

A collection of biogra-
phies of mediæval
Indian saints.

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SHRI DNYANESHWAR

A SHORT SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

(1275-1296)

ALTHOUGH from times immemorial, the life of a householder has been held up even above that of a *sanyasin*, there are natures that feel an overwhelming attraction for the life of perfect freedom and joy, the life of penance undisturbed by the dust and heat of *samsara*, natures which, not content with the moderate liberty of the householder, crave for *sanyasa* with the same impatience with which a newly-caught parrot struggles against the bars of the cage. "What the little firefly is beside the brightness of the sun, what a grain of sand is beside the vastness of Mount Meru, so is the life of a householder when compared with that of a *sanyasin*." So said Swami Vivekananda

on one occasion. So also thought Vithalpant, the father of Saint Dnyaneshwar. A Brahmin by birth and a *Kulkarni* by profession, all the love of a devoted wife could not reconcile him to a worldly life. Before marriage he had been on a long pilgrimage, visiting every shrine in Guzerat and Maharashtra. Ever since his childhood he was a devotee of Shri Vithal (or Vithoba) of Pandharpur in the District of Sholapur. It is possible that this seed of devotion was well-watered in his travels and though, for a time, he settled down to married life, yet it was not long before he repented. He longed to go to Benares and to become a *sanyasin*. But he was childless and besides, there was that difficulty—the permission* of his wife. How was that permission to be got? Great as is our respect for the yellow robes, still the aspiring monk is allowed to pursue his ambition only if his wife allows him to leave her. What woman would cheerfully consent to bury her own happiness?

* This is a popular belief only. In the *Smritis* no allusion is made to the necessity of getting wife's permission. The only conditions laid down are (1) Birth of a son (2) Performance of Sacrifices and (3) Study of the Vedas.

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No wonder, therefore, that *Rukmini*, wife of Vithalpant, withheld her permission. Let us not blame her. She was but a woman.

But the mind of Vithalpant was unalterably fixed. He would be a *sanyasin* at all costs. Soon after his marriage he lost his parents and was, at the request of his father-in-law, living at the latter's house at *Alandi**. One day, he left his wife and all her people and went to Benares. There, he sought and found the house of the Swami Ramananda, a celebrated *sanyasin*. "Have you taken your wife's permission?" asked Ramananda. "But I have no wife, no child," boldly replied Vithalpant. Believing in his words, Ramananda gave him the yellow robes and allowed him to study under his care.

But this episode, instead of ending here, had a melancholy course to run. The unsuspecting Ramananda became very fond of Vithalpant, now Chaitanyashram, and soon made him his chief disciple. One day he asked Vithalpant (so we shall continue to call him, in spite of his temporary change of life and habit) to look after the *math* and its inmates and

* A village fourteen miles from Poona.

accompanied by a few disciples went southward on a long pilgrimage to Rameshwar. Being himself a Mahratta Brahmin, he chose the western route, visiting on his way sacred towns and rivers. It was impossible for him to avoid *Alandi*, then one of the principal centres of orthodox learning. Vithalpant must have foreseen his guru's prospective visit to *Alandi* and that is, perhaps, why he did not accompany him. But the gods were determined to act prejudicially to him. At *Alandi* Ramananda had, as usual, taken residence at the village temple, where, in the evening, he was saluted by a lady, the picture of grief and anxiety, looking older in appearance than she was in years. That woman was the disconsolate wife of Vithalpant. Ramananda blessed her with the words "mayest thou have a son." The blessing was quite customary and had nothing curious about it. But thinking of her 'runaway' husband she could not repress a rather ironical smile at the benediction, though she did not utter a single word. Surprised at her conduct Ramananda asked her what she meant. In the conversation that followed, it transpired that

her husband had, even against her permission and before she had any issue, renounced the world and had taken *sanyasa* at Benares. The mind of Ramananda became more uneasy when after full investigation he found out that the husband of the woman was no other than his favourite disciple Vithalpant. Now, further journey was at an end. He determined to set things right. So, taking the wife Rukmini and her people with him back he went to Benares. Surprised at the early and unexpected visit of his master Vithalpant asked what had happened. With voice choked with rage, the master said "I had been to *Alandi*, you see," and then asked almost ferociously "Have you any explanations to make?" Disconcerted more by the word "*Alandi*" than even by the question, the disciple fell to the ground, made a clean breast of everything and begged his guru's pardon. He would, he said, do anything to please his master. "Then," said Ramananda, "take your wife and go back to *Alandi* and live the life of a householder." No doubt, it was a critical moment and must sorely have tried the devotion of Vithalpant for his master. He

did not like what he was directed to do; but disobedience being out of the question, he quietly took the hand of his wife and sped back to his village about 1261 A.D. a householder again, there to spend the next twenty-two years of his life in poverty, distress and more terrible still, persecution.

Did Ramananda believe that the people of *Alandi* would tamely submit to his decision? If so, he was entirely in the wrong. Did he make any provision whereby the path of Vithalpant might become less thorny? Did he now and then enquire how his disciple was faring, whether he was dead or living, happy or miserable? The answer is, 'no.' To his mind the initiation of Vithalpant into the order of the *sanyasins*, based as it was on misrepresentation and fraud, was null and void *ab initio*. Such a man, he thought, might have changed his garb but his Ashram never! Even in yellow robes Vithalpant was still a householder. He was really so during the last twelve years. The view of Ramananda might or might not be correct. The real question was, "How would the people of *Alandi* receive their former friend?" And it

the prospect was that they would not be very friendly why, in the world, should Vithalpant have chosen *Alandi* for his residence instead of some other suitable city or village? Perhaps such considerations of prudence never occur to minds, noble and pure, conscious of their own honesty of purpose and too unworldly to foresee meaner treatment at the hands of others. Another interesting question that occurs to one is, "What was the duty of Rukmini when Ramananda ordered her husband back to *Alandi*." She knew the longing of her husband for moksha. She knew, by experience, how unhappy he would be when dragged to the worldly life. Was it not proper for her to sanction her husband's conduct? If the *sanyasa* of her husband was null and void only because he had not her permission, surely was it not her duty to grant it, even at that late stage? The answer is difficult. Perhaps she was childless and the *Shastras* allow the life of *sanyasa* only after the aspirant has got children. It is very difficult to decide this delicate question when we have no positive knowledge as to how far this rule of the *Shastras* was observed in the

13th century. Perhaps nobody was in the wrong. But one would fain wish so much gentleness and so much nobility went unpersecuted.

Cruelly disappointed in his spiritual dreams, Vithalpant returned to *Alandi*—there to find another, perhaps keener disappointment awaiting him. He was boycotted. His friends avoided him; the rest persecuted him. He had no friends but hunger and destitution. He had no hope except from the Faith that in him lay. And yet this harassed, persecuted man had not one word of blame, of censure for his enemies! Gentle, meek, and uniformly forgiving, he blessed those that cursed him and went on, inspite of fatigue and privations, chanting the name of the Lord! Verily, this ostracized Vithalpant resembled that ideal sage so beautifully described, by his son:—

“He treads the earth lightly for fear the ant might be crushed under his feet. As the heron which wishing to catch the fish just plunges its beak into the stream without disturbing the water, so he is particular that the equanimity of others is not disturbed. When the cat removes its litter from one place

to another she holds it by the teeth. But does the action injure the litter? Certainly not. In a similar way his actions do harm to nobody. His countenance is full of love and before he opens his lips, the hearer is assured of the kindness of the words by the love beaming in the eyes. His look is lean and appearance quite ordinary. But don't presume to estimate the sweetness of the plantain fruit from the skin of the tree. Full of thought, he is generally silent. He never raises his hand against man or animal or if at all he lifts it up, it is only to promise protection to others. Do you believe that a man of this type will ever handle the sword or even the stick or that he would be guilty of an act of violence?"*

In 1273 A. D., however, the tedium of his life was broken. In that year his wife bore him a son, later named Nivrattinath, literally 'The Lord of Renunciation.' Two years later was born Dnyanadev, "The God of Knowledge," the subject of this short sketch. After him Vithalpant had two children,—one son and

* The Dnyaneshwari is not, though it deserves to be translated into English. All the renderings in this sketch, therefore, are specially made for it.

the other a daughter. They were named Sopanadev and Mukta Bai 'The Liberated.' The joy, which the parents felt at the birth of these children, was not unalloyed. They had that hard battle to fight, the fight with poverty. And in that trying duel, the more spiritual the soldier, the fewer chances he has of success. Starvation was not new to them. The neglect of their friends and the cruel and almost vindictive persecution of their villagers, had made them pretty familiar with it. What was worse was the consciousness that the children would have to inherit ostracism with the possibility that the happiness of their life might be blasted. That was as iron to the soul of the fond parents. To live under a cloud! and that too from childhood! To grow up in misery and destitution! How agonizing! And yet the distressing thought did not break them. It only drew together the hearts of the family, the father, the mother, the brothers and the sister. The children had no other company. They, therefore, played by the side of their parents. They heard their father talk of renunciation. They saw their mother practise self-denial. They had no regular

schooling. But the very air they breathed was charged with religion and the schooling they had at the feet of their parents, was a great preparation for their future life.

Inecocious beyond comparison, of an extremely joyous disposition, and with the powers of the spirit early awakened, these children—if children they must be called—literally ‘enjoyed’ their poverty, laughed at persecution and drew the highest lessons of life from the most trying vexations. In all the works that they have left us—and they all wrote religious treatises, poems, etc.,—you will not find a single thought, one unguarded expression that reveals a trace of that misery which was their daily experience. The works of Dnyanadev, our hero (better known by the name Dnyaneshwar) are brimful of that ecstasy which mocks at sorrow and delights in suffering. He was not of a militant disposition. He was not the kind of man described by Saint Ramdas :—

“His piercing look strikes terror into the heart of the wicked and makes them conscious of the meanness of their souls.”

On the contrary all his conquests have been

conquests of Love. It is true that a miracle (worked by him) is said to have brought the Pandits of Paithan down to their knees. But when we remember the strong strictures * he has passed against any abuse of spiritual power, we might well pause before we accept the story. The obstinacy of the Pandits must have been conquered by his love. He was too modest to argue, too forbearing to quarrel, too gentle to fight. If in moments of ecstasy, felt while discoursing upon religion, he allowed words of pride to escape him, it was no mean vulgar personal pride. He was proud of his God, of his Guru and of his *Grantha*. While extolling the *Grantha*, he never praised himself but attributed all inspiration to the grace of his Guru. Though poor in wealth, India is by no means so in spirit; and yet in all the religious biography of so many centuries one hardly comes across such a picture of magnificent spirituality thriving in the wilderness of crushing misery.

* On one occasion he says :—Is it not wonderful that ordinary people should insist that a real sage must occasionally exercise supernatural powers when we remember that he is quite oblivious of his own person even? What a stupid bigotry!

But whatever happiness the ostracised family derived from one another's company was soon to end. An event occurred which shows to what extent the perverse obstinacy of blind orthodoxy can go. The ceremony of wearing the sacred thread is of extreme importance in the life of a Brahmin boy. In fact, real Brahminhood dates from that ceremony. Every one, therefore, can understand how anxious Vithalpant and his wife must have been to get that ceremony, Upanayana of Nivrithinath and Dnyaneshwar, now ten and eight years old respectively, performed. They hoped that time and their own forbearance had appeased the anger of their villagers and that no further difficulty on the point would be raised. They, therefore, broached the subject before the leading luminaries of their neighbourhood, hard-hearted, though scarcely hard-headed Shastris, who constituted themselves as the sole repositories of religious wisdom. But they were in no mood to grant justice or even mercy. For a *sanyasin* returning to the second *Ashram*, they thought, there was but one punishment. The sin was monstrous and the

sentence death. Believing (without reason) that their own death would make the path of their children smooth and their thread-ceremony possible, Vithalpant and his wife once more saluted those Brahmins, trusted their children to the care of God, walked straight to Allahabad and there in the holy confluence of the three rivers, ended by one plunge their life and what was more bitter still, their suffering.

In the absence of detailed and authentic account, the conduct of Vithalpant appears to be improperly meek and extremely impracticable. Did he try to find out his old *guru* or failing him, some other Pandit at Benares or even in the Deccan who would point to some favourable text on the point? We do not know.*

* See the Mitakshara commentary on Yajnavalkya Smriti (Part III, verse 280) for the penance prescribed for the *sanyasin* who wants to become a householder. The offence is not classed under the Maha-pataks or Great Sins but under Upa-pataks only. Vijnaneshwar (the commentator) quotes from Parashara a passage which says "A *sanyasin* is purified when he performs three Krichchhras and three Chandrayanas and all the ceremonies that have been performed since his childhood." Now Krichchhras and Chandrayanas are well known and simple Prayaschittas. Another Prayaschitta quoted from Samvarta is equally simple. The offence, therefore, of the religious legislators of Alandi, becomes, to say the least, monstrous.

The very text on which the Shastris of *Alandi* depended for their memorable but scarcely commendable sentence is not available. The facts, however, are faithfully recorded by Mukta Bai, the sister of Dnyaneshwar and have to this day passed unchallenged.

So ends the sad chapter in the history of Vithalpant's life. Now begins the brilliant career of his children. As serene and cheerful as ever they discussed what the next step should be. Nivrithinath perhaps heartily sick of the dogmatism of the leading Brahmins of *Alandi*, was for no submission. "What is that thread-ceremony to me?" he cried, "I am holiness incarnate!" But the hero of our present sketch, born as he was to lead the people instead of defying them, thought conciliation to be the best course: "True, brother, true" he said "you are holiness incarnate, who could doubt your purity? But look at the people and our duty by them." He then proceeded to explain how discipline is the ruling factor in society and pointed out how it devolved especially on the wise to obey its laws and to uphold its honour. "Don't you see how like an army

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without a general the society is going to rack and ruin? If we, the wise, refuse to obey it, why should the ignorant do so, when they have every motive for defiance? Do let us go, brother, and bring the Shastris round;” and forthwith they repaired to the leading Brahmins. “We can’t disobey the Shastras,” they said “nor can we alter them. Your thread-ceremony is impossible: But if you get a permit from the Pandits of *Paithan*, then we are prepared to admit you to the privileges of a Brahmin.” “That we shall try to do” said Dnyaneshwar and off they started to *Paithan*.*

It is said that even the *Pandits of Paithan* at first refused to admit this brotherhood into the fold of Brahmanism, but being amazed at the miracle which Dnyaneshwar wrought by making a buffalo recite verses from the *Rig Veda*, they, in terror and reverence, yielded and gave the necessary permit which enabled Nivrithinath and Dnyaneshwar to have their thread-ceremony performed. But the putting

* On the river Godavari in the Nizam’s territory. *Paithan* and *Deogiri* are both situated in the Nizam’s Dominions but in those days they formed part of *Maharashtra*.

on of the sacred thread was not with them the beginning of study; rather was it the beginning of their life's work—religious revival. At the feet of their father they had drunk deep of spiritual learning. Nivrithinath when a stripling of seven had come across a great sage, Shri-Gaininath at Tryambakeshwar near Nasik, who, struck with the attainments of the lad, initiated him into the mysteries of *yoga*. Dnyaneshwar his junior by two years, became his disciple and throughout his short life referred to his elder brother as his spiritual master, at the touch of whose blessing-hand he had penetrated the 'unknown.' But he was not satisfied with his own spiritual freedom. He had love infinite for his ignorant brothers and sisters in Maharashtra, and ever since his childhood, his mind was busy thinking as to the best way he should help them. In those days, Maharashtra was ruled by the Yadav kings of Deogiri, better known by the subsequent name Daulatabad. The tide of Moslem conquest that had deluged the northern part of India, was soon (1294 A.D.) to reach Deccan and to shatter the already waning power of the Yadav kings. Twenty-one

years (1273) before the invasion of Allauddin, Ramdeo Rao, the then king of Deogiri had headed a strong movement in the Deccan to rebuild the dilapidated temple of *Vithoba* at *Pandharpur*. What the encouragement of the king and the devotion of the people did, Dnyaneshwar saw and he resolved to avail himself of the awakening religious consciousness of the people. Already a band of enthusiastic admirers had gathered round him. To train them properly in the science of Realization, he wrote in 1290 at Nevasa* (District Ahmednagar) the *Bhavartha-Dipika*—that celebrated commentary on the *Gita*, which is deservedly considered as the *Magnum opus* of his brilliant career.

The wisdom and foresight which Dnyaneshwar displayed in selecting the *Gita* for his commentary deserve the highest praise. Deeply versed in all the Vedic lore, he could have selected the *Brahmasutras* or any of the difficult *Upanishads* for his discourse. In selecting the *Gita*, he might have been guided by his devotion to *Shri-Krishna*. Perhaps he

* The district of Ahmednagar is roughly north-east of the Poona District and south-west of Paithan and Deogiri.

was following, consciously or unconsciously, the trend of the national mind which it was his mission in part to arouse. The *Gita* has a peculiar fascination for the leaders especially in times of national awakening. We know how that book has largely inspired many of the national leaders of the day; we know how in his solitary travelling throughout India, Vivekananda had only the *Gita* and a photo of Shri-Ramakrishna Paramahansa for his companions; we know how it has influenced the national movement and has given it a specially spiritual character. So also it affected the Maharashtra of Saint Dnyaneshwar's time. Apart from its singular beauty of expression, clarity of vision, and breadth of outlook, the *Gita* is a book the word-meaning of which even an ordinary man very little advanced in Sanskrit can understand. The writer of this sketch has seen persons who scarcely able to distinguish the *set* from the *Anit* roots and quite ignorant of the ten conjugations and six tenses in Sanskrit are yet able to give in an off-hand manner the sense of any verse from the *Gita*. This sort of Sanskrit literature found great favour with Maratha people of the time of this

religious revival. The Ramayan, the Mahabharat, the Bhagvat,—though the last is occasionally more difficult than the first two—and a few other Puranas were the scriptures from which both the saints and their followers drew inspiration. No wonder, therefore, that our hero should have selected therefrom a piece which has engaged the attention of the greatest intellects of the country during centuries and through all vicissitudes of the national life; and he has delivered the message of Lord Krishna in a work that will last as long as the Marathi language.

It is impossible to describe the supreme beauty of this book except in language which, to those who have not read it, may appear hyperbolic. Never have the dry bones of the Vedanta been clothed in a richer manner. The provinces of poetry and of philosophy generally so unfriendly, here meet in such harmonious perfection that the reader is unable to determine whether the palm belongs to the former or to the latter. The similes are exquisite. Never far-fetched, uniformly elegant and often sublime, they dazzle the mind of the reader by their number and

variety. He piles illustrations upon illustrations and by a succession of images brings home the sense of the text with a force and power that are truly admirable. Saint Dnyaneshwar himself was not conscious of the brilliance of his powers. In the opening chapter he says :

“ I have presumed to attempt to explain the *Gita* without sufficiently taking into account the difficulty of the task ; I can hope to succeed only if the impossible becomes possible, if the glow-worm can give light to the sun, or a tiny bird take out all the water of the sea. To appreciate the vastness of the sky, we ourselves must have vastness of imagination ; so to explain the meaning of the *Gita*, the commentator must be at least equal to the author in intelligence and learning. I am, however, supported in my venture only by the consciousness that I am but the figure-head and really my *Guru*, the great *Nivrittideo* is speaking. When wooden dolls move like animate beings, is that because they have life or power of movement ? Is it not on the contrary the power of the man who holds the strings ? So I need have no misgiving. The desire-yielding

cow is my mother. I might be as contemptible as iron but is not the Philosopher's stone there to convert me into gold?"

A little later, however, all this diffidence drops off and he says:—

“Does the sun appear bigger than a man's hand? And yet does it not fill the earth with light? So short are these words but the meaning is deeper than the sea and as infinite as the sky. It will remove all doubt and like a *kalpa*-tree, satisfy your desires.

“The sweetness of nectar, the charm of music and the cool fragrance of the southern wind—all combined will not stand comparison with the supreme excellence of this story. It will bring joy to all the senses at one and the same time. If sugared milk can cure you of diseases, why spoil the palate with bitter doses of medicines? So if you want *moksha*, you need not torture the senses and try to conquer the mind. Just hear this ‘story,’ and you will get it (*moksha*).” His pride of the Marathi language is manifested in the following words:—

“Do I hear you say that these are only Marathi words and hence inevitably lacking in

beauty? Marathi words no doubt! but words that will put the best Sanskrit composition into shade. They are sweeter than nectar and more refreshing than the southern wind. Mark this, my friends. If you dispassionately read the Sanskrit Gita and my Marathi commentary, you cannot say which is superior to which!"

Though almost the first Marathi writer of distinction, he never apologizes for the use of the Vernacular; and this is the more remarkable because even to the end of the 18th century, Marathi writers had always the dread of the Pandits in their minds when they commenced writing. They either apologized for the use of Marathi, explained that the use of the Vernacular was necessary while educating the masses or at least reviled the Pandits for their scornful behaviour towards the language of the people. Dnyaneshwar did none of these things. He neither quarrelled with the Pandits nor justified his behaviour but wrote (or rather spoke) in the glad certainty that his book was bound to make a mark. His words of pride must never be mistaken for that vulgar pride which is at once odious and contemptible. On the contrary, it is the warmth of ecstasy

that has tinged his words with occasional boldness; otherwise he was the same modest, unassuming Dnyaneshwar as ever.

This is no place to describe the beauties of the work or to trace the delightful picture of the eager, candid and doubting Arjuna, so consistently developed throughout the book. One or two extracts, however, will not be entirely out of place. While commenting on the 10th and 11th verses of the VIth chapter this is how Dnyaneshwar describes the fit place for practising *yoga* :—

“Let it be a quiet place, with a beautiful cluster of trees protecting it from the hottest rays of the sun. Bits of sunshine, peeping through the trees must, however, illumine it, and the wind, gentle, cool and fragrant be there to accompany it. No noise there except the sweet prattle of the parrot or the humming of the bee. A few ducks and swans with three or four *chakravaka* birds would not be entirely unwelcome; and if occasionally the cuckoo cooes or a solitary pea-cock dances—well, we shall not drive them away. In short, the place must amuse us and at the same time awaken all the latent powers of the soul. It must

purify the worldly, stimulate the *Sadhaka* and must even tempt a king if he visits it, to lay aside his crown and practise *tapasya*.”

Arjuna, eager to see the *Virat* form of the Lord and yet uncertain whether He would deign to confer the favour on him says :—

“ But another desire has taken possession of my heart. Shall I unfold it? And why should I not? If the fish does not wish to trouble water with its presence, where is it to go? If the babe hesitates to suck milk from the breast of its mother, who else will feed it? And if we do not approach You, who will help us? I do not know whether I deserve to have the wish granted to me. Like the patient, my duty is to tell the symptoms to the physician. Whether I am fit or not is not my look-out. Does not a hungry person feel that he would devour the whole of this world? It is natural that I crave to see Thee, Oh Lord! But the decision rests with you and no other! I know that you will fulfil this desire, not because I am fit by virtue of spirituality, but because your munificence knows no bounds. Did you not grant *moksha* to your enemies, the demons? If your enemies can claim the

privilege, why should your friends, servants, children be diffident? Again if *Dhryva* was fit for your favour why not Arjuna also?"

- In the best translation, nine-tenths of the beauty of the original is lost. The subtle suggestiveness of words or the wonderful magic of expression can never be translated. The book in the original will charm the reader, as it charmed the audience that enthusiastically gathered from day to day in 1290 at the temple of Nevasa where chapter after chapter was delivered extempore and taken down by the devoted disciple Satchidananda. When the work was finished, his master and brother Nivrittidev said to Dnyaneshwar "we have had a good treat. But now let us have something original"; at which Dnyaneshwar composed the *Amritanubhav* 'The taste of Nectar' at ten successive sittings. The book reveals the same grasp of the subject but being more difficult and less rhetorical is not as popular as the first.

The message of Dnyaneshwar, as contained in these two books, derives peculiar significance when we remember how different it was from his own character and predilections.

Generally it so happens that the father of a revolution is himself, in part at least, the child of those forces which under his guidance are ultimately responsible for the changes brought about in thought and life. When, for instance, Mr. Tilak discards the authority of accepted commentators and gives us a new and convincing interpretation of the 'Lord's song' we know that he is preaching a doctrine, which even independently of the Gita he might have preached, a doctrine which is in consonance with his own opinions, in consonance also with the spirit of the times. But it is very difficult to lay aside your opinions and preach a gospel that is required by the condition of the country. That is what Saint Dnyaneshwar has done. Sister Nivedita gives us a beautiful description* of the lifelong struggle raging in the heart of her master, of how though "trying to remain faithful to the banner of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa," he delivered a message "the utterance of which often used to strike him as a lapse"; she has told us how "he would struggle against thoughts of country and religion and make of

* "The Master as I saw Him" by Sister Nivedita.

himself the poor homeless wanderer to whom every country and every religion should be alike" and yet how "before he even knew it," he would be spreading broadcast those words of faith and hope which sent a thrill through the hearts of his countrymen, making them conscious of their own destiny. Similar praise must also be given to Dnyaneshwar. He was a great *Yogin* and *Dyanin*; and yet he has preached the doctrine of Bhakti because he was aware of the needs of society. Like many philosophers he did not condemn *karman*; for he knew that however necessary a strictly monastic life may be to an advanced *sadhaka*, that was neither helpful nor desirable for the ordinary man. He must also be praised for having reconciled the various contending factions by preaching equal devotion to all the deities. The Puranas, in spite of their real service to the cause of religion, have by establishing the superiority of particular deities over others brought a spirit of intolerance in a religion full of toleration. But the religious revival of which Dnyaneshwar was the pioneer, would have nothing to do with such contemptible differences. His writings

contain passages where Shiva and Vishnu receive equal share of devotion. This is the more remarkable as perhaps he preferred for himself the Nirguna form of worship. The truth is that he and other leading saints tried to unite all elements of Hinduism and thus present a solid front to the disintegrating influences that came in the wake of the Mahomedan conqueror : It was a deliberate step in that process of assimilation about which we shall have to speak something later on.

The appearance of these two books considerably enhanced the high reputation Dnyaneshwar had attained. Unlike the politician, the Hindu Saint requires no newspapers, no organization for the propagation of his ideas. He need not even leave his place and still thousands of people would come from the most distant corner, sit at his feet and learn. Dnyaneshwar had the same experience. And yet, not content with the success his mission had achieved he started ostensibly for a long pilgrimage no doubt, but really to carry the truths of the Vedanta to the remotest parts of his country. He was accompanied by his brothers and sister, by numerous friends and

many disciples. The very fact that the party included such men as the goldsmith Narhari, the potter Gora and the gardener Samvta—names respected to this day by even orthodox Brahmins—shows the extent of the awakening. The cry of free primary education of these days is only a revised edition, so to say, of the universal religious education prevalent in India since the days of Buddha. India never lacked education. When arts and crafts were not dependent upon literacy, the necessity of imparting secular education, in addition to the religious one, was justly not felt. The career of wealth, of glory, of ambition and heroism was open to the man who could not even spell his name and who was as ignorant of the six systems of philosophy as of Homer or Virgil.

At Pandharpur, the party was joined by Namdev, the son of a tailor, than whom the God Vithal had no more fervent devotee. To him, Vithoba was not the stable, stone image that He is to the ordinary *Bhakta*. Namdev played and talked with Him, was free to love and in moments of petulance and anger, to chide the God, whose banner is even now

carried by more than a million people in Maharashtra. It is unnecessary to follow the saintly group, visiting shrine after shrine, bathing in sacred rivers, blessing the weak, convincing the doubting, themselves alternately lost in mute ecstasy and eloquent song. The task of preaching *Bhakti* and knowledge to the vast concourse of people who greeted them wherever they wended their way, was generally entrusted to *Namdev*, whose power of waking up the latent fire of *Bhakti* in the hearts of his hearers was unrivalled. Sometimes it was Dnyaneshwar who addressed them or Gora the potter and *Visobakhechar*. It was a triumphal tour and can favourably compare with the journey of the Swami Vivekananda, from Colombo to Almora, when in 1896 he returned to India from his successful mission to the West.

A few words are necessary to enable the reader to have a general idea of the religious revival of which Dnyaneshwar was the pioneer. It has been sometimes stated that the revival was a revolt against caste and Brahmanical oligarchy, that it was a crusade against social abuses and inequalities and that

all the saints and prophets from Dnyaneshwar and Namdev down to Tukaram and Ramdas carried on in their own way the work of social uplift, which, interrupted owing to the wars and revolutions of the eighteenth century, has again been, under more favourable auspices, taken up by the great social reformers of the 19th century. There is more imagination than truth in this statement. It is true that they were social reformers in the sense they reformed the society of their times by holding up the ideals of charity, piety, benevolence and God-surrender. The mind of man is generally too fond of the form and is often forgetful of the spirit; and by laying special emphasis on the essentials of religion, they did succeed in making the people think more of the spirit than of the forms. But it can never be truly said that they were social reformers in the accepted sense of the phrase. And the reason is evident; in the first place, it must be noted that from the 11th or 12th century to the end of the 17th, the influence of the Brahmin was purely intellectual. It is true that he was the repository of religious knowledge and was indispensable on occasions.

when religious ceremonies were to be performed. But in the body politic he occupied only a very subordinate place. Almost all the political leaders of those times—big Inamdars and Jagirdars with administrative powers and military equipment—were non-Brahmins: their wealth, their social status, their political influence might have excited the envy of any ambitious Brahmin. The Shirkes, the Mohites, the Jadhavs, the Bhonsles—to name only a few—all these had nothing to [envy in the social status of the Brahmin. Strangely enough the Brahmin also was quite content with his lot. There was no rivalry, no jealousy, no competition between the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin. These evils did not creep till at least Balaji Viswanath became the Peshwa in 1714. Till that time the so-called lion, and the so-called lamb drank of the same stream. These religious preachers did not break the barriers of caste, simply because there were no serious barriers awaiting the advent of the social reformer. On the contrary they tried to strengthen all those bonds which were calculated to keep alive the Varnashram system which it was their ideal to

reinstated. Their writings do not reek of that Brahminophobia which has characterised the utterances of many non-Brahmins especially during the last few months. They have, no doubt

- scathing criticism on hypocrites and impostors. But these "blessed souls" are found in all classes alike, and the Brahmin had no special monopoly of them. They used their lash not on the Brahmin but on vice; their criticism was abstract and not concrete. They were for caste-distinctions, though *against* caste-jealousies. They were against intermarriages. They did not favour such violation of caste discipline as a Brahmin's taking his food from the hands of a Sudra (*vide* Dnyaneshwari chapter 13 verse 674). Their mission was love and that love no artificial fencing of caste or colour could keep in bounds. On rare occasions they did, indeed, break these rules of caste which again and again they have emphasized in their writings. To cite an example, Ekanath (1528-1599) on one occasion took his meals in the house of a *Mahar*; but any reader who will care to read a hundred lines from his works will find that he is deadly against all breaking of caste-

discipline. Tukaram, himself a Sudra, has never for once even reviled the Brahmin because he is a Brahmin; and even he is in favour of all those caste-distinctions which owing to the blast of western civilisation are rapidly disappearing in the clouds. We might break caste or maintain it, just as we please, but it is really unjust to drag the names of these saints in controversies, the issues of which can be decided on independent lines of thought and argument.

What then, was the mission of these saints and prophets? What is their place in the history of their times? What service did they render to the country? It was their glorious privilege to rouse the hearts of their countrymen to the Faith which was their birth-right. Even in countries noted for their organising power, there is the danger of the masses remaining comparatively ignorant of their religion. The story is told of a great Bishop* visiting one of the mining districts in England and asking one of the miners whether he knew Christ. "What is his number?" asked the man

* The authority for this story is the late Swami Vivekananda.

thinking that Christ was his fellow-labourer. That is the sort of ignorance which the leaders of the national thought ought to guard against especially in times of wars and revolutions when the fate of the nation is in the melting-pot. If Rama and Krishna had been to the Indian peasant no more than Christ was to this typical labourer, then the Moslem proselytiser would have succeeded in his mission quite easily and within no time. While estimating the services of the Maratha saints and prophets the fact must never be overlooked that the period of the religious revival brought about by them synchronised with the occupation of the Maratha territory by the Moslem invader. Till the times of Dnyaneshwar, the shock of the Moslem conquest was not felt in the Deccan. The North Indian plains were already red with the blood of thousands of soldiers, bravely but hopelessly fighting for the cause of their country and religion. The tide at last swept over the whole of Maharashtra and when the Muslim came he brought not only his sword but Koran also. This two-fold mission of the Muslim adventurer it was the duty of the nation to resist. The political

leaders were weak and therefore helpless; consequently the invader established himself in the country almost without opposition. It was exactly at this time that the great wave of religious revival started. That is why, instead of being a controversial movement, it was entirely assimilative and synthetical. It was no time to quarrel whether Shiva was greater than Vishnu or whether the Adwaiti was right and the Dwaiti or qualified Dualist wrong. All those controversies whose echoes and re-echoes from some other parts of the country were still heard, were all hushed up. It did not matter which Deity, you worshipped, so long as you remained a Hindu. The political unity which Shivaji only partially succeeded in making was preceded by social and religious solidarity. The Reformation movement in Europe with which this movement is incorrectly compared, started long after the last crusade with the Turk was fought; but here in Maharashtra the movement as it synchronized with the rule of the Moslem was essentially national though inevitably disguised as religious; and as time passed on, as the political awakening became more

and more pronounced, the religious leaders also became more and more national until at last in Ramdas we see the Patriot-Saint whose political fervour was equalled only by his religious faith. It is true that Tukaram never plunged into the flood but only contented himself with standing on the bank of the national awakening. But even he, so indifferent to worldly matters, blessed the movement and when Shivaji approached him in the spirit of a disciple asked him to seek the aid of Saint Ramdas as the fittest man to guide. When these points are remembered, the reader will see why the movement assumed this synthetic form, why the Brahmin still continued to monopolise his "priest-craft," why even those forms, ceremonies and rituals which had outlived their usefulness were so jealously kept intact and observed with all the intense devotion of a fanatic. The one work, therefore, which the great saints of Maharashtra set themselves to do was awakening the hearts of the people and unifying them by the bond of love for God and religion, and this they did with a persistence and success that is truly marvellous. If even after the lapse of more

than two centuries, "it is hard to convince people who have Tukaram in their mouth, of the intrinsic moral superiority of the Bible," how much more difficult his task must have appeared to the Moslem missionary, in dealing with the contemporaries of Namdev and Tukaram, Ekanath and Ramdas!

Space forbids us from describing at great length the service of these saints and prophets to their language and literature; and yet it is impossible to pass over it in silence. It can safely be said that if there is any force, rhythm or power of expression in the Marathi language, that is entirely due to these saints and prophets who, when Marathi was neglected everywhere, took this famished orphan and nursed it with all the love at their command. The language really stood in need of protectors. It did not find favour with the Pandit who was too full of Sanskrit; and from the 14th century onward it ceased to be the official language. Discarded by Prince and Pandit, by Court and Camp, it sought shelter at the feet of these saints. It is their writings which gave Marathi a dignity which hitherto it lacked. Their success was sufficient to induce literary

aspirants to imitate their example; and the result was a mass of literary matter of which perhaps a hundredth part only has hitherto been brought to light by Marathi antiquarians. They were prolific writers, all of them. To compose verses by the thousand was quite an easy thing with them. Their ambition was to write crores of verses. Namdev is credited with being the author of 96 crores of *Abhangas* (verses); and though this is a physical impossibility that shows the ambition of the writers or expectations of their readers. It is true that much of this literature is marred by a want of the sense of proportion, by artistic inelegance and by tiresome repetitions. But this is because the authors did not get any regular literary training; and in spite of their literary faults, even the most prejudiced reader will have to admit that the works they have bequeathed us are full of the aroma of spiritual faith and insight. This is not the place to describe the growth of the Marathi literature or to describe how from being the handmaid of religion, poetry grew to have an independent throne for herself. One or two points, however, deserve special mention. The

literature of these times deals almost exclusively—directly or indirectly—with Religious ideas and religious personages. It can roughly be divided into four parts (1) The exposition of the *Vedānta*. This is found in Dnyaneshwari Amritanubhava, Ekanathi Bhagvat and works of this type, all written in verse ; (2) Songs of religious ecstasy, mostly composed in the *Abhang* metre, which is an adaptation of the *Anushtubh* metre ; (3) Didactic poetry, also in the same metre containing maxims of good conduct, strictures on the vices of hypocrites and (4) Stories from the Ramayan and the Mahabharat. This forms the narrative Poetry which, written in various metres, has reached high-water mark in the writings of Shridhar, Mukteshwar and Moropant.

After his return from the pilgrimage,* Dnyaneshwar and his brothers with their youngest sister, led an even course of life at *Alandi*. They never married ; they never worked for their livelihood. They had only one occupation in life—Service of God. If they saved society that was solely because they wanted to

* The time, which the party took for completing this pilgrimage, is not known. Perhaps it was three or even four years.

serve God through society. To elevate the depressed and to console the miserable were the basic elements of their religion. As Mr. Tilak has truly said in his recent book on the *Gita*: "To make the individual soul universal whereby the meanest creature in this world becomes only a manifestation of the Almighty and therefore a meet object of worship is the highest form of devotion compared to which the offering of incense and flowers to Him in the privacy of your room or the solitude of the temple, though helpful, is far less elevating." It is a kind of *yajna*. This service of society and the man who never draws a breath for himself is the greatest saint; such was Dnyaneshwar. But the success of his mission awakened the jealousy of many, some of whom had their own axe to grind. One of them was *Changa-Deva*, a great yogin claiming to have lived for fourteen centuries. Anxious to test Dnyaneshwar, he once started for Alandi. Riding on a fierce tiger, tamed only by the superior powers of *yoga* with a serpent for his whip, he marched followed by a regiment of disciples. He had intended to vanquish Dnyaneshwar but was himself half-vanquished when he saw Dnya

neshwar coming forward to receive him by moving a wall. The conversation that followed convinced Changa-Deva that he had caught a Tartar. Ultimately he disbanded his disciples and himself became one at the feet of our hero.

“Whom the gods love die young” says the proverb and in this case the gods were but too anxious for the return of one of their own company. So on 25th October, 1296, two years after Allaudin’s invasion of the Deccan, Dnyaneshwar closed his brilliant career by entering into eternal *Samadhi* amidst the subdued sobs of his own loving sister, brothers, disciples and friends. He was barely twenty-two. Before the first anniversary of his death, his sister and brothers followed him, unwilling to live in the void caused by their brother’s death.

So ends the story of Dnyaneshwar’s life. The history of his inner struggles,—if there were any—of his mental and spiritual development is hopelessly lost to us. What remains is a series of bare facts, happily well authenticated, and a succession of miracles whose account, proceeding though it does

from contemporary writers, is, in these days of rationalism, often rejected. To my mind the greatest miracle which this boy-saint wrought was the immortal book which he composed when barely fifteen. There he stands, before the mind's eye of his reader, in the temple at *Nevasa*, the light of knowledge radiating from his countenance, holding the audience bound by the spell of his eloquent words. To me, however, the picture is far less appealing than the other, in which, the saint, as yet undiscovered, begged from door to door returning not railing for railing but love for hatred, compassion for cruelty and nobility for mean conduct. The children of the ostracised *Vithalpant* became the religious leaders of their time. The beardless begging boy is the spiritual light of six centuries. He conquered Maharashtra and made it prostrate before the throne of *Vithoba*. From his time, *Pandharpur* became the Benares of the Marathas. At a time when religion was in the hands of Pandits and a sealed book to the people, he spread broadcast the truths of the *Vedas*. And what a love for his people! Himself a great yogin and a follower of the great Shankaracharya, for them

he discarded, like Vivekananda, the bliss of *Samadhi* and the stimulating silence of the cave and worked for and amongst them. Personally partial to jnana only, he preached *Bhakti* and sanctioned *karman*. He opened their heart and kindled their spirit; and though the political complications of the next two centuries put a temporary check on the religious revival; yet with the coming of *Ekanath* it rose with a rebound, extended to the remotest corners of Maharashtra and made religion first a rallying sound and then the war-cry of the people. The religious revival made the subsequent movement against the Muslim conquerors possible; and though the credit of building *Swaraj* must be given to Shivaji and his followers, yet the contribution of the leading saints and prophets towards the development of the idea of nationality must never be overlooked. For the patriotism of those times was based not on Economics but on religion.

• THE
VAISHNAVITE REFORMERS OF INDIA
CRITICAL SKETCHES OF
THEIR LIVES AND WRITINGS

BY

T. RAJAGOPALA CHARIAR, M.A., B.L.

CONTENTS.—Nathamuni ; Pundarikaksha ; Yamuna-charya ; Sri Ramanujacharya ; Sri Vedanta Desika ; Manavala Maha Muni ; and Chaitanya.

