but had successfully cultivated the Sciences of Nature and developed methods of

scientific observations and reasoning, which compare favourably, according to Principal Seal, with Mill's doctrine of Inference and Experimental methods" (p. 25). You are yourself a Doctor of Science, and but for this book revealing to you the fact of the existence of "Mechanical, Physical, and Chemical theories of the ancient Hindus," you would have been in utter ignorance about it, and perhaps, would have scouted the idea that the barbarous East could have boasted of such things. It is a pity that the exploration into our sacred Books, Literature and Philosophy were left to European Scholars like Max Muller and Goldstücker and others, who are laboring in the same field. Professor Goldstucker says—"The social condition of the Hindus as reflected by the hymns of the Veda (Rig Veda) is not that of a pastoral or nomadic people, but on the contrary, betrays an advanced stage of civilisation. Frequent allusion is made in them to towns and cities, to mighty kings and their prodigious wealth. Besides agriculture, they mention various Arts which were practised by the people, as the art of weaving, of melting precious metals, of fabricating cars, golden and iron mail, and golden ornaments. The employment of the needle and the use of musical instruments were known to them. They also prove that the Hindus of that period were not only familiar with the ocean, but sometimes must have been engaged in naval expeditions. They had some knowledge of medicine and must have made some advance in astronomical computation as mention is made of the adoption of an intercalary month for the purpose of adjusting the solar and lunar years" (Literary Remains I. 271). If you are an attentive reader of contemporary Bengali newspapers and periodicals conducted in English, you must be aware

that it is now established that the Hindus had their own Arithmetic, Algebra, Astronomy, Optics, Physical Geography, Electricity and Magnetism ; their commerce, their sailing boats, their ship-building, their mechanical Engineering, their surgical instruments, their music, their fine Arts, their architects, their painters, sculptors and their airships too, (if the Mahabharat is not altogether a myth), in addition to their Literature, Philosophy and Sacred Books ; the numerals 1, 2, 3, &c., and first, second and third, &c., first originated in India, and so did the game of chess ; in fact, ancient India had everything necessary to meet the demands of civilisation. You will be surprised to hear, as I was, that there is, in Manu, a Sloka inculcating almost the same truths about the vegetable kingdom, which Dr. J. C. Bose found out after a great deal of research, and elucidated in his learned treatise—"The Response in the Living and non-Living." (Ch. IV. 49). To me, all this illumination comes too late in life, but 'better late than never.' It would have probably changed the whole course of my life and living. But with this knowledge of our ancient civilisation and culture, what have we done to utilise them in educating our people ? Is not the policy and mode of education just the same as if we have still no knowledge about them ? Of course, in Government schools and colleges, we cannot expect any change ; but in our own institutions, are we not still treading on the beaten track ? Side by side with English literature, have we tried to introduce our own literature, instead of the compilations from our literature, prepared by the Text-book Committee of the University, which have made us "Jack of all trades but master of none ?" Side by side with English History, have we made any attempt to teach the history of our own country, even in fragments to be found here

and there ; or the Puranas, the Mahabharat and the Ramayana ; has the Geography of our own country found any place in the curriculum of our studies ? Have we tried to find out what the Mathematics of our own country was ? or the Astronomy of Arya Bhatta, or Baraha Missra, the father-in-law, or of Mihir Misra, the husband of Khana, who herself was a distinguished astronomer, and tried to place them before our students, side by side with Western astronomy ? Hindu Astrology was at one time a living science, and so was Palmistry, but we now laugh them to scorn ; but we are disposed to believe in Zadkiels and other western astrologers, and palmists, and gladly cross their palms with shillings when in Europe. Have we placed Eastern philosophy before our students side by side with Western philosophy, or Indian Logic with Western Logic ? Before applying Western scientific discoveries to our needs, did we make any attempt to find out whether our own country had anything of the same kind, or was any attempt made to adapt them to the genius of this country ? Have we given any encouragement to our own inventions, however crude they may be, and placed them before our students, or explained their principles to them ? I know a Jessore gentleman invented a bike to cross the river ; an Assamese lad was seen to approach a steamer on the Brahmaputra river paddling his way on a machine, like a bike, made of few pieces of tin ; there were several machines invented for hand-weaving at the time when the Swadeshi movement was on its zenith, but they did not attract any notice, and were starved to death for want of capital. There is enough inventive genius in this country but what have our schools and colleges done to develop this genius ? Our students have learnt to ape and copy, but have not been taught to attempt any thing original. Is not

this a defect in our general education ? Blend the West with the East, and the result may be very satisfactory. Teach the boys to stand on their own legs; open to them the panorama of the West and East simultaneously, and let them study both. Let not the refulgent rays of the West dim their eyes to the lustre of the East. If you can accomplish this, you will raise the Brahmo Samaj considerably in the estimation of the public, and set an example which will not only redound to your credit as an educationist, but serve as a beacon light to the posterity.