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NAMDEV

THE subject of this sketch is one of the two great poets of Maharashtra, the first to give impassioned and poetic expression to the doctrines of the Vaishnava faith. Born in the fourteenth century, some decades after the Brahmin reformer Dnyandev whose intrepid life and utterances had caused a great national and religious awakening, he sang in pure and devout strains of the love of God and the need of attaining Him. The value of Namdev's life and poetry cannot be better judged than by the reverence and love with which he was looked upon in latter days, when the movement had spread through the whole nation and a host of saints and poets arose to testify to its power. Tukaram called himself the spiritual disciple of Namdev and was, it appears, chiefly guided in his devotion and poetry by the influence of Namdev's works. In the joyous refrains of the simple people

who daily go on pilgrimage to Pandharpur, Tukaram's name is ever cheerfully joined with that of his illustrious predecessor.

Before narrating the story of Namdev's life, it behoves us to say something about the origin and history of the shrine of Pandharpur in which city Namdev was born. It was Namdev's life and poetry, more than anything else, that linked the name and cult of Vitthoba irrevocably with the rising religion of Maharashtra.

THE SHRINE OF PANDHARPUR

The shrine and city of Pandharpur which were the chief and loved resort of the mystics and poets of mediæval Maharashtra are situated on the banks of the Bhima river (also called Chandrabhaga), a tributary of the Krishna. The origin of the shrine is lost to us. That it existed and was well known as the shrine of Vishnu even so early as the thirteenth century is borne out by a few inscriptions. The first in date is a copper-plate grant by one Malliseti, a general of the Yadava king, dated 1249 A.D., in which it is mentioned that the

general made a grant of a village in the Pundarikakshetra in the presence of Vishnu. The next bears the date 1270 A.D. It says that Bhanu, son of Kesava, celebrated an Aptoryama sacrifice in the city in consequence of which all the gods and Panduranga were delighted. From these it is clear that the shrine was considered and revered as that of Vishnu. But how Vishnu came to have the name *Vittal* is a matter of discussion among Marathi scholars. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar is of opinion that the word *Vittal* is made up of *Vittu* and *la*, the former being a Canarese form of the Sanskrit name *Vishnu*, while *la* is a suffix indicating tenderness or affection. That *Vittu* in Canarese is a corruption of the Sanskrit *Vishnu* can be accepted with certainty, as we find it occurring in the names of some of the kings of the Hoysala dynasty such as Bittideva, etc. Others derive the word from *Vita*, meaning "a brick" in the Marathi language, and say that that name was given because *Vittal* stands on a brick pedestal. Whatever may be the derivation of the word;

there is no doubt that the image stood for Vishnu and was as such worshipped by the people. In latter days, Vittal was identified with Krishna, the husband of Rukmini (Rakhmai in Marathi), and his worship became the joy and faith of Maharashtra.

It has been surmised by some that the image and shrine of Vithoba, prior to the period they came to represent Vishnu, might have been some image and chaitya of Buddha. Says Mr. H. G. Rawlinson, "Who this Vithoba or Vittala originally was, has been the subject of much learned, and for the most part fruitless, discussion. One thing at least is certain. Before his shrine, as before that of his brother at Puri, all castes are equal, and the haughty Brahmin and humble Sudra stand on the same footing. Perhaps Vithoba has borrowed some of his attributes from the gentle Buddha whose deserted halls at Karla and elsewhere testify to his former power in the land. Perhaps he is even Gautama himself—*quantum mutatis ab illo*—transformed by long centuries of uncritical devotion."

The accredited legend, however, is as follows : One Pundalika was much attached to his parents and spent his life in ministering to them and attending on them day and night. Once Rukmini, the spouse of Krishna, fell out with him, and, leaving Dwaraka, betook herself to the woods near Pandharpur where Pundalika and his parents were living. Krishna went in search of Rukmini and during his journey met Pundalika and his parents. Pundalika, not heeding the arrival of the divine Krishna, threw down a few bricks for Krishna to stand upon and went on with his filial ministrations. The ministrations over, he turned to Krishna and offered him his worship. God Krishna was exceedingly pleased with Pundalika's filial devotion and, at the latter's request, as a reward for his devotion, made his temple at the place where he stood. Rukmini too came and joined him. Thus arose the temple and image of Vithoba at Pandharpur. As Sir R. G. Bhandarkar suggests, this legend perhaps testifies to the fact that Pundalika, or some one of his name, first

carried to, and preached in, Maharashtra the Vaishnavite religion which was forming and spreading in North India in the early centuries of the Christian era.

It may be mentioned that the Krishna worshipped as Vittoba is Krishna the husband of Rukmini, not Krishna the lover of Radha. The aspect of Krishna-myth that engrossed the heart of Northern India was that of Krishna as adored by Radha and the Gopis. It is this face of the myth that is prominent in the religions of Vallabha and Chaitanya. The religion of the latter, if anything, is really more ardent and soul-engrossing than that of the Maratha saints. The ardour and spiritual yearning, that find expression in the discourses of Chaitanya, the *Prem Sagar* and the Pahari paintings, are greater than anything similar that we find elsewhere in mediæval India. In latter days, however, in Rajasthan and in Bengal, religion and worship came to be mixed up with sensuous and worldly doings: but little of that debasement can be laid at the door of religion. It may be, as Sir

Bhandarkar remarks, that the Vishnu-faith of Maharashtra was "more sober and purer," but the strength and cause of it lay not in the form of Krishna-myth that the saints chose to glorify, but in the qualities, the lives and the utterances of the poets and saints themselves. The Vaishnavite preachers of other provinces, partly owing perhaps to their training and local traditions, partly owing to the circumstances under which the new faith reached them, laid more insistence on study and Shastraic worship and inculcated implicit loyalty and devotion to the guru. The schools they founded became therefore more theologic and priest-ridden. The Maratha saints, while addressing their message to the great heart of the people, laid great insistence on the training and virtues of the heart: little trammelled by ancient theology and modes of thought, the Maratha movement became more protestant and humanitarian in character. The theologic schools of the North gained in poetry and sectarian strength; while the movement in Maharashtra became rational and humanitarian.

Whatever be the origin of Vithoba, whatever be the theological antecedents of which he was born, he soon became the God and national deity of Maharashtra. A race of most impassioned mystics and poets and of noble saints found in him and his name the heart and symbol of their faith. There was little of idolatry or anthropomorphism in that devotion. Full of strong emotion, of a great sincerity and faith, it was a personal religion rendered to a living God. It was no rude idol they worshipped, but One whom they feel they cannot comprehend but whom by the very strength and intensity of their desire they have realised more than any that professed more rational worship.

NAMDEV'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Namdev came of a family belonging to the tailor caste. His ancestors originally lived at Narasivamani, situated near Karhad, Satara District, now known as Bhaya-Narasingpur or Kolem-Narasingpur. His parents, Dama Set and Gona Bai, however, left Narasivamani and emigrated to Pandharpur where the saint-poet

was born. Dama Set led a religious life at Pandharpur maintaining himself and his family by tailoring and a little trade in clothes. Legend tells us that Namdev was not "born" but "found" by Dama Set floating in a stream, by the grace of Vittal. Be the legend as it may, Dama Set and Gona Bai brought up the child with great affection and love.

Even as a child, Namdev seems to have been of a devout and spiritual turn of mind. An interesting and curious legend is told which runs thus. Dama Set used every day to visit the shrine of Vittoba and worship him with fruits or rice or the like materials of worship. Once Dama Set being absent at a neighbouring village on business, Gona Bai gave the materials of worship to Namdev and asked him to go and offer them to Vittal. Namdev went, and, placing the food before the image, prayed in true child-like faith, that Vittoba do eat the same. Finding the image silent, the child-worshipper burst into tears. At last, we are told, the child's simple faith and

devotion were so compelling that the Deity, in order to please him, actually ate the offering.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

As Namdev grew into youth, his parents got him married to a maiden of their caste named Rajai. He seems to have lived lovingly with her and two children were born to them, a son and a daughter. Though married and father of a family, Namdev grew more and more unworldly and ascetic in disposition. Ever visiting the shrine or attending religious assemblies, or exercising himself in song and devout exercises, he rarely crossed the threshold of his house. His parents often sought after him and entreated him to give up his devotions and pursue the family trade. They were themselves, they said, growing old and could not work. But neither their entreaties nor even their helpless and aged condition could turn the thoughts of Namdev. Full of reverence and affection for his parents, kind to all beings even to a fault, he could not find it in his mind to engage in any secular task, but went and spent himself in devotion and

spiritual exercises in the shrine of Vittoba. Namdev's disregard and neglect seem to have brought poverty and discord into his household, though perhaps they were never so acute as we read in the life of that other great mystic, Tukaram, the doleful sage of Dehu.

Once, we are told, the aged Gona Bai, stung by her son's neglect of the household and the consequent poverty, repaired to the shrine of Vittoba, and, there standing before His image, charged Him thus: "My son whose upbringing cost me so much trouble and anxiety is now a slave of Thee. He lives forever in Thy Temple; he has neglected his trade; his parents, wife and child he has ruined. You have enticed him away from world and honour. My family is in ruin. Is this Thy vaunted Divine Mercy? Standing on Thy brick pedestal, O God of Illusion, Thou causest a tragedy to be enacted in every home!" Vittoba, the legend continues, secretly put on the guise of a merchant and went and deposited some money and treasure in the house of Namdev, before Gona Bai returned home-

from the temple. Namdev, as might be expected, on arriving home, took hold of the treasure and swiftly distributed it among Brahmins and mendicants.

The chief occupation of Namdev during these days consisted in celebrating what are called *bhajans* and *sankirtans*, chantings of prayer and song. Putting on the *tulsi* garland, cymbal in hand, the tailor-youth would go and stand in the courtyard of the Vittoba shrine and long dance and sing. Or when the temple festivals came and pilgrims poured in, the devout youth forgetful of all, even food, would join in their chantings and songs and pass his time in high spiritual revel. Ere long he began to compose songs, and young friends and mystics began to gather round him attracted by his devotion and his songs. His virtues too, his great tenderness, his affection for all, should have endeared him to many. But in that mediæval age, the songs and ecstatic doings of this untutored youth seemed to have struck the minds of the elders and the orthodox with a certain spiritual

naivete and daring. A remarkable anecdote is told of how, once when Namdev was seated in the midst of an assembly of devotees, a saintly potter, by name Gora, tapping him on the head, said that he was *kaccha* (half-baked), hinting thereby that he should, in order to perfect his religion, sit at the feet of some *guru* and learn. Namdev sought after a *guru* and found one in Vishoba Khesar, an ascetic dwelling in the shrine at Mallikarjun.

NAMDEV AND VISHOBA KHESAR

A great change seems to have come over Namdev's life and religious attitude after his initiation and discipleship under Vishoba Khesar. In one of his songs, Namdev tells us that he obtained his knowledge of the True and Living God from the Khesar, and by his influence was led beyond idolatry and the worship of stocks and stones. Vishoba Khesar was a Vedantin and a great opponent of idolatry and perhaps also a Saivite in form. The circumstances under which Namdev is said to have first seen him at the shrine of

Mallikarjun are themselves exceedingly characteristic. The intrepid and selfless Khesar, we are told, lay with his feet touching Siva's emblem and his eyes closed in meditation. The devout youth, Namdev, was staggered at the sight and cried in the ears of the ascetic, "O Swami, why dost thou thus lie with thy feet on the God's image?". The ascetic, waking up, replied, "Fatigue and old-age had laid me down. Unconsciously my feet touched the image. You please take my feet and place them where Siva's image is not." Namdev complied, and when he lifted Khesar's feet and placed them in another direction, he found to his astonishment a Siva's image starting up just below where he placed Khesar's feet. Namdev, lifting the feet again, tried another place and yet again another, but wherever he took the feet, he found there an image of Siva starting up. Namdev, struck with the mysterious greatness of the ascetic, fell at his feet and implored him to teach him the secrets of faith. The legend seems to embody the fact that Namdev learnt from

Vishoba Khesar the great truth that God is all-pervading and omniscient and that idolatrous worship would never lead to Him.

- Namdev returned to Pandharpur filled with
- new faith and knowledge, and became, as the legend says, *pacca* or full-baked.

NAMDEV'S PILGRIMAGES

The next important episode in the life of Namdev is his pilgrimage to the various shrines and holy places of Northern India and Deccan. Mahipathi says that Namdev was accompanied on his pilgrimage by the great reformer Dayandev. There are strong reasons against the truth of such a story. There is some evidence to show, as will be seen in a latter part of this sketch, that Namdev could have flourished only towards the end of the 14th century which is clearly a hundred years after the demise of the great Brahmin reformer Dayandev; and the association of the two is therefore a pure invention of later times.

Namdev's pilgrimage extended as far as Hastinapur and Badrikashram in the north.

His visits to those shrines seemed to have comprised nothing more than the usual routine of worship and prayer: but, on his return journey through Berar, an interesting incident is recorded by Mahipathi to have happened at a place of Saivite pilgrimage, called Avinda Nagnath. The story is interesting as it agrees well with the gentle and tender spirit of Namdev and also bears testimony to the easy persecution that befell the reformer or the faithful preacher of those days. Happening to arrive at Avinda Nagnath on the day of *Maha Sivaratri*, Namdev and his fellow-pilgrims bathed and went and worshipped Siva in the shrine. A little time after, Namdev moved by deep devotion took the cymbals in his hands and began to sing and preach. Large numbers of men gathered and sat to hear him. Namdev's words and songs engrossed the hearts of the listeners. "As the sea swells at the sight of the full moon," runs the description of Mahipathi, "so did the hearts of the audience swell with devotion at the words and songs of the Deccan saint." As the preacher and

audience were thus immersed in one stream of devotion and music, the priests and Brahmans of the temple appeared, smeared all over with ashes, beads round their necks, holy water in hand and articles of worship. Seeing the crowded audience that blocked the passage to the inside of the shrine, the Brahmans spoke aloud in angry tones, "Make way, touch us not." The assembled people demurred saying "What is there of pollution here! you may go." But the haughty Brahmans would not, and, approaching Namdev, said "Avaunt! thou wretch! Thy *bhakti* lore has ruined the holy principles of religion. Go behind the shrine and there carry on thy mad dance and song." The words fell like a bolt from the blue. The audience were perturbed and Namdev was struck with grief and sorrow beyond all measure. His thoughts instantly turned to the shrine of his kind and gracious Vittal where there was none high or low and where song and prayer were never despised. Though inwardly grieved, he moved with his audience, according to the bidding of the

Brahmins, to the western courtyard of the temple, and there continued his songs and preaching. To the surprise of all present and of the Brahmins in question, the image and temple suddenly turned west, in order, it is said, to please and honour Namdev ; and it is said that to this day the Siva temple at Avinda Nagnath remains facing the west (generally Hindu temples face the east). His pilgrimages over, Namdev returned to Pandharpur and spent his life at the feet and in the presence of, his beloved Vittoba.

NAMDEV'S LATTER LIFE

His discipleship under Vishoba Khesar and his pilgrimage apart, there are no other important episodes recorded in the life of Namdev as written by Mahipathi. One or two incidents, however, may be mentioned. After his return to Pandharpur, Namdev, in the usual manner of the Hindus after they finish a pilgrimage, prepared to feed a large number of Brahmins and holy men. Vittoba himself, it is said, helped Namdev with the necessary provisions and acted as

the host. The Brahmins were all well fed and, pleased with the entertainment given to them, invoked the blessings of God on Namdev and the host. But finding to their surprise that Namdev was a Sudra and that the host ate with him, the Brahmins raised an uproar and said that a purification was necessary. The host, it is said, then disclosing his Divine attributes, preached to them on the nature of true religion and told them that among those who worshipped Him in faith and devotion there was no distinction of caste or birth.

Another incident may be referred to, as it throws some light on the possible age of Namdev, and also for the interesting testimony it bears to the fact that Namdev's fame as a devotee and man of religion was established even in his own life-time. A rich Brahmin of Bidar wished to celebrate some festivals in honour of Vittoba in his native town in fulfilment of some vow of his. He came and invited the Pandharpur saint and poet to come and assist him in the celebrations. Namdev and his friends, taking their *bhajan* instruments,

followed the Brahmin. As they entered the Mussalman capital singing and chanting, the servants of the Mahomedan governor came and stopped them and inquired them what they did. Namdev replied that he and his followers were but religious pilgrims chanting and singing God's name; and their mission was one of devotion and peace. The Mahomedan officers, however, listened not, but surrounded them, and led them like captives to the door of their governor's palace. The governor, taking the pilgrims to be pretenders and infidels, had a cow slaughtered in their presence and, addressing Namdev, asked him to bring it back to life. Namdev, moved to tears, sat down in prayer and, at last, it is said, Vittal brought the cow back to life and vindicated the piety and faith of his adherents.

• NAMDEV'S AGE

The reference in this and other minor stories in Namdev's life to Mahomedan persecution, and the reference in one of his poems also to a destruction of idols by the Turks, seem to show that Namdev should

have flourished some time after the advent of the Mahomedans into the Deccan. The first inroad and establishment of the Mahomedan power in the Deccan took place in the beginning of the 14th century A.D. It may also be said that we find no reference to the Mahomedans in Mahipathi's life of Dnyandev. Another fact too, according to Sir Bhandarkar, points the same way. The strong dislike of idolatry which is attributed to Vishoba Khesar, and which, through him according to the story and one of Namdev's own poems, descended to Namdev himself, must to some extent have been the result of Mahomedan influence. A third factor in determining the period of Namdev is found in the fact that, while Dnyandev's style is highly archaic, Namdev's is more modern. From these, it may be safely inferred that Namdev should have flourished in the latter part of the 14th century (1370—1440 A. D. may, for the present, be taken as provisional dates), and the date 1270 A. D. (Saka 1192), which is traditionally given as the date of Namdev's birth should be

considered as antedated by at least one hundred years.

NAMDEV'S FELLOW-MYSTICS AND DISCIPLES

In the poetic biography of Namdev written by Mahipathi, a number of most lovable mystics and saints appear who all seem to have lived in the time of Namdev and on terms of spiritual comradeship with him. How many of these saints, or which of them were really contemporary, we have no means of judging apart from the writings of Mahipathi himself. But their lives and character and the part they play in the life of Namdev are in themselves so interesting and full of beauty that we cannot pass over them in silence.

JANI

Jani, child-poet and mystic, was the offspring of some poor parents. Once the latter coming on pilgrimage to Pandharpur with their daughter, the young girl, barely seven years old, moved by some strange devotion and mystic love at the sight of Vittoba, chose to remain in His city. The parents urged her long to follow them back to their home but

she refused and was left at Pandharpur. The little girl all alone lived in the city, a houseless devotee worshipping Vittoba. One day she fell under the notice of Namdev, and the saint, struck with the girl's precocious God-love and courage, took her to his home and giving her unto the hands of Gona Bai bade her look after the girl and nourish her. Gona Bai, with a true mother's heart, took the stranger-girl into her household, set her to some household work and cherished her lovingly. The little girl-devotee, we read, lived happily in Namdev's house, partaking in his *bhajans* and songs and assisting in the household work.

Jani, true devotion's child, was also a poetess. Small beautiful songs of hers, telling of God and His Love, are still current and highly popular throughout the Deccan. They are sung by the Marathi woman as she draws water from the village-well or sits at the grinding-stone, and by the hillman tending the flock on the hills. Poet and devotee of Vittoba as she was, Jani never gave up her

place in Namdev's household, and it was from out of her common life, a life of toil and service, that she sang forth her rapturous lyrics of love and devotion. A most beautiful anecdote is told of how, once, when Jani was grinding at the stone, Vittoba himself came to assist her in her heavy task. The shrewd Gona Bai, thinking that Jani had called in somebqdy to assist her for wages, fell to rebuking her; when to her surprise she found God Himself seated along with Jani and helping her in her toil. Of Jani's latter life, of how it ended, we know no more than in the case of the lives of many another mystic and devotee. She lived perhaps for a long time under the kind protection and spiritual fellowship of Namdev, and, after a life of household toil and religious devotion, closed her days in the city of Vittoba.

• RAKHA

Another character that figures in the life of Namdev is the pious and ascetic Rakha. In an age of gentle and pious souls, Rakha was the most pious and gentle. He was by birth a potter and lived in the city of Pandharpur with his

wife named Banga and a daughter. Once he had made a number of new pots and kept them for baking. A cat laid its young in one of them. Rakha, unconscious of the same, took down all the pots and placed them in the fire to be baked. A little time hence the mother cat came, and, missing its young, loudly began to scream. Rakha was seized with great fear and remorse, and, with a perturbed heart, prayed and vowed to God that he would abjure the world and become an ascetic, if only the little cats be saved. So saying, Rakha kept praying to God till the fires went out, and, then taking out one pot after another, he found, to his devout astonishment, the little cats uninjured and in life, in one of the pots. Beside themselves with joy, the gentle Rakha and his wife prepared to fulfil their vow. They gave away to the poor all they had, and, with nothing but the clothes they wore on their person, they embarked on a life of asceticism. They took not to begging but daily went and gathered the wood and the twigs in the forest, and, selling them for a price, maintained them-

selves. We are told that the ascetic Rakha, while daily gathering the fallen twigs and pieces of wood, would touch them not—such was the intense purity of his mind—where they lay in groups, fearing lest some other hand had gathered them for its use.

THE LAME SAINT

Another devout soul that figures in Namdev's biography is the Lame Saint of Paithan. He was a youth, born of poor parents, having neither hands nor feet. He was in due course invested with the sacred thread, but, disabled from movement or work, the unfortunate boy lived on the food given him by his kind neighbours. However, as he saw almost every day crowds of pilgrims marching to Pandharpur, his heart too was filled with a desire to see and worship Vittoba. He begged of the pilgrims to take him with them, but they complied not. At last he resolved, lame though he was, to creep on to Pandharpur. And so, across plain and hill, he crept till he reached a village called Lahool, mid-way between Paithan and Pandharpur.

When he reached Lahool, there was only a single day left for the sacred Ekadasi to arrive. Half the journey had yet to be done; and therefore bereft of all hopes of seeing Pandharpur, the lame youth sank down helpless and dejected. It is said that Vittoba himself at last appeared at Lahool and vouchsafed the youth his sight.

CHOKAMELA

The last to be referred is one of the most gentle and devout souls ever born in Maharashtra and one who had long predeceased Namdev. Chokamela was a Mahar by birth, the lowest of the low. He was born and lived in the city of Pandharpur, where his duty was to drag the bodies of dead cattle from the vicinity of the townsmen's houses. Though a Mahar and fated to low work from birth, his eye of faith early opened and he often prayed and meditated on Vittoba. He could not enter the temple nor stand in the streets, and therefore prayed continuously to Vishnu from the outer gate.

The thought, however, of a Mahar saint and worshipper was too much for the orthodox and

the high of the day, and as a result bitter persecution befell Chokamela. One day, as Chokamela worshipped Vittoba standing afar, a Brahman scoffed at him and said "Tell me what good are all the prayers you say. You worship Vishnu both day and night; yet you cannot venture into His sight. Your prayers to Him are as a dog should desire to eat with Brahmins. A beggar shall win a royal mate long before you enter Vishnu's heaven." Chokamela, humbly bowing, replied —

"The sun, though parted by unnumbered
miles,

Still on the lotus sheds his radiant smiles;
The moon, though high and higher still she
soars,

Spurns not the passion of the fond *chakor*.
So too High Heaven's Lord may yet incline,
Hope of the Hopeless, to this prayer of
mine.

From far the mother runs her young to
save,

From far He sees and shrinks not from the
slave.

Base though I be, no evil have I done
Him in whose eyes all castes and creeds are
one."

Chokamela was at last banished from the city and forced to live beyond the Bhima. Though outcasted, he still prayed to his Vittal from where he lived on the other side of the Bhima. Some time after in the year 1332 A.D. the Governor of Bidar impressed all the Mahars in his province to build a protecting wall round Mangalwedha town. Chokamela was impressed along with others. When the work was nearing its end, a part of the unfinished wall crashed down and smothered a number of Mahar workmen. Among the victims was Chokamela himself one.

NAMDEV SEEKING THE BONES OF CHOKAMELA

For many years Chokamela's ashes lay unhonoured under the fallen ruin. At last Namdev, it is said, received a divine message from Vittoba to carry them to His temple. In obedience to it, Namdev went to Mangalwedha, but Chokamela's bones were mingled with those

of several hundred fellow-workmen. At first Namdev was at a loss to identify those which he sought. At last placing his ear close to the ground, he heard at one spot the cry of "Vittoba, Vittoba". He then knew that the bones that lay there were Chokamela's. Reverently he collected them, and took them to Pandharpur, where a stone erected over them still marks the earthly remains of the gentle Mahar saint. The anecdote indirectly bears testimony to Namdev's spirit of humanity and his tender reverence for sainthood.

NAMDEV'S CHARACTER

In the many anecdotes and incidents of Namdev's life already narrated, we may gather some idea of the great sincerity and faith and the exquisite tenderness of heart and gentility of mind, of the Maratha poet. Some more anecdotes are told in his biography which reveal the same beautiful characteristics. Once, on an *Ekadushi* day when the pilgrims were preparing their food in open places round Pandharpur, a dog came on the scene and began to carry away the food they had prepared for

their dinner. The pilgrims took some sticks and pursued, it when the dog entered the house of Namdev, and, seeing some newly-prepared articles of food, put out its mouth. Namdev, friend to all beings, at once took the cakes, and, smearing them with ghee, gave them to the dog. No act of kindness could be greater. It is said that Vittoba himself had assumed this guise of a dog to test the heart of his devotees. Another anecdote is told which is, if at all, more touching and beautiful in its tenderness. Once, Namdev's mother being ill, she asked her son to go and bring her some herbs. Namdev took a blade and went out to bring them. As he, however, stood and cut the plants, the sight of the falling juice brought profound tears into his eyes. Suddenly turning the blade on to his own leg, he made a cut there to see how he himself felt it and taking out a piece of flesh applied it to the sundered plant to help it to revive. As the late Ranade said, "this intense spirituality may sound somewhat unreal to men not brought up in the atmosphere

these saints breathed. But there can be no doubt about the fact and there can also be no doubt that the national ideal of spiritual excellence has been shaped by these models. It may be that a stronger backbone and more resisting power are needed in the times in which we live, but in an account of the saints and prophets as they flourished more than two hundred years ago, we cannot afford to interpolate our own wants and wishes."

NAMDEV'S CLOSING DAYS AND DEATH

His devotions apart, Namdev seems to have spent his time largely in preaching and in composing songs. More than three to four thousands of poems bearing his name have come down to us. Most of these poems, as is the case with the poems of the other great poets of this movement, should have been composed extempore in the course of the *bhajans* and *sankirtans*. That Namdev constantly figured in such *bhajans* and congregational meetings is certain. But Mahipathi has left us no detailed descriptions of his daily preachings and *bhajans*, of the

eagerness and ecstasy and love that would have swelled Namdev's utterances or of the vast crowds at Pandhari and elsewhere that would have gathered to hear him. In the lives of Ēkanath, Tukaram and Ramdas written by the same poet, we have vivid descriptions of some of the most memorable *bhajans* and meetings they held, of the very men and women who attended them and of the great wave of enthusiasm and religious ecstasy into which they swept whole assemblies of devotees and pilgrims. Perhaps removed by a very long period from the time when Mahipathi came to write the pious lives, the tradition that had gathered round the life and doings of Namdev had faded in parts, while the enthusiasm and the love that attended on the lives of the more recent saints were more fresh in the memory of the people and found their way into the biographies. Be it as it may, Namdev's life could not have been a whit less full of love and devotion and pure ecstasy and charity than that of the 16th and 17th century saints. Living to a pretty good age, some seventy



years, Namdev breathed his last at the very door of his loved temple of Vittoba at Pandharpur. The first step leading to the door of the Vittoba temple at Pandharpur is named after him—a fitting memorial to a saint who helped to lead the souls of men on to the feet of God.

NAMDEV'S RELIGION AND POETRY

Namdev, like Tukaram, was more a poet and a mystic than a preacher or the spokesman of any creed. If we may believe the story of his initiation under Vishoba Khesar who was probably a non-idolater and a monist, Namdev should have learnt something of religious theory and philosophy under him. Such as it was, it would have gone to give strength and clearness to Namdev's faith and vision. Namdev's poems, however, little reveal any philosophic theory or speculation. They are, above all, poems of great Devotion and God-love.

The preciousness of the message of Namdev, as that of Tukaram, consists in the fact that it utters with simple sincerity a cry of the heart for God and points out to man the need

of God's Grace. As Ranade says, "the charm of Namdev and Tukaram lies in their appeal to the heart and in the subjective truth of the experiences felt by them in common with all who are religious by nature." Again and again there breaks out in these two singers the authentic call of man's unquenchable desire, "O! that I knew where I might find Him." The abundance and intensity of these expressions of desire and love cannot be adequately realised except by a study of those poems themselves. There are in their poems also notes of praise and God-attainment and eager moods of beatitude and peace. The great governing ideas of these mystics are however derived from the current Vaishnavite faith.

We give below a few poems :—

The first deals with the futility of idol-worship and is incidentally important as containing a reference to the guru Vishoba Khesar and his teaching.

"A stone God never speaks. What possibility then of his removing the disease of mundane existence ?

A stone image is regarded as God, but the true God is wholly different. If a stone God fulfils desires, how is it he breaks when struck?

Those who adore a God made of stone lose everything through their folly.

Those who say and those who believe that a God of stone speaks to his devotees are both fools. Those who extol the greatness of such a God and call themselves His devotees, should be regarded as worthless persons and their words should not be heard by the ear.

If, by chiselling a stone, a god is made of it and is worshipped with care for many years will he be of use at any time? Do reflect on this well in your mind.

Whether a holy place is small or large, there is no God but stone or water.

In the village of Dvadasi (Barse) instruction was given that there is no place which is devoid of God. That God was shown to Namia in his heart and thus *Khesar* conferred a blessing on him."

The following poem describes the Omnipotence of God. One may see in it some reflec-

tion of the thought of the old Sanskrit classics. "The Veda has to speak by Thy might and the sun to move round (by it) : such is the might of Thee, the Lord of the Universe ! Knowing this essential truth, I have surrendered myself to Thee.

By Thy might it is that the clouds do pour down rain, mountains rest firm and the wind doth blow.

Nothing moves at all without Thee. O Lord Pandurang, Thou art the cause of all. Namdev, like the other great Vaishnava mystics that followed him, condemned fasts and pilgrimages and called on men to cultivate pure faith and love of God. Sin, he says, can be effaced only by repentance and God will manifest Himself only to those who devoutly call on Him.

"Your mind is full of vices. What is the use of the pilgrimages you make ? What is the use of austere practices if there is no repentance ? The sins resulting from a mental act cannot be effaced by the highest of holy places. The essence of the matter is very simple : *Sin is effaced by Repentance.*" So

says Nama; "Vows, fasts and austerities are not at all necessary, nor is it necessary for you to go on a pilgrimage."

"Be you watchful in your hearts and always sing the name of Hari. It is not necessary to give up eating food or drinking water; fix your mind on the feet of Hari. ~~sacrificial ceremonies or giving up objects or desire are not wanted.~~ Realise a fondness for the feet of Hari. Neither is it necessary for you to contemplate the *One without Attributes*. Hold to the love of the name of Hari: says Nama, be firm in singing the name and then Pandurang will render Himself manifest to you."

In the two following poems we have a description of the virtuous and holy condition of a real *bhaktha*. Such a one, at peace with himself, cares not for the world's censure or its praise:—

"Recognise him alone to be a righteous man, who sees Vasudeva in all objects, eradicating all pride or egoism. The rest are entangled in the shackles of delusion. To

him all wealth is like earth and the nine species of gems are mere stones. The two—desire and anger—he has thrown out and cherishes in his heart quietude and forgiveness. He constantly repeats the name of Govinda not desisting even for a moment.”

“ Firmly grasp the truth which is Narayana. Purity of conduct should not be abandoned: one should not be afraid of the censure of the people, and thus accomplish one's purpose. Surrender yourself to your loving Friend (God) giving up all ostentation and pride. The censure of people should be regarded as praise and their praise should not be heeded. One should entertain no longing for being respected and honoured, but should nourish in oneself a liking for devotion. This should be rendered firm in the mind and the name of God should not be neglected even for a moment.”

The two following poems, so full of subtle beauty, will be familiar to students of mystic poetry:—

He is one, but fills and encompasses

many. Wherever you look, you find Him there. There is scarcely one who understands Him all being deluded by the variegated picture drawn by Maya. Everything is Govind, everything is Govind, there is nothing without Govind. Just as there is one thread and on it are woven breadthwise and lengthwise hundreds of thousands of beads, so is everything woven in the Lord. The waves, the foam and the bubbles of water are not different from water. All this extent of the universe is the sport of Parabrahm and, when we think of It, is not different from It. Illusive objects and objects seen in dreams are regarded as real. When by the instruction of my guru my mind awoke, I accepted the truth. Reflecting in your mind see this all to be the creation of Hari, says Namdev : in the inside of every individual thing there is one Murari alone without any interstice."

"The pitcher is filled and the water brought to bathe the God. There were forty-two hundreds of thousands of beings in it; there was already Vittal in them. Whom shall

bathe? Wherever we go, there is Vittal and He ever sports in joy. Flowers have been brought and wreaths woven of them for worshipping God. First of all the flowers were smelt by the bees, there was Vittal there; what shall I do? Milk has been brought and cooked for the offering of *Kshir* to God. The milk was first tasted by the calf; in it was Vittal, what shall I do? Here is Vittal, there is Vittal, no world without Vittal. This place and that Thou hast filled. Thou hast filled the whole world, says Nama humbly."

Few poems in Marathi, except perhaps some of Tukaram, can match the following in their intense spiritual yearning and their cry for God's grace.

Why dost Thou leave me suffering?
 O haste and come, my God and King.
 I die unless Thou succour bring.
 O haste and come, my God and King.
 To help me is a trifling thing.
 Yet Thou must haste, my God and King.
 O come: (How Nama's clamours ring).
 O haste and come, my God and King.

Another is more beautiful :—

O God, my cry comes up to Thee,

How sad a cry is it!

What is this tragic destiny

That Fate for me has writ?

Wherefore, O Hrisikes, dost Thou

So lightly pass me by?

To whom, to whom but to Thee now

Can I lift up my cry?

As chiming anklets sweetly ring,

So rings Thy name abroad;

To human spirits hungering

Thou givest peace with God.

Thou on Thy shoulders carrying

All the world's load of care,

To Thee 'tis such a little thing

Thy trouble too to bear!

Ah, Pandurang, Thy hand withhold,

My mother dear Thou art.

My Nanna, waxing very bold,

Casts him upon Thy heart.

THE
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CRITICAL SKETCHES OF
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BY

T. RAJAGOPALA CHARIAR, M.A., B.L.

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SHRI EKANATH

(1528-1599)

Looking back to the five hundred and odd years of religious revival in Maharashtra from the times of Saint Dnyaneshwar down to the seventeenth century, what strikes us most is the uniformity and persistence with which the leaders of the awakening delivered their message. Though for a time it appeared that the seed which Dnyaneshwar sowed was cast on barren soil, still with the coming of Ekanath, it sprouted with an abundance that made ample reparations for its previous failure; the message of Dnyaneshwar, Namdev and Ekanath echoed and reached through city and hamlet till at last the burden of the song was taken up wherever Marathi was spoken or understood. Then came Tukaram; and he in his own unique way has immortalized the ideas of this religious movement and having succeeded in catching the attention of the modern reformer

and of the Christian Missionary has been "fortunate" enough to be translated into English. The vitality of a movement is measured by the greatness of its leaders, "its capacity to produce in each generation men fitted to carry on the work with greater vigour and more assured success," by the diffusion of its ideas through all classes of society and fourthly by the doctrinal improvement which it brings about. Judged by almost every one of these tests, it will be seen that this movement was neither spasmodic nor accidental but the ripe fruit of the efforts of great and heroic souls who knew what they were about and who adapted their message to the particular needs of their times. The lives of about fifty such saints have been chronicled and the very fact that about half of them were non-Brahmins and some of them even *Mahars* is an index to the general awakening. They all agreed in essentials and the message of one generation was delivered with unabated fidelity by another. It is true that they contributed nothing new to the philosophy of religion; neither did they set themselves to

destroy. Theirs was the unifying, harmonizing mission, the mission of peace and love, of meekness and forbearance, of rectitude and piety. They diffused the knowledge of religion and made it the property of the poorest and most ignorant. They raised the dignity of the house holder and showed how, even without shutting himself up in a cave, a man could attain salvation. They purified ritual, gave dignity to idol-worship and when Hinduism stood in danger, made it first the rallying-sound and then the war-cry of the people. All honour to these great men who in the days of storm and stress stood by Hinduism and by their unique efforts developed the idea of nationality which under the able guidance of Shivaji bore so glorious a fruit.

While reading the lives and studying the services of these saints we must always keep at the back of our mind the fact that the religious revival in Maharashtra synchronized with the occupation of the Maratha territory by the Mahomedans; and we cannot help admiring how, when the petty chieftains that dotted the

whole of western India were engaged in fighting their petty quarrels and the Pandits unworthily wrangling over the dregs of the Vedantic philosophy, these saints came forward and with a recognition that did them credit of the national danger, fought with the Muslim not with sword and gun but with the yet more potent weapons of Faith and Love. It is a relief to come to this period of Hindu history after the study of the "age of the Acharyas" when the best brains of the country were busily engaged in hair-splitting and text-torturing. The intellectual cannonade which shattered Buddhism and drove it out of India recoiled on itself and we have the lamentable spectacle of more than six centuries stretching, straining, twisting every word, line and page of a few ancient books! We admire the genius of those intellectual giants to whom in spite of their unfortunate method we owe a clear, definite and philosophical exposition of Hinduism. But we admire still more the sagacity of those Saints and Prophets who refused to confine their Spiritual Vision to the

contents of a few books. Not that they did not revere books : more, they have even commented upon some. But their attitude is so detached, so impartial, so uncontending, as to disarm suspicion and scepticism and their occasional passionate outbursts proceeded not from the heat and warmth of advocacy but from that overflowing love which breathes through every word and runs through every thought. It was such men who were required to lead Maharashtra when the Moslem invader came—men, God-fearing, unassuming, persistent but patient, gifted but humble, men who in their Love of God had not forgotten man, who to improve their nation were heedless of their own salvation. To this class belonged Saint Dnyaneshwar who from a life-long bed of thorn, uttered only words of Peace and Love. To this class also belongs Saint Ekanath, the hero of our present sketch.

The ancient city of Pratishtan, later known by the name Paithan enjoyed during the middle ages a wide reputation for its piety and

scholarship. We have seen* how in the last quarter of the 13th century the orthodox Brahmins of Alandi had asked Dnyaneshwar and his brothers to go to Paithan and see if the learned men of that place were willing to admit the "children of a Sanyasin" into the Brahmin caste. Even before that time and later, Paithan was regarded as the Benares of the Deccan and was one of the principal centres of orthodoxy. At the time we are writing about—the middle of the fifteenth century—there lived at Paithan a Brahmin named Bhanudas. He was a great devotee of the God Vithoba of Pandharpur†. It is said that the great King Krishna Rai (1430—1452) of Vijayanagar had come once to Pandharpur on pilgrimage. So pleased was he with the beauty of the image of Vithoba that he took it away to his capital to the mortification of all the devout *Bhaktas*. It was Bhanudas who boldly went after the King to Vijayanagar and there at dead of night entered the royal palace

* Sketch of Saint Dnyaneshwar.

† District Sholapur.

and embraced his favourite God! Vithoba presented him with His diamond necklace and promised that He would go to Pandharpur with his devotee. When, on the next day, the necklace was found in the possession of Bhanūdas, the King at once sent him to the scaffold but the scaffold was miraculously turned into a beautiful tree, at which Krishna Rai begged pardon of Bhanūdas and allowed him to take the image of Vithoba to Pandharpur. It was this Bhanūdas who was the great-grandfather of Ekanath. Bhanudas had a son named Chakrapani whose son Surya Narayan was Ekanath's father. Ekanath was born about 1528. The exact date of his birth is not known. Soon after his birth he lost both his father and his mother and was brought up by Chakrapani. Those who have known what the love of a grandfather and a grandmother is "with its delightful weaknesses, with that complete collapse of all power of resistance to a child," in fact "the love of parents multiplied by two" need not be told that he passed an exceptionally happy childhood. He was never

a boy in habit and temperament. He spent days and months, not in childish plays and amusements but in going to the banks of the river Godavari, collecting curious-looking stones there and worshipping them as Siva. While the rest of his mates would play the horse with a stick, he, disdaining that game, would, with a staff on his shoulder, play at being a *Haridas* (lit. Servant of Hari), a religious preacher. He was never cross, and was always obedient and uniformly cheerful, so people were naturally drawn towards him and experienced a kind of pleasure in his company. He was a studious boy, quick at figures, and, seeing his sharp memory and understanding, his grandfather performed his *Upanayana* (ceremony of putting on the sacred thread) at the tender age of six. And then, all the craving for worship, for ceremonies, for devotion that was reflected in worshipping stones and playing at being a Haridas welled up into an earnest study of the Vedas, into close and attentive hearing of the lectures of religious preachers. The modest and charming way in which he asked difficult

points in Vedanta won the hearts of learned men but often they had to admit their own incapacity to explain his doubts ; then he would go to a temple of Siva and there remain absorbed in contemplation for hours. Nobody knew what plans he revolved in his mind in the solitude of that temple. Nobody—least of all his grandfather and grandmother—was prepared to find him give a slip one morning, and leave friends and relations in sorrow and surprise, never to be heard of for the next twelve years.

The spectacle of a boy of twelve, bright and happy, leaving friend and relations and going to practise religious austerities and seek spiritual salvation might well be termed a phenomenon. We have known wayward boys and youths, brought up in bad company, impatient of the restraint, to them dull, and of the monotony of a settled life, leave father, mother, without a tear of love or a qualm of conscience. Ekanath did not belong to this class. We have seen “life-wrecked” persons, battered through a stormy and chequered career, receiving hard knocks at every step, getting failure at every

turn, tired of life but afraid of death—leave the scene of their unlucky life and repair to forests, sheerly out of despair. We know Ekanath passed an exceptionally happy boyhood. A future, fair and bright, was smiling before him; a career of comfort and worldly greatness was within his reach; but he deliberately turned his back upon its charms and like the *Dhruva* of old repaired, nobody but himself knew where. We can well conceive how this boy, affectionate beyond measure, must have struggled and struggled with the thought of having to leave his dear old grandparents, how his heart must have ached and throbbed at the mere idea of their infinite sorrow, how and with what tender—almost pathetic devotion—he must have done services to them, possibly the last! Tradition tells us that he was strengthened in his resolution by the voice of God which he clearly and distinctly heard in his favourite temple asking him to go to Deogad* (Daulatabad) for spiritual realization.

Though an integral part of Maharashtra, Daulatabad now comes under the Dominions of H. E. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Whether such a miracle as God delivering his message or advice in human accents is possible or whether such calls are, as Gibbon puts it, the workings of an overheated brain persistently busy at the same idea, may be doubted by modern rationalists. But the very fact that such a call was felt is itself a sure sign of the longing of the heart, and we cannot help thinking that a religion which gives such inspiration to persons like Ramdas, Ekanath or Ramakrishna Paramahansa in their boyhood, can certainly be proud of its past achievements and need not in the least be apprehensive of its future glory.

The voice which Ekanath heard in the temple advised him to go to Daulatabad and take his spiritual lessons at the feet of Janardanswami, chief officer on the fort. Had Ekanath consulted the opinions of well-informed persons he would not have taken a different course. Janardanswami was noted far and wide as being one of the greatest householder-saints of his time. Born in 1504 of an humble but pious Brahmin family he started his career at

a time when the Brahmins were in high favour with the Muslim rulers of the celebrated Bahamani Kingdom (1327-1526 A.D.). His talents were conspicuous, character reliable, and bravery admirable. He was at once an accountant, a soldier and a capable executive officer. But these qualities, bright as they were, were only the back ground of his wonderful spirituality. In the duplicity and intrigues of the court of Malik Ahmed, his unwavering probity was everywhere respected; and it is said that out of regard for his worship of *Shri Dattatreya* all the offices in the city and fort of Daulatabad were closed on Thursdays. Such was the man whom Ekanath was directed to join; and after days of travelling, he stood before the house of Janardanswami, footsore, and thoroughly exhausted. The gates of the Swami were ever open to travellers. But though thus readily admitted, it was not without many misgivings that Ekanath approached the tall and princely Swami. There was, however, no rebuff but cordial welcome to this young stranger. At the

sight of Ekanath, the Swami remembered how that same form had appeared to him in his meditation that morning. With heart alternating between hope and fear, Ekanath told who he was and what took him thither. The Swami replied in suitable terms and promised to do everything he could for a boy of such promise and earnestness.

And now began a discipleship which to those who have been brought up in modern ideas and under modern conditions might appear meaningless and even stupid but without which no true spirituality can grow. The complete effacement of all ego and individuality is the *sine qua non* of purity of heart, and in the development of religious faculties it is not the head but the heart that is principally concerned. This must not be understood to mean that religion requires blind faith and surrender, total or partial, of reason. Spirituality never expects any intellectual slavery. What is required is patience, confidence and love. These open the gates of the heart and make it ready for the final

realisation. It is not without sufficient reason that Narendranath Datta (afterwards the Swami Vivekanand) sat at the feet of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, fighting intellectually no doubt, but loving his Guru with the heart of a child. Ekanath yielded the same tribute of love. He had never to wade through that scepticism and intellectual-doubting which for many years tormented Vivekananda. His mind was, happily for him, already attuned to faith and in his spiritual progress, intellect occupied a subordinate, but by no means contemptible, place. To make his heart sublime, to purify his mind and develop spiritual faculties he followed the time-honoured course viz., personal attendance on, and service of, his Guru. From early morning till late at night he waited upon Janardanswami and though the Swami had scores of servants, yet Ekanath tried to dispense with the attendance of as many as was possible, so that he might be able to do each and every service however humble, however contemptible for his Guru. He himself has given us a description of how

the true disciple serves his Guru and we have not the slightest doubt that he himself had acted up to his own ideal:—

“With his heart full of devotion he (the true disciple) chants, day in and day out, the name of his Guru. When the Guru is absent he will always be, like the unfledged bird waiting for its mother, thinking of him. In the company of his Guru he forgets everything else, forgets that he has a body of his own which requires occasionally at least, food and drink, rest and sleep; more, he forgets his family, father and mother, wife and child. He will plunge himself in the river of nectar of his Guru's worship. He will ever drink the milk of service from the udders of his desire-yielding cow—Guru. He envies the dust his Guru treads, and the very air which he breathes, for he knows that his Guru is his ideal, greater by far than even father or mother, greater than everything else in this world.”*

* All the renderings from Ekanath's writings are specially made for this sketch.

There is certainly an element of danger in this path, both for the Guru as well as for the disciple. Such service greater than that which the wife offers to her husband or the child to his or her parent, so closely akin in outward form at least to the extreme forms of slavery, is a fruitful cause of degeneration when it is rendered to a person whose spiritual nature has been developed but imperfectly. There is the danger of the Guru becoming an impostor, and the disciple nothing better than a willing slave. But under favourable circumstances this form of worship is more helpful to the disciple than the worship of idols and images. Whatever that might be, Ekanath derived great benefit by living with Janardanswami. Occasionally, the Swami would send Ekanath to a neighbouring hill in order to practise solitary and austere *tapasya*. He would now and again put Ekanath to the test and see how far his disciple had advanced. Sometimes again, it was after the lamps were put out and the night far advanced that he would discourse with Ekanath on the subject of the

realisation of God. Again and again would Ekanath ask him "Revered Sir, how shall I realise God?" and the answer to the question was to Ekanath's mind indefinitely postponed. On one occasion Ekanath sat up far into the night, for hours occupied in finding out a mistake of one pie in the official accounts which he kept for his Guru. Again and again he turned his eyes over the never-ending pages of the account-books and still no trace of the slip. "Shall I this once fail in my duty and incur the Swami's displeasure?" he thought. But there was no time for such thoughts. So with heart heavy and eyes wet he trimmed his lamp and plunged himself into the ocean of figures. At last the mistake was found and in ecstasy Ekanath clapped his hands and laughed loudly. When he turned back it was to find his Guru standing at his back, the picture of kindness and dignity. Ekanath in silence fell at his feet. "Now my son," the Swami said, "you know the way to realisation. Can you not turn the same concentration Godward and

discover this whole mistake of Life?" "To be sure I will," said Ekanath and from that day redoubled his exertions. He practised the severest forms of penance in a solitary corner of the fortress and we are told that when he was lost in meditation, a serpent used regularly to go to Ekanath's cave and there coil up its body round his limbs. At first it wanted to bite him but such is the power of spirituality that as soon as the serpent touched Ekanath's body, all its wicked impulse disappeared and if it frequented its visits, it was only to do some service to Ekanath by coiling up its tail round Ekanath's neck and holding its hood over his head as if to protect him from the sun. Ekanath himself was for many days quite ignorant of his new friend and servant, for the latter disappeared from the place before Ekanath came to the plane of consciousness. On one day, however, as chance would have it, a shepherd saw it and gave a cry which at once brought Ekanath to consciousness. Those who know what a kind heart Ekanath had and how he carried the principles of *Ahimsa* to

the extreme throughout his long life, need not be told that the life of the snake was spared. We have this story on the authority of Ekanath himself. Another story has been handed down to us which though not as well authenticated is equally remarkable. On one Thursday Janardanswami, as was his wont, was engaged in the worship of his favourite God, Shri Dattatreya. Suddenly the alarm was sounded and word was brought that a strong and numerous enemy force was advancing on the fort and that there was not a single moment to lose. In the thick fog of historical uncertainty which hangs over the period, we have no means of understanding who the enemy was and what the nature was of the struggle which the garrison of Deogad was called upon to face. We are concerned not so much with the nature of defence as with Ekanath's part therein. When the news of the approach of the enemy troops was brought by the courier, Janardanswami was deep in meditation. Ekanath, who was standing by the gate of the temple-room received the news and was one short minute

exceedingly perplexed. Should he rouse his Guru from meditation and thus disturb his worship? If not, what was to be done in the matter? Ekanath made up his mind to personate the Swami. Being rather of the same height and stature as his Guru, he was quite successful especially when clad in the armour of the Swami. He led the attack, gave all orders and within a very short time routed the forces of the enemy; and when amidst shouts and cheers the victorious pseudo-Jañardan returned, he found the Swami just roused from his trance, reading the letter Ekanath had left. In a twinkling everything was explained and the Swami could find no words to express his admiration for the zeal and devotion of his disciple. It must have been such episodes as these revealing the sterling worth of Ekanath that must at last have induced the Swami to rend the last film of ignorance from the mind of his disciple. So on a bright Thursday morning he asked Ekanath to accompany him to a favourite and solitary place of contemplation just a couple of miles away from his

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residence. Ekanath instinctively knew that *the* moment had come and so with heart beating with wild hope and joy he followed the Swami to the beautiful grove whose sight put him in mind of those singularly beautiful verses in Dnyaneshwari :—

“ It must be a cool place, sheltered by a cluster of trees growing round a beautiful temple of *Siva*. Bits of sunshine peeping through the branches must, however, illumine it and the air, cool, fragrant and refreshing render it pleasant. Small streams of sparkling water, gaily dancing in their course, silently lapping, will do much to add to its charms. No sound there except the sweet prattle of the parrot and the humming of the bee. A solitary swan or a couple of *chakravaka* birds will not be entirely unwelcome; and if in addition the cuckoo cooes or the peacock dances, well, we shall not drive them away. In short the place must be such as to amuse the worldly, soothe the depressed, stimulate the *Sadhaka* and induce even a king if he visits it to lay aside his crown and live there in peace and meditation.”

He had till now the whole of this description by heart but he had never yet an experience of that tranquillity of mind which prepared him for the coming spiritual treat. "Well, my boy, stand here for sometime. Know that this is the crowning day of your life; and don't you be afraid of whatever form you might see Lord Dattatreya coming in." No sooner had his back turned than Ekanath saw a Mahomedan friar, tall and dark, his form clothed in a fresh hide reeking of stench; he was followed by an ugly and terrible bitch with eyes streaming with blood like those of the fabled Furies. Ekanath gave a start but instantly remembering the caution of his Guru became his former self again. The Swami and his visitor began to converse on diverse subjects till at last the Swami called Ekanath and presenting him to the "*Malanga*"* ordered him to milch the bitch. Ekanath did as was direct-

* The word in the chronicles is "*Malanga*" which according to the dictionary means "a Mahomedan friar professing extreme poverty and leading an austere life partly in monasteries and partly itinerent." But more probably it means a 'Dhor' or a man belonging to that low caste which deals in the hide of cattle, etc.

ed and before the "Malanga" disappeared Ekanath had the singular good fortune of seeing him transformed into that familiar form of Dattatreya which he had pictured to his mind so often. And who should the bitch be, but that celebrated *Kama-dhenu*, the desire-fulfilling cow? Lord Dattatreya blessed Ekanath, prophesied his future greatness and foretold that he would write a commentary on the 11th Chapter of the *Bhagvat Puran*.

From this time onward Ekanath could, at will, see the saintly form of the Son of Atri. We have it on the authority of Ekanath himself that the Lord Dattatreya lent him aid and encouragement while writing his works and that the Lord had with His own protecting hand shielded him from danger. Was the vision purely subjective? Was it that the fancy of Ekanath incessantly at work dreamt forms and sights, rendered familiar by his intimate knowledge of the Puranas or was it some higher, deeper, mysterious spiritual experience which defies the laws of reason and staggers imagination? Those who know how the late

Swami Vivekananda felt, wherever he went, the accompanying and protecting hand of Kali ever clasped to his own, will pause before they venture on a dogmatic assertion. Let us who stand on the physical and intellectual plain only chronicle without censure or criticism the miraculous happenings in the lives of great saints and prophets. At any rate it is not strange for one like Ekanath who had renounced home and heart at the tender age of twelve and passed the fruitful years of his youth in constant meditation and prayer, to have gone through stages of spiritual development, which to us, poor mortals are inexplicable. Let us own that our much-boasted modern Science has not yet even accurately registered the phenomena which transcend ordinary rules of matter. It is only on such a candid and humble confession of ignorance that the future progress of science depends.

Now that Ekanath had attained the acme of his ambition, it was time for him to leave the residence of his Guru and go back either to his own city or repair to any region which his

fancy chose. But he showed no desire of doing anything of the kind. With the same joyful, peaceful, unruffled devotion he served his Guru and lived with him. He would gladly have remained with the Swami till the end of life. But Janardanswami knew that Ekanath had a mission in life and, to further prepare him for it, he asked him to go on a round of pilgrimage, visiting sacred cities, rivers and shrines. At this Ekanath was all tears. Which shrine or river, said he, was more sacred than those revered feet which he had been worshipping? No, he would not leave his Guru under any circumstances. It was only when the Swami promised to accompany Ekanath for some time that the latter consented. They left Daulatabad and went to *Panchabati* near Nasik, far-famed in the Ramayan as having been sanctified by the residence of Rama. In the sixteenth century, Nasik was an important stronghold of orthodoxy, a centre of learning and culture, and one of those half a dozen cities in Maharashtra which maintained its reputation for piety and scholarship. From *Panchabati*,

they went to *Tryambakeshwar* (20 miles from Nasik), the place whence the river Godavari starts its course and one of the twelve places in the Deccan having a temple of Siva which is said to be the work of no mortal. To Ekanath and his Guru, it was rendered even holier by the fact that the great *Nivrittideva*, the elder brother of Dnyaneshwar had attained spiritual wisdom there. They lived there for sometime and then the Swami intimated his wish to return to Deogad. "Go thou, my son," said he, "and in spirit I shall accompany you wherever you are. On your way you will meet persons of all sorts, persons high and low, rich and poor, saintly and wicked. Remember you are not to display your spiritual power to anybody. My blessings with you always!"

It is needless to follow Ekanath visiting shrine after shrine in Northern India and saturating his mind with that religious fervour which coupled with his own earnestness of purpose, made him a singularly proper man to lead Maharashtra in the religious revival which had been already started. His pilgrimage in Upper India

was a great eye-opener to him inasmuch as it brought to his mind vividly the destructive work wrought by the Moslem invaders wherever they went. It widened his intellectual vision, deepened his sympathies, strengthened his faith and ingrained in him the ambition of directing in proper channel the religious enthusiasm of his country. So when after many months he returned to *Paithan* it must have been with the fixed purpose of taking up the work for which he was born. To add to this the message which Janardhanswami, his old Guru, sent to him about this time expressly required him to become a householder. The itinerent tendency was still strong in him and when he went to *Paithan* - it was not to his own house that he walked straight but put up in the temple of Siva, where the voice of God had, years before, enjoined him to go to *Deogad*. As was his wont, he went round the village in the evening a-begging. It was impossible for even his dearest friends of childhood to recognize him, so completely was he transformed in age, dress, features and

Everything. But his old grandfather who for the last twelve years had been fondly expecting Ekanath's return and who tried to discover the features of Ekanath in every stray traveller and *bairagi* instantly recognised him. He threw his arms round the neck of Ekanath and wept long and bitterly. It is hard to say how much of grief and how much of joy there was in his feelings. "Now, my son," he said, "you must never forsake me." "But, father, shall I not complete my pilgrimage and go to South-India shrines?" "No, you may not," persisted the old man. "The autumn of old age has well nigh made my leaf of life ready to drop down. Stay, stay with me, if only till I die. Besides, here is something for you." With these words he placed a carefully-kept note before Ekanath who instantly recognising the writing to be Jāṭardhanswami's first held it over his head and then read it through. Ekanath made up his mind. He would, to obey his Guru, be a householder and side by side continue his religious and literary work. In pursuance of this plan he got himself

married and settled in his old house at Paithan. •

When Ekanath returned to Paithan, he was about twenty-five years of age. From that time till 1599, the year of his death, he lived mostly at Paithan, dividing his time between spiritual meditation and prayer on the one hand and religious lectures, discourses and compositions on the other. In the life of saint Dnyaneshwar we have seen how wide-spread the literary instinct of the men and women of the religious revival in Maharashtra was. They not only sought spiritual knowledge and inspiration, but no sooner did they have it than at once they rushed into literary composition in order to impart it to others. When we see how powerful this impulse for communication was, we need not wonder that Ekanath wrote some books. On the contrary we are surprised to find that, excepting his commentary on what is called the *chattus-sloki Bhagvat* (four verses in the Bhagavat Puran summarizing the conclusions of the Vedanta and of the philosophy of life) he wrote nothing for more

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than twelve years since his return to Paithan. The simplicity and unassuming modesty of his nature might perhaps be responsible for this. Whatever that be, we might well suppose that he was not idle. He has told us how

“Blessed is this *Kali* age, in spite of its wickedness because we can attain salvation simply by singing the glory of Hari. All castes, all creeds, assemble together and praise the Lord according to their knowledge and faith. Your sex or caste does not count. It matters not whether you are a Sudra or a woman. Have Bhakti, sing the glory of Hari and you can attain Heaven. Even the Vedas are miserly because they are open to the first three castes only. But this *Kirtan* is the privilege of the lowest and meanest person. It will deepen your faith and strengthen your spirit. Even the happiness of *Mukti* sinks into insignificance before the ecstasy of *kirtan*. It entails neither the hardships of yoga nor the rigorous tedium of sacrifices. It is the highest worship.” This *kirtan*, public and

private, was his only occupation ; his voice was musical and his presence commanding, and whenever he gave religious lectures with the accompaniment of music, thousands of people eagerly gathered in his courtyard, filling every nook and corner, sometimes compelled to find uncomfortable seats on walls and on the branches of neighbouring trees. His earnestness of purpose, his piety, his passionate enthusiasm, his learning and above all, the purity of his life and true spiritual insight and experience made him an ideal preacher. The theme differed with the occasion. Now it was the glory of Shri Rama and Krishna, the most favourite Avatars of Hindu Mythology ; sometimes it was the life of a Great Bhakta that was placed before the audience, of Dnyaneshwar, the son of a *sanyasin* and himself a born one or of Damaji who, unable to see the terrible sufferings of people in famine, opened the corn stores of the Government, allowed people to plunder them and was saved from the wrath of the Mahomedan King of Bidar by the intervention of God Vithoba himself. What-

ever the theme, the burden of the song was the same viz., the insistence on the observance of the *Bhagvat* faith. It was the *Bhagvat Dharma* which, before him, Dnyaneshwar, Namdev and others had preached to the people and it was the *Bhagavat Dharma* which Ekanath also preached to his contemporaries.

The *Dharma* preached by *Bhagavat* or Lord Krishna to Uddhava in the 11th chapter of the *Bhagavat Puran* is popularly known as the *Bhagavat Dharma*, though as Mr. Tilak has proved in his *Gita-Rahasya* that name can be applied to the message of the Gita itself. But though both Dnyaneshwar and Ekanath were devotees of Lord Krishna, and though they have written commentaries on the message of Krishna in the Gita and in the *Bhagvat Purana* respectively, still even they could not go against the current and displace God Vithoba by God Krishna. The *Bhagvat Dharma* of old, as modified in the religious revival we are speaking about, was inseparably associated with the worship of Vithoba of Pandharpur. It is remarkable how without

any prestige of antiquity, mythology or Puranic description, this God came to be so widely worshipped in Maharashtra as to induce Dnyaneshwar and Ekanath to accept the traditional identity between Him and Lord Krishna. They knew that without the backing of some learned and philosophical literary works this worship of Vithoba was likely to be shortlived and confined only to a very small class of people. They therefore availed themselves of the tide of the national sentiment which they tried to strengthen by allying it with the ancient philosophy as found in the *Gita* and the *Bhagvat Purana* and this was more necessary because the worshippers of Vithoba were ignorant and heedless of Sanskrit which contains all the treasures of Hindu philosophy. It was this literary backing of Dnyaneshwar and Ekanath coupled with other causes that we have no time to recount here that has still kept the "cult" living while other sterner, and in their days, stronger cults have languished.

But though the Gita and the Bhagvat were the mainsprings of inspiration, still the men of this revival, leaders and followers alike did not rely on these books with the same fanaticism which has guided the various sects of Acharyas with regard to the *Prasthanatrayee* (the *Brahmasutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*). Almost none of those men had received that intellectual training which delights in hair-splittings of words and subtleties of thoughts. They therefore approached Sanskrit works on philosophy and metaphysics with the attitude of the man of the world, of one who would fain learn but who at the same time has no mind to wade through the niceties of thought and argument. They had the highest reverence for the Vedas and the various *Shastras* and since the Vedas, the *Shastras*, the *Smritis* and even the *Puranas* were very old and belonged to a time which could not be measured, they regarded them with equal reverence. But the very plurality of books of authority was prejudicial to that authority. Therefore, instead of conforming their ideas and visions

to any book or set of books, they took what was helpful to them without a word of censure or criticism of what they rejected.

Another feature of this school was the holding up of *Bhakti* over all other forms of *Sadhanas* :

“ One need not renounce his belongings and go to a forest. One need not prepare the mind by hard self-control for difficult *Samadhi*. If we only worship Hari and chant His name, salvation will stand begging at our doors. Look at the Gopis. Had they any learning? Had they practised any of the *Sadhanas*? No. Their one qualification was the steadfast *Bhakti* of the Lord through thick and thin ; and that was enough. Why curb the senses? Why run away from objects of the senses? Whatever thou hast, dedicate to God and chant His name. Meditation requires high intellect. How can the man in the street practise it? The rituals and ceremonials require accuracy in performance. Their rigid discipline is very difficult. But a *Bhakta* requires no such discipline. A *Bhakta*'s

progress towards God is like that of a young prince to his father, the king. While other visitors wait in the ante-chamber, the prince goes boldly to his father and talks with him. So the yogins wait and wait but the *Bhakta* directly and with ease attains salvation. Leave then, therefore, the noble flights of philosophy to men of genius and the complexities of ceremonies to those who might like them, and take this straight and easy path of *Bhakti*."

So, leaving the "devil" and the "gods" to the doctors and fanatics and the flights of metaphysics to philosophers, these men went straight to the tree of *Bhakti* and tasted of its nectar-like fruit to their hearts' content; and here also we might find the traces of that peculiar method which for want of a better name we shall call "Indian." It rejects nothing. Whatever forms, rituals, ceremonies they found in their times, these men (Dnyaneshwar, Ekanath and other leaders of the revival) kept in tact. They pulled down nothing. They have not one word of condem-

nation for even that part of our ritual which is meaningless. They however glorified *Bhakti* to such an extent that from its peaks everything else appeared small and contemptible. This method is eminently constructive and though it has its disadvantages, yet it is infinitely better and more conducive to permanent results than the fanfaronade of the impatient reformer.

These and other causes made the movement an essentially democratic one. It is true that bigots, the professional scholars and philosophers and metaphysicians stood aloof from it. The latter found nothing to admire in a movement impatient of learning and solely occupied with the glorification of the name of Hari. They therefore refused to join it or joined it only when a compelling personality like that of Dnyaneshwar or Ramdas obliged them to leave their books and study wisdom acquired from more natural and direct sources. The bigots will be bigots always. Ekanath has told us what they thought of him :—

“Look at this Ekanath, the disciple of

Jagardanswami. He cares neither for marks, signs, figures and secret symbols, nor for our old ceremonies and practices. He chants the name of Hari and by some mysterious force is deceiving the people. Should he not at least give some *mantra* to those who seek wisdom from him—*mantra* given in secrecy and kept with mystery?"

But this mystery about religion was exactly what Ekanath and others tried to remove. It is true that for the motive of spiritual practices they have gone back to that pessimism which makes the highest enunciation appear in a somewhat unfavourable light when compared with the joyful self-reliance of modern thought. It is astonishing how the great Dnyaneshwar himself, ever-brimful of infinite divine joy and whose life was one long wakeful *samadhi* of spiritual ecstasy, has condemned all life as the home of eternal woe and misery. Says he :—

“Look at this market of human life where sorrow is being bought and sold. Do you expect to get any happiness from this life? You might as well try to blow up the ash that

covers the fire which is already extinguished. Will you get sleep on a bed of live fire? Where birth itself is a preliminary stage of death, where misery puts on a cover of attractive joy and where the step of death is heard even in the womb of a would-be mother—do you say you can gather real happiness in a world like this?" It might be, that the ever-increasing political and national misfortunes of Maharashtra might have well chimed in with the ring of pessimism that somewhat takes away the charm of this religious revival. All the same we are conscious of an entire awakening, reaching the lowest castes, the nooks and corners of society and this awakening itself contributed in no small measure to the raising of the status of the non-Brahmin castes. With what pride do we now recall those memorable words of *Chokamela*, the Mahar saint: "Never ask a man's caste when he has in his heart faith in God and love of men. God wants in his children love and devotion and He does not care for his caste." Possibly for a time the spirituality of men like him was not recog-

nised but soon after he came to be respected by the proudest Brahmin. Ekanath has more than once charged the Vedas with being miserly inasmuch as they were shut up from the Sudras and Pariahs. "Greater than anything, greater even than the holy Vedas is the name of Hari which is not forbidden to any, even to those so-called low class people." It is worth noting that Ekanath does not himself call them low class people but prefixes the word "so-called" to mark his view of the equality of all castes and creeds.

It is not strange that a man who saw God in every form, human or animal, and who had been specially trained in this spiritual quality by his Guru should himself have occasionally set aside the restrictions of caste. It is said that on one day at high noon Ekanath was going to bathe in the waters of the Godavari when he saw a Mahar child stumbling and falling in the dust. Ekanath at once ran to the spot, picked up that child and himself took it to the house of its mother. On another occasion he nursed a Mahar

prisoner recently let off from jail and on the verge of physical wreck. Another story tells us how one day when the food for *shraddha* was being cooked in his kitchen, some Mahars passing by the house smelt it and whispered among themselves "How happy would it be if we ever get such nice food to

once called them and not minding the inevitable wrath of those Brahmins who were invited to perform the *shraddha*, served the Mahars with the dainty food. These and like other stories conclusively prove how deeply ingrained in his mind was that principle of equality which is the *sine qua non* of true spirituality. Says he:—

"The true *Bhakta* regards each object in universe as the image of God. It is true that the Vedas say 'Never see the face of a man who has strayed away from his proper *karman*.' But this commandment is only for the first few stages. We require a lamp only when it is dark. But when the sun of divine knowledge rises there is no necessity for

seeking aid from this petty lamp of the Vedas. A man who regards the most enlightened Brahman as being filled with the same God who dwells in the body of the lowliest of the lowly, is a true *Bhakta*. The same element of lustre only in different proportions is found in the sun and the firefly. From the ant to the creator, everything, living or dead, is the image of God. Look at the tree which gives with the same impartiality its shade, fruit and flowers to the man who has watered it as well as to him who wishes to fell it down. Such should be a *Bhakta* in his dealings with others. Equality is the highest spiritual quality."

Side by side with this quality we find another, which must have stood him in good stead throughout all the trials and vexations of his life and that was his serene peace of mind undisturbed by any calamity, or persecutions. Under the hardest knocks of ill-fortune he preserved a countenance singularly unruffled and a temper perfectly under control. It is interesting to see how misfortune affected Tukaram, Ekanath and Dnyaneshwar

severally. Suffering drew tears from the eyes of Tukaram. In the depth of sorrow he sought and obtained shelter at the feet of Vithoba. The temper of Dnyaneshwar was the very reverse of that of Tukaram. He was a man who mocked at sorrow and laughed at persecution. He was all ecstasy. Through pain, presecution and misery, he kept the same joyous mood which sweetened more and more with every blow. Ekanath resembled neither Dnyaneshwar nor Tukaram in this respect. He hit the golden mean, was neither all ecstasy nor all sorrow but, like the flame sheltered from wind, kept the fire of faith and hope ever steady, neither bursting into dazzling light nor drooping down almost to darkness. It is such a man who can control his temper amidst the numerous storms of life and it is this quality which, joined with its accompanying patience and sweet reasonableness facilitates the task of the reformer by disarming prejudice and opposition. There are many anecdotes of Ekanath illustrative of all these qualities. On one occasion a certain Mahomedan, whom

Ekanath had never offended ~~and who perhaps~~ was a tool in the hands of some "respectable" persons spat at Ekanath who was on his way home from the river Godavari. It was a gratuitous insult but without a word of reproof Ekanath retraced his steps to the river and bathed again. But the man would not allow Ekanath to go without a repetition of his wicked act. Ekanath bathed again only to find the spittle of the ruffian on his body a third time. This happened for 108 times till at last in shame and reverence the Mahomedan apologised and fell prostrate before Ekanath. There is another story which tells us that, like the famous Pavari Baba, he would not allow the thieves who had stolen into his house and were running away at the sight of Ekanath to go away without taking some articles at least! And when the contrite thieves begged pardon, he asked them to dine with him and then return to their places. And the blessings which he poured on a public woman who one day sought his spiritual advice remind us of similar incidents in the life of Ramakrishna

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Paramahansa and of Jesus Christ. It was this unconventionality of his conduct that created the opposition of the social and religious bigots of his times and that has induced the English-educated reformers of India to claim Ekanath as a social reformer. It is hardly possible however to find in his writings anything bespeaking agreement with the tenets of our present-day reform movement.

It is not surprising that the message of a man, who acted up to every principle that he preached, should have found place into the hearts of the ever-increasing crowds of people who daily gathered to hear his sermons. But the fame of the most eloquent speaker, though it might go down to future generations, will never produce abiding results unless it is supported by an authoritative exposition of his ideas. That is why so many illustrious persons have not disdained to write books. The only surprise about Ekanath is not that he wrote books but that he did not make any serious effort before he was well over 40; and this is the more remarkable because

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about the time of his return home from Daulatabad he had, in response to a sudden inspiration written a commentary on the four celebrated verses in Bhagvat, the Chattus-Shloki Bhagvat, in the presence of his Guru. On his return to Paithan his time was divided between reading, contemplation and preaching; and those who were specially attracted towards Ekanath and who daily drank of spiritual wisdom at his feet requested him one day to write something which would be permanent. It was at their request that he took the text of the 11th chapter of the *Bhagvat Puran* for exposition and commentary. He completed the first five chapters and then went, (at the request of a disciple it is said) to Benares to convince some opponents of his of the worth of the book. Those who know how modest and unassuming Ekanath was, will scarcely credit this story. That Ekanath would, for the first and last time in his life, pay the disputant back in his own coin was unthinkable. We are half-inclined to suppose that he went there to submit his work to the superior taste and

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judgment of the learned pandits living there. We know how Moropant, the famous Maratha poet and others took all their literary works to Benares and got the seal of the approval of renowned pandits. They were not satisfied with the popular homage but wished that their compositions should be applauded by scholars of eminence also. They had to begin by combating the prejudice of Sanskrit Pandits against Marathi. We have already seen, in another sketch, how Dnyaneshwar though not at pains to remove the scholastic prejudice, has yet to point out to the literary excellence of his own composition as a silencer to all the howlings of the bigots. Ekanath's attitude is equally vigorous and self-confident:—

“ We admit that the Sanskrit writers were great. But why should we suppose that Marathi writers fall below the mark? - Have they not tried, in their own way, to deliver the same message? Is a gold lotus, more precious only because it is old? One cow gives milk, but does another yield water? If the same ideas are imparted through a different

medium what do you lose? You say Sanskrit is the language of the gods? But is not Marathi also the same? Or is it the language of thieves and robbers? The result is that whether Sanskrit imparts religious knowledge to people or Marathi, it does not matter so long as the ideas are the same."

This is not an apologia but a proud assertion of the dignity of the Marathi language and its claim to be regarded with no less reverence than Sanskrit. The bigots, however, were not to be suddenly won over by such a categorical declaration with regard to the position of the Marathi. Ekanath's fame had already preceded him and they tried to frighten him into submission by bodily attacking him with a company of three hundred followers armed with clubs and sticks! But something in Ekanath held them back and they could not find in themselves to beat him. It is not to be supposed, however, that they were won over. The only change in their attitude was one of sullen contempt instead of boisterous display of

opposition. There were certain scholars, who, though they could not refuse Ekanath's request for a patient hearing, were yet too proud to see his face and we have the amusing spectacle of Ekanath reading out his chapters to the assembly of Pandits some of whom had concealed themselves behind *purdas*! They did not want to see the damned face of Ekanath who in their opinion was something worse than a heretic. But the intrinsic worth of Ekanath's composition together with that "soft answer that turneth away wrath," which he knew how to give, gradually won for him the favour of the Pandits, not however, before one of them had put Ekanath's commentary to the divine test by throwing it into the Ganges and accepted its worth only on finding Mother Ganges herself supporting the book and not allowing it to go down!

All opposition was now disarmed; those who came to scoff remained to praise. The Pandits of Benares gave royal honour to his book by placing it on an elephant and carrying it in procession through-

out that sacred city. We may say that ~~it was the triumph not of Ekanath but of the~~ Marathi language which hitherto was regarded as the language of the low. At the earnest request of many of the pandits, Ekanath remained at Benares for more than two years, finished his commentary on the *Bhagvat Puran*, and started writing and finished a small but very beautiful poem called the "Swayamvar of Rukhmini." The latter is a composition running into about 1,700 verses but his commentary on the *Bhagvat* is a big work containing 20,000 verses.

Ekanath's life at Benares was an eye-opener to the Pandits in more ways than one. For the first time in their lives perhaps, they were awakened to the sense of the inferiority of mere book-learning, when pitted against *Bhakti*; and when brought face to face with Ekanath they must have hung their heads at the consciousness of their own petty and jealous minds and admired that serene tranquillity which as Cowper says is the noblest fruit of a man's

faith in God. What a contrast between their minds bubbling with ideas of self, of honour, of fame, of opponents vanquished and followers made, and the mind of Ekanath which no gross thought could tarnish and which like the bright rays of the sun might touch the earth but would never catch any filth therefrom !

Having established his prestige at Benares Ekanath returned to his own province and with his outlook widened again took in hand the task of religious revival which he was interrupted in, by his visit to Benares. Till now he had confined himself to his own circle at Paithan and though in India the fame of spirituality does bring to a man hundreds of men, eager for words of religious wisdom, from all parts of the country, still even the preacher has occasionally to admit the usefulness of going to preach at various centres of faith and culture ; and now it was that Ekanath conceived the idea of bringing under his influence the worshippers of God Vithoba. He went to Pandharpur where his worth was at once recognised and thus

brought him many followers. At Pandharpur and other places he had marked the respect that was shown to the memory of Dnyaneshwar. But unhappily very few people had the text of Dnyaneshwar's commentary with them, and those few who had got the texts were unable to understand the meaning clearly; for since the death of Dnyaneshwar about the end of the thirteenth century, the Marathi language had undergone such transformation that few were, in Ekanath's time, acquainted with their contents. Ekanath, therefore, conceived the idea of publishing the original text but he quickly found that it was better to preserve the original beauty of the composition which though occasionally rude and jarring owing to the nature of the language yet was far more eloquent than any subsequent alterations could make it. In this work, he was encouraged by Saint Dnyaneshwar himself who, one night, appeared in dream before him and called him to Alandi. Obedient to the call Ekanath immediately repaired to Alandi and there had the unique honour of a three days'

talk with saint Dnyaneshwar in the solitude of his underground Samadhi ! Ekanath got copied the original or at any rate a very old and considerably authentic text of Dnyaneshwari and distributed those copies to the remotest corners of Maharashtra and must have sent scores of preachers to explain the meaning of the old and archaic language to the ordinary people. The fact that not once the fear of his own book being superseded by the nobler work of Dnyaneshwar struck his mind, shows the true magnanimity of Ekanath.

Ekanath led a singularly happy life. The shadow of misfortune, of financial difficulties, of domestic discord which hung like a pall over the earlier years of Tukaram's life never disturbed his equanimity. The social ostracism that to the end of his days dogged the footsteps of Dnyaneshwar never came to the lot of Ekanath in its utmost rigour. It is true that even he had to pay the price of his occasionally unconventional conduct but so great was his popularity and so unstinted his charity that the howls of censure and criticism were

quickly silenced. His serene tranquillity helped him to ride over the storms of his life. ~~In the company of a devoted wife and of a devoted friend named Uddhav, in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, of health, of all the necessaries of a happy life one might well envy the career of a man whose thoughts were always directed to the contemplation of God, whose tongue uttered only words of love, of faith and of wisdom, whose hands were ever busy ministering to the needs of men. The gates of his house were ever open to the high and low alike. If he ran into debt it was solely because of his innumerable guests; and how often was the hand of God required to pay the importunate money-lenders on Ekanath's account. We have it on the authority of his contemporaries that the God Hari was so much pleased with the devoted service of Ekanath, that out of gratitude He left his home in Heaven and served Ekanath for full twelve years. Whatever that may be, even those who will not believe in the possibility of such miracles, shall have to admit that the man~~

who ever since his childhood gave the best in him to religion, must have in a spiritual sense walked with God.

The smoothness of Ekanath's domestic life was later on disturbed by the conduct and attitude of his son Hari who was in many respects quite the opposite of his father. With the impulsive waywardness of youth he would often find fault with his father for having destroyed the prestige and dignity of the Vedanta by compositions in Marathi. He also disliked the unconventional ways of his father, and, being a proud and unbending champion of orthodoxy, resented his father's behaviour on more occasions than one. At last the son was provoked beyond endurance and left his home in disgust. But Ekanath who had a mind to bring his son round followed him to Benares and after repeated importunities brought him back to Paithan. He had however to stipulate that the work of expounding the Vedanta would be entrusted to his son. But when the son found that his lectures, however learned drew only scores of people while the audience

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of Ekanath were to be counted by the thousand, he was quickly disillusioned.

And now came the time when Ekanath had to leave his mortal body. His message was delivered and his life-work done; and though he was amusing himself with writing the story of Rama, he felt that the call from above had come. He told his friends and followers accordingly. "But, Sir," said they, "have you not your Ramayan to complete yet? We remember how you postpone'd eleven days the time of the death of K. Madas the poet? Will you mind performing the same feat again?" Ekanath replied that he had no such intention: he had undertaken the work at the order of Sree Rama Himself. Now if He the God willed that it should remain incomplete, surely he (Ekanath) had no business to bring it to an end. Again and again his friends pressed him. At last Ekanath said "why do you trouble me like that? If it is God's will that the work should be finished, then even this boy will do the work." The people were surprised to see Ekanath pointing to a boy of

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fifteen, not very remarkable for his intelligence. They did not know what to say. Ekanath noted their incredulous looks, called up the boy and bade him go on ; and at once the boy delivered the text of one chapter without pause or hesitation. We have neither time, nor space nor the necessary imagination to describe the tenderness, the love and the sorrow in which on the 6th day of the dark half of Falguna, 1521 Shalivahan (1599 A.D.) the populace of Paithan followed Ekanath to the river Godavari. The sky rang with the loud and ecstatic *Bhajan*. After it was over, Ekanath took off his clothes and entered the stream. Some say he never returned ; others hold that after an invigorating bath, he came out of the water and with his eyes shut and mind concentrated, entered with the wings of meditation into eternal Samadhi.