The intellectual education of our girls is a much more intricate question. Hitherto we have given them an education more befitting the harder sex. We copied *verbatim* from the worst patterns of the West. We have made them more of Suffragists than wives, mothers or sisters which God intended that they should be. We totally misconceived the sphere of their life ; and completely lost sight of the main difference in the natural constitution of the two sexes. Women are the presiding deities of the home. I do not say this is purely an Indian conception of the duties of women. The Western ideal is also the same. But we made the butterfly section of Western Society our models, either not knowing or neglecting the best patterns of womanhood, which are abundantly found in the West and the East. Our principal difficulty was the absence of our own institutions and the want of good European Girls Schools manned by well educated European ladies. We had to send our girls to Eurasian schools where the education is of the most superficial type, and where our girls learnt not only bad English, but bad manners and bad deportment. Skipping, dancing, and flirting, aping western mode of talking, eating,

sitting and reclining on sofas or easy chairs were very easily learnt, but nothing worth the name of education. We did not then know or care to know that there were in our own country admirable types of real and genuine womanhood to serve as models to our girls,—women who were as well educated as any woman in any country on the face of the world,—whose names are reverently mentioned every morning in our homes, such as Sita, Sabitri, Sabya, Damayanti and Sakuntala ; and amongst the Panditas—Maitreyi, Bishwabara, Gargi, Lilavati, Khana and a host of others. We looked upon them as mythical persons, not knowing the history or literature about them. We did not then know, as we do now, that the prayer, *Asatama Satgamaya*, which we recite every day in our devotions, is the composition of Maitreyi; that Bishwabara composed the 28th Sukta of the 5th Mandal of Rigveda; and that Romesha, Urvashi and others composed Sukta 126 Mandal 1, Rik 7 ; Suktas 10 and 95, Mandal 10, and several others hymns of the Rigveda ; all those panditas had made the Indian Shastras and philosophy subjects of their special study. In the life of Sankaracharjya, we find that after he had vanquished by reason and argument almost the whole world of Pandits, on the question of *Adaitavad* (that the Divine and human Souls are one), he visited Mandan Misser, who was a great authority on *Dwaitavad* (that the two Souls were quite distinct), and before they discussed the subject it was agreed that the defeated one would accept the doctrine of the other. After a long discussion, Mandan Misser had to admit defeat ; but before he was called upon to keep his promise, Ubhai Bharati, his wife, challenged Sankaracharjya to a forensic duel with her, and said as husband and wife were one, unless he could defeat her also her husband could not be called

upon to surrender. The challenge being accepted, Ubhai Bharati questioned the great Pandit on some Shastras, which he failed to answer as he had not studied that branch of the Shastras. Again, we find when Yajna Valkya was about to give up his family life and become a Sanyasi, he made an equal division of his earthly goods and effects among his two wives ; and he was in the act of making over possession to them, when Matrayi one of his wives said—"What shall I do with wealth, take me with you and give me *Paramartha Jnan* (knowledge of the Infinite)."

With such luminaries before us, we sought for the best pattern of womanhood elsewhere. But now that we have a school of our own for the education of our girls, let us introduce them to the best specimens of our womanhood. Let, as I have said of our boys, the mixture of Western and Eastern learning form the main pillar of our educational edifice for the girls too. Let them be taught ancient Sanskrit and modern Bengali Literature, so as to be conversant with the ancient type of Indian womanhood, their life, habits, manners and customs, so that the disgraceful state of our girls growing in utter ignorance of their mother-tongue and of their not being able to read, speak or write it, may be removed. Let them be taught Indian Fine Arts and be brought up in such a way as to become exemplary mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, nurses and good companions to their husbands. Let them learn domestic economy. Let them not despise household work as drudgery and menial work as degrading to their position. As ministering angels, nothing should be derogatory to their sense of honor. Let them be taught foremost of all, self-sacrifice, which is at the bottom of all our happiness. Let us bring them up as good house-

wives to suit all conditions of men—aristocrats, middle classes and the poorer classes. Let us teach them respect and reverence for their senior relations—mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters and sisters-in-law, fathers, fathers-in-law, elder brothers and brothers-in-law, uncles and uncles-in-law and all elderly men and women. Let them be sweet-mouthed, meek and humble; not egotistic, foul-mouthed or stuck up in their bearing. Let their education be of such a kind as to make their hearts expand, their mind broadened, their sympathies widened, so as to serve as handmaids to Humanity; to make their homes abodes of peace, love and happiness. Let not their intellectual attainments interfere with the household affairs and let them bear in mind that their first thought should be the Home and everything else afterwards. Let Indian music be taught. There is great dearth of female teachers, but let us train up the girls by a male teacher who is a thorough master of Hindu music. It is a great mistake to teach every girl vocal music. Let those only who have natural aptitude be selected for vocal music, but let everyone learn instrumental music. In time, we shall be able to do without male teachers, and supply the country with qualified female musical teachers, a great *desideratum* of the present time. I am delighted to hear that a beginning has been made by the starting of the Brahma Girls School, which if properly conducted, keeping in view our national ideals, will, in time, develope into an ideal girls school. It is desirable that the prominent members, should not keep away their own girls from it and educate them elsewhere, and thereby set a bad example; and further that Hindu and Mahomedafi holidays should be observed for the students of those denominations.