The appearance of Ekanath at a time when, after the disruption of the Bhamani Kingdom in 1526 and its consequent division into five effete monarchies, Maharashtra was fast recovering its national consciousness, is an event of

the deepest significance. It shows how the nation, ever alert, ever mindful even under the hardest blows of misfortune, of its mission, was slowly but steadily preparing for the fulfilment thereof. It shows how the inspiration which later on guided Shivaji, moved other men also, working in the social and religious field and that though quite independent of each other the political and socio-religious movements were running along parallel and homogeneous directions. It is true that under the able leadership of Ramdas, the religious revival did assume a distinctly political form, lending aid to and receiving inspiration from the political upheaval. But that was only a transient phase. No doubt Tukaram and others, who were conscious of the occasional usefulness of militant and organised activities had blessed the efforts of Ramdas; and the new movement, assimilating as it did the noblest tendencies of renunciation and patriotism, was for a time irresistible. But the nation as a whole refused to accept it permanently. It stood by that elastic organi-

sation which Dnyaneshwar and Namdev had strengthened but not started, which Ekanath watered but not planted and which Tukaram served only to popularize. Only the worship of Vithoba has lived. Even now, in the crescent plain of Pandharpur, at least six hundred thousand people from all parts of Maharashtra gather twice a year to pay their Homage to King Vithoba. At the call of Pandhari they heed not, care not what sacrifice they make and with the orange flag on their shoulders often walk barefooted to the city of Vithoba. On entering it, they will not eat a morsel of food, will refuse even a drop of water but will sit for even three days, in the dust of the streets till the thinned crowds enable them to get admittance into the portals of the temple. Such faith is found at Pandhari alone. Well might the poet, in his innocence believe that Vithoba occupies His throne for twenty-eight centuries (ages). We, with less faith and more historical knowledge, know that the temple at Pandharpur was built about a couple of centuries before

~~the times of Dnyaneshwar.~~ But even the confirmed sceptic would like to brush aside all prosaic thoughts of historicity and allow his feelings to be swept away by the sweet, musical, air-rending but heart-filling cry of Vithal issuing from the lips of ecstatic people. Again and again will it alternate with the sacred names of Dnyanadev, (Dnyaneshwar) Ekanath, Namdev and Tukaram. The passionate earnestness of Tukaram, the Divine madness of Namdev, the sublime spirit of Dnyaneshwar, the catholic heart of Ekanath,—each has contributed its own quota to the prestige of Pandhari, and though there are other aspects of the life of Ekanath which are equally important, still in the mind of the orthodox many, the image of Ekanath will, forever, remain indissolubly associated with the worship of that God who “for the last twenty-eight ages” has been shielding Maharashtra from all sorts of national disasters.

TUKARAM.

WE have been hearing much of Sir Rabindranath Tagore during recent years. To literary men in the West, Tagore's poems have gone as a revelation. Their simplicity and the strangeness of the spiritual atmosphere they breathe have, indeed, an irresistible appeal. Perhaps, their dominant note is one which has been seldom heard in Western literature since Wordsworth or Shelley, and rarely before them. But to those who have studied at all deeply the ancient literature of our country, more especially the vernacular literature, Tagore ceases to be a surprise. He is a descendant of a long line of poets who, from end to end of India, have sung for many centuries in a similar strain about their spiritual experiences. Sir Rabindranath Tagore has achieved nothing new—except, indeed, the translation into English of a wonderful music and flexibility of his Bengali poems—but he has nobly returned to the almost extinct literary and spiritual tradition of our fathers.

The Mahratta poet, Tukaram, is a typical example of the ancient kind of Indian poet of whom we have been speaking. His simplicity, earnestness and poetic power are extraordinary. His poetry is full of an innate mysticism, full of the brooding spirit of love and human kindness. There are in him also great and eager moods of devotion, of spiritual yearning and vision. But in him we do not meet with that deep sense of human life nor that richness of imagery which we find in the modern Bengali poet. Tukaram is essentially a religious poet and mystic.

THE RELIGIOUS AWAKENING IN MAHARASHTRA.

Before proceeding with the life and poetry of Tukaram, we propose to study, with some detail, the great religious and social awakening that had been going on in Maharashtra during the two centuries preceding his birth. From the end of the 13th century onward, a great movement of religious reform was spreading in the land. It established a new and reformed faith, and drew men together in religious and social comradeship. Tukaram came on the very top of the wave and is distinctly a child of that movement.

DNYANDEV, THE REFORMER.

The foundation of this religious movement

was first laid by an intrepid Brahmin youth, of Alandi (a town near Poona), by name Dnyandev (1271 to 1293 A. D.). He was one of four children whom an unjust society had branded as outcaste. Orphaned and alone, they lived for some time in the outskirts of their village, denied the privileges of caste and ceremony. Social opprobrium and poverty met them on every side. The eldest of the four, Nivrithi Dev by name, seemed to have been of a quiet and resigned disposition. The second, Dnyandev, was, however, made of stronger mettle. He resolved to approach the learned Brahmins, the pontiffs and rulers of the Hindu ecclesiastical system, and lay the case before them. They should surely point out some way out of the social opprobrium and misery in which he and his brothers and his little sister were involved. Led, therefore, by Dnyandev, the brothers and their sister wended their way to Prathishtani, (modern Paithan in the Nizam's Dominions) which in the middle ages was, to some extent, the Benares of the Deccan. The Brahmins of that town held supreme sway in religious and ecclesiastical matters over the whole of the Maharashtra. The Brahmins were soon convoked in assembly, and Dnyandev asked if they, the

children of a *sanyasi* who had come back to household life and had, therefore, been outcasted, could be admitted again to the privileges and rites of religion. The Brahmins looked into the hoary scriptures and gave their answer in the negative. Dnyandev gently but in all firmness rejoined : "The same *jivatma* lives in all, the house-holder and outcaste, the high and the low. How could, then, there be any difference between them?" One of the assembled Brahmins rose in wrath and, pointing to a passing buffalo, asked "if *it* also had the same *jivatma* and if Dnyandev would feel anything if the beast were beaten." So saying, the Brahmin flew to the side of the passing beast and gave it resounding blows on its back. Dnyandev turned and showed his own back to the audience, and there were red stripes and swelling thereon. Sympathetic suffering indeed! Dnyandev, so the story says, followed up the advantage, and passing his hand over the head of the buffalo, made it recite the Vedas. A miracle surely! If ever it had been performed, it should have gone to the very heart of the Brahmins, for they had long imposed on the world with their hollow faith and sounding lore.

The account that has come down to us of this

historic event that was to inaugurate the Reformation in Maharashtra is somewhat legendary. But there can be no doubt of the fact that, here at Paithan, Dnyandev boldly attacked the supremacy of the Brahmins, and declared that God is one and in His eyes all are equal. This event bears a striking resemblance to the famous protest and declaration made two centuries after in 1517 at the Diet of Worms by the German Reformer, Martin Luther. The caste of the four seems to have been recognised after this event. But the great heart of Dnyandev could not rest there. He saw that all classes of people—the Brahmins and Sudras alike—were immersed in ignorance and superstition, that they had forgotten their faith in “the One Great Hari;” and proceeded to write a commentary, an exposition, of the *Bhagavad Gita* in popular Marathi verse. The *Dnyaneswari*, as the commentary is called, with its denunciation of the follies and superstitions of the age, with its eloquent insistence on the unity of God and the equality and brotherhood of man, became a new gospel of reform. Dnyandev afterwards embodied his own spiritual longings and visions—for he was a poet as well as a reformer—in a book of poems entitled *Anubhavam-*

rita. But the intrepid and great-hearted reformer was fated to a premature death. Not yet twenty-one, having opened the gates of Heaven for others, he entered in early himself.

NAMADEV AND CHOKAMELA.

The movement inaugurated by Dnyandev spread with increasing influence during the succeeding centuries. The close of the 14th century saw the birth of the poet and mystic, Namadev (1390 to 1449 A. D.). Legends associate him with, and make him a contemporary of, Dnyandev; but this is unhistorical. The probable dates of his life are those given above. Namadev seems to have been aware of Dnyandev and his works, and his own faith might have been kindled by them. His poems are full of deep god-love and piety and are extremely popular throughout the Deccan. In Namadev, there becomes manifest a marked feature of the new religion—a passionate adoration of a personal god, an adoration in love and in faith—denominated in Indian literature as *Bhakti*. Contemporaneously to Namadev, lived Chokamela, the *Mahar* saint of Pandharpur (1280 to 1332 A.D.). Though born in the lowest of castes, Chokamela early grew to faith and love of God.

Being a *Mahar*, he could not enter the temple nor even the sacred streets. But he worshipped his god from afar and prayed and meditated sitting on the banks of the Bhima in the outskirts of the city of Pandharpur. He was not, however, allowed to pursue his life of piety and worship uninterrupted; severe persecution befell him. His sanctity was recognised at last, and he was admitted into the temple and the privileges of worship by the Brahmins themselves. The rise of these two—one, a tailor, and the other, a *Mahar*,—to the rank of saints testifies to the liberalising and reforming tendencies of the new religion and revival inaugurated by Dnyandev.

PANDHARPUR.

The centre of the new movement was a small shrine and city on the banks of the Bhima river. Though not very ancient, Pandharpur became early famous in Marátha history. It became the resort and meeting-place of the mystics and reformers of this epoch. The image of Vithoba, said to be an avatar of Krishna, was to them the visible symbol of the Great God and Ruler. Year by year pilgrims poured in from all parts of the country to worship at the shrine, to witness the festivities and take part in the *kathas* and *bhajans*.

organised by preachers and holy men. Pandharpur still remains a holy place to the Marathas.

EKNATH.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are, however, the halcyon period of this movement. It was in this period that there flourished those three great men—Eknath, Ramdas and Tukaram—men typical in every way of this movement. Eknath (1549 to 1608 A. D.) a Desastha Brahmin, was born in the town of Paithan, the classic city, where Dnyandev had made the famous attack. Perhaps he was the very descendant of one of those Brahmins who sat in judgment on the intrepid youth and his brothers. Eknath is remarkable both as a poet and as a reformer. His reforms landed him into a life-long conflict with society, which was carried on the one side with acrimony and hatred and borne on the other with perfect courage and good-will. Eknath's early training was at the hands of Jayaram Swami, a scholar and contemplative, who served also as an officer of state. Eknath, having completed his education, married (for asceticism was no part of the new movement), settled as a house-holder and began a life of religious devotion and service to others. The chronicles

contain beautiful descriptions of Eknath's daily life and charity. Early morning saw him at prayer or study, and after dinner and a little rest, he sat and expounded some epic or scripture. Men poured in from far and near to hear him; and as night drew on, *bhajans* would be held, in which all sang hymns and danced. As the influence of Eknath increased, as his character and charity began to tell on men and women, he was drawn into conflict with society. A *Mahar*, who daily attended his expositions invited Eknath to come and dine in his house. Eknath, true to his principles and without the least hesitation, accepted the invitation and dined with the *Mahar*. Society rose against him and outcasted him. Again, on a day of *shraddh*, three hungry *fakirs* came and begged at his door for food. Eknath went into his house, and, taking the food prepared for the Brahmins, came and gave it to the hungry *fakirs*. The Brahmins refused to attend the *shraddh* and, it is said, the very *pitrus* themselves descended from their abodes and accepted the offerings.

There was yet another conflict—a conflict characteristic of the new movement—in which Eknath threw his weight on the popular side and

came out successful. Eknath, keen reformer as he was, was also a poet. Full of the new Vaishnavite religion, his thoughts turned to the translation of the *Bhagavata Purana*. A furious opposition from the learned and the orthodox broke out, even as it happened when the brilliant youth Dnyandev translated the *Gita*. The legend says that a certain Maratha Brahmin was reading Eknath's Marathi *Bhagavata* at Benares. The religious purists of the place who saw it fell foul upon him. They asked the pious Maratha how he dared to read, or show reverence to, a Marathi *Bhagavata*. Eknath himself was sent for, and he went and stood before the religious tribunal of Benares—the Mahant and his brethren. The sacredness of the translation was, however, established by a miracle and the orthodox were silenced. The story further adds that the Marathi script—pious product of Eknath's genius—was even set on an elephant and carried in procession through the streets of Benares. The whole story looks like pure legend; but it evidences the strong desire on the part of the orthodox and the learned to preserve the treasures of faith to themselves. Eknath and others like him, who wrote in the vernacular

were moved by the new popular and reforming impulses to bring the secrets and teachings of religion to the doors of all, the poor and the high alike.

RAMDAS THE PATRIOT-SAINT.

It was in the very year of the death of Eknath that the two great men, Ramdas and Tukaram, were born. Though the work and character of Ramdas, the Brahmin saint, differed considerably from that of the Sutra mystic, Tukaram, they were yet one in their life and ideals and children of the same movement. Ramdas was born in Nasik. Of a strong ascetic disposition of mind, he broke off from his family—the story says the crisis took place on the very day fixed for his marriage and when the marriage ceremonies were about to begin—and wandered for some time among the woods and mountains of his native land, exercising himself in religion and spiritual discipline. His solitary wanderings over, he returned to society and, going about from village to village, preached the new religion of Love and Devout worship. But Ramdas was not merely a religious reformer. He was a great patriot, and visions of a united Maharashtra, free from the yoke of the Mahomedan, flitted before

his mind. Ramdas, therefore, it is said, established schools for the physical and mental training of youth in every village he went to. At last, Ramdas came across Sivaji himself who found in him his destined *guru*. The meeting of Sivaji and Ramdas is one of the most remarkable episodes found in Indian history. The story is well-known how Sivaji made a gift of his whole kingdom to his *guru*, how the latter gave it back to Sivaji, asking him to rule it in his—the preceptor's—name. Sivaji, in token that the kingdom belonged to an ascetic, adopted the ascetic's orange banner as the national flag. Sivaji's patriotism and knowledge must have been greatly kindled and fortified at the hands of the great sage-patriot. Sayings of Ramdas are preserved in his works—*Dasbodh* and others—which show his great insight and practical wisdom. It was the labour of saints and patriots like him and Sivaji that built up the Maratha State and Empire. Sivaji died in the life-time of his *guru*. The latter did not outlive him long. In 1681, a year after Sivaji's death, he was lying on his death-bed; and as he lay thus, the story says, the trampling of Aurangazib's invading army reached his ears, and the dying saint, moved to strange

fears, sent those famous lines to Sambaji, Sivaji's successor: "Establish a united kingdom and propagate the religion of Maharashtra."

TUKARAM.

The other great figure in the 17th century was Tukaram, the subject of this sketch. He was born in 1608 at a little village called Dehu, not far from Poona, on the banks of the river Indrayani. By caste, he was a Sudra; his ancestors were *Wanis* or shop-keepers by trade. But they were all pious men, given to devout exercises and charity. They were also good servants of the Fatherland for which two of the family at least had devoted their lives in battle. They were devotees of God Vithoba.

HIS MISFORTUNES.

In 1629, when Tukaram was growing into manhood, the Deccan was swept bare by one of those great famines which have, from time immemorial, visited it at uncertain intervals. Tukaram's parents, wife and child died therein. His elder brother's wife—the husband having already taken the robe of a *sanyasi* and disappeared from the sight of his kin—also perished and the poet's cup of sorrow was well-nigh filled. To crown all, the little store of grain failed.

Grain was at high prices, and the villagers, starving and famine-stricken, no longer bought his goods. In despair at his ruined heart and shattered ties, Tukaram turned for consolation to religion. One of his songs tells the story:—

By caste I was a Sudra I became a trader; this God from the first had been worshipped by my family. I ought not to talk of this, but since you have asked the question, I respect your speech, O saints! When my father and mother had finished their course, I was grievously harassed by the world. A famine used up my money, and took away my good name; one wife of mine died crying for food. I grew ashamed and was tormented by this grief; I saw that I was losing by my business. The temple of God which we had was in ruins; I resolved to do what occurred to me. I began by preaching and singing on the eleventh day; but at first my mind was not in practice. So I learned by heart some speeches of the saints, being full of resource and faith in them. When others sang first, I took up the refrain, purifying my mind by faith. I counted holy the water wherein the feet of the saints had been washed; I suffered no shame to enter my mind. I served others when the chance was given me, wearying out my own body. I paid no heed to friends who loved me, I was heartily sick of the world. I bade my own mind testify to the true and the false, I paid no heed to the voice of the crowd. I honoured the instruction my teacher gave me in a dream, I believed firmly in God's name. After this the impulse of poetry came upon me; I embraced in my spirit the feet of Vithoba. A blow fell upon me; I was forbidden to write; thus for a while my spirit was grieved. My pages were sunk in the river; I sat down like a creditor; Narayana comforted me. If I told all the story, the tale would be long; it would grow too late, so enough of it now. You see now my present purpose; my future course God knows. God never

neglects his worshipper; I have learned that he is merciful. Tuka says, This is all my capital, I utter the verses which Pauduranga bids me utter.

Tukaram continued steadfast in his devotions, washing the feet of holy men, singing at *kathas* and *bhajans* and above all things, "toiling hard to do good to others." He sings, "God, the merciful, despises not the believer. This I came to realise. All my riches are now the verses which God hath put into my heart."

NEGLECT OF THE WORLD.

Tukaram hereafter began to neglect his trade and even his family. With the passing away of the famine, the prosperity of the Deccan was in some measure restored and Tukaram married again. But as time went on, religion took a more and more absorbing hold on him. Day after day, rising at sunrise, and performing his morning devotions to Vithoba, he would make his way to a little hill called Bhandra and there remain in deep meditation. House and family were neglected, and his wife, who was a worldly-minded woman, was vastly irate at this. Tukaram, however, looked on his domestic worries with a quiet patience, not unmixed with humour. He even extracted some spiritual consolation from them :—

Now, my son, what will you eat? My husband is grown a devotee of the temple. He wears garlands on his head, he does not care to be a shop-keeper as he was. He has made arrangements to feed himself. He has no interest in us. He goes about with cymbals and open mouth, he sings before God in the temple. What are we to do now? He is gone off to the jungle. Tuka says, Show some patience now, if you never did before.

It is well, O God, that I became bankrupt, and was crushed by the famine; this is how I repented and turned to Thee, so that the world became odious to me. It is well that my wife was a scold, that I was dishonoured, and lost my good name, my wealth and my cattle; it is well that I did not fear people's opinion, but sought Thy protection, O God; it is well that I built up Thy temple, and neglected my wife and children. Tuka says, It is well that I fasted on the eleventh day, for so I kept myself awake.

COMPOSING POEMS.

It was about this time that Tukaram received in a dream the command to sing of God and his love for Him.

Namadeva came with Panduranga, and roused me in a dream. "I appoint you a task, write poetry, do not talk of vain affairs," Namadeva counted his own verses, Vithoba kept the tally; he told me the total he arrived at, a hundred crores. "What is left undone, you must finish, O Tuka."

In spite of this stanza, there is reason to think that he did not compose so great a number. The poems seem to number in all from six to eight thousand of which some four thousand and five hundred have been translated recently by Messrs. Nelson Fraser and K. B. Marathi.

HIS ENEMIES AND THEIR CONVERSION.

Tukaram was not allowed to pursue his life of religion and poetry uninterrupted. He had already a number of disciples, and the proud and priestly family of the Deos of Chinchwad, who traced their descent to Ganapathi himself, had actually dined with him. This incensed the Brahmins. One Mambaji seized Tukaram, threw him into a prickly pear hedge and beat him. Tukaram, it should be said, freely forgave his cruel foe who afterwards became his devoted follower. It is sad to think that, in spite of the martyrdom of the great saints that had gone before Tukaram—of Dayandev, of Chokamela, whom priestly persecution followed all his life,—society in Maharashtra still treated with cruelty men whose only sin was their devotion and love for all.

A more cruel blow was struck by one Rameshwara Bhatta who caused Tukaram to be arrested and brought before him. How did he, a Sudra, he asked, dare to expound the secrets of the Vedas to his audience? Tukaram replied that ~~whatsoever he taught was put into his heart by~~ Vithoba, but that he was willing to abide by the Brahmin's decision. Rameshwara bade him cast

his poems into the river. Tukaram did so, and then stricken with exceeding grief, he lay for days, without food or water, at the temple-door 'like a creditor at the debtor's threshold.' At last, says the legend, the God heard him, and the poems appeared floating on the waters of the Indrayani and were restored to the poet. Rameshwara was likewise converted and became Tukaram's disciple.

TUKARAM AND SIVAJI.

It was about this time that the great Sivaji, having freed the country from Mahomedan bondage, had made the Deccan once more a Hindu Kingdom. We have already spoken of his piety and his deep devotion to the saints of the land. Hearing of the poet and holy man, Tukaram, Sivaji, then at Lohagaon, sent an invitation to him and a deputation of his officers and soldiers to escort him in pomp to his court. Tukaram refused to visit the prince: Here is his reply:—

What would it profit me to enter your presence? The fatigue of the journey would be wasted. If I must need beg my food, there are many whom I may ask for alms; in the lanes are rags to furnish me with shelter. The rock is an excellent bed to sleep on; I have the sky above me for a cloak. With such a provision made, why need I fix my hopes on any one? It would be a waste of my days. Should I come to your palace seeking honour, what peace of mind should I find there? In a king's

palace the wealthy are respected; the common herd meet with no respect. If I saw there fine apparel and men wearing jewels, it would at once be the death of me. If you are disgusted when you hear this, still, God will not scorn me. Let me tell you this surprising news, there is no happiness like the beggar's. Austerity and renunciation are the greatest things; wealthy men fettered by desire live miserably. Tuka says, You are opulent and honoured: but the devotees of Hari are more fortunate.

Now there is one expedient you should make sure of; do not grow disgusted with the good. Do not put forth efforts which will bring guilt on you. There may be censorious and evil persons round you, do not encourage their views. Search out carefully men who will protect the state, using all discrimination. There is nothing I need tell you, you know everything. O King, help the cause of the defenceless. On hearing this you should be satisfied; there is no more to be gained by an interview. What pleasure would it give me to meet you? The days of my life are spent. There are but one or two rules of life; if we recognize their meaning, we shall not lose our self-respect. There is one that brings a blessing, and its purport is this, learn to see one spirit in all created things. Fix your thoughts on the joyous self, see yourself in Ramdasa. Blessed is your birth on earth, O King, renowned is your name in the three worlds.

TUKARAM'S MODE OF LIFE.

His life was spent daily in prayer and meditation, in holding *bhajans* or performing *kathas* wherein were given short expositions of religious doctrine or story interspersed with devout songs and prayers. He often went about from village to village, but mostly his days were spent at Pandharpur, the holy city even as the other great holy men and women of the age did. The

following incident described by Mahipathi, the Marathi chronicler, is highly interesting for the light it throws on Tukaram's character, and doings, and also for the light it throws on the character of the new movement and the men who took part in it. There was a large assemblage at Pandharpur. Sivaji had honoured the meeting with his august presence, and after the manner of the Hindu kings of old ministered to the comforts and convenience of the assembled *Sadhus* and *Sannyasis*. Some women saints also had joined in that memorable meeting. Aka Bai, a disciple of Ramdas Swami, was one of them. We have the authority of Mahipathi in stating that it was she who read out to the glorious assemblage the Swamiji's work styled *Dasbodh* (knowledge of man as servant of God). Benu Bai was another disciple of Ramdas. At the Parligarh assemblage also, which took place sometime after, these two women, along with some others of their sex, were present and took part in its proceedings. But in both these meetings Tukaram was the most prominent figure. In the hill-fort of the Parligarh Sivaji had built a temple and consecrated it to Ram Chandra. The aforesaid meeting had been called

by the king himself. Tukaram by his *Sankirtan* and *Katha* pleased all. Sivaji himself along with some others took active part in the religious observances. After the *Utsava* was over, he proceeded to do *puja* to the assembled Brahmins, Pandits and Sadhus, and made some present to them. Similarly, gold coins and other valuables were brought in for the propitiation of Tukaram. But this saint of saints, understanding the Raja's intent and purpose, all of a sudden disappeared from the place much to the wonder of all present. Sivaji had also intended to make a gift of four villages to the saint, but, in consequence of his sudden disappearance, his intention could not be fulfilled. On Sivaji's expressing deep regret at the conduct of Tukaram, his *Guru*, Ramdas Swami, who very well knew the noble self-sacrificing character of the man, consoled him with the words:—"My son, to the truly religious, even the wealth of all the three worlds is but light as air. Tukaram having, as it were, kicked at *Mahasidhi* (accomplishment in excelsis) itself, is deeply engaged in the worship of Vithoba, free from all desires and aspirations. The four kinds of *Mukti* are of very little avail to him. That being so, can the common things of this world

have any value in his eyes?" Mahipathi says that Ramdas Swami was much impressed with this very striking instance of Tukaram's indifference to worldly concerns.

HIS DEATH.

The time for Tukaram's departure from the shows and unrealities of life was drawing near. Some of his poems seem to be prophetic of the approaching end. Full of strange forebodings, yet not without a deep spirit of hope and tender trust in God, these poems are so striking that we can hardly refrain from quoting them :—

FI will go now to my mother's house; the saints have sent for me. He has heard the story of my joys and sorrows; his mind is moved to pity. Some messenger, it seems, prepared with food and raiment, is coming to take me. My heart is drawn towards the road, I see continually the path to my mother's house. Tuka says, Now my mother and father will come themselves to take me back.

Patiently I am waiting, I cannot endure a wrangling uproar. My heart is drawn thither; I ask every new comer the way. I grind and pound like other people, but my thoughts are elsewhere. Tuka says, I have grown senseless here; perchance I shall be so there too.

Through experience in this world I am deeply convinced that there is one soul in both places, that he feels pity for me. Hunger is appeased by eating hunger; there is no appetite for food left. Tuka says, I am delighted; my heart is satisfied by this experience.

Yonder Hari is come, his hands adorned with the shell and the wheel. Garuda comes with whirring wings crying eagerly "Fear not, fear not." The splendour of Hari's crown and ear-rings hides the lustre of the

Sun ; his hue is that of the purple cloud, lovely is his form to see. Four arms has he ; a wreath of basil hangs swaying round his neck. The lustre of his yellow robe lights up the ten quarters of the sky. Tuka is fully satisfied ; the throne of Vaikuntha has come to visit his house.

Give me now a send-off ; return to your own homes all of you. Be happy in all your deeds and duties ; take my words for a blessing. You reared me up and gave me into the hands of one who frees me from all care. Now I shall go with the Lord of life, whom I follow with my whole heart. If I should cherish further my love for you I shall stay here too long ; let no one move beyond this point. I have put my hand in his ; we are one in duty, desire and purpose. Tuka says, Now that I have met him, other topics I have left for others to talk about.

Peace be to you, members of my house and others, salutation to the saints. The bee returns to the honey ; the torn rope cannot be mended. When the river-water has flowed into the ocean, it comes not back. Listen to my word ! Tukaram has gone, he returneth not again.

Of his end, we know no more than what is recorded in a note attached to the little old volume of his poems still worshipped at the village of Dehu. It is said to be the actual volume which Tukaram cast into the waters of the Indrayani at the Brahmin's bidding. The note runs thus ; " In the Saka year 1571 (1649 A. D.), the name of the year being *Virodhi*, on the second day of the dark half of the month of *Shinga*, the day being Monday, in the morning, *Tukaram started on his pilgrimage. Farewell.*" What this means, we shall perhaps never know.

The Marathas believe that Vithoba himself carried him to Vaikunta. Others hold that, taking the robe of a *sanyasi*, Tukaram wandered forth into the great world where, undisturbed even by the adoration of his disciples, he might snap the last ties which bound him to earth and remain utterly alone with God till death should take him.

HIS DESCENDANTS.

Tukaram died leaving some issue of his body. At the time when he disappeared from earth, his wife was in an interesting condition. Tukaram had directed her to name the child Bhagaban, as he would turn out a great devotee. The good man had left in all two sons and three daughters. All these children bore sacred names, *i. e.*, names of gods and goddesses. The two sons were called Mahadeva and Vithoba, respectively, while the three daughters were severally called Kasi, Bhagirathi and Ganga. All the daughters were married on the same day. The nuptials took place with three boys of his own caste, who were found playing on the public road. On this strange circumstance coming to the notice of the boys' parents the next day, the latter so far from being displeased, expressed great joy at having had alliances made with Tukaram's family.

Indeed, the saint was held in high esteem by all from the highest to the lowest. We have already noticed Sivaji's high regard for him on several occasions. This regard was so deep and sincere that it did not cease with his life, but was, after his demise, converted to favour towards his family. It is stated that a few years after Tukaram had left earth for good, the King came to Dehu, and on being informed that his children were not in a well-to-do condition, granted some villages as jagir for their maintenance and support. These villages are still in the possession and enjoyment of his descendants.

TUKARAM'S RELIGION AND POETRY.

It may be remarked at the outset that Tukaram was no philosopher or preacher. He set himself not to preach any new doctrine or to found any sect or school. On the other hand, he pours ridicule on philosophers and systems. He was a man trying to discern spiritual things, to live the life of the spirit. All his poetry and effort are directed to one end—to realise God, to live in God. And judging by his poetry, we cannot deny that his spiritual intuition was very high, that his efforts to live the life of the spirit were amply rewarded.

Though Tukaram is not in spirit a philosopher or preacher of doctrines, his poems show the influence of, and embody, the new Vaishnavite faith that was spreading over the whole of North India during these centuries. He imbibed it even as the kindred spirits of the age did. Tukaram was acquainted with the poetry and utterances of the saints and poets of his own land; and these had liberated the new tendencies of thought, and, above all, made current the new Vaishnavite faith with its burden of Love and Brotherhood.

THE NEW RELIGION.

• This new Vaishnavite creed had been propagated in South India by the great reformer Ramanuja. It was the outcome, partly of the severe intellectualism of Sankara's system and partly also of that religion of the heart, which makes itself felt at some stage or other of spiritual culture and which priests and systems are powerless to kill. It travelled to the North India through a number of monks and preachers. The new philosophy may be defined as one which effected a reconciliation of the finite and absolute conceptions of God. God is at once personal and impersonal. He is at once the great and Omnipotent.

tent Being and the friend and inhabitant of each soul. God is the fount of energy, the All-Pervading Spirit, the source of Love and Life and the unique end of all men's desires. He ought to be adored in all faith and love. Thus the merciful and protective aspects of the Divine were emphasised. Religion, it was declared, consisted not in the passionless mergence of the soul in the infinite but a devout and whole-hearted adoration of God.

This philosophy further implied the distinction of god and soul. Though essentially one, god and soul are yet distinct. This doctrine of union-in-separateness is the great feature of this mediæval faith. As an English critic of Kabir has said "For the thorough-going Monist, the soul, in so far as it is real, is substantially identical with God; and the true object of existence is the making patent of this latent identity, the realisation which finds expression in the Vedantist formula 'That art thou.' But Kabir says that Brahma and the creature are 'ever distinct yet ever united,' that the wise man knows the spiritual as well as the material world 'to be no more than His footstool.' The soul's union with Him is a Love-union, a

mutual inhabitation ; that essentially dualistic relation which all mystical religion expresses, not a self-mergence which leaves no place for personality. This eternal distinction, the mysterious union-in-separateness of God and the soul, is a necessary doctrine of all sane mysticism for no scheme which fails to find a place for it can represent more than a fragment of that soul's intercourse with the spiritual world. Its affirmation was one of the distinctive features of the Vaishnavite reformation preached by Ramanuja." This doctrine was shared not only by Kabir, but also by the other great mystics and poets of this epoch, among whom Tukaram was one. Having its basis in the longings of man's heart, its capacity for devotion, prayer, repentance, this doctrine fell in profoundly with the mysticism and yearning of the mediæval Indian mind. The heart of India, long pent up in the darkness and formalism of the Middle Ages, burst forth in streams of prayer, love and ecstasy. Nowhere do we see the workings of these new and mystic modes of thought, of these new visions of the Absolute, more beautifully expressed than in the poems of Tukaram.

Numerous are the poems of Tukaram, des-

criptive of the Nature of God—His All-Pervading nature, His Omnipotence and Love. Some of these poems are full of the old light reflected from the Sanskrit classics—the Puranas and the Scriptures; while others are more mystical and original in their thought and poetry.

I will extol Kesava, Mukunda, Murari, Rama, Krishna, mighty names that annihilate all sin. O Life at once and Death of the world, who art at once the Dwarf and the Universe of manifold glory; Thou who severest mortal ties, who bearest the disc and the mace. Strong Hero that didst overthrow the demons! O Warrior that wear-est the jewelled Crown, O Generous Master, that givest the world to men, O Image of Madana, entrancing the spirit, in whom the cowherds and the damsels delighted. O Kanta, master of dramatic skill, endowed with every perfection, possessed of every attribute, beyond all attributes, who beholdest and knowest all things; Thou who hast created the sun and other lights, yet dost allow no sense of pride to approach Thee, how can I serve this God? What little can I offer Him? Without faith, He cannot be comprehended. Tuka suffers not his soul to quit His feet.

O Vasudeva, Lord of the humble, Lotus-eyed, Glorious Eternity! O Thou who givest happiness to Thy worshippers, there is nothing void of Thee! O Infinite One, Master of the world, most Noble form, Image of Vamana! creator of Brahma, Lord of Vaikunta, inaccessible to the Vedas and Shastras! O All-Pervading One, Whose arm is everywhere, unfathomable! Eye of the world, God of the World, Ancient Father of Brahma! O Panduranga, servant of Thy worshippers! Thou that dost crush their fears, O Best of Beings! Infinite one that dost fill the minds of all, that dwellest apart from association and solitude! O Lord of the senses, Thy noble form is unknown to Thy simple worshippers; assume Thy embodied shape and set them to adore Thee, says Tuka.

O God, Thou art a sea of compassion ; Mother, Father and Brother to me ! Thou art an ocean of measures for attaining Life ; Thou dost sever the ties of the world, the snares of destruction. Thou art a wall of adamant to ~~Thy refugee ; freedom from fear is Thy generous gift.~~ It is beyond all Gods to perceive Thee ; Thou art unembodied, imperishable ; where the highest effort of praise is too feeble for the theme, what can I do with my uncultivated wit ? Do not make me wait to know Thy purposes. I know nothing of faith, but I call myself Thine ; I know nothing of devotion, but I offer Thee homage. For Thy own name's sake, O controller of the senses, it behoves Thee to run speedily. O Lord of Pandhari, I am filled with Thy joy ; I have vanquished pain ; I have laid all my burden on Thy head, I shall fear no more, says Tuka.

The following two poems are more mystical and subtle.--

If I speak of goodness, he satisfies every desire ; if of sweetness, how sweet is his name ! If of mercy, behold, he is altogether righteous ; of humility, he will not vex his servants. In generosity he is ready to give his spouse away ; he triumphs over Time and Death. Regarding wisdom, he is a heap of noble qualities ; but all to those who know him alone. He is as old as time ; his way of diversion cannot be fathomed. Among the cowherds, he was a rude cowherd, a subtle cheat among the weak women. We may call him a simpleton, for he is submissive to faith ; greedy, for he loves the morsels left by others ; ugly, for he fell in love with Kubja ; timorous, for he dreads sin. As to games he alone can play them ; in dancing he alone knows a dancer. He hides within our spirit yet, though we grasp thee, O God thou art not apprehended. If we call thee high, behold thou art highest of all ; or low, then thou art lowest. Tuka says, I have spoken the truth ; I have paid no false worship.

The Yogis gaze on the reflection of your splendour ; we see the original before our eyes. He stands upright with both hands on his hips ; from his body glances a purple lustre. He pervades the world, yet dwells far from

it; within all things he is hidden unmodified by all. He has neither shape, nor outline, nor name; we must approach him in our spirits. There is neither end nor limit to him, nor room for distinction of caste; he has neither family nor caste, head, hands or feet. The joy of faith enlightens the ignorant, through their own fond desire, says Tuka.

The doctrine of the soul's distinction from God—a cardinal doctrine of the mediæval mystics—often supplies a most beautiful theme to Tukaram.

Cursed be that knowledge which makes me one with thee; I love to have precepts from thee and prohibitions. I am thy servant; thou art my lord; let there be still between us the difference of high and low; let this wonderful truth be established, destroy it not. Water cannot taste itself, nor trees taste their own fruit; the worshipper must be separate, thus alone pleasure arises from distinction. The diamond looks beautiful in its setting; gold when it is fashioned into an ornament; if there were no difference, how could you contrast the one with the other? After heat one enjoys shade; at the sight of her child the milk comes into the mother's breast—what delight there is when they meet each other! Tuka says, This is a great thing gained and so I view it; I am thoroughly resolved to desire liberation no more.

Had I not been a sinner, how could there have been a Saviour? So my name is the source, and hence, O sea of mercy, comes thy purifying power. Iron is the glory of the Parisa, else had it been but an ordinary stone? Tuka says, Through the petitioner's faith comes the honour of the tree of wishes.

If you and I should become one and the same, how then could the service of My Lord exist as a graceful ornament for me to wear? There would be no room for love. If utterance should cease, how could this joy exist? Tuka says, As it is, we dance before thee with fond delight.

We know the secret of thy mind: whence comes the worshipper? Whence comes God? If there is no such thing as the seed, how can it bear fruit in the end? Thou

hast played many parts ; whence comes merit and whence comes guilt ? We were non-existent ; it is thou that hast beheld thyself. If within one house, unperceived, a theft took place, there is an end of coming and going elsewhere for the goods stolen. Tuka says, He has taken us by the hand, and thereafter he has made us distinct from himself ; in lonely and in crowded places there is a ceremony of comfort between God and his worshippers.

Of the new religion, the Love-Aspect appealed most to Tukaram. He figures the nature of the Absolute Love in a number of ways, most stirring and profound. Many are the metaphors he uses to describe this Supreme love—those of friend, of bride and bridegroom, but chiefly that of mother and child.

Who asks a mother to love her child ? It is her infant that creates love in her. It is the yearning of her heart that makes her protect him. O, thou that art dark as a cloud, we compare thee to mortal parents, but we see that it adds no grace to thee. The mother guards her child here on earth, but in the next world she is not near him ; not so is it with thee. O Infinite One, thou art master of Time ! Tuka says, O Narayana, thy compassion is greater than hers.

The yearnings of love are something that comes from the heart ; there is nothing like them. A mother will not let her child cry much ; when he is fretful, she is not slow to move. When her face breaks into smiles, the child understands it. Tuka, with all his ignorance, possesses this knowledge ; he is not like the run of men.

A child may be unkind to his mother, yet still she loves him. She forgets that she is weary : she lifts him on her hip and lays his body against hers. She weeps at his distress ; she is ready to give away her life for him. She jumps up when he calls her name, she flings away her life, says Tuka.

And such Love belongs to the very nature of the Absolute:—

If the Ganges went to the sea, and he refused to give her a place, where could she go? Is the water vexed with creatures that live in the water? Does a mother refuse to shelter her children? Tuka says, I have come to seek your protection; why are you silent?

A God, then, who is all love ought to be worshipped in love and faith alone. In a characteristic poem, he tells us:—

I practised neither meditation nor penance, I used no violence to my mind, I laid no restraints on it. Standing where I was, I cried to Thee to rescue me in my strait. I brought and offered Thee no water; by meditation alone I served Thee; what I spent was spent alone. Says Tuka, My generous master accepted it in all sincerity.

What do *we* know about divorce from the world? We know but the name of Vithoba; among the crowd of his worshippers we dance rejoicing and beat the cymbals. What do *I* know about peace and mercy and love?—except what I find in the name and praises of Govinda. Why should I practise neglect of the body, when I am immersed in the sea of nectar? Why should I serve him alone in the waste, when I have this joy among men? Tuka says, Right well I know; Vithoba goes by my side.

Let us offer the worship which is best, the worship of the heart; then what do we want with outward preparations? God ought to know the heart and he knows it; in the heart of the true worshipper is the truth which He accepts. In the last hour, the spirit shall reap gain or loss according to the seed it has sown. Tuka says, that worship which keeps us in peace secures its end.

Such a worship—a worship of the heart in love and in faith—is accessible to all, the high and the low, the learned and the ignorant. It could

know no distinctions of caste or birth. Says

Tukaram :—

Our Lord knows nothing of high or lowly birth, He stops wherever He sees devotion and faith. He ate the pounded grain that Vidura, the slave's son, offered Him; He protected Prahlada in the demon's house. He worked with Rohidas in tanning hides; He wove scarfs on Kabir's loom. He sold goat's flesh with the butcher Sajana; He mowed the grass in Savata's field. He blew the fire with the goldsmith Narahari; with Chokamela He dragged away dead cows. With Nama's slave Jani, He lifted up cowdung; at Dharma's house He carried the water and swept the floors. He became a charioteer and drove the horses of Arjuna's car; He relished the cakes that Sudama's love presented Him. At the cowherd's house, He tended kine, He kept the door for Bali. For the sake of Mira Bai, He drained the poison cup; He became a *Mahar* in the service of Damaji. He carried clay for Gora the potter. He paid off the bills of Narsi Mehta. For Pundalika's sake He still stands there (at Pandharpur); blessed, says Tuka, is His story.

The king of generous princes dwells at Pandhari, with uplifted arms he beckons to all. He desires the ignorant more than the learned, it is they that he embraces fondly. He takes away anxious care and bestows love in return; he thinks not of his own gain or loss. Tuka says, We are feeble and helpless; Panduranga watches over us.