Then as to the method of imparting moral and spiritual education. You must be now familiar with my ideal of spirituality ; and my opinion is that moral education, must follow, as the night follows the day, the spiritual training. A sort of Catechism, explaining, "the terms in most frequent use in the language of our service," recommended by you, does not seem to me sufficient to meet the requirements. "A habit of prayer and meditation" is not acquired except by constant practice ; and such practice must be preceded by fitting preparation of the Mind and Soul, and I may also add, of the body, by proper discipline to sharpen the edge of what you call, "the receptivity" for spiritual truths. It was with this object in view, I believe, that the ancient Rishis prescribed *Bramhacharjya* for the students of our country, both boys and girls, before they reached manhood or womanhood, respectively. The rules and regulations laid down are very strict, but calculated to train the body, mind and the soul. Shortly speaking, they enjoin every student to rise before dawn, take their ablutions, by which time the Sun rising, they are to salute the Sun as the first manifestation of the Divine Light disclosed to them at the dawn of the day ; then salute the Guru, the parents and elders of the family ; and then pay respects to all to whom respect is due, generating in them reverence for their elders and superiors ; then begin their study after reciting some text from the Vedas, imploring the All-wise to bless their efforts. After finishing their task, they are to take their food which must be very simple, and strictly regulated to keep down the cravings of the flesh. Then they are to rest, compare notes with one another, or discuss the subject of their study ; and then back to study again for a little time, and then to take physical exercises, or indulge in some

Method of
imparting
education.

recreation they like best. After sunset ablution again, or at least cleansing the whole body, reciting texts, thanking the Creator for all the enjoyments of the day ; and praying for peace and rest during the night ; then at the feet of the Guru again for study ; wholesome but light food at night and then to rest ; not to have any comfort or luxuries ; to sit on mats and sleep on mats, probably to get hardy ; obedience to the Guru teaches humility and meekness ; self-denial is taught by the humble mode of living and "a habit of prayer and meditation" is taught by the recitation of *mantras*, or holy texts, from the sacred books twice a day, and also at the meals, such texts being explained to them by the Guru in the course of their study. Manu devotes one whole chapter to these duties, and I have taken only a few out of them. It may be said that these parrot-like recitations are not of much good ; but they are more or less good manure for the soil before the seeds are thrown ; and then gradually the seeds are cast, the seedlings appear ; and with the nitrogen of a pure heart poured into them, they grow into plants, and ultimately into big sturdy trees. I have already observed that the process of spiritual growth must be slow and tedious. One must rise from the finite to the Infinite. Boys and girls must be led to God through his manifestations in the creation, which they can realise, and then from the creation to the Creator by gradual steps. We learn from Eastern Gurus that to develop the power of meditation, their attention should first of all be concentrated upon definite objects which they may realise by their senses, then slowly to objects not realisable by the five senses but still comprehensible by their minds, such as Love, a father's or mother's love ; Truth—the parents or any other near relations, never breaking their promises,

never indulging in deceptions, but insisting upon straightforward conduct ; and Affection—the care and tenderness bestowed upon them, comforting them in their trials, caressing them when in affliction, tending them during their illness and looking after their health and comforts ; also by giving them object lessons, and drawing their attention to the mysteries of God's handiwork in the creation and tracing them to their legitimate Author. After they learn to fix their mind upon any subject, they will be able to realise abstract principles ; and ultimately to meditate upon the Great Unseen, playing the game of Hide-and-Seek in His creation ; and then to realise Him in their Soul. I am not aware of any better method for the training of young souls than *Barhmocharjya* for the reception of spiritual and moral truths ; and why should not this system be tried in our Schools at least so far as practicable ? If it is to be rejected because it is Hindu, and unsuited to modern conditions of life, then all I can say is that we are still at the bottom of the ladder of Liberalism ; and our religion has degenerated into a dogma. Mr. Robindra Nath Tagore has, I hear, adopted some such principle in his school at Bolepur with great success ; and it is worth enquiring into and giving a fair trial. Mrs. Beasant has founded the Hindu College on a like basis.

To found a College and a Theological Institution, you appeal for funds to the Brahmo Community ; but I do not think this community alone, even the three sections together, will be able to help us much to secure such a sum of money as will be required for a College or Colleges answering your expectations. The community is small and comparatively poor. There may be some who are well-to-do, but they are not wealthy or opulent. The majority have to make the two ends meet

Appeal for
funds

with difficulty. You will have, therefore, to appeal to the other Indian communities, and to the public generally. But our community is so exclusive, so sensitive, and narrow-minded, that I doubt whether there will be much response to our appeal. We feel ashamed to call ourselves Hindus, and they will hesitate much to assist us. We have seen the spectacle, at the distribution of prizes to our girls, of heaping abuses on the Hindus, though Hindu ladies contributed largely to the prize funds. The Moharajas who have recently begun to take some interest in our Samaj, may help us to some extent, but the question is,—will they? Our millionaires are not known to contribute liberally to our educational projects to the same extent as they respond to the call of Government for public memorials to august personages, or for pageants. The other communities may help us, but not to the extent we expect. This is due to our own bearing towards the public, which must include persons of various shades of opinion and character, good, bad or indifferent. Puritanism had its day; but in modern democratic times, it shuts out a lot of people from our community, who otherwise would have at least sympathised with our aims and objects, and lent their purses.

Puritan-like, we drive away from our community those who take even a drop of wine, and scrupulously shun people who frequent theatres. One of our ministers ceased to visit the Paramahansa of Dakhinessur, simply because some theatre people began to visit him, probably to seek spiritual help from him; not that his character had in any way suffered by contact with those people. We live very much like turtles in big shells; whenever we protrude our head and see something immoral or impure, we draw in our heads for fear of contamination. It is impossible to have a community of

saints ; there must be some black sheep in every flock. As an instance of narrow-mindedness, I can tell you of my own case. I was going to be nearly outcasted, simply because I called myself a Hindu in some family litigation and pleaded that Brahmos were Hindus as regards Inheritance and Succession. Again, a minister was treated with contempt and ridicule, because he said, "We have so long prayed with our eyes shut, let us pray with our eyes open." He was shuffled off the pulpit, because he was more radical in his thoughts and sermons than other ministers, and referred more frequently to our sacred texts. We get frightened at the mere mention of the name of 'Hari' 'Rudra,' and other terms used in the Vedas to denote the Divine Being, as is evidently shown by the *Vedanta Sūtras*, simply because they are also the gods of Hindu idolatry ; and we have taken care to strike out these words from our ritual, although taken from the Upanishads. Could our narrowmindedness or exclusiveness go further ? What is our three-quarters-of-a-century spiritual teaching worth, if we cannot meet vice face to face and conquer it by our spiritual forces ? We feel ourselves polluted by the very touch of impurity, instead of being able to purify it by our example and precepts ; and convert the base metal into gold by the touch-stone of our purer lives ? At one time, it was the mission of the Brahmo Samaj to reclaim fallen men and women, but we had to give up the attempt for fear of ourselves falling into their trap. We now hate them, and avoid them like reptiles, although Buddha received with open arms such men and women, and turned them into anchorites. Such is the moral courage and strength we have gained during this long period of religious life ! Our circle of friends and acquaintances is growing beautifully smaller ;

our sympathisers are falling off one by one, and we are being left severely alone. You very pithily say—"how our actions contradict our open professions and intentions," and pertinently ask,—“Does not the decline of the Brahmo Samaj show that it is suffering from external disorder and disease”? I only add, our narrow mindedness and exclusiveness too. Even Sir Herbert Risley in his Census Report of 1901, (p. 393, s. 689) says “Brahmoism has no attraction for them (the educated classes) when orthodox Hinduism allows them all the latitude they need.”

Social Institutions.

Yata Karma.

Namakaran.

Let us also take the social institutions into our consideration, to show how we have unnecessarily offended our Hindu brethren,—*viz.*, the *Yatakarma* (birth ceremony), the *Namakaran*, the Marriage, and Death ceremonies. The Hindus perform the *Yatakarma* on the sixth day of birth, but we generally do so on the last day of the month. The *Namakaran* ceremony, which is only another name for the *annoprashan* of the Hindus, and studiously performed in the sixth month, we perform whenever we choose, and sometime we do not observe it at all. We consider there is some superstition attached to the month, and do not stick to the sixth month, because the Hindus do so. We simply offer a prayer, and feed our friends and relations; but the Hindus do much more which is not wholly idolatrous. Why may we not adopt the non-idolatrous portion, the *Striachar*, for example, perfectly innocuous; may be outrageous to modern ideas of decency, but certainly not immoral, and which add considerably to the gaiety of the occasion.

In marriages also we have departed considerably from the Hindus, and this without much show of reason. We begin with courtship after the European fashion. There is no equivalent for that word

either in Sanskrit, or Bengali in one word. After all, it does not seem to be an unmixed blessing, having regard to the large number of cases in the matrimonial Courts in the West, where very often 'Settled facts' are unsettled, and homes made miserable. It is too much to believe that during this period of the love-romance, the parties should disclose to each other their secrets, their frailties, and their mutual temperaments, or their real nature ; but the probability is, that their defects are carefully concealed. Yet in ancient India, damsels were not given away without their having some acquaintance with, or knowledge of, their intended husbands. The *Gandharvya* and the *Shodrayamvara* customs then prevailing, prove that the girls were grown up at the time when they chose their husbands. Sakuntala, Daymanti and Draupadi were all married when they passed their girlhood. Even instances of girls remaining spinsters all their life, are found in Shovana and Shulava, who were called Sromonas or Bhikharinis. Inter-marriage and widow-marriages were also prevalent and sanctioned by Manu (Ch. III. 43). Preliminary to the marriage, there are certain ceremonies, of which we follow *Ayubridhdhanna*, but reject the *Adhibash*, on the eve of the marriage. We might very well reject the idolatrous portion, and observe the rest. The Hindu marriage rites consist of, (1) Invocation of God ; (2) *Shastibachan*, in which the father or any one giving away the bride, asks the bridegroom thrice to say (a) Punyaham (b) Ridhatam (c) and Shwasti (consent) to the proposal of the giver to the giving of the bride to him ; (3) *Archana*, (adoration of the bridegroom) with *Arghya*, consisting of flowers, sandal-wood-paste, cloth and a ring ; and (4) *Baran*. Up to this time the bridegroom alone is present. Then he is taken away for (5) *Striackar*. When they (bride and bride-

Preliminary.

Marriage
rites.

groom) come back, then (6) the permission of the bridegroom is asked for the gift, and on such permission being granted by saying *Shwasti*, (7) the *Sampradan*, (giving away of the bride, takes place and on the bridegroom, saying *Shwasti*, the gordian knot is tied. (8) Then follows the marriage vow, and after all (9) the *Saptapadi*. These are the principal ingredients of a Hindu marriage, omitting unimportant parts. With the exception that the *Salgram* (idol) is always present and that the name of *Vishnu* is pronounced in repeating the *mantras* in Hindu marriages, there is nothing objectionable in the *mantras*. The Maharshi kept every thing in tact, eschewing the idol, and substituting *Om Tat Sat* in the place of, Vishnu. Of course, the *Yajna* that follows and the *Nandinukh* that precedes, are idolatrous and therefore omitted by the Maharshi. The proceedings are rather long, and naturally tax the patience of civilised people like ourselves ; we have therefore cut short the whole thing, and adopted the western method, although a portion of it may be meaningless. For instance, what is the meaning of the question—are you prepared to accept each other as husband and wife, after months, may be, years of courtship? It is said this is necessary for acknowledgment of the engagement before the public, and in the presence of God, but is not registration which precedes the marriage sufficient for the purpose? Well did a low caste bridegroom of Barisal say, when asked this question—"If not, what have we come here for"? This is evidently taken from the western marriage service ; for I do not find anything like it in the Hindu service, where the consent of the bridegroom is asked only before the *Sampradan*, but in a different way. This appears to be a substitute for the Hindu *Shwastibachan*. Again, the words *BaidhaPatni* is also an importation from the west, being a literal