There are in Tukaram also great moods of ecstasy, of eager devotion, of profound, tender trust or sometimes of spiritual despair :—

They call you a sea of mercy; then why do you delay, O Panduranga? why have you no pity yet? I cry like the fawn for its mother, when it is wearied by thirst and hunger in the jungle. Suckle me, O mother, with the milk of love, run towards me with swollen breast. Tuka says, Who but you, O Panduranga, will drive away my pangs?

With what sweet notes can I implore you, with what melody of speech? Come, come, O mother Panduranga, give me the breast of your love. Like a nestling with open beak, I cry for mercy. Tuka says, We are like petted, wayward self-willed children.

Wherever I go, I am a vendor of stale goods ; I can see no prospect of gain. Were the lines drawn upon my forehead propitious, should I suffer this toil and care? Thou wilt not receive me as thy own and the worldly comforts I once had I have lost. My allotted portion has now once been given me to endure. Time is stealing from me my capital, life. When did I hear of thy fame ! How is it I lose my life ? says Tuka.

We are alone in a strange land, we have missed the road and lost all our bearings ; now should any one take us by the hand and lead us home, what return can we make for his kindness ? Even so I stood stark naked, O Keshiraja, I felt ashamed I could do thee no service. I was like a child whose mother cast him forth with a great throe, heedless even if the spot were fit for his birth : when heat and thirst and hunger set him screaming, she would put him to her breast—what shall I say of it ? I was like a great criminal that goes forth to die with an iron pole on his shoulder. Yet, says Tuka, this is what happened : Some one snatched me away and set me in shelter behind him.

I turn no more to look behind me ; I am thoroughly sick of the world. Come and meet me, O Generous One ; I cannot bear the call of death ; with Thy support I shall be at peace then, I shall be content with my part in the game of life. My throat, says Tuka, is choked with this earnest desire, how is it this comfort visits me not ?

What indecision vexes my soul ! Make me Thy own after any sort : be resolved upon this. Other gains seem vile to me ; I have learned from experience their good and evil. Let me fall, says Tuka, into a trance unbroken ; let me sink into Thy Loving spirit.

My words are not figures of rhetoric ; I beseech Thee in accents of true misery. Let no delay intervene in our task ; Thou art a self-made image of mercy. I have turned my face towards Thee, says Tuka ; I will hug Thy feet when I see them.

I am much afraid of Learning; may it never interfere with me, O Narayana. I will drink the milk of Love, wisely choosing the joy of devotion. There is nothing in the three worlds like it. There are homes for the liberated-soul but the peace they give is a poor thing. Tuka says, Grant me this that I and Thou may never pass away; I delight not in that loss of difference whereof I spoke.

I have called on Thee till my throat is parched; my life is ebbing, my patience is gone. Why hast Thou not yet noticed this, O mother's home of the wretched? I look on wealth as though it were a stone, on pleasures as poison. Pardon me my faults, embrace me and give me Thy love. A longing for Thy form lingers in my heart; within and without I never cease to feel it. All I have to help me now is Thy feet, says Tuka.

Thou wilt help us of Thy own free will; why should I entreat Thee in this way? My prayer for mercy is still unanswered, my soul is still a soul apart from Thee. How can the seed sprout unbidden, without the warmth of parental love?

The mind that hath once stepped forth before Narayana, here it pauses how dumb, how enfolded in Thee. They who once were whirled round from birth to birth, when they came to Thee, were fully satisfied. They were dyed, says Tuka, in the dye of Thy delight.

My death is dead; I am grown immortal. I have swept clean the bed and the roots of the tree of bodily consciousness; I have made a barren place where it grew. The flood which rose has fallen; I have placed my confidence in the water of life. Tuka says, Truly I have purified my old life.

In thy love thou hast assumed a manifest form; this is why thou hast created the wide-extended world. Accordingly, I rejoice to sing thy name; I will not forget it for one moment. This is the secret to master, the essence of all religious duty; all modes of worship are embraced in this. From various points of view, various faiths arise; there is little reason to follow any of them, Tuka says, We shall cast him into the womb of desire, and grapple him to our soul as though he were a little unborn child.

There is a beautiful legend which tells us how Tukaram once being ill could not go on his usual pilgrimage to Pandharpur for the autumn festivals and, therefore, wrote a number of songs to form a message to the God of Pandharpur and sent them by the hand of the pilgrims entreating them to bring back to him the reply which the God was sure to give. The pilgrims went off carrying the message; and Tukaram, so the legend says, lay waiting on the spot by the roadside where he first met the pilgrims till they returned. This incident narrated by the Marathi biographer, Mahipathi, is probably true: it is in perfect keeping with the profoundly mystical and devotional temperament of Tukaram. The poems themselves which formed the message are extant and are full of deep poetry and pathos. The following are taken from them:—

I will be patient no more, I will send Him a message; if He resents it, He is welcome to do so. If He resents it, at least He will answer me; in some way or other He will send me the feather back. It matters not to him if He loses one child; I have no other parent's home.

It is not my lot to make a humble prayer, I approach Thy feet with a pressing request. In my love, I have written a bold letter. I cannot fathom Thy Nature, my intelligence is too weak. If I cannot fathom Thy Nature, how can my feebleness describe Thee? Accept my speech such as it is; I glorify Thee in faltering accents. Says Tukaram, I place my head where Thy feet stand on the brick.

Fatigue and trouble will vanish at a message from Thee; when we have seen Thy form we shall have nothing left to wish for. The straying impulse of the senses will be stopped; the spirit will attain to peace. Spread abroad the news that we have a parent's house—immovable, excellent, giving a comfort not of this world. I have no earthly desires, but I am glad the one longing is left me, to see myself my own. Tuka says, this is an undying delight: I shall not let it be rudely interrupted.

I cherish a desire but it bears no fruit, the time of accomplishment has not yet arrived. My heart is quivering like grain on a frying pan. I have no delight in the many shapes of this world, the future I know not and cannot control. I sink down and rise up again; I am caught in a whirling eddy. Tuka says, Much do I speculate, I climb one hill and descend another.

Hereafter, at least, whatever thoughts occur to Thee, send some one to tell them me; like a needy beggar I shall look for his coming. My soul is at my lips in flight; My mind is laid at thy feet. Tuka says, I am grievously in suspense.

- Pray O ye saints, for me. What offence has Tuka committed? How is it he has lost the Feet? Not in one way alone should you implore pity and sympathy for me. Tuka cannot see Pandhari or the feet on the brick.

Lend an ear to my representations, let an answer be speedily given me. Shouldst Thou feel inclined to mercy, call this sinful one to Thee. Do not rake up any memories; root out my sinful acts. Tuka says, Have Thy feet no power to do this?

Whatever I have said now, willingly or in ignorance, pardon all my faults. O Panduranga, O Mother mine. Whether I have blamed or praised you, you must bear with what I have said. Tuka says, you have petted me like a child, you must satisfy my fond desire.

What message will come from my Parents' house? I cannot close my eyes for wonderifg. I am waiting hopefully with my arms clasped above my brow. I count the days on my fingers; I am restless and excited; I know not whether the saints will forget or my Father and

Mother will be attentive. The place will be crowded, says Tuka, who will think of me there ?

But He is a sea of mercy ; He will not let me fall away from him. He sees and hears with many eyes and ears, He suffices all and is not exhausted. Without our telling Him, He knows our thoughts, He fulfills our longings whatever they are. From many months I have heard His fame and I trust Him. Tuka says, the promise I spoke of He will keep, it will not be wasted.

Yet in spite of this, my merits and demerits may have drawn me away from him, how far I cannot say. They may stop him from sending a messenger ; or again they may cause him to send one speedily. Till I see the pilgrims returning, my heart is filled with fancies. Hope raises floods of ideas, the motions of my heart run wild. Tuka says, when I get the message, all my senses will grow calm.

Perchance the saints have now taken leave ; they have entered the temple precincts. They have eaten the dish of auspicious cards, they have started with good omens in a lucky hour. Their throats are choked with sobs ; their hearts are swelling with the sorrow of parting. They meet with loving embraces ; the saints have consoled each other. Tuka says, they cannot bear to think of departing, they turn back ever and anon to see the temple spire.

Thus perchance, they have left Pandhrai, the pilgrims are now passing along the road. They recall the ceremonies they have seen, they talk of them as they go along. What they have heard or preached dwells in their minds, it will all be turned into love. Emblems of *garuda*, drum, cymbals, flags they have with them ; they tell each other of their bliss. Tuka says, now they are hurrying back, I shall embrace and cling to them.

Before concluding, we may quote two beautiful poems—anecdotes mystical and charming in their poetry—descriptive of God's love.

Here is a little secret of your love, O Lord of the world I remember the tale and will tell it to you. A deer and

two fawns were grazing blithely in the wood, when suddenly there came a hunter with two dogs. He spread his nets on one side, he stationed his dogs on the other he fired the grass on one side and waited himself on the other. The deer were beset on all sides; they began to remember your name. "O Ramkrishna, God of Gods, come at once! who will save us in this strait, but thou, O father, Lord of the world?" You heard their words and your pitiful heart was troubled; you ordered the rain to quench the fire speedily. You roused up a hare and the dogs pursued it; the deer joyfully bounded off, crying "Govinda has saved us!" Thou art thus full of mercy beloved of thy worshippers; they delight heartily in thy praise. O spouse of Bokhumai, says Tuka.

Weak as I am, how can I describe thy greatness? Thou art a mine of mercy, a sea of compassion. Some birds laid their eggs on the field of Kurukshetra; they built their nest in the grass. Suddenly there was a pillar of war raised thereon; the spot was chosen for a battle. The hosts of the Pandavas and the Kauravas came thither to meet in strife. In that hour the birds remembered thee; "Help us," they cried, "O husband of Lakshmi! Elephants, chariots and horses will run about here; the rocks will be crushed to dust. In such a peril how can we be saved? How can we forsake our little ones and flee?" In that hour thy heart was moved with pity. There was a bell on an elephant's neck; it fell upon them when they looked not for it. Eighteen days did the battle rage; neither wind nor heat did them any harm. When the battle was over they were pointed out to Arjuna; thou didst show him the birds, O Narayana! "Lo! I have saved my servants from death Else how could they have lived through the battle!" Such mercy dost thou show to thy worshippers; thou art indeed our mother, says Tuka.

An English critic and admirer of Tukaram has said "To those who have read Tukaram's *Abhangas*, it is useless to speak in praise of Christian Ethics." Tukaram's poems contain, as

all religious poetry should, a great deal of ethical and moral teaching.

What have the water creatures done, that the fisherman seeks to destroy them? This is a design born of human nature, enmity of kind against kind. The hunter slays the game without any fault of theirs. Tuka says, So likewise do rogues molest the saints.

The sinful man knows not that one is like another, he sits down to cut another's throat. God is present as the soul in all created beings; how is it he does not recognize him in the brutes? He sees a soul groaning and howling; yet how do his cruel hands conduct themselves? The villain will go down to hell, says Tuka.

We should not kill even a snake in the presence of the saints since they feel that their own souls pervade the universe. There is one thread that runs through the individual and the universal soul; both are indistinguishable; if you pluck forth a single hair, the whole body feels a shock. The saints cannot bear to see another is hurt; it is a sort of pain to themselves, they feel that the soul in all creatures is the same. Tuka says, This is the law of morality; this is what is meant by worship; it keeps the soul at peace.

It is well to speak one's true thoughts; a false heart suffers pain unending. Let a man's talk be his own, let him control his mind and make it his witness. A speech cannot be called back again; it may leave long pain behind it. Tuka says, I shrink from the troubles that follow falsehood; enough now, O God, of lying words.

Those who wield the weapon of forgiveness—what can the wicked do to them? If a forest fire breaks out where there is no grass, it must die out of its own accord. Tuka says, Forgiveness benefits all mankind; practise it continually and make yourself happy.

To revile any one is sinful; to grieve any man is to grieve God.

Mercy, forgiveness, peace—where these are, there is the dwelling-place of God. He comes running to that house and takes up His abode there.

Merit consists in service to others; sin is injury done to them; there is no other way to gain anything. Truth

is the true religion; observances are false, there is no other secret than this.

~~God is our friend; through him all are our friends. We are truly blest; every place is filled with kindred of ours.~~

Through God, the whole world is related to us; when a rope is stretched, every fibre of it is tense. The world is not worthless or an object of scorn; see how each life is blended with the life of all. The joy and grief of others penetrate us, and ours then, by the same rule. Tuka says, When this pure principle dwells within the heart, the outward man is radiant with light.

If you greet men with the words, 'A blessing on you, all sense of hostility vanishes. Narayana has fully assured us of this, by the sense of love he has planted in our hearts. These words put to flight all anxious care.

Falsehood and wickedness are condemnable, not because of any fear of punishment but because they shut a man out from the vision of God. He is like a man diseased that cannot exercise or enjoy his functions properly.

When the body is heated by fever, milk tastes like poison; so it is with him who has banished God's truth, a raving fever fastens upon him. When jaundice affects a man's eyes, he sees the moon of a yellow colour. Tuka says, When a man loves spirituous drinks, he cannot taste the sweetness of butter.

Tukaram, it should be remembered, was no mere dreamer or composer of poems; he is above all a practical mystic. He everywhere insists upon individual experience as the true test of religious life. Poetry itself, he says, is "a thing

RAMDAS.

“When the Faith is dead, death is better than life; Why live, when Religion has perished?”

“Gather the Marathas together: make Religion live again: our fathers laugh at us from Heaven!”

Such was the message which a Hindu saint and patriot, in the darkness that covered the whole of India in an age of Mahomedan misrule and oppression, gave to a rising soldier and national leader, the famous Sivaji. The words were, in a large measure, fulfilled through the labour of the saint and the soldier alike. The Marathas were gathered and consolidated into a nation. They were knit together in the bonds of a new and reformed religion. An Empire grew which ruled over the whole of the Dekkan and for a time held sway over Delhi and the Central India. It succumbed, however, before a strange and foreign power whose entry could have been

little dreamed of by the prophets and builders of the seventeenth century. But still the work done—the union and independence achieved, the reformation in religion and social life that was carried out—makes the rise of the Maratha Nation one of the most remarkable and instructive episodes in modern Indian History.

It has been pointed out by a patriotic writer on Maratha history that “the rise of the Maratha Nation was not a mere accident due to any chance combination, but was a genuine effort on the part of a Hindu Nationality, not merely to assert its independence, but to achieve what had not been attempted before—the formation of a Confederacy of States animated by a common patriotism—and that the success it achieved was due to a general upheaval, social, religious and political, of all classes of the population. The uprising of the Marathas was not, as the English historian put it, the work of ‘the turbulent predatory spirit of the Hindus of Maharashtra which, though smothered for a time, had its

latent embers stirred by the contentions of their Mahomedan conquerors, till, like the parched grass kindled amid the forests of the Sahayadri mountains, they burst forth in spreading flame, and men afar off wondered at the conflagration." "Freebooters and adventurers," says, the native historian, "never succeed in building up Empires which last for generations and permanently alter the political map of a great continent. Unlike the great *Subhedars* of Provinces, who became independent after the death of Aurangazib, the Founder of the Maratha Power and his successors for two generations bore the brunt of the attack of the Moghul Empire at the zenith of its splendour. The military adventurers named above were not backed up by any national force behind them, and their power perished with the individuals who founded it. In the case of the Maratha Confederacy, however, it was far otherwise. For ten generations, a succession of great leaders sprang up to fill the place of those who died in the struggle, and the Confederacy not only out-

lived opposition but derived greater strength from the reverses it sustained from time to time, rising Phoenix-like in greater splendour from the very ashes of its apparent ruin. This tenacity showed clearly that the underlying principles had stronger vitality than can be explained by the standard theory of adventure and freebooting or the illustration of a sudden conflagration."

The rise of the Marathas was, then, the result of a deep national awakening which was at once religious, social and political. "It was the upheaval of the whole population strongly bound together by the common affinities of language, race, religion and literature, and, seeking further solidarity by a common independent political existence. . . . It was a national movement or upheaval in which all classes co-operated. The strength of the organisation did not depend on a temporary elevation of the higher classes, but it had a deeper hold on the vast mass of the rural population. Cowherds and shepherds, Brahmans and non-Brahmans, even Mussal-

mans, felt its influence and acknowledged its power. The political Revolution was preceded, and, in fact, to some extent, caused by religious and social upheaval which moved the entire population. . . . Like the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century, there was a religious, social and literary Revival and Reformation in India, but notably in the Dekkan in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The religious Revival was not Brahminical in its orthodoxy ; it was heterodox in its spirit of protest against forms and ceremonies and class distinctions based on birth, and ethical in its preference of a pure heart, and of the law of love, to all other acquired merits and good works. This religious revival was the work also of the people, of the masses and not of the classes. At its head were Saints and Prophets, Poets and Philosophers, who sprang chiefly from the lower orders of society—tailors carpenters, potters, gardeners, shopkeepers, barbers, and even *mahars*, more often than Brahmans. The names of Tukaram, of Ram-

das, of Vaman Pandit and Eknath were names to conjure with, and after a lapse of two hundred years, they still retain their ascendancy over the minds of the people of Maharashtra. The political leaders acted in concert with these religious leaders of the people."

The religious movement of reform and revival that to a great extent inspired and gave life to the national movement had its beginning in the thirteenth century. Towards the close of that century, a remarkable Brahmin youth—one of four children whom an unjust society had branded as outcaste—boldly rose in protest against the arrogant exclusiveness and the meaningless faith of the Brahmins and the other high castes. Moved by a desire to bring the knowledge of true religion to all, he proceeded to write a commentary—an exposition—of the *Bhagavad Gita*, in popular Marathi verse emphasising the Oneness of God and the path of True Worship and Faith. The spirit of reform and new religious impulse, thus started,

spread and grew with widening influence in the two succeeding centuries. The two outstanding figures are Namdev, the mystic poet of the fourteenth century, and Eknath, the resolute reformer and preacher of the fifteenth century. The poems and utterances of the two gave wide currency to the new- of faith and *Bhakti*; while their lives and struggles, especially those of the latter, testified to the new spirit of Human Love and Service and of Brotherhood that was abroad in the land. The movement thus started and carried on for two centuries bore its full fruition in the next. The seventeenth century is filled with the life and doings of two great men, Tukaram, the mystic and poet, in whom all the longing and God-Love of Maharashtra Vaishnavism found its fullest expression and the other, Ramdas, the subject of this sketch, who, with his great genius and character, gave an organisation and form to the new religion and made it subserve the high purpose of national independence and national righteousness.

To rightly understand the place and work of Ramdas, it is necessary to study with a little detail the features of the new religious movement. The movement bears an instructive resemblance to the protestant movement that set in in Europe at the same time. Just as Luther and other reformers of Europe rebelled against the authority of the clergy, the Maratha reformers—and to some extent the reformers in other parts of India also—rose up in protest against the monopoly of the Brahman caste and its exclusive spirit. They asserted the dignity of the human soul as residing in it quite independently of the accidents of its birth and social rank. The old ideals of celibacy and asceticism and the unnatural retirement of men and women were also condemned. Like the European reformers, the Indian saints raised their voice against the excesses to which image-worship and ceremonial religion had gone. They preached on the other hand of a Pure and Loving God who ought to be worshipped in Love and in Faith alone; *Bhava* (Faith) and *Bhakti*

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(Devotional Love), they said, are far superior to all other forms of worship, such as the performance of rites and ceremonies of external worship, pilgrimages and ablutions, self-mortification and fasts, learning and contemplation; these have relation only to the body or the mind while the spirit is what God desires to see engaged in His Service. The European reformers made the Bible accessible to all, high and low alike, and the monopoly of learning till then enjoyed by the priests was shaken to its foundations. In the same spirit, the Maratha reformers, beginning with Dnyandev, boldly translated and made accessible to all the great scriptures and sacred epics—the Gita, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat and the Bhagavata Puran. The Brahmans, the supporters and custodians of the classical learning, long resisted the innovation. Eknath and Tukaram especially had to bear a good deal of opposition and even persecution. The conflict ended at last in the success of the popular side, the living languages.

Of this long line of apostles and poets, Ramdas was a true descendant. The new religion of Love and Faith they had introduced found in him a staunch advocate and preacher. Their struggles for unity and brotherhood, for larger and closer fellowship and tolerance among the several castes and orders, Ramdas shared and bore a noble part in. Like them he addressed his thoughts and doctrine to the people in the language of the people. But to these—great as such work was—he added a new ideal of social and religious unification and of political emancipation such as were little thought of by the mystics and reformers that preceded him or lived in his times. Perhaps struck with the desolate condition of Hindu society and Faith all over the country in his wanderings and pilgrimages, perhaps also moved by an inherent patriotism and sense for national greatness, this remarkable Vaishnava saint and ascetic set himself to carry out a scheme of social and religious organisation to train the young and the old in religious culture and service as well

as in social virtues and national ideals. The success he achieved was immediate and profound. Beginning first with the masses for whose instruction and training schools and *ashrams* were established in the various parts of the country, the power and influence of this saint extended to the nobles and the leaders of the people including Sivaji who, lying amidst the forts and hills of his native jaghir of Poona, was dreaming of the establishment of a Maratha State. The shaping of Sivaji's individual policy and ideals, as well as the up-lift and awakening of the masses both alike lie to the credit of this statesman-saint. Sivaji's work necessarily required co-operation. And if, those who eventually came to be his co-workers and successors had not been disciplined and trained towards the common nationality, we may reasonably doubt of Sivaji's success in spite of his towering intellect, his undaunted enthusiasm, his inexhaustible energy and faith. He was no doubt, the first among the men of his age

but every one of his colleagues was himself a leader and a hero, though on a smaller scale. These heroes were the products of that spiritual training and social and national culture which they were every hour imbibing from the various teachers and institutions that Ramdas had brought into existence. The national sentiment was by these influences kept at a higher level of spirituality and devotion to public affairs than it would have otherwise attained. It was this background, prepared by a new religion and national ideals, behind Sivaji's central figure which constituted the chief source of wisdom, strength and patriotism that were put forth under the leadership of Sivaji. In the work then of religious emancipation and national consolidation that ensued, Ramdas's name and memory have been rightly associated with that of Sivaji in the traditions of the people as one of the two great founders of the Maratha nationality.

RAMDAS'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

Ramdas came of the Brahmin family of the

Thosars of Jamb (Satara District). His father was a village officer of Chafal on the banks of the Godaveri, by name Suryaji Pant. Suryaji Pant lived a pious life with his wife ; but for a long time, he had no children. At last, two sons were born to him, the elder of whom was named Gangadhara and the younger, born in 1608, was called Narayana. When Narayana was barely three years old, Suryaji died. Gangadhara, the elder, who had grown into youth and had by this time received some education, succeeded to his father's office and looked after his mother and younger brother. While Gangadhara married and settled down as a householder, looking after his family, a far other destiny opened before his strange younger brother. Somewhat other-worldly and ascetic in his disposition, Narayana, before he had even emerged into bare youth, broke off from home and society.

FOREST LIFE AND ASCETIC EXERCISES.

The crisis, according to the story, occurred when Narayana was twelve years old.

and his marriage, arranged by his loving mother, was about to be celebrated. All of a sudden, when the marriage-pipes began to sound, on the recitation of the mantra beginning with "*savadhana*," Narayana flew out of the marriage-hall and disappeared from the sight of his kin.. The intrepid and ascetic youth betook himself to the hills and the wood & valleys near Nasik where the Godavari takes its rise and there exercised himself in mystic and contemplative practices. Roaming among these woods and hills rich with the memories and traditions of the divine Rama and his consort, Narayana imbibed his love of Rama and his notions of a kind and merciful God. The mythology of Rama has always embodied the ideas of a kind-hearted and merciful Divinity and His worship associated with that ardent Devotion and Loving Faith which are denominated the cult of *bhakthi*. There is, no doubt, then that here in these historic retreats, Ramdas imbibed his love of Rama and his notions of a Religion of Love

and Faith. Legend tells us that God Rama Himself vouchsafed him His sight in these classic valleys, initiated him into His Love and gave the ascetic and devoted youth the name by which he is now known to the world.

RETURN TO THE WORLD AND SOCIETY.

As Ramdas's love and devotion to Rama grew, as his religious outlook was broadened, he gave up his seclusion in the forest and began to frequent villages and cities and teach men the faith and the love that filled his own breast. By thus forsaking his seclusion and asceticism, and by coming forth into society, teaching and companionship men and women, he indubitably demonstrated the influence of the new ideals that were shaping this epoch. For a soul immured in seclusion and austere meditation was not the dream of this age; but prayers and loving faith and service and fellowship with men were the ideals of the new epoch into which India was passing.

Before, however, he settled down to a life of preaching and service, Ramdas went on

long journeys to the various sacred places of India. This *thirthatana* was a well-known item in the mediæval scheme of culture and spiritual education. Chaitanya, Nanak and many another mediæval mystic, went on similar wanderings and pilgrimages before they settled down to work as preachers and religious men. Among the places Ramdas is said to have visited are Benares, Ajodhya, and Mathura in the north; Jagannath in the east and Rameshwar and Ceylon in the south. He returned to Maharashtra after 12 years.

• HIS RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL IDEALS.

His wanderings and pilgrimages seemed to have not only deepened his religious experience and increased his love of the ancient Faith but also to have filled him with new national and social ideals. For when he returned to Maharashtra to labour and preach among his countrymen, we find his activities two-sided, religious as well as socio-political. During the course of his wanderings, Ramdas seems to have been struck with the degraded condition of the Hindu society and religion.

Political feuds and oppression prevailed everywhere. The Mahomedan had erected his rule all over the land. The ancient Hindu faith, treated with contempt by the foreigner, exercised little or no influence, evoked neither cheer nor hope in the hearts of its vast adherents. In his own province though there had been great saints and great and powerful soldiers and nobles, the masses remained ignorant and disunited and voiceless. The loyalty and strength of the nobles were in the service of foreign rulers. To spread the religion among the masses and vivify their life, to unite them and the nobles together into one great nation—this was the task that was to be performed. Ramdas, returning to his Maharashtra, launched himself on a career of religious and social work intended to draw the people together in religious fellowship and political unity. Into this mighty and self-imposed task, the great saint threw all his energy and wisdom and insight with whole-hearted enthusiasm. The ways and methods he adopted attest his great wisdom and supreme practical genius.

Ramdas's two great objects, as he afterwards put them in a famous epistle addressed to Sivaji's son, Sambhaji, were "to unite all who were Marathas together and to propagate the religion (dharma) of Maharashtra." The "religion of Maharashtra" was the new Vaishnavite faith that had already been made current by the apostles and poets of the land. Ramdas resolved to make strong, to spread and nationalise that religion. His second object embraced the work of national consolidation and political liberation that was already agitating the minds of the nobles, the jaghirdhars and even the peasants and hillmen of the country. The clear conception and enunciation of this two-fold aim—to spread the Vaishnavite religion and educate the people in its ideals of *Bhakti* and Brotherhood, to unite the people together in bonds of fellowship and love and inspire them with ideals of national independence and national glory—attests the remarkable insight and wisdom of this Prophet-Saint of Maharashtra. Within a few years of his return to Maharashtra,

he covered the whole country with a network of *Mutts* and *Ashrams* presided over by well-trained disciples, which served as schools of religious culture and national and political training for the sons of the land.

RAMDAS'S MUTTS AND ASHRAMS.

The *Mutts* and the *Ashrams* were established in almost every village and town of Maharashtra. They were in the nature of societies and clubs of a politico-religious character. A temple of Hanuman, which could be found in almost every village of Maharashtra or where there was none, a new one was erected, served as the meeting-place and the young men of the village formed the members. These societies and *ashrams* had for their aims the religious and spiritual culture of the members by celebrations of religious festivities, recitals of Purans, Harikirtans and Bhajan Melas (forms of congregational worship and prayer) the development of physical strength and skill in arts of war by means of wrestling, gymnastics, riding, fencing, shooting and other

similar exercises, social service and succour and mass instruction. There were no hard and fast rules governing the admission of members, or defining the scope of work or the extent of duties. There was no special creed to be signed nor any preliminary declaration or oath to be made. They were open to all, young and old, timid and courageous, moderates and extremists alike. No peculiar qualification nor any warrant of character was required. The societies had for their basic principles *Bhava* and *Bhakthi*—Faith and Love—Love for God and Faith in His dispensation, love for the Motherland and faith in her glory, love for our brethren and faith in them, love for Self and faith in Self—this was all that was necessary. At the head of each of these societies was placed one of Ramdas's disciples who remained the head of the society, a worshipper of God and keeper of the temple. From there, he guided, advised, encouraged and brought together the youth of the village; held and organised

religious services and discourses ; himself all the while communicating with and acting under the instructions of the guru. Before the disciple was so deputed, he had to undergo severe training at the hands of Ramdas and prove his worthiness to undertake the important charge of the society and the temple.

RAMDAS'S DISCIPLES.

Ramdas gathered and trained a large number of disciples of all castes, as earnest and religious and self-sacrificing as himself. Notices of some of these disciples occur in his biography written by Mahipathi. The earliest was Uddhav of Takili where Ramdas addressed his first discourse after his return from the forest. Another noted disciple was Ambaji of Shahpur whom Ramdas re-named Kalyan. He remained near the person of Ramdas all his life and wrote down the poems and sayings of Ramdas as they were sung or uttered extempore. Among these disciples was also a barber by name Dattu. This Dattu is remarkable, for ignorant, uncultured and low-born as he was, Ramdas took him in hand and traine.

him to love of God and service of men. Many of the disciples were, as has been said before, placed in charge of the several mutts and ashrams which Ramdas was establishing all over the land. But before they were so placed in charge, they were taught the Vaishnavite faith and doctrines—it was on their behalf that Ramdas wrote his great work on Religious Philosophy and Practice, the *Dasbodh*—and made to undergo severe spiritual training by means of study, prayer and service. The disciples were enjoined to lead a life of purity and devotion. Poverty was to be their rule of life. Taking what others freely gave, they were never to solicit alms larger than what sufficed them and their followers. They were to hold religious discourses and congregational meetings. They were severely enjoined never to sell the name of Rama.

Nothing attests the supreme wisdom and sympathy of Ramdas than the welcome he extended to women into his order. Since the days when Dnyandev and Namdev proclaimed the

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new faith, the cult of Bhakthi had attracted pious women. The story of Jani, "the Lord's pet"—a winsome child of song and true devotion—is well-known. Some time after came Ganopathra, the courtesan's daughter of Mangalwedha, whose "conversion" ranks as the highest achievement of Maratha Vaishnavism. Many more, whose names have not been perhaps recorded, should have taken up the new faith and spent their lives in adoration and service under the protection and fellowship of the saints. Among the disciples of Ramdas the names of two women are handed down to us who seemed to have played a worthy part in his life and work. The one was Aka Bai, daughter of a village official of Shahpur. She was a pious and well-read lady. During one of Ramdas's visits to her village she was attracted by his teachings and followed him. She ever after remained in the company of Ramdas, taking part in his *kathas* and *bhajans*, often reading and expounding his works, serving God and the guru with loyalty through her life. The other was Venu Bai, a

widow of Kolhapur. Ramdas having once gone to Kolhapur to preach at the invitation of one of its inhabitants, she came, and sought his feet. Her frequent attendance at Ramdas's kathas and discourses drew down the people's scandal on her and her parents attempted to poison her. She at last abjured everything, home and kin, and joined Ramdas at the village of Chafal. These women-disciples of Ramdas, so pious and self-sacrificing, so entirely dedicating themselves to a life of worship and service to others, are indeed memorable.

RAMDAS AND SIVAJI.

Not many years had passed since Ramdas returned from his pilgrimages and wanderings and set about organising the *mutts* and *ashrams*. The air was full of the doings and fame of a young and new-risen soldier, Sivaji, the intrepid and heroic son of the Jaghirdhar of Poona. Putting himself at the head of the peasants of his native hills, the young warrior had already captured and fortified a number of forts in the neighbourhood, Torna taken in 1646

being the most important. He had also made overtures to the several nobles and Jaghirdhars of the country whose arms and virtues were in the service of Mussulman kings to unite together and secure protection and toleration for their land. These acts alarmed the neighbouring Mussulman power and Sivaji was about to be drawn into a conflict with them. There was nothing to inspire Sivaji but his own innate patriotism and ideal and the courage and loyalty of the peasants and hill-men of his native jaghir. At this time—in the middle of the year 1649, that the youth of twenty-two met the saint Ramdas in one of his hunting expeditions on the banks of the Krishna river.

Sivaji, though warlike and adventurous by birth, was yet full of strange religious and national impulses. We are told that in his childhood he loved to hear the Mahabharat and the Ramayana, stories of ancient glory and nobility, and that in latter days he often went long distances to hear *kathas* and *bhajans* by holy men. Mahipathi tells us that Sivaji in

one of his warlike expeditions met Ramdas on the way and stayed with his whole army for a time to serve Ramdas and listen to his discourses. The Chitnis' *Bhakhar* mentions a number of the great teachers and saints whose counsel and fellowship were sought by Sivaji and his fellow-workers, chief among them being Morydev of Chinchwad, Ranganath Swami of Nigadi, Vithalrao of Bedar, Vaman Joshi of Shingad, Nimbaji Bawa of Dahitane, Jayaram Swami of Wadgaon, Keshava Swami of Hyderabad, Paramanand Bawa of Poladpur, Achalpuri of Sangameswar and Mani Bawa of Padgaon. The most celebrated, however, of these spiritual teachers were Tukaram Bawa of Dehu and Ramdas Swami of Chafal, the latter of whom eventually became the spiritual preceptor and even the chief guide in secular affairs, of Sivaji.

Perhaps, there is no more remarkable episode in modern Indian history than the meeting of these two men, the saint and the soldier, and the life-long fellowship that ensued between them. Ramdas, saint and preacher of

religion as he was, was yet burning with a great patriotism and deep national and social ideals. Dreams of a consolidated faith and national independence were in his mind. The institutions he was now establishing all over the land were doing their work among the masses. The acquisition of Sivaji, the rising soldier and patriot, was the final step in the work of religious and political consolidation already begun. Sivaji, under Ramdas's guidance and association, became the Captain of the National forces and the Defender of the Faith.

The chronicles are full of the deep love, reverence and enthusiasm with which Sivaji ever sought the counsel and company of Ramdas. They disclose eager and frequent visits to the saint, journeys with him on various pilgrimages and constant attendance at his devout vigils and discourses. Ramdas taught him the sacred *mantra* and initiated him into the Vaishnava religion, and the soldier-disciple often exercised himself in contemplation and devout exercises. Mahipathi tells us that, at

the time of the consecration of Sujjangad, Ramdas set his royal disciple to discourse on religion, and all the people assembled rejoiced saying that Sivaji had become a worthy and noble Vaishnava. The episode is remarkable, for, in the best days of India, secular work was never thought to unfit a man for religious life and service. The influence of Ramdas on Sivaji comprised, however, more than the initiation of the latter into the new religion. During all the thirty years that the influence lasted, Ramdas guided him, advised him, taught him, filled him with solace or inspiration; while there is nothing to countenance the idea that the saint had any share in the purely secular or warlike acts of Sivaji, we have no doubt that the hero's patriotism and national ideals were greatly kindled and fortified at the hands of the saint. A few remarkable poems of Ramdas addressed to Sivaji are preserved to us in his *Dasabodh*, which show the high faith and ideal and the noble mission which the saint was constantly teaching and inspiring Sivaji to fulfil.

RAMDAS'S POEMS TO SIVAJI.

A few years after his meeting Sivaji, Ramdas thus addressed him and pointed to him the greatness of his mission—

“Immoveable at heart, the protector of many, resolute to lead a holy life, rich and meditative, generous-hearted—who can vie with such an one ?

Bold and liberal and earnest-minded, alert and brave, you have put all kings' to shame, O Prince.

The shrines are desolate; the Brahman's houses are polluted; the earth is quaking; Faith is dead.

Gods and cows, Brahman and the Faith, these are to be protected: therefore God hath raised you up.

— In all the earth, there is not another who can save the Faith; a Remnant of the Faith you have saved.

Through you, religion survives; many look to you, blessed in your fame, world-renowned.

The wicked are rooted out ; they tremble ;
 Many come to you for shelter, O Shiva, Prince
 of auspicious name."

Ranade tells us that "it is recorded that on three memorable occasions, Sivaji was determined to give up all his possessions and retire from worldly life to seek salvation, and on all these occasions, it was with great difficulty that his teachers and ministers prevailed on him to entertain more correct notions of his duty in life." On one such occasion, Ramdas addressed a remarkable poem to him wherein the saint reminds Sivaji of the great dharma that was his—the task of national unity and political emancipation—and bade him think on the high duty of a soldier.

"A Prince should gauge the capabilities of men ; he should employ fit servants, putting aside the unfit.

Treachery should be blotted out ; seek out
 Truth where she lies hid.

Lucky is he who wins people's heart ; time-servers should be kept at a distance.

Luckless is he who grows weary of action : cowardly is he who fails at the supreme moment.

Sheep run from a tiger. What do we care for a buffalo, though he be far larger ?

Kings should fulfil their kingly office : Warriors, the duties of a soldier ; Brahmans should perform their religious functions ; each

He who is afraid should shun the soldier's work and fill his belly by other kinds of work.

A warrior should die fighting and go to heaven : or striving valiantly, return to reap the meed of Victory.

When the faith is dead, death is better than life ; why live, when religion has perished ?

Gather the Marathas together, make religion live again : our fathers laugh at us from Heaven !

If you are proud of your lineage, march out to the fight; shun it and bitter will be your repentance.

Forgive me, O prince, but a man of one caste cannot fulfil the duties of another.

The enemies of God are as dogs; root them out. Victory is with the servants of God, doubt it not.

Discrimination, prudence, action, these be thy virtues; Rama killed Ravana by the aid of the Lord of Tulja.

Tulja Bhavani conferred her blessing on Rama: to her Ramdas prays."

The following poem was addressed by Ramdas to Sivaji on the eve of the latter's victory over Afzal Khan in 1659 A.D. First pointing to Sivaji the duties of princes and the dangers that surround them, the saint concludes with a noble invocation of the blessings of good thought and deed on the prince and his people.

"They deck their bodies with jewels and fine

raiment but far better is a soul arrayed in wisdom.

A prince has many folk under him: he should, therefore, be prudent, for upon him rest the hopes of many.

The accursed barbarian has waxed mighty: be continually on your guard against him: God does all; wondrous happy is he whom He favours.

Justice and Thought; Wisdom in all things: Courage at the crisis and noble Deed: these be the gifts of God.

Fame and Glory: unequalled Virtue: these be the gifts of God.

Gods and Brahmans: Thought and Deed: the People's Love and a Charitable Heart: these be the gifts of God.

Thoughts for this World and the Next: Prudence and Tolerance: these be the gifts of God.

Thought for the ways of God: Veneration for Brahmans: Protection for the People: these be the gifts of God.

Incarnations of God on earth: Protectors of the Faith: these be the gifts of God.

An eye for Merit ; Shrewdness of Mind : Love of the faith and Holy Life : these be the gifts of God.

The noblest of virtues is Reason ; by Reason only we cross safely the sea of life."

Before we leave this portion of the sketch, we may refer to one or two noteworthy incidents recorded by history which testify to the wisdom and deep national spirit of Ramdas. At the suggestion of Ramdas, the National Standard of the Marathas received its orange colour (*Bhagva Zenda*) which was and is the colour of the clothes worn by anchorites and devotees, as a token of the fact that the work of liberation was carried on, not for personal aggrandisement, but for higher purposes of service to God and man. The old form of salutation (*Johar*) was dispensed with as implying submission to foreigners and a new form " Rama-Rama " was substituted which recited the name of Ramdas's favourite deity. Under the same influence, the names of Sivaji's principal officers were changed from their Mahomedan

designations to their Sanskrit equivalents and the forms of correspondence also similarly improved. Sivaji once from a sense of gratitude to his spiritual teacher made a gift of his kingdom to him and Ramdas gave it back to him as a trust to be managed in the public interest. Once again, when Sivaji pressed him to accept some Inam lands for the service of his favourite deity, Ramdas significantly requested him to assign Inams in territories which were still under foreign sway, thus emphatically hinting that the work of liberation was not yet completed.

• RAMDAS'S DAILY LIFE. •

As in the lives of the other great mystics and saints of this age, there was nothing remarkable or noteworthy in the daily life of Ramdas. It was a life of ascetic simplicity spent for the most part in wanderings, in religious expositions, in devout vigils and in the service and teaching of others. In the morning after the usual *puja*, he or his disciples went soliciting alms through the village or town where they happened to stay. The

grain collected was ground, made into cakes and eaten by guru and disciples. Even in latter years when the great Sivaji and his peers joined him, and offered him lands and mutts to stay in, he rejected them all and kept on to his wandering and houseless life. It was not till he had become more than sixty years old that he consented to stay in the new mutt, the Sujjangad, which the gratitude of his royal disciple had erected for him.

BUILDING OF SUJJANGAD.

By the year 1672, Sivaji had established his sway over the whole of Maharashtra. He had devised a most efficient and broad-based form of government which was to last for more than a century. In 1674, he was fittingly crowned King of Maharashtra. It was long, however, the desire of Sivaji that his *guru* should make his residence near him and guide him in the administration and affairs of the Kingdom. Therefore, soon after his coronation, he had a large mutt built at Parli near Satara and endowed it with lands. A day was fixed and all the saints and holy men of the land

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were invited to witness the consecration of the Mutt. Mahipathi tells us that many were the holy men that responded to the king's invitation. The celebrations were long and memorable. Consecrated images of Rama and Hanuman, the favourite deities of Ramdas, were set up. Ramdas made it his headquarters and it was named Sijjangad.

SIVAJI'S DEATH.

Before a few years passed, Ramdas's crowned disciple *urda* who had long shaped, inspired and guided Sivaji's career and whose affection for him was great, was much grieved at his death. It is said that the noble saint ever after refused to stir out of his room (*mathi*) in the mutt. Greater grief, however, was in store for the dying saint. Shortly after the loss of his disciple came the invasion of Aurangazib which for a time threatened the work of the king and saint alike with destruction. As Ramdas lay in his room in Sijjangad and heard the tramping of the invading host, his heart was greatly perturbed. Calling Sivaji's son to

his side, he long taught and exhorted him. A remarkable epistle which he sent to Sambhaji has survived to us which sums up the two great ideals which Ramdas and his great disciple had tried all their lives to achieve.

LAST DAYS.

The grief-stricken saint did not survive his miseries long. In the next year, 1682, finding that his death was near, he sent for the numerous disciples of his, who were working in the various parts of the country. They all gathered; nominating one of them, Gangadhara by name, to the *gaddi*, Ramdas turned towards the assembled disciples, and, in dying accents, reminded them of their vows of poverty and self-sacrifice, exhorted them to preach and spread the cult of *Bhakthi* and carry on the work of religious and social regeneration they had begun. A remarkable episode is told of how Ramdas next commissioned his disciples to burn him (ascetic though he was) and not to bury him, fearing lest his *samadhi* should usurp the worship that ought to be directed to

God. He breathed his last on the 9th day of the second fortnight of Magh, Shaka 1608 (Feb. 1682). The disciples unwillingly gave the body to the fire. The funeral rites were celebrated under the order and auspices of the king. For many days, people, high and low, flocked to Sujjangad to pay their condolence to the departed saint. The mutt long resounded with chantings of God's name and prayer and worship.

RAMDAS'S CHARACTER.

Ramdas, as might be seen in the fore-going sketch, was a strange blend of the old and new ideals. Ascetic to the core, full of the old-world simplicity and restraint, he also had the deep humanity, the overflowing love, and the emotional spiritualism of the new epoch. Unlike the other great saints of his own or other lands, he contented himself not with mere religious work, but added to it social and political activity. In thus combining religious and national ideals, Ramdas stands unique in the history of Indian religious reformers and saints. His great and fervid patriotism, his

love of country and religion, his genius for organisation and work were virtues which were not to be met with even in the purely secular heroes of this epoch.

As a saint, Ramdas was notable for his great kindness, charity and liberal-mindedness. He took under his shelter disciples of all castes and degrees—low-born, ordinary men, even unlettered and ignorant ones; and with a genius and kindness of a typical guru of men, trained them to love of God and service of fellow-men. Ramdas's great genius and practical capacity earned him the name of 'Samartha' or 'the Able' among his contemporaries. At once saint and reformer, poet and statesman, prophet and organiser, Ramdas is one of the most remarkable characters that have appeared in mediæval or modern India.

RAMDAS'S RELIGION AND WORKS.

The two chief compositions of Ramdas are his great work on Religious Philosophy and Practice entitled the *Dasbodh* and a poem called *Manacheshlok* containing admonition to the mind. The *Dasbodh* is divided

into twenty chapters called *dashakas*, each *dashaka* being again sub-divided into ten *samāsas* or cantoes. The book deals with various themes such as Devotion, *Jnan*, the nature of the Atman and the Brahm, the Bhakthi, the methods of Worship, the Principles of the duties of disciples, the Dharma of the religious preacher, the art and attainments of the religious preacher. The work throughout bears the impress of Ramdas's great genius and vast Sanskrit learning. Ramdas's creed is ostensibly Vedantic; there are traces of Advaitic thought as propounded by Sankara. But more often his thoughts lean to Vaishnavism, the religion of the day. In those supreme poems of his, dealing with the various forms of Bhakthi, the Saguna Brahm, the praise of the Divine Rama, he embodies the doctrines of that Vaishnava faith which was the *religion* of Northern India in this epoch.

The following is an extract from a long *samasa* dealing with the worship of *Saguna Brahm*. (Dashaka VI, Samasa 7.)

“ You fall prostrate before the great of the world : You servilely adore them : but to God you bow not : What is this ?

Rama is the chief of our family : Rama is the great End : He is the Lord of lords, the Liberator of the Gods.

We are His servants : by serving Him knowledge dawns :

He destroys the evil ones : He is the support of the virtuous : this truth is for ever.

Man's thoughts are fulfilled ; obstacles disappear : When Rama favours, realisation dawns.

Worship of Rama gives Knowledge ; it makes man's greatness grow : .

Dedicating yourself to Rama, you should do your acts : then dawns knowledge : within the mind should grow the thought ‘ Rama is the doer.’

‘ Rama is the Doer, not I ’—this is the worship of the Manifest.

If you believe *you* act, you come to grief.

In order to give us true devotion, God has become embodied : out of Mercy : we should realise God is the doer.

If God were not to manifest Himself, then who can know Him? Not even the best of us can realise Him."

The Vedantic doctrine of the 'One Spirit in all created things' is the theme of another *samasa* couched in the form of a discourse between disciple and guru. (Dashaka X, Samasa 1.)

"If the spirit of all beings is one, Why should ~~beings~~ keep aloof from another?"

One is happy, another is ~~unhappy~~ such is the world: if so, how to find the Oneness of spirit?

If there is One Soul in all, why not one's thoughts be known to another? Why are there secret thefts and practices?

The serpent moves to catch its prey: the poor creature flies in fear; if *they are one*, how can there be enmity?

Listen: Soul is knowledge, knowledge is the faculty of knowing.

Properly understood, there is but one soul in all: for same is the faculty and nature of all.

All beings have the same faculty of sight : have the same sense of taste : have the same powers of hearing, touch and smell. •

Animals, birds, insects, ants and other forms of life, all are one in their power of consciousness.

To all beings, water is cold : to all, fire is hot : because of One pervading spirit, it is same to all.

The soul of all beings is One : this truth is the soul of Truth : the marvel of this Truth is known everywhere.”

Among the various poems of Ramdas dealing with the virtues of man, the following entitled the ‘Description of the *Uttama Purusha*’ is noteworthy (Dashaka XII, Sam. 10.)

“It is unholy to throw away the remnants of food which we do not require : they must be given to those who need it.

Our action must agree with our words : the sorrows of the afflicted must be removed ; we should feel sorry at the sorrow of others and rejoice in their happiness.

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By sweet and sincere words can the hearts of others be won : let sins be nobly forgiven : let strangers be considered as our kin.

By labouring to the utmost can glory be obtained : pursuit after glory makes us lose happiness : it is knowledge that gives contentment.

~~More~~
 vomit of a dog : wise men never heed it : people follow him whose devotion is steadfast and who practises every virtue.

Such a great-souled man should gather people together and labouring jointly, earn God's grace.

If unexpectedly such a saint dies who will continue to sing the praises of God ? Many disciples must, therefore, be prepared and trained in the path of Religion." . . .

The following poem is in praise of the Begging Life (Dash. XIV Sam. 2.) . . .

" He who lives by alms should be called an ascetic : for by begging he is freed from the sin of greed.

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By taking what people, good and bad, give of their abundance, the ascetic may be said to live on nectar.

Datta, Goraksh and other saints solicited alms: for desirelessness springs out of begging. Beg ever in new places: wander over various lands; then alone begging is true: praiseworthy verily.

To him who lives a-begging always, no country is foreign: wherever he goes, it is his land: all the three worlds are his country.

Be not obstinate in begging: entertain no sense of shame: yield not to fatigue on account of wandering.

Begging is a cow of plenty: her gifts are never ordinary: he who looks with contempt on begging is a false ascetic.

Begging makes the whole world kin with thee: Begging takes away pain; Begging is respected of all.

Begging means freedom from fear: greatness comes of it: also liberation and God-at-one-ment: such are the virtues of Begging.

The Divine creeper of Begging grows everywhere and yields at all times : to him who is devoid of shame.

There are many lands in this world : the beggar never dies of starvation : he is a burden to none.

Greater than the life of the Brahman, the warrior, the trader and the husbandman is the life of the beggar.

There is no *vairagya* equivalent to begging : than *vairagya* is no greater bliss : without *vairagya* one is without bliss.

Regard as alms whatever you receive : be content with little : though they proffer you much, take but a handful.

Begging alms is happiness : it is the mark of desirelessness : it makes for sweet speech and peace.

Thus I have discoursed according to my knowledge : Begging saves us in times of adversity."

We may quote at the end a very interesting poem by Ramdas on the art of Poetry. (Dash. XIV, Sam. 3).

“The fragrance of meaning emanating from the garland of poetry should enchant the hearts of the bees. Let the heart weave such a garland and place it at the feet of Rama.

In making such a garland, the thread of *alankar* (rhetoric) should be carefully preserved.

That is good poetry which brings repentance to the mind, makes popular customs hang down their heads and gives true knowledge.

True poetry should spread knowledge, check man's desires, and guide him to the path of Devotion. The true poetical talent must help to improve the intellect, humble down heterodoxy and awaken new thoughts.”

K A B I R.

FEW chapters in the history of Indian Religion have been so little studied as the one dealing with the great and wide-spread Reformation, at once religious and social, that was inaugurated in mediæval India in the 15th and 16th centuries. The movement bears a striking resemblance to the similar movement of reform that set in in Europe during the same period. A number of intrepid and high-minded reformers arose—four being chief among them—who condemned in strong and fearless terms the idolatry and superstitious practices of the people. In their place a new religion of Love and Devout Worship was established. Social and caste-distinctions were also strongly condemned by these reformers which, as a result, were greatly relaxed in some places, and in others, entirely abolished. The North Indian Vernaculars too received a great impetus from this movement and some of the greatest and most renowned works in those languages were the outcome of this Reformation.

KABIR.

The origin and doctrines of this Reformation are to be found, to a great extent, in the new Vaishnavite movement that had been started in South India by the two great Acharyas, Ramanuja and Madhwacharya. From the 8th century onwards, a distinct school of Vaishnavite worship was slowly growing in Southern India. The older Vaishnavism that had, under the Guptas, spread all over India, had here in the South fallen on good soil ; and an indigenous school arose with a literature partly in the vernacular and partly in Sanskrit. The movement was silently growing and developing new lines of thought when on the top of the wave came Ramanuja himself with his doctrine of Love and Brotherhood and Vishishtadwaita Philosophy. A century and a half later, came Madhwacharya who, though his doctrines differed to some extent from those of Ramanuja, propounded similar concepts of God and inculcated the same religion of Love and Devout worship. These doctrines, fraught with a new faith and hope and significant of a new happiness and peace, should have had a warm and ready access to the heart of mediæval Hindusthan, oppressed, as it was, by political and social anarchy and sunk in the depths of religious decay.

From very ancient times, a close literary and spiritual intercourse has existed between Southern and Northern India. Monks and scholars have long carried and spread the thought and philosophy of one land to another. The new Vaishnavite doctrines, that were at this time vigorously preached in South India by Ramanuja and his followers and by Madhwacharya, were thus carried to the North by the monks and teachers of their respective orders. Notices of a number of these South Indian missionaries are to be found in the traditions and stories of Northern India. The chief of them was a Ramanujite monk of the 14th century whose name and memory is still invoked with great reverence and gratitude by many a North Indian sect. It was from him, Ramanand by name, that the founders of the two great sects of Modern Hinduism, Kabir and Nanak, derived their doctrines and their spiritual inspiration. Another, by name Madhavendra Puri, a monk of the Madhwacharya order, carried the new religion and learning to Bengal and one of his disciples imparted the new religion to Chaitanya who was soon to become the founder of a great school of Vaishnavism in Bengal and Orissa. The new religion spread to Rajasthan and Guzerat

where a great Vaishnavite Church was founded by a South Indian monk which still holds its sway over millions of their people. Maharashtra too, where the banner of the new movement was early raised by a remarkable Brahmin youth, should have received many of its doctrines and ideas from the South, though we do not meet with any recorded notices of South Indian monks and teachers in the Marathi literature relating to this movement. The advent of these South Indian monks resulted in a general awakening and the spread of Vaishnavite doctrines throughout Northern India. The four great Reformers—Chaitanya (Bengal), Dnyandev (Maharashtra), Kabir (Central India) and Nanak (the Punjab)—though there were great individual differences between them—adopted and preached broadcast the new Vaishnavite doctrines and helped to bring about a great Reformation in religion and social ideals.

In the reformers of Central and Northern India—Kabir and Nanak—we find a new element working in addition to the Vaishnavite ideas of the South. In spite of the aloofness and hatred which characterised early Mahomedan rule, Mahomedan thought and literature were slowly

making themselves felt on the mind of the people of Hindusthan. The poetry of *Hafiz* and *Sufi*, of *Jalaludin Rumi* and *Faruddin Attar*, was eagerly read by the cultured among the Hindus. Celebrated Sufis, too, like the *Mullah Shah* of *Lahore*, were going about preaching their doctrines, taking disciples and initiating them into their mystic rites. Mahomedan Sufism bore a remarkable resemblance to the Vaishnavism that was now spreading in Northern India. With its doctrine of the identity of God and soul, with its mystic and contemplative exercises, with its strange disregard of ceremonial rules and practices, it could not but have affected to a great degree the rising Vaishnavism of Central and Northern India. But, in spite of its Mahomedan influences, the religion of *Kabir* and *Nanak* still remains a most characteristic survival of Mediæval Vaishnavism.

Among the four great mediæval reformer (the biography of one of whom—*Chaitanya*—has already been published in this series), *Kabir*, the subject of this sketch, is a remarkable character in many ways. His great courage and spirit of protestantism, his supreme love and kindness to all, his fearless yet humble advocacy of pure and

ennobling doctrines, above all, his profound mystic poems and utterances, make him a most eminent figure in this mediæval movement. •

KABIR'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

The date of Kabir's birth is a subject of great uncertainty, the most probable one (supported by an authentic verse) being 1440 A. D. Many a legend is told as to his birth and parentage on none of which reliance can be placed. He was found, says a legend, lying as a child in the lake called Lahar Talao near Benares, on a blossoming water lily; Niru, a childless Mahomedan weaver, saw it, took it home and adopted it as his child. A Kazi was in due time called to give the child a name; the Koran was opened and a lot was cast. The word *Kabir* which means "great" in the Arabic language was the first that presented itself and the name was accordingly given to the child. All legends considered, Kabir seems to have been of Hindu parentage, though adopted and brought up as a Mahomedan. •

We know very little of Kabir's early training, of the way in which his spiritual genius was kindled. That he was for a long time without a guru or teacher can be said with certainty. He, however, seems to have been of a reflective and •

intrepid disposition. He often surprised his parents and neighbours by his queer acts of love and charity and even occasional sallies of free-thought. But in spite of his mystic moods and utterances he followed his trade, and, at the same time, received and served holy men and mendicants.

RAMANAND, THE SOUTH INDIAN MONK.

Kabir for a long time remained without a teacher. This was the time when the fame of the South Indian preacher and monk Ramanand was at its height in Benares. We have already referred to him; but it would be proper for us to give here a fuller account of this Vaishnavite teacher, as it was, by sitting at his feet and by joining in his discourses and teaching, that Kabir learnt his characteristic doctrines and religion. Ramanand was born at Melkote (Malabar Coast, South India) where Ramanuja had once taken refuge and established his Vaishnavite faith. More than two centuries have passed and his Vaishnavism should have, therefore, been in full swing at the time of Ramanand's birth in that place. Ramanand was instructed in the new creed by one Ragavanand, a Vaishnava scholar. Ramanand served the guru for

some time and then went on a pilgrimage to the sacred places of Northern India. In the course of his wanderings, he visited Benares, and there lived at the ghat called *Panchganga* where his sandals were preserved at the time of the Vaishnava chronicler, Nabhaji.

During his travels, Ramanand seems to have freely mingled with teachers of other creeds and formed new ideas on religion and social observances. When he returned home, his co-religionists and those who had previously lived with him interrogated him as to his observance of caste-rules since his departure from them. It was found that his theological belief had altered in some respects and that he had relaxed the severe caste-rules of the orthodox order. His brethren of the order expelled him; but his guru appears to have felt some sympathy with him, for he authorised him to found a sect of his own which he accordingly did.

Ramanand went to Benares and there began to gather disciples with whom he often held discourses on religious topics. The philosophical and theological tenets of the new faith, he preached, corresponded to a great extent to those of Ramanuja, but he added to them

a new gospel of freedom, of religious and social equality. He laid down as a rule that all persons of any caste who accepted the tenets and principles of his sect, might eat and drink together irrespective of birth. All men who serve God are equal. He thus threw his spiritual door wide open, admitted disciples of all castes, and boldly announced that *jan* or knowledge of God emancipated men from all bondage. He called his disciples the Liberated (*Avadhuta*), as he allowed them, and they accepted, a liberal interpretation of Hindu social rules sanctioned by religion. At the same time, it may be noted, Ramanand vehemently opposed atheists and those who boasted that they existed independently of God. The following hymn of Ramanand occurring in the *Adi Granth* reveals his characteristic mysticism and simplicity :—

Whither shall I go ? I am happy at home,

My heart will not go with me ; it hath become a
cripple.

One day I did have an inclination to go ;

I ground sandal, took distilled aloe wood and many
perfumes,

And was proceeding to worship God in a temple,

When my guru showed me God in my heart.

Wherever I go, I find only water or stones,
 But Thou O God! art equally contained in every-
 thing.
 The Vedas and the Puranas all have I seen and
 searched.
 Go thou thither, if God be not here.

O True Guru, I am a sacrifice unto Thee,
 Who hast cut away all my perplexities and doubts
 Ramanand's Lord is the All-Pervading God.
 The Guru's word cutteth away millions of sins,
 (Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

KABIR'S MEETING WITH RAMANAND.

Kabir seems to have long desired to sit at the feet of Ramanand but, being a Mahomedan, doubted whether he would be admitted to discipleship. At last, he hit upon a very characteristic step which is narrated with great detail in his biographies. One day rising early morning, he went and hid himself on the river steps of the Ganges ghat down which Ramanand used to go to his bath in the river. As Ramanand came, he unknowingly trod on Kabir's head and exclaimed in his astonishment 'Ram' 'Ram'. Kabir, at once rising up, fell at his feet and said "Thou hast given me the word of initiation and I am become thy disciple." Ramanand, struck with the sincerity of Kabir, accepted him. Kabir ever after

seems to have remained the disciple of Ramnanā joining him in the theological and philosophical disputes which he carried on with the learned of the day.

During the course of this life in the company of Ramanand occurred an interesting incident which throws a curious light on the peculiarly mystic bent and deep spiritual earnestness of Kabir's mind. A renowned Brahmin disputant, by name Sarvajit, arrived at Benares. The pundits of Benares informed Ramanand of his arrival and told him that no one could cope in argument with the new-come pundit. Ramanand, however, set Kabir to argue with him. The pundit, on seeing him, inquired his caste whereupon Kabir answered that he was a weaver. The haughty pundit turned up his nose and asked what a weaver was. Kabir replied.—

No one knoweth the secret of the Weaver,

God hath woven the warp of the whole World,

If thou listen to the Vedas and the Puranas,

Thou shalt hear, 'I have stretched the warp so

[long ;

I have made the Earth and Firmament my workshop

I have set the Sun and the Moon in alternate motion,

Working my legs I did one work'—with such a

Weaver my heart is pleased.

The weaver hath looked into his own heart and
there recognised God.

Saith Kabir, 'I have broken up my workshop,'
And the weaver hath blended his thread with the
thread of God.

Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

KABIR'S LIFE.

Though some traditions try to conceal it, the fact is well proved that Kabir was a married man and the father of a family. As Evelyn Underhill puts it :—

It is clear that he never adopted the life of the professional ascetic or retired from the world in order to devote himself to bodily mortifications and the exclusive pursuit of the contemplative life. Side by side with his interior life of adoration, its artistic expression in music and words—for he was a skilled musician as well as a poet—he lived the sane and diligent life of the Oriental craftsman. All the legends agree on this point that Kabir was a weaver, a simple and unlettered man, who earned his living at the loom. Like Paul the tent-maker, Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan the tinker, Tersteegen the ribbon-maker, he knew how to combine vision and industry; the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart. Hating mere bodily austerities, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family—a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to conceal or explain—and it was from out of the heart

of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love. Here his works corroborate the traditional story of his life. Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation; pouring contempt upon the professional sanctity of the yogi 'who has a great beard and matted locks, and looks like a goat, and on all who think it necessary to flee a world pervaded by love, joy and beauty—the proper theatre of man's quest—in order to find that One Reality 'who has spread His form of love throughout all the world.'

KABIR AS A PREACHER.

His discipleship over, Kabir set himself to preach the doctrines he had learnt to whoso would listen to him. He soon became the centre of a large number of disciples who began to gather round him at the loom or in the market-place to listen to his songs and discourses. But, preaching as he did in the city of Benares, the very pre of orthodox Hinduism, his strange mystic doctrines, his denunciation of theological beliefs and ceremonial rites, brought down the opposition of the learned and the orthodox on him,

O servant, where dost thou seek Me ?

Lo! I am beside Thee,

I am neither in temple nor in mosque:

I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash:

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies,

Nor in yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me :
thou shalt meet me in a moment of time.

Kabir says : O Sadhu ! God is the breath of all
breath.

There is nothing but water at the holy bathing
places ; and I know that they are useless, for I have
bathed in them.

The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak ; I
know, for I have cried aloud to them.

The Purana and the Koran are mere words ; lifting up
the curtain, I have seen.

Kabir gives utterance to the words of experience ;
and he knows very well that all other things are
untrue.

(Rabindranath Tagore's *A Hundred Poems of Kabir*).

Long not for a dwelling in Heaven and fear not to dwell
in Hell ;

What will be, will be ; O my soul, hope not at all.

Sing the praises of God from whom the supreme reward
is obtained.

What is devotion, what penance and austerities, what
fastings and ablutions,

Unless thou know the way to love and serve God.

Be not glad at the sight of prosperity and grieve not at
the sight of adversity ;

As is prosperity, so is adversity ; What God proposeth
shall be accomplished.

Saith Kabir "Through the saints, I now know in my heart,

That the worshipper, *in whose heart God dwelleth performeth the best worship.*"

If God dwell only in the mosque, to whom belongeth the rest of the country ?

They who are called Hindus say that God dwelleth in an idol ; I see not truth in either sect.

O God, whether Allah or Ram, I live by Thy name,

O Lord, show kindness unto me.

Hari dwelleth in the south, Allah hath hfs place in the west.

Search in Thy heart, search in the heart of hearts ; *there is His place and abode.*

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

PERSECUTION.

The opposition of the orthodox soon manifested itself in hatred and ill-will. Of the many legends of the persecution that befell Kabir, a few are characteristic and deserve notice. A young and beautiful courtesan was sent to tempt Kabir; "but like the Magdalen of Biblical story, she was converted by her sudden encounter with the initiate of a higher Love." Another time, Kabir was hauled up before the Mahomedan Emperor Sikandar Lodi on a complaint of leading the people

astray with false doctrines. Kabir went and stood before the Emperor and the courtiers told him to make obeisance to the monarch. Kabir replied that he was not accustomed to courts and did not know how to make prostrations; nor, he added, had he any business with the emperor; he but knew the name of God who was the Support of his soul and the Only Sovereign of the world. The Emperor seems to have been at first provoked to anger; but, being a man of culture and knowing that Sufis of his sect were always allowed a little freedom, at last let him go in peace.

HIS EXILE AND DEATH.

• Though his life was spared, in the interests of peace, he was banished from the city of Benares. “Thenceforth, he appears to have moved about amongst various cities of Northern India, the centre of a group of disciples, continuing in exile that life of apostle and poet of love, to which, as he declares in one of his songs, he was destined ‘from the beginning of time.’ In 1518, an old man, broken in health, and with hands so feeble that he could no longer make the music which he loved, he died at Maghar near Gorakhpur.” An old verse thus speaks of his death—“Kabir went

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to Maghar in the Samvat year 1575 (1518 A. D). On the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Maghar, *his spirit blended with the spirit of the world.*" All India knows the beautiful legend of Kabir's death, how both Hindus and Mahomedans fought for his corpse which the one wanted to burn and the other to bury, how at last Kabir himself appeared before them in person and asked them to lift the shroud and look beneath. In the place of the corpse, to their great astonishment they found a heap of flowers half of which was buried by the Mahomedans at Gorakpur and half taken by the Hindus to Benares and burnt—"fitting conclusion," says the author already quoted, "to a life which had made fragrant the doctrines of two great creeds." The following poem composed by Kabir on the death of a saint-friend of his might well have been uttered at his own death:—

Not a drop now trickleth from the citadel of thy
brain—where is the music that filled it ?

The great saint hath departed with the name of the
Supreme Brahm, the Supreme God.

O Father, whither hath departed the soul which
dwelt with thy body ?

Which revelle din divine knowledge, expounded an
preached ?

Whither hath the player gone who played the drum of thy body ?

Thy tales, thy words, thy divine instruction are no longer heard ; all thy vital energy hath been drawn away ; the ten breaths which kept thee together have escaped. Thou art dead ; thou hast left thy friends and relatives ;

Sayeth Kabir : He who meditateth on God bursteth his bonds even when alive !

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

PAINTINGS OF KABIR.

The visitor to Kabir's mutt at Benares is shown what purports to be his picture. Dharm Das, his chief disciple, and Shrutagopal are represented kneeling at his feet in an attitude of supplication while his son, Kamal, is seen fanning him. The visitor may also see a picture of Kabir and Ravi Das, a friend and fellow-disciple and townsman of his. Ravi Das appears in the picture as a very attenuated old man, naked except for a red cloth round his middle, wearing a rosary in two folds round his neck and beads on wrist and arms. His royal disciple, Jhal, queen of Chitoor, is also seen richly dressed offering him food on a platter.

KABIR'S RELIGION AND POETRY.

The main doctrines of Kabir's creed were, as might have been seen already, based on the current

Vaishnavite philosophy and religion. In his hands, however, those doctrines were purged of all theological obscurity and reasoning and propounded with a beauty and mystic poetry unrivalled in that mediæval epoch. We have in the previous sketches dealt in detail with the several doctrines of the mediæval Vaishnavite reformers and our aim in this sketch, therefore, will be to give a few poems of Kabir and refer them to those various concepts and doctrines.

Speaking of Kabir's concept of God, Evelyn Underhill says :—

These (Kabir and other mystics) have resolved the perpetual opposition between the personal and impersonal, the transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic aspects of the Divine Nature; between the Absolute of philosophy and the "sure, true Friend" of devotional religion. They have done this, not by taking these apparently incompatible aspects one after the other; but by ascending to a height of spiritual intuition at which they are, as Ruysbroeck said, "melted and merged in the Unity," and perceived as the completing opposites of a Perfect Whole. . . . God is here felt to be not the final abstraction, but the one actuality. He inspires, supports, indeed inhabits, both the durational, conditional, finite world of Becoming and the unconditioned, non-successional, infinite world of Being; yet utterly transcends them both. He is the

Omnipresent Reality, the "All-Pervading" within whom "the worlds are being told like beads". In His personal aspect, He is the "beloved Fakir" teaching and companioning each soul. Considered as Immanent Spirit, He is "the mind within the mind."

The need felt by Kabir for both these ways of describing Reality is a proof of the richness and balance of his spiritual experience; which neither cosmic nor anthropomorphic symbols, taken alone, could express. More absolute than the Absolute, more personal than the human mind, Brahma therefore exceeds whilst He includes all the concepts of philosophy, all the passionate intuitions of the heart. He is the great Affirmation, the fount of energy, the source of life and love, the unique satisfaction of desire. His creative word is the *Om* or "Everlasting yea." The negative philosophy, which strips from the Divine Nature all its attributes and—defining Him only by that which He is not—reduces Him to an "Emptiness" is abhorrent to this most vital of poets. Brahma, he says, "may never be found in abstractions." He is the One love who pervades the world, discerned in His fulness only by the eyes of love; and those who know Him thus share, though they may never tell, the joyous and ineffable secret of the Universe.

The following poems, rhapsodical and sublime, contain Kabir's vision of Godhead:—

The light of the sun, the moon, and the stars shine bright;

The melody of love swells forth, and the rhythm of love's detachment beats the time.

Day and night the chorus of music fills the heavens ; and Kabir says, " My Beloved One gleams like the lightning flash in the sky ?

Do you know how the moments perform their adoration ?

Waving its row of lamps, the Universe sings in worship day and night.

There are the hidden banner and the secret canopy.

There the sound of the unseen bells is heard.

Kabir says : There adoration never ceases ; there the Lord of the Universe sitteth on His Throne.

The whole world does its works and commits its errors ; but few are the lovers who know the Beloved.

The devout seeker is he who mingles in his heart the double currents of love and detachment, like the mingling of the streams of Ganges and Jumna ;

In his heart the sacred water flows day and night ; and thus the round of births and deaths is brought to an end.

Behold what wonderful rest is in the Supreme Spirit ! and he enjoys it who makes himself meet for it.

Held by the cords of love, the swing of the Ocean of Joy sways to and fro ; and a mighty sound breaks forth in song.

See what a lotus blooms there without water ; and Kabir says : " My heart's bee drinks its nectar."

What a wonderful lotus it is, that blooms at the heart of the spinning wheel of the Universe ! Only a few pure souls know of its pure delight.

Music is all around, and there the heart partakes of the joy of the Infinite Sea.

Kabir says : "Dive thou into that Ocean of sweetness : thus let all errors of life and of death flee away."

Behold how the thirst of the five senses is quenched there ! and the three forms of misery are no more !

Kabir says : "It is the sport of the Unattainable One ; look within and behold how the moonbeams of that Hidden One shine in you."

They have sung of Him as infinite and unattainable ; but I in my meditations have seen Him without sight.

What a frenzy of ecstasy there is in every hour ! and the worshipper is pressing out and drinking the essence of the hours : he lives in the life of Brahma.

I speak truth, for I have accepted truth in life ; I am now attached to truth, I have swept all tinsel away.

The inward and the outward are become as one sky, the Infinite and the Finite are united : I am drunken with the sight of this All !

This light of Thine fulfils the Universe : the Lamp of Love that burns on the salver of knowledge.

Kabir says : "There error cannot enter, and the conflict of life and death is felt no more."

Open your eyes of love, and see Him who pervades this world ! consider it well, and know that this is your own country.

When you meet the true Guru, He will awaken your heart ;

He will tell you the secret of love and detachment, and then you will know indeed that He transcends this universe.

He is the Ultimate Rest unbounded :

He has spread His form of love throughout all the world.

From that Ray which is Truth, streams of new forms are perpetually springing : and He pervades those forms.

All the gardens and groves and bowers are abounding with blossom ; and the air breaks forth into ripples of joy.

There the swan plays a wonderful game.

There the unstruck music eddies around the Infinite One ;

There in the midst the Throne of the unheld shining, whereon the Great Being sits—.

Millions of suns are shamed by the radiance of a single hair of His body.

On the harp of the road what true melodies are being sounded ! and its notes pierce the heart :

There the Eternal Fountain is playing its endless life-streams of birth and death.

They call Him Emptiness who is the Truth of Truths in whom all truths are stored !

(Rabindranath Tagore's *A Hundred Poems of Kabir*)

God constructed an inaccessible fortress for His residence
 Which He illumined with His light.
 The lightning playeth and pleasure reigneth
 Where the Youthful Lord God reposeseth. •
 If the soul love God's name,
 Man shall be released from old age and death and his
 doubts shall flee away.

The sound of the unbeaten music is heard
 Where the Lord God reposeseth,
 He who fashioned continents and different countries,
 The three worlds, the three gods and the three qualities,
 Though styled Inaccessible and Invisible, dwelleth within
 the heart.
 None can find the limit or the secret of the Sustainer of
 the Earth ;
 • He shineth in the plaintain blossom and in the sunshine,
 And hath taken His dwelling in the pollen of the lotus.
 God's *spell* is within the twelve *petals of the heart*
 Where the Holy Lord God reposeseth

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.) •

The conception of God as the One Great Love is the characteristic and most important feature of the mediæval religion. Kabir, born poet as he was, realised and gave expression to this faith more vividly than any other mediæval mystic. As the English critic already quoted says :—

For the mere intellectualist as for the mere pietist, he (Kabir) has little approbation. Love is throughout His

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"absolute sole Lord:" the unique source of the more abundant life which he enjoys and the common factor which unites the finite and infinite worlds. All is soaked in love, that love which he described in almost Johanne language as the "Form of God." The whole of creation is the play of the Eternal Lover; the living, changing, growing expression of Brahma's love and joy. As these twin passions preside over the generation of human life, so "beyond the mists of pleasure and pain." Kabir finds them governing the creative acts of God. His manifestation is love; His activity is joy. Creation springs from one glad act of affirmation: the Everlasting Yea, perpetually uttered within the depths of the Divine Nature. In accordance with this concept of the universe as a Love-Game which eternally goes forward, a progressive manifestation of Brahma—one of the many notions which he adopted from the common stock of Hindu religious ideas, and illuminated by his poetic genius—movement, rhythm, perpetual change forms an integral part of Kabir's vision of Reality.

All things are created by the Om :
 The love-form is His body.
 He is without form, without quality, without decay :
 • Seek thou union with Him !
 But that formless God takes a thousand forms in
 the eyes of his creatures :
 He is pure and indestructible. .
 His form is infinite and fathomless.
 He dances in rapture and waves of form arise from
 His dance.

The body and the mind cannot contain themselves
when they are touched by His great joy.

He is immersed in all consciousness, all joys, and all
sorrows ;

He has no beginning and no end ;

He holds all within His bliss.

Hark to the unstruck bells and drums !

Take your delight in love !

Rains pour down without water, and the rivers are
streams of light.

One Love it is that pervades the whole world, few
there are who know it fully :

They are blind who hope to see it by the light of
reason, that reason which is the cause of separation—

The House of Reason is very far away !

How blessed is Kabir, that amidst this great Joy he
sings within his own vessel.

It is the music of the meeting of soul with soul.

It is the music of the forgetting of sorrows,

It is the music that transcends all coming in and
all going forth.

Dance my heart ! dance to-day with joy.

The strains of love fill the days and the nights with
music and the world is listening to its melodies.

Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm
of this music. The hills and the sea and the earth
dance. The world of man dances in laughter and tears.

Why put on the robe of the monk, and live aloof from
the world in lonely pride ?

Behold ! my heart dances in the delight of a hundred acts ; and the Creator is well pleased.
 (Rabindranath Tagore's *A Hundred Poems of Kabir*.)

God abideth in the heaven above, in the Earth beneath
 and in every direction.
 The supreme Being is ever the Root of joy ; the body
 may perish but God shall not.

The Earth bloometh, the firmament rejoiceth ;
 Every heart is gladdened by God's sight,
 The Lord God rejoiceth in endless ways ;
 Whithersoever I look, there is He contained.
 The four Vedas rejoice in worldliness :
 So do the Smritis with the books of the Mussulmans.
 Shiva practising *yog* rejoiceth.
 Kabir's Lord bloometh equally in all things.

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

A cardinal doctrine of the mediæval Vaishnavas
 was the dualistic relation of God and soul.

For the thorough-going Monist the soul
 as it is real, is substantially identical with God ; and the
 true object of existence is the making patent of this
 latent identity, the realisation which finds expression in
 the Vedantist formula 'That art thou.' But Kabir
 says that Brahma and the creature are "ever distinct
 yet ever united;" that the wise man knows the spiritual
 as well as the material world to "be no more than His
 footstool." The soul's union with him is a love union,
 a mutual inhabitation ; that essentially dualistic relation
 which all mystical religion expresses ; not a self-

mergence which leaves no place for personality. This eternal distinction, the mysterious union-in-separateness of God and the soul, is a necessary doctrine of all sane mysticism; for no scheme which fails to find a place for it can represent more than a fragment of that soul's intercourse with the spiritual world. Its affirmation was one of the distinguishing features of the Vaishnavite reformation preached by Ramanuja, the principle of which had descended through Ramananda to Kabir.

The following poem expresses the doctrine:—

When He Himself reveals Himself, Brahma brings into manifestation that which can never be seen.

As the seed is in the plant, as the shade is in the tree,
as the void is in the sky, as infinite forms are in the void,

• So from beyond the Infinite, the Infinite comes; and
from the Infinite the Finite extends.

The creature is in Brahma and Brahma is in the creature. They are ever distinct, yet ever united.

He himself is the tree, the seed and the germ.

He Himself is the flower, the fruit and the shade.

He Himself is the sun, the light and the lighted.

He Himself is Brahm, Creature and Maya.

He Himself is the manifold form, the infinite space;

He is the breath, the word and the meaning.

He Himself is the limit and the limitless: and beyond both the limited and the limitless is He, the Pure Being.

He is the Immanent Mind in Brahma and the creature.

The Supreme Soul is seen within the soul,
 The point is seen within the Supreme Soul,
 And within the Point, the reflection is seen again.
 Kabir is blest because he has this supreme vision !

(Rabindranath Tagore's *A Hundred Poems of Kabir*.)

The path of attaining God who is all Love and Joy lies not through ceremonies or rites or worship. A God who is all love can be worshipped only in love. Kabir says in a remarkable poem:—

O sadhu! the simple union is the best.

Since the day when I met my Lord, there has been no end to the sport of our love.

I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears, I do not mortify my body ;

I see with eyes open and smile, and behold His beauty everywhere,

I utter His Name, and whatever I see reminds me of Him; whatever I do, it becomes His worship. The rising and the setting are one to me; all contradictions are solved. Wherever I go, I move round Him, all I achieve is His service:

When I lie down, I lie prostrate at His feet,

He is the only Adorable one to me; I have none other.

My tongue has left off impure words, it sings His glory day and night :

Whether I rise or sit down, I can never forget Him for the rhythm of His music beats in my ears.

Kabir says : "My heart is frenzied, and I disclose in my soul what is hidden. I am immersed in that One great Bliss which transcends all pleasure and pain."

This "simple union," this worship in love, and in faith, is the theme of many an impassioned and beautiful poem of Kabir. In varied metaphors drawn from Indian life and poetry—the migrant swan, the lotus, the bridegroom and the bride—he describes the yearning and love for God. The tenderness and poetry and the rich imagery of these poems are unmatched in Indian literature :—

To Thee, Thou hast drawn my love, O Fakir !

I was sleeping in my own chamber and Thou didst awaken me, striking me with Thy voice, O Fakir;

I was drowning in the deeps of the ocean of this world, and Thou didst save me : upholding me with Thine arm, O Fakir !

Only one word and no second and Thou hast made me tear off all my bonds, O Fakir says, "Thou hast united Thy heart to my heart, O Fakir" !

"Dear friend, I am eager to meet my Beloved ! my youth has flowered, and the pain of separation from . . . troubles my breast. •

I am wandering yet in the alleys of knowledge without purpose, but I have received His news in these alleys of knowledge. •

I have a letter from my Beloved : in this letter is an unutterable message, and now my fear of death is done away.

Kabir says: 'O my loving friend! I have got for my gift the Deathless One.'

This day is dear to me above all other days, for to-day the Beloved Lord is a guest in my house ;

My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with His presence.

My longings sing His Name, and they are become lost in His great beauty : I wash His feet, and I look upon His Face and I lay before Him as an offering my body, my mind and all that I have.

What a day of gladness is that day in which my Beloved, who is my treasure, comes to my house! All evils fly from my heart when I see my Lord.

'My love has touched Him ; my heart is longing for the Name which is Truth'.

Thus sings Kabir, the servant of all servants.

I hear the melody of His flute, and I cannot contain myself.

The flower blooms, though it is not spring ; and already the bee has received its invitation.

The sky roars and the lightning flash ; the waves arise in my heart,

The rain falls ; and my heart longs for my Lord.

Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls thither my heart has reached :

There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air.

Kabir says : my heart is dying though it lives.

I played day and night with my comrades, and now I am greatly afraid.

So high is my Lord's palace, my heart trembles to
mount its stairs : yet I must not be shy, if I would enjoy
His love.

My heart must cleave to my Lover : I must withdraw
my veil, and meet him with all my body.

Mine eyes must perform the ceremony of the lamps of
love.