translation of lawful wife ; but can a wife ever be unlawful? What constitutes the wife is not the agreement to accept each other as husband and wife, but the marriage vow. What is therefore the significance of the word, 'lawful,' especially after registration? I would simply put the word *Patni*.

We offer *Arghya* without *Archana* of which it is a part. It is an act of adoration (*archana*) to the bridegroom, because he is supposed to be especially invited by the bride's father to receive her daughter, and the proper way to receive an invited guest is by offering *Arghya* to honor and respect him. We use the shell and reject the kernel. We have dropped the *Baran* altogether. The Hindu idea of *Baran* is to instal the bridegroom into sonship, or rather, the husbandship of the daughter. We have also abandoned the ceremony of *Sampradan* (gift). It is thought that a girl is not a chattel to be bodily delivered, and that the Hindu idea of gift is dominated by this notion. It is also pleaded that our girls choose their own husbands, and thereby give themselves away, leaving nothing for the father to do. Both these reasons are fallacious. What is given away is not really the thing itself, but the use of it, although physically the thing also passes. When we give away a table, or a chair, or furniture, do we not really transfer the use of the article? So, in giving away our daughters, we transfer our guardianship, our trust and responsibility to the husband, in obedience to the laws of God ; and by the holy tie of matrimony they (wife and husband) become one. It is not the body that is the subject of the gift. It is the Brahma form of marriage which now prevails among the Hindus, and Manu directs that "a well attired bride decorated with ornaments should be given in marriage to an erudite,

Archana and Arghya.

Baran.

Sampradan.

good charactered bridegroom *especially invited* by the bride's father himself to receive her" (Ch. III.—27). This is the form we also follow with variations. The duty of a father does not cease with the selection of a husband by the daughter. Until the gift, she remains in the custody of her natural guardian who looks after her and promotes her welfare, supplies all her wants and ministers to her comforts. By the gift, the custody and the responsibilities are transferred; otherwise, what is the use of the father or any other legal guardian taking any part at all in the ceremony? Why does the father ask for the bridegroom's acceptance before the gift? It clearly means the acceptance of the custody and responsibilities, and not of the physical body, so no question of a chattel arises. We look upon *Saptapadi* as a relict of barbarism, in sheer ignorance of the beautiful *mantras* which are recited on the married couple taking each step after marriage. They are full of meaning and wholesome advice, given by the bridegroom to the bride; and we have thrown it overboard, simply because it is a Hindu custom.

Granthibandhan and the marriage vow.

We follow *granthi bandhan* by using garlands, but the marriage vow we have adopted, is from the west. The word *Ajiban* is only a translation of the words—"until death do us part." This is repugnant to the Hindus, who consider the marriage tie to be indissoluble and eternal, although they believe in the transmigration of the soul. We may very well change the word into *anantakal parjanta*, or drop the word altogether. Of course, among the Hindus the vow is taken only by the bridegroom. It is proper that both should take the vow; but the use of the word *Srimān* by the wife to the husband is unconventional, and should be changed into *Srijit*, the meaning being the same.

I don't see any rhyme or reason for objecting to the *Striachar*. This is perfectly non-idolatrous but intensely amusing. We do not object to the throwing of old shoes, and rice on the married couple, when starting on the honey-moon journey. We have adopted the best-man and brides-maids custom, and that of cutting the cake and sipping wine after the ceremony ; but we reject innocent customs. It is time that we should meet and agree to one uniform form of service. At present, each has his own form.

With the idea of courtship, has come the idea of separation during life from the West. There are not wanting Brahmos who would be only too glad to avail themselves of the provision for divorce in the Act, if they found an opportunity, and who regret that the American principles of divorce do not apply here. The Act has completely severed our connection with the Hindu *Samaj* and it certainly requires amendments. There was a committee appointed to consider this question at the Theistic conference some time ago, but I have not yet seen the report. If we cannot altogether do without the Act, I would suggest at least the insertion of the word, "orthodox" or "established" after the word "profess" and before the words, "the Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Mahomedan," &c., in the declaration, and also in sec. 2 of the Act. The declaration, should be repealed and the Act (3 of 1872) put on the same basis as the English Civil marriage Act. Already signs of revolt against the Act are in sight, and it is time that the Brahmos should stir in the matter with some earnestness. I hope this matter will be definitely settled at the next conference. While on this subject, I must say we have made a great mistake in converting the marriage pandal into a huge drawing-room, where

The marriage Act.

society scandals are discussed with avidity in one corner, while the service is going on in another. There is no desire to observe the solemnity of the occasion ; but on the other hand, great impatience and even petulance are shown when the service becomes a little long or tedious, albeit interesting. It is forgotten that we belong to the great and glorious Hindu race ; and whatever causes may have led to its decay or death, there is another danger-signal in view, by marriage with foreigners, converting that race into Eurasians.