Kabir says : " Listen to me, friend : he understands
who loves. If you feel not love's longing for your
Beloved One, it is vain to adorn your body, vain to put
unguent on your eyelids."

The shadows of evening fall thick and deep, and the
darkness of love envelops the body and the mind.

Open the window to the west, and be lost in the sky
of love ;

• Drink the sweet honey that steepes the petals of the
lotus of the heart.

Receive the waves in your body : what splendour is
in the region of the sea !

Hark ! the sounds of conches and bells are rising.

Kabir says : " O Brother, behold ! the Lord is in this
vessel of my body."

(Rabindranath Tagore's *A Hundred Poems of Kabir*.)

I turned my body into a dyer's vat and then dyed my
heart therein : } the five virtues I made my marriage
guests ;

With God, I made my marriage circumambulations, my
soul being dyed with his love.

Sing, sing, O ye brideswomen, the marriage song :

The Sovereign God hath come to my house as my Husband.

I made the bridal pavilion in the lotus of my heart, and divine knowledge the recitation of my lineage.

I obtained God as my Bridegroom; so great hath been my good fortune.

DemiGods, men, saints and the thirty-three crores of Gods in their chariots came as spectators.

Saith Kabir "The one God, the Divine Male, hath wed and taken me with Him."

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

Some more poems, embodying the intense love and mysticism of Kabir may be quoted here:—

How could the love between Thee and me sever ?

As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water : so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.

As the night-bird chakor gazes all night at the moon, so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.

From the beginning until the ending of time, there is love between Thee and me ; and how shall such love be extinguished ?

Kabir says: 'As the river enters into the ocean, so my heart touches Thee.'

More than all else do I cherish at heart that love which makes me to live a lifeless life in this world.

It is like the lotus, which lives in the water and blooms in the water yet the water cannot touch its petals, these open beyond its reach.

It is like a wife who enters the fire at the bidding of love. She burns and lets others grieve, yet never dishonours love.

(Rabindranath Tagore's *A Hundred Poems of Kabir*.)

Though I have assumed many shapes, this is my last.
The strings and wires of the musical instrument are all worn out; I am now in the power of God's name;
I shall not have again *to dance to the tune of birth and death*;

Nor shall my heart accompany on the drum;
I have taken and destroyed my bodily lust and anger;
Lust's raiment hath grown old, and all my doubts are dispelled.

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

Saith Kabir: 'When God was gracious unto me, I obtained Him the Perfect one.'

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

My weaving is now in the Infinite Silence.

I have now no quarrel with any one;

I have given up both the Pundits and the Mullahs.

I weave clothes and wear them myself;

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

What the Pandits and Mullahs prescribed for me,

I have received no advantage from and have abandoned.

My heart being pure, I have seen the Lord;

Kabir having searched and searched himself, hath found God within him.

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*.)

KABIR'S WORKS.

The works of Kabir, from which the poems quoted above have been extracted and translated by various writers, are of a numerous and varied character. They are mostly however collections of songs composed in the various metres of old Hindi. An exhaustive list of Kabir's works, as contained in the collection known as *Khas Grantha or the Book*, preserved at Kabir's *chaura* in Benares, is given by Wilson in his 'Religion of the Hindus' (Vol. I. p. 76). The chief and celebrated works are the *Bijak*, the *Sukhnidhan* and a number of collections called *Sabdās*, *Sakhis*, *Rekhtas*, *Mangal*, *Vasant*, *Holi* etc; "there are also a variety of stanzas, called *Agams* etc., composing a very formidable course of study to those who wish to go deep into the doctrines of this school and one in which the greatest proficients amongst the Kabirpanthis are but imperfectly versed. A few *Sakhis*, *rekhtas*, with the greater portion of the *Bijak*, constitute their acquirements."

The author or compiler of *Bijak* was Bhagodas, one of Kabir's immediate disciples; it is the great authority on all the religious matters and doctrine among the Kabirpanthis in general. "It is written in very harmonious verse and with great

ingenuity of illustration ; its style however is more dogmatical than argumentative and it rather inveighs against other systems than explains its own." *Sukhnidhan* is more venerated as it is taught only to those pupils whose studies are considered to approach perfection. Wilson considers *Sukhnidhan* as being exceedingly clear and intelligible. In these reputed works and collections of Kabir, there appear to be numerous stanzas and poems which perhaps were not written or composed by Kabir. Recently one or two critical editions of Kabir's works have appeared.

KABIRPANTHIS.

Though Kabir never aimed at founding a sect, but, like all true mystics and reformers, only tried to instil into men true faith and knowledge of God, his followers soon formed themselves into a sect. In spite of their smallness in numbers and their sectarian character, these Kabirpanthis still preserve vestiges of their original founder and his teaching ; and the following account given by Wilson in his " Religion of the Hindus " of the religion and present condition of the Kabirpanthis may be read with interest :—

Though the *Kabir Panthis* have withdrawn, in such a very essential point as worship, from the Hindu com-

• munion, they still preserve abundant vestiges of their primitive source ; and their notions are in substance the same as those of the Puranic sects, especially of the Vaishnava division. They admit of but one God, the creator of the world, and in opposition to the Vedanta notions of the absence of every quality and form, they assert that He has a body formed of the five elements of matter and that he has mind endowed with the three *gunas* or qualities of being ; of course, of ineffable purity and irresistible power : He is free from the defects of human nature : in all other respects, He does not differ from man and the *pure mân*, the *sadh* of the Kabir sect, is His living resemblance and after death is His associate and equal ; He is eternal, without end or beginning. . . God and man are not only the same but that . . . both in the same manner ever . . . es and moves and has its be . . . adopted these . . .

• . . . followers of Kabir do not mean . . . to deny the individuality of being and only intend these texts as assertions of all nature originally participating in common elementary principles.

• It is no part of their faith to worship any Hindu deity or to observe any of the rites or ceremonials of the Hindus, whether orthodox or schismatical ; such of their members as are living in the world conform outwardly to all the usages of their tribe and caste and some of them even pretend to worship the usual divinities. Those, however, who have abandoned the fetters of society abstain from all the ordinary practices and address their homage chiefly in chanting hymns exclusively to the invisible Kabir : they use no *mantra* nor fixed form of

salutation : they have no peculiar mode of dress. . . . the frontal marks, if worn, are usually those of the Vaishnava sects or they make a streak with sandal or gopichandan along the ridge of the nose, a necklace and rosary of *tulsi* are also worn by them.

The moral code of *Kabirpanthis* is short ; but, if observed faithfully, is of a rather favourable tendency. Life is the gift of God and must not, therefore, be violated by His creatures ; Humanity is consequently a cardinal virtue and the shedding of blood whether of man or animal, a heinous crime. Truth is the other great principle of their code Retirement from the world is desirable The last great point is the usual sum and substance of every sect amongst the Hindus—implicit devotion in word, act and thought to the *Guru*: in this, however, the characteristic spirit of the *Kabirpanthis* appears, and the pupil is enjoined to scrutinize the teacher's doctrines and acts, to be first satisfied that he is the sage that he pretends to be, before he resigns himself to his control. This sect is, indeed, remarkably liberal in this respect, and the most frequently recurring texts of Kabir are those which enforce an attentive examination of the doctrine that he offers to his disciples. The chief of each community has absolute authority over his dependents ; the only punishments he can award, however, are moral, not physical.

There is no doubt that the *Kabirpanthis*, both clerical and lay, are very numerous in all the Provinces of Upper and Central India except, perhaps, in Bengal : the quaker-like spirit of the sect, their abhorrence of all

violence, their regard for truth, and the unobtrusiveness of their opinions, render them very inoffensive members of the State—their mendicants also never solicit alms and in this capacity even they are less obnoxious than the many religious vagrants who in the rank soil of Hindu superstition and the enervating operation of an Indian climate so plentifully engender.

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TULASI DĀS

INTRODUCTION

 F the several Vaishnavite schools that arose in North India in the middle ages, the eldest and one founded on orthodox traditions was that established by Nimbarka (13th century A. D.) Perhaps a monk from the South (Nimbapura, Bellary District), he was a well-read Vaishnava philosopher and mystic and had his headquarters at Muttra. In two works, one a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, and another a small poem entitled *Dasasloki*, he propounded a pure form of the Vishishtadvaitic philosophy and linked it to the worship of the Supreme as incarnate in Krishna-Radha. Some time later, another missionary, also belonging to South India (Melukote, Mysore), came with a liberalised Vaishnavism. There are evidences to show that Ramananda's sect, of all the sects that arose in North India, was the

most intimately associated with the classic Vaishnavism of South India. Contrary to Nimbarka, he wrote and sang in the vernacular and linked his Vaishnavite teaching to the worship of the Supreme as incarnate in Rama-Sita. He had his head-quarters at Benares. All the various sects that arose in Mediæval India in later days—the Kabirpanthis, the Sikhs, the Dadupanthis, etc. on the one hand—the Ramawats, the Vallabhacharis, the Radhavallabhis, the Charandasis on the other—the one class fully protestant and the other, reformed and Vaishnavite—can be traced to the teaching and labour of these two early apostles of Vaishnavism.

As a result of the teaching of these reformers, the two centuries—the 16th and 17th—were a period of great religious activity and reform in North India. A number of sects arose, and also a number of gifted mystics and saints both within and outside those sects, of whom full accounts are preserved in Nabhaji's *Bhakthamal*, latter on amplified by Priya Das. As we study those lives, we feel

we are in a new world of mysticism, of religious love and fervour. Religion, it was proclaimed, was the property of all from the highest to the lowest, and as a result men of all conditions and castes from the Dom and the Chamar to the Brahman and the Kshatriya gathered together under the shadow of the new gospel. The faith too which the philosopher and mystic were now teaching was that of a Personal and Living God endued with every gracious attribute and accessible to seeking souls. While some harked back in their love and adoration to the older divinities of the land—to Rama-Sita and Krishna-Radha—others took refuge in the *Sabda*, “the Unutterable Word.”

Both these phases of the reformed religion—one clustering round the old divinities, and the other protestant—are fully represented and embodied in the poetry of the age. Hindi, with its two dialects, the Eastern and the Western, is full of the literature of this movement. If the poems of Kabir form the high water-mark of the more rational and

protestant faith, the *Ramayana* of Tulasi Das is the greatest expression of the more orthodox Vaishnavism. The *Ramayana* is not however void of a power of appeal even to the protestant sects. Even as Dante summed up the thought and faith of Mediæval Catholicism in his great epic, so also Tulasi Das has summed up all the longing and philosophy of Mediæval Vaishnavite India. Out of all that spiritual rapture and yearning of Mediæval India, represented by various sects, Vaishnavite and protestant, the *Ramayana* of Tulasi Das rises as some great piece of divine music. To all the various sects—to the believers in Rama, in Krishna, to the believers in the *Sabda*, even to the believers in the sword,—the *Ramayana* remains the embodiment of their faith, the Gospel of the Supreme and Transcendent Being that can be approached by all in love and simple faith.

TULASI DAS'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Tulasi Das was a Sarayuparina Brahman by birth. Some say that he belonged to the

Kanyakubja division of the Brahman caste, but, as the Brahmans of the latter class condemn begging, the taking of presents and the like, and as Tulasi Das distinctly says in his *Kabittavali* 'I was born in a family which begged,' it is certain that he belonged to the former division. Tradition adds that he was a Dube of the *Parasara gotra* of that clan. The most-trustworthy accounts state that he was born in *Samvat* 1589 (A. D. 1532). His birth however was unfortunate; it took place under a conjunction of stars (called *Abhuktha Mula*) which was considered to portend death to the parents. Therefore, to avoid danger to themselves, the parents abandoned Tulasi Das who seems to have been picked up by some *Sadhu* and cherished by him. The fact of his abandonment is corroborated by one of his own verses in the *Binaya Patrika* where he says "My father and mother brought me into being and then abandoned me; and God Himself created me without good fortune and forsook me." An orphan, then, with parents, he lived and wandered with the

Sadhu and learnt from him and his associates the story of Rama, as he himself tells us. The name, Tulasi Das, was probably given to him by the sadhu ; for his original name was different. A traditional stanza gives the following as the names of Tulasi Das's parents and others—Father's name—Atmaram Sukla Dube, . mother's name—Hulasi, spiritual preceptor's name—Narahari, father-in-law's name—Dina Bandhu Pathak, Tulasi's wife's name Ratnavali, and son's Tarak. Tulasi Das's own name was Ram Bola. Various places claim the honour of his birth, but, according to Grierson, Tari in the Doab seems to have the best claim.

In his youth Tulasi Das studied at Sukarakshetra (modern Soron). He was married to Ratnavali in his father's life-time, and, after the latter's death, lived contentedly as a householder and begat a son. Tulasi Das seems to have belonged to or joined the Vaishnava order established by Ramananda some generations ago. "It would be incorrect however to call him a strict ad-

herent of the sect." In the *Ramayana* he himself tells us that he has followed many scriptures, and now and then he alludes to the nirvishesha advaita teaching of Sankaracharya, with its maya and nirguna Brahm. A great friend of his was Madhusudhana Sarasvati who was a follower of the doctrine of Sankaracharya.

TULASI DAS'S CONVERSION

If we may believe the story, Tulasi Das was passionately devoted to his wife. After the son had been born, one day, when Tulasi Das came home, he found that his wife, without letting him know, had gone to her father's house. Full of the lover's grief, he followed her there in the night and on meeting her was received by her with the following words: "Have you no love for Rama? My body is but a framework of skin and bone." Immediately on hearing these words, Tulasi became 'converted' and set out again for his own village. His wife who had by no means intended to produce so violent a reac-

tion, followed calling him back, and asking him to stay and eat that she might return with him. But "what could a fan do in the face of a whirlwind?". Tulasi Das from that moment became an ascetic, and, abandoning home and family ties, wandered about a released worshipper of Rama. He made Ajothya, and subsequently Benares, his head-quarters, from which he frequently visited such places as Mathura, Brindaban, Kurukshetra, Prayag and Purushotampuri.

SOME INTERESTING INCIDENTS IN

HIS LIFE

On one of his journeys, Tulasi Das, after visiting Bhrguasraman and other places, went and stayed at Gay Ghat, being attracted by the devotion of its king, Gambhira Deva. He thence went to Brahmapur to visit the Saivite shrine there. From Brahmapur he went to Kant (in Shahabad); there not only did he find no place where he could get any food but was distressed to see the people devoted to the customs and manners of female demons. A cowherd (*abhira* or *ahir*)

of the place however was very kind to him. Mangar Ahir—that was the name of the cowherd—had a cattle yard in the open plain, where he used to offer hospitality to holy men. With great humility he invited Tulasi Das thither and gave him some milk which the poet boiled down into *khoa* and ate. He then asked Mangar to ask for a boon and the latter begged first that he might be endowed with perfect faith in the Lord, and that his family which was short-lived might be a long-lived one. Tulasi Das replied: “If you and your family commit no thefts, (the Ahirs are notorious for their robbery) and avoid causing affliction to any person, your desire will be fulfilled.” It is now claimed that the blessing has been fulfilled. The story is still well-known both in Baliya and Shahabad Districts. In 1889 A. D., says G. A. Grierson, the representative of this Ahir family was an old man by name Bihari Ahir and the family is noted for its ready hospitality and freedom from theft. From Kant, Tulasi Das went to a place called

Bela Pataut where he met a Pundit and a Kshatriya. They two received him with great hospitality. The poet complained that the name of the town Bela Pataut was not a good one and suggested its being changed into Raghunathpur, by which, he said, hundreds of thousands of men would be continually uttering the name of Rama when speaking of it. The town has ever since been known by that name.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE ~~Rivya~~

Patrika

One day a murderer came on a pilgrimage, crying 'For the love of Rama, cast alms to me a murderer.' Tulasi, hearing the beloved name, called him to his house, gave him sacred food which had been consecrated to the gods, declared him purified and sang praises in honour of his deity. The Brahmans of Benares held an assembly and sent for him, asking 'How was the murderer's sin absolved' and 'How had he eaten with him?' Tulasi replied, 'Read ye your scriptures. Their truth hath not yet entered into

your hearts. Your intellects are not yet ripe, and they remove not the darkness from your souls.' They replied that they knew the power of the Name as recorded in the scriptures. 'But this man is a murderer, how can he obtain salvation?' Tulasi asked them to name some proof by which he could convince them, and they at length agreed that if the sacred bull of Shiva would eat from the murderer's hand they would confess themselves wrong. The man was taken to the temple, and the bull at once ate out of his hand. *Thus did Tulasi teach that the repentance of even the greatest sinner is accepted by the Lord.* The miracle had the effect of converting thousands of men, and making them lead holy lives. The result enraged the *Kaliyuga* (personified present age of sin) who came to the poet and threatened him saying, "Thou hast become a stumbling-block in my kingdom of wickedness; I will straightaway devour thee, unless thou promise to stop this increase of piety." Full of terror Tulasi confided all to Hanuman who

consoled him telling him he was leading a blameless life and advising him to become a complainant in the Court of the Lord Himself. "Write a *Binaya Patrika*, a petition of complaint, and I shall get an order passed on it by the Master and will be empowered to punish the Kaliyuga. Without such an order I cannot punish him, for he is the king of the present age." The *Binaya Patrika*, which we shall notice fully in a latter section, is a collection of beautiful and touching hymns addressed to Rama. What is of unique importance here is the story of how he took into his fellowship and love a man guilty of homicide itself, and converted him by his charity and loving-kindness into a true Rama-bhaktha.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE *Ram-Charit--*

Manas

Tulasi Das at first resided in Ajodhya as a Smarta Vaishnava, and here the Lord Rama is said to have appeared to him in a dream and to have commanded him to write a *Ramayana* in the vernacular language used by the

common people. He commenced it in the year 1574 A.D., when he was forty-two years old. When he had got as far as the *Aranya Kand*, differences arose between him and the Vairagi Vaishnavas with whose regulations about food he could not comply, and as a result he left Ajodhya for Benares where he completed the poem. He settled in Benares at Asi-ghat, near the Lolarka-kund. A ghat on the Ganges near this place is still called the Tulasi ghat. Close by is a temple in honour of Hanuman, said to have been built by the poet.

TULASI DAS AND THE PANDITS

It is said that, after Tulasi Das had finished his great poem, one day, when he was bathing at the Manikarnika ghat, a pandit who was proud of his knowledge of Sanskrit came up to him and said: "Reverend Sir, your honour is a learned Sanskrit Pandit. Why, therefore, did your honour compose an Epic poem in the vulgar tongue?" Tulasi Das replied: "My language in the vulgar tongue is imperfect, I admit, but it is better

than the *nayika-varnanas* of you, Sanskrit knowing gentlemen." "How is that?" asked the Pundit. "Because," said Tulasi—

"If thou find a jewelled vessel full of poison and an earthen cup full of ambrosia, which wilt thou refuse and which wilt thou accept? Tell me this after considering the matter."

Ghanashyama Sukla was a great Sanskrit poet, but used to prefer writing poems in the vernacular. They were on religious topics and a pandit reproached him for this, telling him to write in Sanskrit in the future adding that God would be pleased thereby. Ghanashyama replied that he would ask Tulasi Das about it and do what he advised. He then laid the whole matter before the poet who replied—

"Whether it be in the vulgar tongue or whether it be in Sanskrit, all that is necessary is true love for the Lord. When a rough woollen blanket is wanted to protect one in the storm, who takes out a silken vest?"

In thus upholding the dignity of the vernacular tongue, Tulasi Das was responding to a widespread democratic feeling which Vaishnavism had generated in the minds of many another mystic and reformer of mediæval India. Jnanadev wrote his commentary on the Gita in the vernacular and the great mystics and reformers that followed him did the same. In Bengal the early poets Vidyapathi and Chandi Das wrote their mystic idylls in the vernacular and the latter school of Vaishnavism that arose under Chaitanya paid the same reverence to the vernacular and composed its works therein.

DEATH OF TODAR MAL

The famous Todar Mal, Akbar's minister, was one of Tulasi Das's friends and was an ardent devotee of Rama. When he died (1589 A.D.) the poet wrote the following beautiful poem *in memoriam*.

"A master of but four villages, but a mighty monarch of himself, Tulasi! in this age of evil, the light of Todar hath set. Tulasi placed on his head the heavy burden

of love for the Lord, but Todar could not bear the burden of the world on his shoulders and laid it down. Tulasi's heart was like a pure watering-basin in the garden of Todar's virtues. When I think of it mine eyes overflow and become filled with tears of affection. Todar hath gone to the dwelling-place of the Lord, and therefore Tulasi, refraineth his grief, but hard it is for him to live without his pure friend."

We may add that the famous Maharaj Man Singh of Amber (A.D. 1618) and his brother Jagat Singh and other great princes were in the habit of visiting the poet and doing him reverence. A man once asked why such great people came to see him now-a-days. In former days no one came to see him. Tulasi replied :

"Once did I beg and could not get even a cracked cowrie in alms. Who wanted me, then, for any need? But Rama, the cherisher of the poor, made me of great price. I used to beg from door to door for alms, now kings

worship my feet. Saith Tulasi: *Then* it was without Rama, *Now* Rama is my helper."

There is a legend of Tulasi Das having resuscitated a dead person and in consequence of being sent for by the reigning king of Delhi (some say it was Shahjehan, but the poet died in 1623, five years before the former ascended the throne). The king is said to have asked the poet to perform some miracle. The poet refusing, the king ordered him to be put in prison. He was however miraculously rescued in the end by Rama's hosts.

TULASI DAS'S VISIT TO BRINDABAN

The visit is thus described by Priya Das. "After returning to Kasi from Delhi, he went to Brindaban and met Nabhaji and heard his poetry and his whole soul was filled with delight. On visiting the shrine of Madan Gopal, he said 'Of a truth Rama is my special patron, I would fain see him.' Then appeared the God to him in that very form, and he was glad on beholding his incomparable beauty. It was said to him: 'The Krishna avatar is of the greatest

renown ; Rama was *only a partial* incarnation.' On hearing this, he said, 'My soul was full of love for him when I took him *only for the son of Dasaratha* and admired his incomparable beauty ; now *that you tell me of his divinity my love is increased twenty-fold.*'

TULASI DAS'S CHARACTER

Tulasi Das seems to have possessed great tenderness and love for fellow-beings. The story of his conduct towards the murderer who came pronouncing the name of Rama has already been told. Other stories are preserved which show the highly devout and charitable disposition of the poet. "Once," says Priya Das, "some thieves came by night to thieve and plunder Tulasi Das's goods, but beheld a cloud-dark form with bow and arrows in his hand. Whenever they moved, the form approached them with ready shaft ; they were terrified ; and although they went round and round, they could not get rid of this watchman. At day-break, they came and asked Tulasi, 'O Sir, who is this dark-complexioned

lad of yours?' On hearing this question, he remained silent and wept; then, gave away all that he had, knowing that Rama himself had been the watchman. The thieves too were initiated and received instruction and became pure of heart."

TULASI DAS'S LAST DAYS AND DEATH

Tulasi Das returned to Benares and there resumed his life of poetic activity and inward adoration. He lived to a good old age; he was ninety-one when he died (1623 A.D.). His last words are said to be as follow:—

"I have sung the glory of the name of Rama, and now would I be silent. Now place ye the gold and the leaf of *tulasi* into Tulasi's mouth."

TULASI DAS'S POETRY AND WORKS

Mr. G. A. Grierson thus describes Tulasi Das's works * :—"Some score of works are attributed to him, but only twelve, six greater and six less, are certainly his. The most noteworthy are the *Ramayana*, (more properly *Ram-Charit-Manas*), the

* Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1903.

Gitavali, the *Kabittavali* and the *Vinaya Pattrika*. I have selected these four names on account of the various aspects of his poetic works which they illustrate. Commentators say that there are *three* ways of looking at Rama: we may look at the tender side of his character (*Madhurya*), its majestic side (*Aisvarya*), and its complex side (*Misrita*) in which tenderness and majesty are combined. There are *four* ways of singing his praises: as a *magadha* or panegyrist, as a *vandin* or bard, as a *suta* or *pauranika*, i.e., a historical poet and as an *arthin* or suppliant. A work in which the complex view of Rama's character, together with his glory and his power, is celebrated is called a *charita* and is sung by a *suta*. His tenderness should be sung by a *magadha* and his majesty by a *vandin*; while entreaties addressed to him should be sung by an *arthin*.

“The most famous of Tulasi Das's poems is undoubtedly the *Ramayana* or *Ram-Charit-Manas*. Its name shows that it is a *Charita*. The poet writes in the character of a *suta*

and deals with the complex side of his hero's character. To put the fact in line with our English ideas, we may say that it corresponds to an epic poem. In its own country it is supreme over all other literature and exercises an influence which it would be difficult to describe in exaggerated terms. Its style varies with the subject. There is the infinite pathos of the passage describing Rama's farewell to his mother, the rugged language describing the horrors of the battlefield, and, when occasion requires it, a sententious, aphoristic method of dealing with narrative which teems with similes drawn, not from the traditions of schools, but from nature herself. His characters too live and move with all the dignity of a heroic age. They are not colourless phantoms which he clothes with beautiful imagery, but are real beings each with his well-defined personality. His characters are as life-like and distinct as any in Occidental literature. It would be a great mistake to look upon Tulasi Das as merely an

ascetic. He was a man that had lived. He had been a householder (a word of much meaning to an Indian) and had known the pleasures of wedded life, the joy of clasping an infant son to his bosom and the sorrow of losing that son ere he had attained his prime. He appealed, not to scholars, but to his native countrymen as a whole—the people that he knew. He had mixed with them, begged from them, prayed with them, taught them, experienced their pleasures and their yearnings. He had wandered far and wide and had contracted intimate friendships with the greatest men of his time.

“His *Gitavali* is work of a different character. Like the epic, it narrates the career of Rama, but the poetic ‘flavour’ of ‘tenderness’ reigns supreme. It may be called the Gospel of the Infant Rama. The greatest portion devoted to the childhood of Rama is a charming and most poetical account of his and his brothers’ baby lives.

“The *Kabittavali* also deals with the life

of Rama but here we have a work in the heroic style. •The *Vinaya Pattrika* is an altogether different work. Here the poet is a suppliant.'

These four poems are the most important works of the poet dealing with the story of Rama. Conceived in the various forms of poetical composition, conveying, each in accordance with its poetical *rasa*, the sublime mystical longing of the poet and his vision of Godhead, they are a great religious and spiritual asset to the Hindi-speaking peoples of Northern India. The religion of Tulas Das as revealed in these poems will be considered in a latter section, but here, writing of his poetry, we may quote a few passages illustrating his supreme imagination and poetry and intense spiritual vision.

- The first is a hymn addressed to God, full of beautiful poetry and faith :—

“All hail! Lord of the Gods, Giver of peace to men, Protector of all Thy worshippers, Bhagavan, Hail!

Smiter of demons on behalf of Brahman^s
and cows, Husband of sea-born Lakshmi.

Protector of Gods and the earth, wondrous
in Thy working whose secret none may
know ;

Merciful by nature, kind to the poor ; Have
mercy upon me.

All hail ! Imperishable, Dweller in every
heart, All-pervading, True Bliss ;

Without movement of limbs, Thy working
is pure, free from Maya, Thou givest release ;

On whom the passionless ones, much
devoted to Thy service and free from desire,

Meditate night and day and sing praises ;
Hail, Sachchidanand !

Who madest the plan of creation in its
threefold form, no second was with thee ;

O ! Sin-Destroyer, remove our anxiety ;
do not regard our (unworthy) faith or wor-
ship ;

Thou destroyest the world's fear,

Thou bringest pleasure to the heart of saints,
Thou art a shield against a multitude of
foes ;

- And for all the host of gods who put aside all skill in thought, word and deed, Thou art a protector. Have mercy on us! . . . Thou to whom the humble are dear, the Lord Bhagavan.”

The second is a sublime passage in which Valmiki, on being asked by Rama for a dwelling-place in the forest, replies—

“You ask me ‘where can I stay,’ and I am abashed at your asking. ‘Where Thou art not,’ there will I appoint and there will I show you a resting-place.

“Listen, O Rama! I will now tell you an abode where you, with Sita and Lakshmana, may abide.

“They whose ears are like the ocean, and stories of Thee are like rivers flowing into them, yet ever flowing they are never full—in their hearts is a house worthy of Thee.

- “Those who have made their eyes eager for the sight of Thee, like the pined cuckoo longing for a cloud, and who, ignoring the ocean, rivers, streams, and water, find delight only in the raindrops of Thy presence—in their

heart is a restful home, abide there, O Lord of Raghuray with Lakshmana and Sita.

“ All who ask this one fruit, the love of the feet of Rama, dwell in the temple of their heart, both Sita and Ragunandan.

“ Lust, anger, desire, pride, ignorance, covetousness, perversity, passion, enmity, deceit, and illusion—where all of these are not—dwell in their hearts, O Raghuray.

“ Beloved by all and helping all, they who count alike pleasure and pain, praise and abuse, who speak the truth and think the kindly thought; and sleeping or waking, find their refuge in Thee, who never, forsaking Thee, seek another—dwell, O Rama, in their bosom!

“ Who have no desire at any time but their love for Thee is unfailing (or pure), dwell ever in their hearts! let that, O Lord, be Thy special abode! ”

The following is a beautiful description of the ‘ Holy Man ’ from the work called *Vairagya-Sandipani* (The Kindling of Devotion.)

“ Unimpassioned is he, but giving happiness

to all, just and self-restrained, ever singing the praises of the Lord. Ever enlightening the souls of the ignorant, and ever for this purpose wandering from place to place. Such holy men are only here and there. Blessed is the land where many such dwell. Ever devoted to helping others, ever devoted to the supreme goal, in love working out their lives. When he speaketh, it is with discretion and full of his own sweet nature.....

He showeth enmity to no one, to no man showeth he over-friendship. Tulasi, this is the religion of the holy, ever to speak with justice.

Tulasi, by these marks do you know him. One truth, one strength, one hope, one faith. As a *chataka* bird longeth for the rain-cloud, so he longeth for the Lord. He hath no anger nor fault, and is a ship wherein to cross the ocean of existence. He hath abandoned desires and betaken himself to humility and contentment.

The adornment of the night is the Moon, of the day the Sun. The adornment of the

servant of the Lord is Faith and the adornment of that faith is perfect Knowledge, the adornment of that knowledge is Meditation, of meditation, total Self-surrender to the Lord; and the adornment of self-surrender is pure and spotless Peace.

This Peace is altogether pure and spotless and destroyeth all the troubles mankind suffereth. He who can maintain such peace within his heart ever remaineth in an ocean of rapture.

O Tulasi, when Peace hath taken up its abode within thee, from thy heart of hearts there ariseth a loud cry for mercy. There ariseth a loud cry to the Lord for mercy. Lust and its crew are fled even as the darkness fleeth ashamed before the rising sun."

The following two poems, full of a deep spiritual longing and poetry, are taken from the *Vinaya Patrika*.

"Whither can I go? To whom can I tell my sorrows? No other place have I.

"Have I not passed my life a slave at Thy door and Thine only? (1)

“True, often have I turned away from Thee, and grasped the things of this world ;

“But, O Thou ! full of mercy, how can acts like mine be *done* by Thee (that Thou shouldst hide Thy face from me). (2)

“O glory of Raghu’s race, till Thou wilt look upon me, my days will be days of evil, my days will be calamity, my days will be woe, my days will be defilement. (3)

“When I turned my back to Thee, (it was because) I had no eyes of faith to see Thee where Thou art ;

“But Thou art all-seeing (and canst therefore look upon me wherever I be) ;

“Thou alone and no other art like unto Thyself ; Thou who dost relieve the sorrows of the humble ; (4)

“O God, I am not mine own ; to some one must I be the humble slave, while Thou art absolutely uncontrolled and master of Thy will. I am but a sacrifice offered unto Thee ; what petition can the image in a mirror make to the living being who is reflected therein ?

(5)

“ First look upon Thyself and remember Thy mercy and might ; then cast Thy eyes on me ; and claim me as Thy true servant ;

“ For the name of the Lord is a sure protection and he who taketh it is saved, (6)

“ Lord, Thy conduct and Thy ways ever give joy unto my heart ;

“ Tulasi is Thine alone ; and O God of mercy, do unto him as it seemeth good unto Thee.”

(7)

“ O Rama, my Holy One, I offer myself and sacrifice unto Thee. Show Thou grace unto me as Thou art wont.

- The Evil age hath in its wrath cut off every good way, the means of ultimate salvation, and the means of attaining to the lower heaven, yea, every earthly happiness, every goodness, and hath brought into use its own hard and evil way.

Wherever the soul looketh towards good, there ever it causeth new sorrows to increase.

Every pleasure that delighteth fleeth in terror, while all things that delight not stand in front of a man in unmeasured numbers.

• The soul is plunged in spiritual woe; the body is distracted by disease; man's very words are foul and false;

• And yet, O Lord, with Thee doth Tulasi Das hold the close kinship of perfect love."*

THE RELIGION OF TULASI DAS

We have already said that Tulasi Das's poetry embodies the greatest expression of mediæval Vaishnavism. It may be worth while to analyse his poems and see how those concepts which Vaishnavism gave to mediæval India were understood and preached by this greatest of North Indian poets.

"The theology of Tulasi Das" says a recent writer, "resolves itself into a very simple proposition 'Bhagavana is the Supreme and He is incarnate in Rama!' Other gods are allowed their place, but they do not compete with Rama. It is He alone and all others are His servants (?). He is beneficent as well as powerful and has very tender care for men. In Him men may find the complete satisfaction of all their needs. Hence it becomes a

* Indian Antiquary, 1893.

question of the first importance—How are men to know and be linked with Him? To this we have the answer in a single word, *Bhakthi*. It is true that there are other things besides, penance, alms-giving, sacrifice, worship, repetition of the name, etc., but just as the gods stand grouped around Bhagavana for their glory, so these stand in their due position as planets around the central sun." Bhakthi has been defined by a learned translator of a Sanskrit treatise on the same as follows :—"It is an affection fixed upon the Lord. It is not knowledge, for devils may know—not worship, for the formal may worship—nor work, although pure and unselfish work may lead to it—nor is it belief. It finds its fruit in respect for the Adoreable, sorrow for sin and celebration of His service."

"Bhakthi seems to come very near to the living 'faith' of Saint Paul, in that it is the outgoing of the whole being to a Personal and Supreme God, the contemplation of whose 'freedom from all limitation' in Tulasi Das

begets separation from ignorance and sin, just as the contemplation of His 'holiness,' in Saint Paul, brings about repentance concerning sin; and meditation on whose goodness begets gratitude, and a desire for nearness and vision prompts to whole-hearted service."*

The nature of Bhakthi is thus described (in the *Ram-Charit-Manas*) by Rama in his address to the low-born Shabari (*Aranya K. Do. 58, 59*):—

~~"The Raghu Lord said 'Hear my word, O Bhamini! I know only one kind of relation, that is Bhakthi—caste and sect, race, religion, greatness, power, wealth, family, virtue, cleverness—when men are without bhakthi what are they? They are like clouds without water.~~

I will describe to thee the nine kinds of bhakthi; listen attentively and store them in your heart.

The first is—companionship of the holy men.

* From *The Theology of Tulasi Das* by the Rev. J. N. Carpenter.

‘ The second is—Loving to hear my story.

‘ The third is—without pride to serve the Guru’s lotus-feet.

‘ The fourth is—Having rejected hypocrisy to sing my praises.

‘ The fifth is said by the Veda to be—repetition of my mantra, and strong faith.

‘ The sixth is—suppression, goodness, to be given to many good works, and always to love good men.

‘ The seventh is—To recognise the world as filled with me, and to reverence the saints more than myself.

● ‘ The eighth is—To be content with what prosperity you have and never even to dream of another’s fault.

‘ The ninth is—To be upright and free from guile, and having trust in me to give no place in your heart to envy or dejection.

‘ Out of these nine, whoever has only one, be he man or woman, animate or inanimate, he, O Bhamini, is very much beloved of me; all the kinds are strong in thee, that way which Munis reach with difficulty,

that way to-day thou hast clearly found. The fruit of the vision of me is quite unequalled, the soul finds its own true nature."

• In another place we find—

• "The search for the Supreme (Vedanta), the rules of religion (Mimamsa), and the analysis of essence (Samkhya) all declare—they say—that Bhakthi is *knowledge directed to God, coupled with absence of desire.*"

— The supreme Bhakthi-hero of the story is Bharata—~~"So understand this in your heart, put away perversity and love worthily the feet of Bharata. He is Rama-bhaktha, loving the welfare of others, merciful, sharing the pain of others, the jewel of all the faithful, do not fear him, O Indra!"~~

• • Bhakthi is the true source of spiritual knowledge; by love alone one can know the Supreme. "They can know Thee, to whom Thou givest knowledge, and knowing Thee, they become like Thee by Thy mercy, O Sandalwood of the heart of the devout (bhaktha), they know Thee as Raghunandan."

Such love is accessible to all, to the low-born Kol and the Kirata as well as to the Brahman. Meeting the Kiratas in the forest, Rama "who is the word of the Veda, the mantra of the heart of the saint, the Lord, the store of mercy, was listening to the word of the Kiratas as a father listens to the talk of his child. To Rama love alone is dear, let the understanding understand! Rama made all the forest-dwellers happy, he spoke to them a sweet address abounding with love."

Such bhakthi helps a man to bear all troubles and discomforts, and breathes into the soul a profound rest and joy. In a remarkable passage describing the coming of Autumn, Tulasi Das beautifully discovers his innate mysticism and love of Bhakthi, by saying "The water of the rivers flows into the sea and there rests *like a man who has found rest in Hari.*" The fruit of Bhakthi finds a more direct expression in the following passage—"From religion comes rest, from meditation knowledge, and

knowledge gives release, so says the Veda. That, brother, by which I am *quickly pleased*, is my Bhakthi which gives pleasure to the Bhaktha."

● The cardinal feature of mediæval Vaishnavism which, along with the doctrine of Bhakthi, has given it its distinctive character, was its concept of a Loving and Personal God, endued with every gracious attribute, immanent in the world and in the human soul, yet transcending them all. ~~Translated into Indian terms, mediæval Vaishnavism conceived of God as *saguna* rather than *nirguna*. The following quotations show Tulasi Das's adoption of that concept :~~

"Some may honour Brahm, without attributes, the Incomprehensible, whom the Vedas praise:

The Lord Rama, with attributes and form, the King of Kosala, delights me.

With Sita and Lakshmana make my heart Thine abode, hold me as your special servant, O Vishnu ; give me devotion."

(*Lanka K. Ch. 62, 63*).

“ Although Thou art passionless, all-pervading, eternal and always dwellest in the hearts of all, yet dwell in my heart in this attitude— a wanderer in the woods with Sita and Lakshmana.

They who know Thee as *Saguna* and *Nirguna*, let them know : but O Lotus-eyed, the Lord of Kosala, dwell as Rama in my heart.

They laud Thee as Brahm, unborn, without a second, beyond comprehension, beyond the mind ;

Let them thus know and call you Lord ; we will always sing to Thee in the power of Thine attributes.”

(*Uttar K. Ch. 12*)

“ There is no difference between *saguna* and *nirguna* ; so say the Vedas and Puranas and wise and holy men.

“ He who is without qualities, without form, without sign, without birth, for the sake of His love to the faithful, has become *saguna*.

“ How could He who is without attributes

become 'with attributes'?—It is just as water and hailstone are not different.

“He whose name is ‘Dispeller of Illusion,’ how can He be said to be under the power of ignorance?”

“Rama is *Sachchidananda*, Lord of the Day, with Him there is not a trace of the dark night; *Bhagavāna* (or the Blessed One), with Him there is no dawn of knowledge.

“Pleasure and pain, egoism and pride—these belong to the soul.

“The world knows that Rama is *Brahm and all-pervading, separate from all gods and eternal.*”

(*Bala K. Sor. 16, Ch. 1-8.*)

“Then I forsook the worship of the *Nir-guna* and took up with full determination the meditation on the *Saguna.*”

(*Uttar K. Ch. 13, Do. 170.*)

“Though they have attained salvation, when they hear of the deeds of Rama, they forsake the contemplation of the Supreme; they who do not love the story of Rama, their hearts are like stone.” (*Uttar K. Do. 64.*)

It may be worth while to look a little at the mystery of Incarnation as solved by Tulasi Das. In *Do.* 129 *Bala K.* Shiva is thus made to state the causes of the Incarnation.

“ Thus, O Parvathi, I will explain to you as I understand the causes. Whenever there arises a hindrance to righteousness, when demons, sinners and the proud increase, when such do unholy things which cannot be told, when they trouble Brahmans, cows, gods and the earth, then the Lord assuming various bodies, the Mine of Mercy, destroys the pain of godly men.”