Death ceremony.

Cremation.

Carrying the body.

As regards the death ceremonies, at the beginning we were very much in favor of burials, according to Western notions ; but we did not carry out this idea into action, as we were not unanimously agreed. Then we found later on that cremation was recommended by the West, and so we have finally made up our minds to cremate. But the custom of carrying the dead on our shoulders to the burning ghat is still troubling our minds. It requires self sacrifice, discomfort and troubles, and causes great personal inconvenience. It is looked upon by our enlightened countrymen as a relict of the barbarous east, especially when it demands the leaving off of shoes and boots carefully buttoned or tied with laces, and walking bare-footed ; and they would prefer the civilised method of carrying the dead upon hearses drawn by horses with black trappings, and if horses are not available or prove more costly, then even drawn by bullocks. They may catch cold if they have to put off for a time their trousers, coats and warm underclothing, especially in the winter season, and suffer from foot sores at all seasons. According to the national sentiment, there is some sanctity attached to the corpse until it is reduced to ashes ; and until then, it is treated as a sacred trust in the hands of the family members, agnates and friends of the deceased,

If there is a time when all differences are made up, all party factions cease, and all social quarrels are laid aside, it is on the occasion of carrying the dead-body. I should be very sorry to see this sacred idea lightly treated or set at naught by my co-religionists, however enlightened they may be. The setting of fire to the body, or rather to the face, is another bone of contention, to some it is very revolting, and to some barbarous; but that may be dispensed with, if it offends our sensibility. Some would recommend the crematorium, but I think our *Shashan*, or the general burning ground, the best place, as the sight of it raises in our breasts *Vairagya*, or a sense of the vanity of this world; and those who wish and can afford, may easily raise memorial structures on the site. The *mantras* recited on the occasion of consigning the body to the fire, contain grand truths about the materiality of this earthly body, and the elements composing it, returning to their proper places.

The next question is about the mourning to be observed. What has our religion to do either with the mode or period of mourning for us to have changed the custom prevailing in this country relating to it? There is a trite old saying, that if a Hindu becomes a Mahomedan, he becomes inordinately fond of meat, meaning beef. Is it because we have renounced Hindu idolatry, that we must also renounce their mourning? Must we like the Mahomedans, as distinguishing them from Hindus, use the reverse side of plantain leaves, for our food? Mourning is the sign of grief for our departed parents or blood-connections. There is nothing idolatrous or superstitious in it. What rhyme or reason is there for our putting on black bands on our arms, or black sari or dress by our ladies, instead of wearing the *Katcha* (or *Uttari*) round our necks and white saris and jackets by

Mourning

our women, as signs of mourning? Why should we go on eating our usual meals of fish and meat, and wear our ordinary dress, shoes and boots, and have our ordinary drink, indulge in ordinary amusements, go to dinner parties and balls, and satisfy our animal wants, with only black crapes on our arms, or widow's weeds on? Why should we not be able to undergo some privations, suffer some hardships or inconveniences, by taking one meal a day, following the custom of our country, and fruits and milk at night even for a month, or such period as we may unanimously fix for our mourning? If we cannot do this, then our cry for spirituality deserves to die in the wilderness, without finding any echo in our hearts. Did not our parents make any sacrifices for us, bear any hardships for us, and suffer any inconveniences for us, while we were helpless in their laps, or even after our childhood, or manhood or womanhood? If we cannot make any sacrifices for them, then our education, our culture, our religion, our morality and spirituality are a mass of huge delusions; and the less we talk or write about them, the better for humanity. It is such westernisation that the country abhors.

Period of
mourning.

There is no uniformity in the Samaj about the period of mourning; some observe it for a month, some for 12 or 13 days, and some for even less a period. If a month is too long, let us fix a shorter period, or let each one follow his family custom uniformly. The *Sradh* ceremony is the last. It is derived from the word, *Sradha*, or respect for the deceased. We have wholesale rejected the customary ceremony, whereas we ought to have adopted everything except the idolatrous portions. We have not enquired into the meaning of the *mantras* recited on the occasion, but they are beautiful and bring tears to our eyes. They begin with "om Matharam

Sradh.

Pitharamchoiba, Shakshath Protaksha Debatam " (by knowing that our father and mother are representatives of the living God). Another *mantra* says, "*yang* • *Matapitar klesh sahateh sambhabet Nrinang* : "The pang that a mother suffers on the birth of a child, nobody can repay even in hundred years" and so on. Our sermons on such occasions are very bare, and do not refer to the sacrifice made by our parents, at least I have not heard any. They generally give the biography of the deceased in fulsome colors for any meritorious act he has done during his lifetime. Then there are gifts. The Shastras provide for 16 kinds, consisting of (1) Earth or Land, (2) *Ashhan* (or seats) • (3) Water (4) Cloth (5) *Pradip* (or lamp) (6) Rice and other eatables (7) *Pan* (betel) (8) Umbrella (9) Perfume (10) Garlands (11) Fruits (12) Bedding (13) Shoes (14) Cows, or their price, (15) Gold and (16) Silver. They are arranged when the ceremony is performed in bell-metal or silver utensils, and then distributed among *Adhyapakas* (teachers) and learned Brahmins. We also make gifts, that is, those who can afford, but mostly in coins or currency notes. But why may we not follow the Hindu custom, and keep our presents where we offer our prayer, (just as we arrange marriage presents) and afterwards distribute them (among other charitable institutions) to the real *Adhyapakas* of the country, not as Brahmins, but as instructors of our youths,—those having *Tols* or schools for teaching,—to reward them for their free gift of learning, for supplying students free board and lodging, for which they have to go abegging from door to door. The very name of a *Pandit* frightens us as smelling of idolatry and superstition ; and in this fright we forget the noble work, he is doing in disseminating knowledge of our classical

literature, philosophy and sacred books. The Adi Somajists follow this custom, and for all this are they not Brahmos? The New Dispensationists also follow this custom, though they distribute the presents only among themselves; but if we attempted any such thing, we will be simply laughed at and hustled out of the Samaj. Under such conditions, it would be idle to expect any help from our countrymen at large for our Brahmo School or College. I would suggest the improvement of our boy's and girl's school on the basis heretofore pointed out by me. I would further suggest to disconnect these institutions from Government control on the principle which actuated Mrs. Beasant as regards the Hindu College at Benâres. So that we may conduct them on our own principles and according to our own ideas, plans and methods. The City College was founded with some such objects, but we failed to stick to our purpose for want of funds; and by accepting Government aid, it has lost its independence and is now an ordinary College like all purely secular institutions. But it testifies to the correctness of my views relating to help from outside; and I would suggest the conversion of the *Sangatshava* into a theological class for the present. If we want to raise large sum of money for our institutions, we must go over the world with begging bowls, accepting even the meanest gift. We must have our *Bhikshuks* and *Bhikshukinis* to do this work. They must be well educated, self-sacrificing and their want must be very few indeed. They must devote their whole time to this service. By their self-abnegation and privations, they must satisfy the world that they are the real sons and daughters of God, and work in His name and for His glory, their own interests being nil. The vast sums of

money raised by the Arya Samajists, the Ramkrishna Mission, and the little Sisters of the Poor, ought to be eye-openers to us. Our shelter is languishing for funds, our Missionaries are ill-fed, insufficiently clothed, and poorly paid, and cannot properly carry out their mission by going from place to place for want of funds. We are not able to organise relief parties during famine, or outbreak of epidemics. We cannot organise Charity on a large scale for the relief of the poor. We are cramped and pressed on all sides. Something must be done to remedy this state of things.

In all that I have written about the Samaj, pointing out our shortcomings, I must not be understood to mean that the Brahmo Samaj has done no solid work at all. I certainly think that our chief achievements have been in the moral and social department of the Samaj. We have raised the moral standard ; we have promoted the cause of temperance ; we have raised the status of our women by giving them some education ; we have set an example of the commingling of the sexes in our social functions. We have also improved the dress of our women, and to some extent altered the mode of our living, though at a great sacrifice of domestic economy, and I have great doubts as to its being an unmingled good. I have been thinking on this subject for sometime now, and I have come to the conclusion that we have made a great mistake in altogether changing our mode of life, at least the well-to-do among us ; and I am not sure that our example has not affected even those who earn their bread literally by 'the sweat of their brow.' I am even afraid that the contagion has spread among the well-to-do, or even the middle class of orthodox Hindus. Our necessities of life have increased, our wants have multiplied, our ideas of ease and

Good work of
the Samaj.

comfort quadrupled, our cravings for luxury quickened beyond our means ; and we have lost sight of the good old Hindu maxim—'Plain living and high thinking.' We have also neglected the trite English saying—'Cut your coat according to the cloth'. We require soap to cleanse our body ; we require dining tables, forks, spoons and knives for our dinner ; we require Baburchees, Khan-samas and Mosalchees to cook our dinner and to attend on us ; and of course with plates of all kinds, fruit dishes, fruit knives, fish knives, cooking utensils and all the paraphernalia of this department alone our 'expenses' have swelled up enormously. Then the wearing apparel, —trousers, drawers, vests, shirts, over coats, dressing gowns, mackintoshes, separate dining and visiting suits, gloves, shoes, boots, ordinary slippers and bath slippers, bathing gowns *et hoc genus*, superadded to dhutis, panjabis, china coats, chaddars and shawls, has made great inroad into our packets. Then in the ladies department, with laces, jackets, blouses, vests, bodices, over coats, dressing gowns, stockings and other under garments, mirrors, toilet sets, gown stands, dressing tables, wash-hand stands, drawing room furniture, bed room furniture, chairs, couches, sofas, etc, in addition to ordinary saris, silk saris, Benares, Bombay and Madras saris, besides Jewellery, marketing, horses or motors to drive in the evening for fresh air, frequent changes to salubrious hill stations to recoup their delicate health, their badminton or tennis sets, and other petty things too, numerous to mention, the cost has become almost prohibitive. Then the babies department—their clothing, ayas, nurses, governesses, artificial food, wetnurses, perambulators, cradles, child's ponies to ride, cost money. These lines may offend the refined tastes of our ladies, but my object is to show the

different channels in which our money flows out of our pockets.

These are our voluntary offerings to the shrine of civilisation, at the sacrifice of thrift ; these are the taxes we willingly and gladly pay to foreign traders for the importation of this precious article into this country. Those who can afford, let them pay for luxuries ; but the effect is to demoralise the whole country. A distinguished Hindu friend of mine, now a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, one day in a conversation with me, regretted very much that the cesses levied by civilisation in the way of good living, are very exorbitant, and he laid the blame at the door of the Brahmos as paving the way to this extravagant mode of living,—an accusation which I could not, in all conscience, deny. If in ancient times, when this country had also a civilisation of its own, when our men and women were devout worshippers at the temple of learning, when they had a society in which they freely mixed and conversed, entertained friends and guests, not only with sumptuous dinners but with music and theatricals, the cost of living had even approached the present standard, I do not know if they could have managed to eke out their existence. Surely, there must have been a cheaper mode of living ; and may we not find that out and retrench our expenses, without lowering the intellectual, moral and spiritual tone of our homes and hearths ? Why many of us have to drudge on notwithstanding broken down health, or, cannot retire from active service although old age has bent our back ? Simply because we have not been able to save anything out of our emoluments of office, on account of high and fashionable living, always beyond our means. Is this a desirable state of things, and must it not either be mended, or altogether ended ?

To sum up : Do not forget that the founder of our Samaj was a Hindu, that the seeds of our faith were taken from Hindu Scriptures, and that we belong to the great Hindu race. Do not despise the East, although the West may be the God of our idolatry. Take as much from the West as we may assimilate, having regard to the climate and physical condition of our country, especially as regards food, dress, manners and customs. All exotic plants, or flowers, do not grow in this country. Put the Samaj on a broader and more radical basis. Tolerate differences of opinion and religion ; humble yourselves before all other denominations, mingle freely with them, and try to draw them closer to us by ties of disinterested friendship. Do not patronise, or look down upon them as being on a lower level. Stick to our national manners, customs and usages so far as they do not militate against reason and conscience. Look to the principles, rather than to the forms—to the substance and not to the shadow of our old religious and social institutions. Explore our sacred Books for spiritual truths, and you will not be disappointed, either as regards spiritual knowledge (*Jnan*) or *Bhakti* (Love), or the method of training ourselves, or our boys and girls to meditate on the Great *Om*. Do not feel ashamed to call yourselves Hindus, or Hindu Theists, or Hindu Brahmos or Protestant Hindus, as you choose. I call myself a Hindu-theist. The Roman Catholics, the Protestants, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Quakers and the different divisions in the Christian Church all call themselves Christians. The Shias, and Sunnis, and the Sufis call themselves Mohamedans. The Shaivas, the Shaktas, the Vaishnavs, the Sikhs, and the Jainas all call themselves Hindus. It is the Brahmos who singularly stand aloof, disowning the great Hindu race to which

they belong. Do not dogmatically assert that the gates of heaven are shut to all except the Brahmos. Do not idolise yourselves or your Samaj, but work humbly and advance steadily, towards the great Goal.

I have now finished. As an old man nearing the dawn of another life, with the sands of this life fast running out, but having the welfare of the Samaj in my heart, I have ventured to say many things unpleasant; but believe me it is on the principle of 'Spare the rod, spoil the child.' My authority to do so may be questioned, but my right to speak the truth, none can dispute. If any of my suggestions deserves serious thought, you may publish this letter to the Brahmo public at large; if not, you may consign it to the waste-paper basket.

I dreamt, still dream, and probably shall die, with the dream very much like Akbar's dream, in the memorable words of Lord Tennyson :

" Well I dreamed

"That stone by stone, I reared a sacred fane

"A temple, neither pagod, neither mosque, nor Church,

"But loftier, simpler, always open-doored

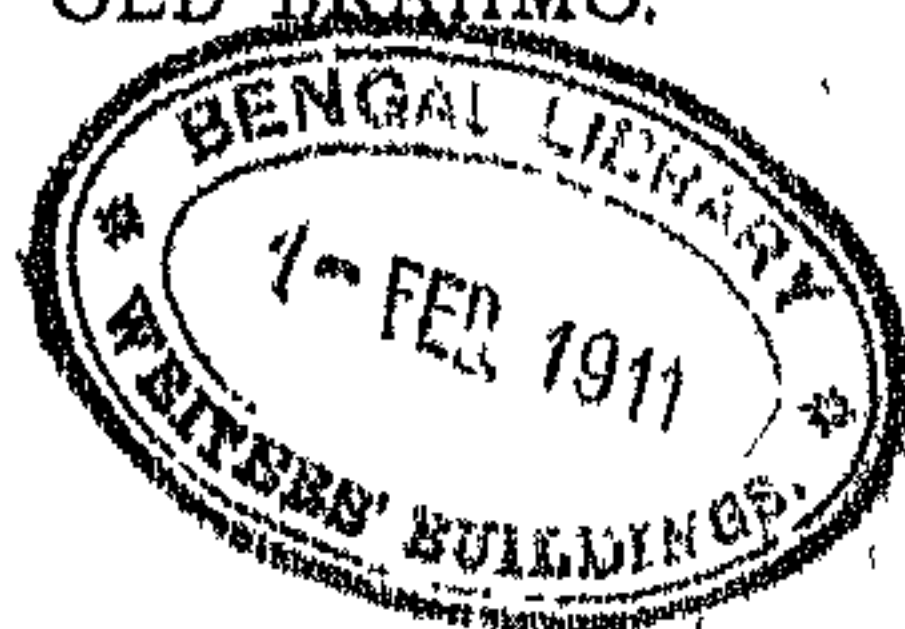
"To every breath from heaven; and Truth and Peace

"And Love and Justice came and dwelt therein.

Amen.

Yours &c., &c.

AN OLD BRAHMO.



MOHES PRESS

10, Shama Charan De's Street, Calcutta.