In one place, *Do.* 151-158, *Bala K.*, the Lord says (addressing Dasaratha) before the incarnation :—

“ There you shall enjoy much pleasure, and when after a time you shall be the king of Oudh I will be your son. *I by my own desire* will put on the form of a man and will be manifest in your house and *with division will assume a body*, Sir, and will do works helpful to the devout.”

“Rama has taken human form on behalf of the faithful, and enduring grief has procured pleasure for the righteous.”

(*Bala K. Do. 29 ch. 1.*)

“For the faithful, the Earth, the Brahmans and gods, the Merciful has taken human form, and displays wonders, by hearing which the snare of the world is destroyed.”

(*Aranya K. Do. 94.*)

In his comment on one of the above passages, Baijnath emphasises the fact that the incarnation is *Ichamay* and not ~~*Maryamay*, that is, a voluntary assumption~~ and not a delusion, and goes on to say—“Like the pleasure of sweetness i.e., in men, fruits etc., the pleasure of sweetness is not in the essential things themselves but in the *relation*, in sight it is fruit etc., the relation (*bhitar bahar*) is the sweetness; so the appearance of the Lord, as far as form went, was ‘man,’ but the material five elements of the body of men were not in his body; in relation (*bhitar bahar*) he is the

true essential God, the body as body is not divided, so with the spirit.”

The following passage is extracted from the chapter on the Doctrine of Works in *Satsayi*. The translation is by Mr. G. A. Grierson. It represents the efforts of the mediæval mystics, now initiated into the concept of a loving and personal God, to overcome the rigidity of the law of *Karma*. Through the entire poem may be heard the high call to a devout and holy life:

“Consider thy body as worthy of honour for the Lord Himself once took the human form (?), and knowledge of the non-dual Lord is never far from it. The holy man alone understandeth the mystery of ‘the sun and the water’ and obtaineth *nirvana*. The Lord is like the sun which draweth water from the earth in the hot season and dischargeth it upon the earth in the rainy season, never desisting his course. *He calleth the holy man to union with Himself as the magnet doth steel.*

“Even as water is drawn from the earth to

the sun and is not lost in it but remaineth water, even so life goeth to the feet of the Lord but is not absorbed in Him. Each according to his nature taketh his store of actions (*karma*) with him and wherever he goeth he beareth its consequences. Thus all things are in the Lord, yet He is not affected by them as a mirror is not affected by that which it reflects, for *karma* cannot be wiped away, it is like a series of waves. Actions are of two kinds (good and bad), and the Lord alone is entirely free from them. Few there are who understand this mystery.

“But the holy man who is absorbed in faith in the saving power of the Lord, doeth every action only out of adoration for his Lord, and never looketh back. He unchangingly looketh upon Sita (the energetic power of the Lord) as the giver of happiness and upon Rama as the taker-away of his woes; the moon and the sun of the night and day of his faith.

“Mankind in their own obstinacy keep

binding themselves in the net of actions, and though they know and hear of the bliss of those who have faith in the Lord, they attempt not the only means of release.....

“ There are the two paths of bliss and sorrow, but without the grace of God, they cannot be recognised ; and it is not till he experienceth the sorrow of these paths that he calleth for the moon (lit. way of Sita, wisdom). Once a holy man treadeth on this path his woes disappear. For that path leadeth to Sita's feet which guide him to the feet of the Lord.

- “ As the young cuckoo deserteth its foster father, the crow, and seeketh its own kin as soon as its wings are grown,—so the Soul when it gaineth wings of intelligence (*chaitanya*) abandoneth things of this world and seeketh the Lord. An even mind (*samata*) and clear discrimination (*viveka*) follow from abandoning worldly welfare ; yet all men chamour for the latter, though not one's desire is ever perfectly fulfilled ; for void of knowledge (*Jnana*) their delight is in ignorance

and their trust is in their hard and evil intellect. But that only is welfare which destroyeth woe, and a spiritual guide alone can point it out. They desire this welfare which is an effect (*karya*) without doing those things which are its cause (*karana*).

“Every one confesseth that the effect (*karya*) is a necessary consequence of the material cause (*karana*); and saith Tulasi, thou and thou alone art the agent (*Kara* or *Kartri*), ~~which acteth upon this material cause, for~~ without an agent there can be no effect and how can he attain (salvation) without the instructions of the spiritual guide (as a material cause)?

“The ultimate refuge of the agent (towards which he should act) is the Lord. The agent and the material cause are the two essentials.

“*From unholy actions holiness cannot come. Wash thyself clear of unholiness and be holy. Show love to all creatures and thou wilt be happy, for, when thou lovest all*

things, thou lovest the Lord, for He is all in all. Thou and the Universe are made of the same elements and in Thee dwelleth thy soul (*jivatman*) which thou canst not know till thou hast attained perfect knowledge. This knowledge may come in a sudden inspiration or from humbly sitting at the feet of a spiritual guide. Learn from thy teacher to distinguish effects (*karya*) temporal from effects eternal ; *the night is dark, let the sunrise of knowledge shine.* A wise man cannot trust for salvation to his good works, for often do they mislead and the wisest are thereby made fools. . . .

“ The Lord is ever endowed with all auspicious qualities in whom alone is the ultimate of hope of all salvation. There is only one easy, simple means of approaching this *Saguna* Lord (*viz.*, Faith) while the way of knowledge to a *Nirguna* Brahm is full of countless difficulties (?).

“ The cause is the agent (*Kartr*) immutable, without beginning, in the form of the uncreated, free from blemish and incompar-

able. (This corresponds to the *Pralayavastha* of Ramanuja). From it come many effects (*Kriya*). But the agent cannot be known without the help of a spiritual guide,* and except in the way of true happiness, how can sorrow be wiped away? Learn thou to know that agent (the Lord) from whom cometh the chief action, for without that knowledge, though thou reason in countless ways, thou will not come to see Him. . . . The potter, the agent, with his material cause, the earth, maketh (vessels) of many (varieties); but the man without discrimination looketh only at the cause (earth) and considereth not that there must have been an agent (potter). The goldsmith as the agent maketh manifest the gold which is the material cause; his joy-giving effects are the ornaments which he maketh from it. . . . The soul which devoted itself to them (instead of to their agent, the Lord) and hath not a spirit-

* In this and the following verses the translator, Mr. Grierson, identifies 'the agent' with the Lord, while the indigenous commentator Baijnath identifies the same with the Soul.

ual guide is deemed to woe. . . . In the market (every one looketh and admireth the vessels) but few think of the potter according to whose volition there are many forms, small and great. . . . Wherever He is and in whatever form He dwelleth, there He is ever the same. No past hath He and no future hath He, the Pure, the Incomparable. *The grace of the Lord is the only means of showing Him.* According to the time, from the agent and the material cause come actions; know this as my decision. Again, according to the time, the agent goeth far off and the cause remaineth as a proof of His existence (?) ”*

* Indian Antiquary 1893.

NANAK

INTRODUCTION

 F the several religious sects that arose in mediæval India, none has attracted greater attention or been more widely studied than the school of Sikhism founded by the Khatri mystic and poet, Nanak. The political and military greatness, to which as a nation the Sikhs attained in latter days, is to some extent at the bottom of this widespread admiration and study. The achievements in war and politics which the small community of the Sikhs made in the short space of a century and a half or two, are indeed some of the most remarkable and brilliant that have ever been recorded of any small and brave community in the world. But the political and military story apart, the Sikh religion, founded on the hymns and teachings of one of the gentlest and most mystical of mediæval Indian teachers, is interesting and valuable as one of the purest protestant faiths that arose in the middle ages in India.

Discarding all superstitions that had accumulated in the course of centuries, the Sikh religion established the worship of the "One Great and True Being." It condemned pilgrimages and rites and temple-worship as not only useless but as a hindrance to true religion, and preached in their place of a pure and ennobling worship by means of prayer and true love and good, virtuous acts. It gave a high place to ethics and morality. Equality of human rights was also established, none being high or low in the eyes of God. The social and reforming effects of a religion like this could not but be great. A rude and scattered community of peasants and hillmen became a strong and well-knit brotherhood united by a common and ennobling faith. A race of primitive and untutored men became a heroic nation, possessed of a strong and individual religious faith, and fired with ideals of moral courage and independence.

The chronicles of the life of the original founder, Nanak, are numerous. The earliest chronicle may be said to be almost contemporary, being written in the time of one of the early gurus. The latter chronicles were but amplifications of this early one, too often orna-

mented with extraordinary legends and miracles. The sketch given in the following pages is based upon the earlier chronicle, translated fully by Dr. A. D. Trumpp in his book, the *Adi Granth*. The story is told with a great deal of simplicity and truth, and forms very commendable and interesting reading.

NANAK'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was born in the month of Baisakh (April—May) 1469 A. D. in the village of Talwandi, Lahore District, the Punjab. He was a Khatri by caste. His father was Kalu, the accountant of the village, who also pursued the life of an agriculturist; and his mother was Tripta, memorable in Sikh writings for her devotion to her son. Nanak appears even in his childhood to have been of a mystic disposition and much given to contemplation. He was early put to school; but he often surprised his schoolmaster and parents by his queer acts and utterances and occasional sallies of free-thought. The Khatri father was put to much concern at the spiritual prepossessions and mystic brooding spirit of his son and tried to break him of his religious habits. He set the youth to various secular tasks—to the

looking after the cultivation of the fields, to the carrying on of a little trade. But Nanak proved averse to them all. He paid little attention to his father's admonition or persuasion. He began to pass more and more of his time in religious contemplation and practices. He gathered a few friends around himself, and with them sang and composed hymns in praise of the Creator.

Under the stress of this life of physical and mental exertion, Nanak's health too seems to have been affected somewhat. The loving parents sent for a physician. Nanak accosted the physician with a mystic outburst :

“The physician is sent for to prescribe a remedy :
he taketh my hand and feeleth my pulse.

The ignorant physician knoweth not that it is
in my mind that the pain is.

Physician, go home: take not my curse with
thee.

*I am imbued with my Lord ; to whom givest
thou medicine ?*

When there is pain, the physician standeth
ready with a store of medicine.

The body is weeping, the soul crieth out
‘ Physician, give none of thy medicine.

Physician, go home, *few know my malady.*

The Creator, who gave me this pain, will remove it.

* * * *

I feel first the pain of separation from God, then pang of hunger for contemplation on Him.

I also feel the pain which Death's powerful myrmidons may inflict. I feel pain that my body shall perish by disease.

O ignorant physician! give me no medicine.

Such medicine as thou hast, my friend, removeth not the pain I feel or the continued suffering of my body.

~~I forgot God and devoted myself to pleasure: then this bodily illness befell me: the wicked heart is punished.~~

Ignorant physician, give me no medicine. As sandal is useful when it exhalet perfume,

As man is useful as long as he hath breath in his body,

So when the breath departeth, the body crumbleth away and becometh useless:

No one taketh medicine after that. When man possesseth even a portion of the Name of the Bright One,

His body shall become like gold and his soul be made pure;

All his pain and disease shall be dispelled ;
And he shall be saved, Nanak, by the True
Name."

NANAK'S EDUCATION

Though some of the mystics and the reformers of this epoch were unlettered men, Nanak cannot be strictly classed with them. In his village school to which he was sent in his childhood, he should have learnt the elements of reading and writing, and something of Hindi and his native dialect. His poems, which are written in a Hindi dialect prevalent at the time, reveal Nanak's acquaintance with, and good mastery of; this language. There is also proof from the internal evidence of his own compositions that Guru Nanak had studied the Persian language. Rai Bular promised that, if Nanak learned Persian, in which all State documents and accounts were then written, he would appoint him village accountant in succession to his father. Nanak, like other Hindus of the time, might therefore have applied himself to the study of the same. There are numerous Persian words and some Persian verses of the Guru found in the *Granth* and it may be accepted as a fact that he became a fair Persian scholar. It is also highly probable that

his mysticism and divine love may have been kindled and inspired to some extent by the great works of the Sufi mystics in the Persian literature.

- The real culture and education of Nanak should however be looked for in another quarter. All that he learnt from the school and the books was little, compared with what he should have learnt in his wanderings wherein he met with large numbers of the contemporary bhaktas and preachers. The names of the men with whom Nanak associated are lost to us. The company of these men, along with his own undisturbed communings with Nature, with his own soul and with the Creator, should have filled him with those great spiritual ideas and intuitions which led him to found a great sect. The voice that had already spoken to many a seer and mystic of Northern India now again became vocal to the Khátri youth of Talwandi.

MARRIAGE AND EMPLOYMENT

Nanak had a sister, Nanaki by name. She was married to one Jai Ram, an *amil* or collector of revenue under the Mahomedan Governor, employed at Sultanpur. Nanak also was married soon after his sister's marriage. His wife was

Sulakhani, daughter of Mula, a resident of Batala in the present District of Gurdaspur. Two sons were born to Nanak. Marriage and the birth of children however failed to divert Nanak. Paying no regard to his household, he still daily betook to the woods and lonely places, and, there in the company of his friends, prayed and sang hymns to the Creator. Jai Ram, during his yearly official visits to Talwandi, had ample opportunities of cultivating Nanak's acquaintance and appreciating his qualities. Rai Bular too, the Zemindar of Talwandi, was an advocate of Nanak. It was therefore agreed between them that the thoughtful youth was being ill-treated by his father; and Jai Ram promised to cherish him and find him occupation at Sultanpur. The thought of Government employ for his son filled the father Kalu's heart with joy and he gladly parted with his son. Jai Ram introduced Nanak as an educated man to the Governor, Daulat Khan, who appointed him store-keeper and gave him a dress of honour as a preliminary of service. Nanak began to apply himself to his duties and everybody was gratified and pleased with his work. Out of the provisions which Guru Nanak was allowed—for State salary was then given in kind—he devoted only a small

portion to his own maintenance ; the rest he gave away to the poor.

The minstrel, Mardana, came from Talwandi and became Nanak's private servant, friend and companion in devotion. He used to accompany Nanak on the rebec when the latter sang. Other friends too followed for whom Nanak found employment under the Governor. When their work for the day was over, Nanak and his friends, Mardana the rebec-player being the chief of them, repaired to some neighbouring solitude and there spent their time in singing and prayer.

ASCETICISM AND WANDERINGS

Nanak, however, could not rest happily in his secular life. He resolved to devote himself to his mission. He abandoned his service, and, having distributed his earthly goods amongst the poor, took up his abode in the jungle and assumed the garb and manner of life of a fakir. Here he practised all the austerities of his holy calling and began to give utterance to those inspired songs, afterwards collected and preserved in the *Adi Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs. His sole companion was his faithful servant and disciple, Mardana, who attended him in all his subsequent wanderings. Mardana was a skilled musician, and

morning and evening sang his master's songs to the accompaniment of the rebec.

Nanak however did not remain long in the neighbourhood of Sultanpur. He began to wander forth among the various cities of Northern India and even outside India, teaching his gospel, making disciples and disputing with the holy men of every caste and creed. He first proceeded to Saiyidpur in the Gujranwal District where he stayed in the house of Lalo, the carpenter. He next went to Kurukshetar and Hardwar in the latter of which took place an interesting episode which throws light on Nanak's protestant spirit and hatred of superstition. The Brahmans and pilgrims were offering ablutions of water with their faces turned towards the east. Nanak went amongst them, and, taking large handfuls of water, threw them in the direction of the west. The Brahmans were surprised and asked Nanak as to what he meant. Nanak asked them "What is your object, please?" They replied "We are offering ablutions unto the manes." "Where are they?" queried Nanak. The Brahmans replied "Thousands of miles away." Nanak rejoined, "My village is situate in the west. When I left it, my

fields were dry for want of rain. So I throw water towards the west. If your handfuls of water can reach the manes thousands of miles away, why not mine reach the fields lying some tens of miles off?"

Nanak then went to Brindaban and to Benares where he seems to have disputed with the worshippers of the various Hindu divinities. It is recorded that, at Benares, Nanak converted a Brahman Pundit by name Chatur Das to his faith. He then travelled to Puri and even farther south as far as Ceylon, and returned to his native place after an absence of twelve years.

Nanak is also credited with a journey to Mecca and the western countries. In all there seem to have been four principal "wanderings."

BABER'S INVASION

During his second wandering, while Nanak was at Saiyidpur, news of Baber's invasion reached the city. Mardana was seized with anxiety and spoke of it to the master. Some days after, Baber came and assaulted and sacked the city. Nanak and Mardana were seized and imprisoned and placed under the custody of Mir Khan, an officer of Baber's army. The ascetic captives were condemned to do work; Nanak carried loads on his head,

while Mardana was forced to work with the broom. While the two were thus at work, some women were being driven along shrieking and weeping; Mardana turned to his master and he sang:—

“They who wore beautiful tresses and the partings of whose hair were dyed with vermilion.

Have their locks now shorn with the scissors and dust is thrown upon their heads.

They dwelt in private chambers, now they cannot find a seat in public.

Hail! Father, Hail! O Primal Being, Thy limit is not known. Thou makest and beholdest the different phases of existence.

* * * *

They had hundreds of thousands waiting on them while sitting, and hundreds of thousands waiting on them while standing. Eating coconuts and dates, they sported on their couches.

But now chains are on their necks and broken are their strings of pearls.

The wealth and beauty which afforded them pleasure have now become their bane.

The order was given to the soldiers to take and dishonour them.

If it please God, He giveth greatness : and if it please Him, He giveth punishment.

If they had thought of Him before, why should they have received punishment ?

But they had lost *all* thought of God in joys, in spectacles and in pleasures.

When Baber's rule was proclaimed, no Pathan prince ate his food.

Some lost their five times of prayer, others their honour of worship.

How shall Hindu women now bathe and apply their frontal marks without their sacred squares ?

They who never thought of Ram are not now allowed even to mention Khuda.

One may return to her home ; another may meet and inquire after the safety of a relation. But others are destined to sit and weep in pain.

*What pleaseth God, O Nanak, shall happen—
What is man ?*

This was the time when the new Vaishnavite faith of South India was being vigorously propagated by various South Indian monks and preachers in the several parts of Northern and Central India. A great poet and reformer had already risen ; the whole land, wherever the Hindi language was spoken, was ringing with the

impassioned lyrics and intrepid utterances of Kabir. He proclaimed the Oneness and Unity of God; he defined His Nature as Love: God, he declared, is at once Absolute, Universal, One without a second; and also the Friend and Companion of each soul. The path to Him was simple: it lay through faith and devotion. Further, all are equal: there is none high or low with God. God is accessible to the "washerwoman and the carpenter" as well as to the "self-righteous holy man." Nanak then in his wanderings, might have imbibed this new religion with its great simplicity, its notions of One Absolute and Loving God and equal human rights. There is no doubt that it was the tradition of this connection and indebtedness that half a century later led to the incorporation of a large number of the hymns of Kabir and other Vaishnavite preachers in the *Granth* compiled by Arjun.

SETTLING AT KHARATPUR

Towards the close of his life Nanak laid aside the habits and garb of a fakir, and settled down with his family at Kharatpur. His friend Mardana also came to live with him; but, wearied with travel and with years, he died a short time after settling at Kharatpur. His son succeeded to his

father's function, and assisted with his music in the prayers of Nanak to the end of the latter's life. Nanak continued to preach his gospel, and every day the *Jappi* and the *Sohila*, the morning and the evening prayers, which he himself had composed, were chanted in his presence. Large numbers of followers gathered round him. He organised them all together and taught them the new faith by word and by precept. His disciples often made him offerings of coin or of kind and the old saint built almshouses and gave charities out of them. The picture that is preserved in the Sikh writings of these last days and of his teachings is a most beautiful and touching one. In spite of his increasing fame and influence, he arrogated not to himself any extraordinary greatness or power. He humbly preached to all the new religion, and said that he was himself a man among men, sinful and mortal as they were, that God was all in all and reliance on Him was the "one thing needful." "Think, pray and praise Him always. The just shall live by faith alone. A teacher hath no defence but the purity of his doctrine." He enjoined on all men to live righteously, and with brotherly love and hospitality, and to abjure all superstitions and

fear. "Falsehood is at an end ; Truth at last prevaiileth : Worship not the dead, bow not to stones." At last when death drew near, he appointed one of his most sincere disciples to look after the community of the faithful that was forming, passing over his own son whom he thought unfit for the task. Nothing demonstrates the selflessness and the nobility of Nanak better than this appointment of Angad in preference to his own son. His death came at last in the year 1538 A.D. at the age of 69.

NANAK'S DESCENDANTS

Nanak's line of the Bedi clan through his younger son has been preserved to the present day. During these four hundred years, they have been held in much veneration by all the Sikhs, trusted and protected in stormy times out of regard for their ancestor. An interesting personality at the recent coronation celebration in London; says an English writer, was Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, K.C.I.E., one of the representatives sent from the Punjab, an old man of great influence and proved loyalty, who has stood by the British Government from the day, as he expressed it, since the line of Ranjit Singh was ended—the lineal descendant in the

fourteenth generation from the Sikh Reformer and the present head of the family. He spoke with decision for his co-religionists, of their fervid loyalty, and of their readiness to prove it again and again in the future as they had done in the past in defence of the King-Emperor and his Kingdom. Recently in the columns of a Punjab newspaper he has expressed his conviction that the political object which led the Sikhs to adopt a military life—viz., the establishment of a perfectly peaceful government and the maintenance of a rule of justice and religious toleration—has been completely realised under the benign rule of the British Government, and that the Sikhs, fully regarding that Government as a god-send, have accordingly placed themselves at its service.

SIKHISM AND ITS SOURCES

The teachings of Nanak have been considered by some to have been influenced by foreign religions and thought, and to have little in common with the doctrines and philosophy of Hinduism. The learned translator of the *Adi Granth*, Dr. Trumpp, discussing the notions embodied in Sikhism, finds in them a late echo of the old Buddhism. Other critics have gone so far as to assert that Nanak might have owed some of his

doctrines to Christian sources. Nothing however could be further from the truth. It would be misreading history and Sikhism alike to suppose that the latter was born of any extraneous influence or religion. Could one but inform oneself of the systems of thought that were current in Northern India at the time, could one but pursue the clue furnished by the names and hymns of the Hindi *Bhagabats* (Vaishnava Mystics) occurring in the *Granth*, one would find that the doctrines and teachings of Nanak, like those of the other great reformer, Kabir, to whom he bears a great similarity in character and teaching alike, were chiefly derived from the contemporary Vaishnavite schools of thought.

Kabir and Nanak no doubt differed in an important particular from the reformers of Bengal and the saints of Maharashtra. The training and ideas of the latter lay more among the orthodox traditions and learning of Hinduism. Their teachings were therefore based on the accredited scriptures and systems of the land. Kabir and Nanak, while accepting their theological and spiritual principles—their notions of God and soul and devotion—base the authority and source of their faith, not in the Shrutis and the Smritis, but

in the heart of man, its intuitions and longings. This difference in view has led to important distinctions which make the sects founded by these two men eminent in some ways. But otherwise, Sikhism and the religion of Kabirpanthis remain the most characteristic survivals of mediæval Vaishnavism.

Whether the South Indian Vaishnavism, which spread to the North through its monks and preachers, was accepted in all its technical and theological completeness by the North Indian reformers is a question which is not perhaps of interest except to the sectarian Vaishnava. What is more important, historically speaking, is that the Vaishnavite creed, spreading to the North-India, became the basis of a new Religion of Love and Faith, that it gave rise to a system of ethics at once deep and exalted, that it inspired ideals of social and political freedom such as no previous faith of India had done. In the darkness and terror of the middle ages, it helped to shed a ray of light and faith on the homes and hearts of the people. In an age of oppression and foreign rule, it helped to draw men together and form them into political federations which ultimately grew into empires and republics.

The following is an analysis of the tenets of Sikhism by Dr. Trumpp : " We can distinguish a grosser and finer kind of Pantheism. The grosser Pantheism identifies all things with the Absolute, the universe in its various forms being considered the expansion of It. *The finer Pantheism on the other hand distinguishes between the Absolute and the finite Being and borders frequently on Theism.* Though God is producing all things out of Himself and is filling all, yet he remains *distinct from the creatures* and is not contaminated by the *Maya*, as a lotus in a pond of water remains distinct from the water surrounding it. The Supreme is in its essence Light, the All-Energising Vital Power, which, though diffused into all creatures, remains distinct from them; the material bodies are dissolved again into atoms, whereas the emanated light is re-absorbed into the Fountain of light. In this finer shade of Pantheism creation assumes the form of *Emanation* from the Supreme (as in the system of the Sufis); the atomic matter is either likewise considered co-eternal with the Absolute and immanent in It, becoming moulded into various distinct forms by the energising vigour of the Absolute; or the reality of matter is more or less denied so

that the Divine is the only real essence in all. That an Absolute Being, thus defined, cannot be a self-conscious spirit, endowed with a free will and acting according to theological principles, seems never to have struck their minds. For after the strongest pantheistic expressions, the Supreme is again addressed as a self-conscious Personality who governs all things and takes care of all creatures and with whom man endeavours to enter into personal relations. Contradictory sentences of this kind we find a great many in the Granth. To this personification of the Supreme it is owing that intellectual and moral qualities are frequently ascribed to Him, though, strictly speaking, there is no room for them in this system. He is called very wise, acquainted with the secrets of the hearts (or the inward Governor), not deceivable, kind to His devotees, merciful, just, etc. In other places, qualities are attributed to Him which are contradictory to each other and which clearly show that they are to be taken in a pantheistic sense." Really there can be no truer analysis than this of the doctrines of the mediæval orthodox Vaishnavism.

NANAK'S RELIGION AND POETRY.

"There is but one God whose name is true,

the Creator." These are the first words of the *Granth Sahib* and they epitomise the teaching of the whole book. This fundamental truth, the unity of the Supreme Spirit, Nanak made the basis of his doctrine. God is One, He is the God, not of the Hindu, not of the Musulman, not of the Christian, but of mankind. Under whatever name He is worshipped—Jehovah, Allah or Ram—He is "the One, Invisible, Eternal, Uncreated". Knowledge of God is the most important of all knowledge. It is not for the Brahman alone but for all, and all have a right to seek it for themselves. Similarly the worship of God is not the exclusive privilege of the priesthood, it is a service in which every man has an equal right to participate, a duty which cannot be performed by one man on behalf of another. It must be in truth and simplicity and devotion, and needs neither incense nor burnt offerings nor sacrifice.

These notions of Godhead and true worship and service are preached in a series of most beautiful and mystic poems, the most sublime of which all is that long one, the *Jappi*, composed by Nanak in his old age, and still sung by every Sikh at day-break. It is a majestic poem describing th

unity, power and beauty of God and the need of
man's devotion and love.

• “Of Him, the One True Name is Om,
Creator, all-pervading He :
void of hate and fear, unborn,
Undying, self-existent Lord.

He can be reached by only those
Who on the guru wait for help :
O Thou, who seekest after Him,
To Him alone thy worship give.

• He in the beginning did live,
He was before Time came to be,
He, verily, existeth now,
He shall exist for evermore.

Him, I cannot by thinking know,
For ages though I think on Him :
Nor e'en by silence deep, though
I in centred self-absorption live.

• “The hungry* are not satisfied
Though they obtain the universe,
And of the countless means devised,
Not one doth help in finding Him.

How shall a man the True One know ?
How shall he falsehood's barriers break ?
He can, as Nanak foreordained,
By keeping His Divine commands.

* God—hungry.

By His command which none can know,
 All bodies into being come :
 By His command spring living things,
 And at His bidding glory's gained.

By His command the high, the low,
 And pain and pleasure are ordained :
 By his command are some absolved,
 And some to endless births are doomed.

All subjects are to His commands,
 And no one is from them exempt :
 Who His commandments understands
 Is, Nanak, from all selfness free. •

Some sing His pow'r, for their's the gift,
 His bounties some who know His signs, •
 Some hymn His attributes, His might,
 • And some, His knowledge travail-gained.

• Some sing to Him, for He creates,
 And then destroys corporeal forms,
 Some sing to Him, for He doth take,
 : And at His pleasure gives back life.

Some sing to Him believing He
 Is manifest, yet far away,
 Some praise Him for He seeth all,
 And some for He's omnipresent.

There is, indeed, no limit set
 To human speech and thoughts of Him :
 By countless men in countless ways
He is described but fruitlessly.

So lavish are His gifts that men
 Receiving them weary grow :
From age to age His creatures have
Received their meat and drink from Him .

• He, the Commander, ordereth
 • By His decree this world's affairs
 And unconcerned, O Nanak, He,
 The Lord, exulteth in His pow'r.

✓ True is the Lord, true is His name, —
 • If uttered with endless love ;
 Unceasingly men ask from Him,
 And from His hands, receive rich gifts.

What shall we offer in return
 That we may in His Presence stand ?
 What shall we utter with our lips
 Which, hearing, He may love us well ?

At the ambrosial hour of morn
 Let us with reverence meditate
 Upon His True and Holy Name
 And also on His Majesty.

• This vesture from past deeds results,
Salvation from His grace Divine :
 • Thus, Nanak, do we apprehend
 ✓ That He is altogether true.

* * * *

Is there a man who could describe
 The living beings He has made ?
 Even if one could encompass this,
 How great would be the task indeed !

What power infinite is Thine !
 How beautiful Thy handiwork !
 Who has the strength to understand
 The gifts Thou on Thy creatures show'rest ?

Lo, by a single word of Thine,
 Created was the Universe,
 At Thy bidding did come forth
 Rivers and streams which none can count.

What pow'r have I Thee to describe ?
 Yea, e'en if I made to Thee
 An off'ring of myself, it would
 A fitting tribute never be.

Whate'er is pleasing unto Thee,
 That only virtuous is and good.
 And Thou alone, O Formless One,
 Art ever from all harm secure.

Countless are those who are engaged
 In ceaseless praising of Thy name,
 And countless they who love Thee well,
 And practise penances for Thee.

Countless the saints who contemplate
 Upon Thy attributes divine ;
 And countless they who love the truth
 And they who practise charity.

And countless are the heroes who
 Unflinching face the foeman's steel,
 And countless they who meditate
 On Thee in silence constantly.

What pow'r have I Thee to describe ?
Yea, even if I made to Thee,
An off'ring of myself, it would
A fitting tribute never be.

Beyond all counting are the fools
 Who are with blindness sore oppressed,
 And countless are the thieves and they
 Who prey on others' property.

Lo, countless those who rule by force,
 And cut-throats too, innumeros,
 So also are the murderers
 Who shed the blood of guiltless ones.

And numberless the sinners are
Who revel in all kinds of sin,
 Of hars too who roam about
With lying tongues, there is no count.

And countless are the filthy ones
 Who pleasure find in loathsome food,
And countless are the slanderers
 Who carry on them loads of sin.

What'er is pleasing unto Thee,
That only virtuous is and good,
And Thou alone, O formless One,
Art ever from all harm secure.

* * * * *
 Should one defile his hands or feet,
 Or other portions of his frame,
 He can the stains by washing cleanse,
 And from them all be freed again.

Perchance polluted be one's clothes,
 They can with water be made clean,
 But if the heart's defiled by sin,
 It can be cleansed by only Him.

Men cannot sinners be or saints
 By merely claiming to be such :
 The Cherubim who are His scribes,
 Present to Him man's roll of deeds.

Who practiseth austerities,
 Almsgiving too, and charity,
 And who resorts to holy shrines,
 Of honour but a fraction gains.

*But he who hears Him and obeys,
 And loves Him in his inmost heart,
 Shall wash off his impurities
 Within his own heart's sacred shrine.*

• In Thee, O Lord, all virtues dwell, •
 Not even one in me is found ;
 By those devoid of virtue, Thou
 Cannot be served or worshipped.

* * * *

But 'tis beyond all human pow'r
 To make a count of all His works ;
 He is the great Lord verily,
 How great, He only, Nanak, knows.

Like streams which with the ocean blend,
 Yet nothing of its vastness know,
 So I, though praising Him always,
 Am of His greatness ignorant.

How great He is, He only knows
 And by His grace and favour doth
 Bestow, O Nanak, upon men
 The gift of realising Him.

His great benevolence no pen
of writer ever can describe :
A mighty giver He's indeed,
Without a grain of avarice.

Countless the heroes who beseech
 For boundless bounties at His hands,
 And countless too are other men
 Who also beg for gifts from Him.

Countless the number is of those
 Who throw away their lives in sin :
 And countless the recipients who
 Deny the gifts they get from Him.

And countless are the well-fed fools,
 Countless the sore and hungry ones,
E'en pain and hunger are Thy gifts,
 O Giver Great and bountiful.

'Tis He the Lord who knows the needs
 Of all and gives accordingly :
 Alas ! how few are they who do
 This truth acknowledge or believe.

* * * *

Priceless Thy dealings and Thy marks,
 Priceless Thy dealers and Thy stores,
 Priceless is all that comes from Thee,
 And priceless that Thou tak'st away.

Priceless Thy love and lovers are,
 Priceless Thy Justice and Thy Courts ;
 Priceless Thy measures and Thy weights,
 Priceless Thy gifts and attributes.

Priceless Thy mercy and commands,
 How priceless Thou, no tongue can tell
 Whilst lisping ' Lord, Thou priceless art,'
 Men in devotion live for Thee.

Who read the Veds and the Purans,
 Discourse on Thee and speak of Thee,
 So also do the learned men
 Who are expounders of the truth.

The Brahmas and the Indras too
 Krishna, the Gopis fair, and Shiv,
 The Siddhs, the Buddhas, Thou hast made,
 • These all unite in praising Thee.

The demons and the Shining Ones,
 The demigods and mortal men,
 Inspired saints and serving-folk
 All magnify Thy attributes.

* * * *

Where is the gate, the mansion where
 Thou dost, enthroned, watch over Thy works ?
 How countless are the harps, the songs,
 And singers and musicians there !

To Thee sing Water, Wind and Fire,
 And at Thy gates, Death's king himself,
 The seraph scribes on whose record
 Are weighed the deeds of mortal men.

To Thee with songs praise Brahm, Shiv,
Heav'n's Queen also with beauty crowned,
 And Indra seated on his throne
 With all his gods within Thy gates.

To Thee sing mighty warriors,
 The quarters four whence life doth spring ;
 The continents, the worlds, the orbs,
 Which Thou hast made and dost support.

To Thee in meditation sing
The Siddhs and contemplating saints,
 The continent, patient ones,
 Unvanquished heroes and the true.

To Thee in all the ages sing
In Vedic hymns, sages and saints
 To Thee sing maidens who enchant
 The heart, in heav'n, on earth, in hell.

To Thee do all the jewels sing
 Which have by Thee created been ;
 To Thee in praise sing one and all
 The sacred shrines where pilgrims go.

To Thee sing those favoured by Thee,
 Thy devotees steeped in Thy Love :
 And countless others I know not,
 How can I, Nanak, name them all ?

He is ever true, the only Lord,
 His Name is true, worlds-maker He,
He is and shall for ever be,
He shall remain though worlds depart.

Let him who seeketh Him regard
 Contentment as his ear-ring :
 Let modesty his wallet be,
 His ashes, meditation deep.

Let him consider death his guilt,
 And faith as his mainstay in life ;
 And let him keep his body pure
 (Like to a virgin undefiled).

In this wise he shall gain indeed
 The spirit of true tolerance *
 For by subjection of the mind
 Is Vict'ry gained o'er all the world

All hail to Him !—to Him all hail !
 The Primal Being and the Pure,
 Th' Immortal Lord who ne'er began,
 Who is the same from age to age.

His mercy is His almoner,
 Knowledge Divine, lo! is His food :
 His Glory is proclaimed abroad
 Through every corner of the world.
 * * * *

He sees all things that He has made,
 But He Himself is never seen
 By any being whatsoever,
 He, truly, is most wonderful.
 * * * *

He having fashioned everything
 Upon His own works contemplates :
 The works of Him, the True One, are
 O Nanak, everlasting, sure.

* Yogic attainment.

All hail to Him ! — to Him all hail !
The Primal Being and the Pure ;
The Immortal Lord who ne'er began,
Who is the same from age to age.

Had I a hundred thousand tongues,
Yea, twentyfold as many more,
I then a hundred thousand times
Would tell His Name with all my tongues.

*I would in this way mount His stairs,
 And, reaching Him, be one with Him :
 The meanest, when they hear of Heav'n,
 Are filled with longing to be there.*

O Nanak, He is realised
Only through His Own grace Divine :
Who boast of other ways and means
They idle prattlers are and false.

For silence, I no strength possess,
No strength to speak, to ask, to give,
To live, to die, to gain a crown,
To gather wealth and victories.

No strength have I to think on Thee,
Or ponder over things Divine,
Nor have I strength to find the way
Of gaining freedom for my soul.

O Nanak ! He whose arm is strength,
He sees all things and wields all pow'r.;
None in His sight is high or low
(For He regards all men alike).

He has created seasons, nights,
 The weekdays and the lunar days,
 The wind, the water and the fire,
 And also all the under-worlds.

He in the midst of these has set—
 As but a passing, resting place—
 This earth with all its living forms
 Of endless beauty, endless kinds.

According to their deeds all these
 Are judged by Him who is the Truth
 And in His Courts of Justice those
 Accepted are who're virtuous.

His Grace and Men's own deeds in life
 The basis of salvation are ;
 Who wanting in purity are
 Make good the balance by His grace.

That which has been described before
 Explains the law in Virtue's realm ;
 What follows, to the realm belongs
 Wherein Knowledge Divine abides—

In this domain are countless winds,
 And countless waters, countless fires,
 Krishnas and Shivas numberless,
 And Brahmas who the worlds create.

Countless the ' Lands of Grace ' are there,
 Countless the Mountains, Narads, Dhruv,
 And Suns and Moons and lands and orbs,
 And Indras and the Sidhs and Naths.

Here in this realm, Knowledge Divine
 Resplendent shines (as doth the sun) :
 Here too are heard sweet songs of praise,
 And sounds of merriment and joy.

• Again the realm of Happiness
 By Beauty is characterised ;
 Here forms without compare are made,
 And none its charms can e'er portray.

Here Understanding fashioned is,
 Discernment, Wisdom, Intellect,
 Here too that Knowledge comes to birth
 With which are gifted sages, saiffs.

Of Action's realm the attribute
 Is energy, active throughout,
 Here mighty heroes, lords of war,
 With Rama's prowess filled, abide.

* * * *

In Action's realm are also found
 Communities of devotees,
 Who are with gladness always filled,
 For in their hearts the True One dwells.

The Formless in the Realm of Truth
 Doth dwell, and on its denizens

• With eyes of kindness and of love
 Looks on, and fills them all with joy.

* * * *

Thus in the true mint I have made
 These hymns in praise of Him, the Lord :
 Such blessed work falls to the lot
 Of those to whom He gracious is.

* * * *

Of living things, behold, the wind
 The Guru is : their mother, earth.
 Their father, water ; night and day,
 The nurse maids on whose lap they play.

Deeds, good and bad, before His throne
 Are by the king of death rehearsed :
 By their own actions some get near,
 And some some far away from Him.

Who meditate upon His name,
 From labour's freed repair to Him ;
 Their faces, Nanak, shine: through them
 Salvation other people gain."*

We have extracted this poem at full length, as it embodies to a great extent the characteristic notions and spiritual concepts of Nanak, and contains very fine and majestic poetry. The religion embodied in these stanzas is decidedly a sublime theism as known to Hinduism. God is the great Transcendent Being "the One True Name, the Creator, the All-Pervading One; the undying Self-existent Lord." He creates and pervades all the worlds. "Countless are His Attributes ; Priceless

[* The above extracts are taken from a very beautiful translation of the Japji recently appearing in the pages of the East and West from the pen of Dr. C. C. Caleb. We acknowledge our obligations to the author as well as to the editor.]

His dealings and His marks : Priceless His gifts and attributes." In all this sublime vision of God, the reader will also note the swift and exquisite touches of eager love and mysticism.

The need of love and devotion is described in the following poem —

R "O man, entertain such love for God as the lotus hath for the water.

Such love doth the lotus bear that it bloometh, even when dashed down by the waves.

The creatures which God created in water die, if denied it, and therefore love it.

O man, how shalt thou be delivered without love?

God pervadeth the heart of the pious and bestoweth on them a store of devotion.

R O man, entertain such love for God as the fish for the water.

The more it hath, the happier it becometh and the greater its peace of mind and body.

Without water, it could not live for a moment.

God alone knoweth the sufferings of its heart.

R O man, entertain such love for God as the *Rohatak* for rain.

Though the tanks be full, and the earth drenched, it will not drink from either.

It shall drink the rain drops, otherwise it is fated to die"*

[*This and the following are taken from Nanak's poems translated by Macauliffe in his book on Sikhism Vol. I]

The same is embodied in characteristic poetry in the following poem :

“ Friends have come to my house : The True One hath caused me to meet them.

* * * *

When I meet the saints, my soul is happy ;
night and day my hearth and home look bright.

The unbeaten sound of the five musical instruments playeth since saints have come to my house.

Come, beloved friends,

Sing a song of rejoicing, O women,

Sing a true song of rejoicing ; then shall you be pleasing to God and rejoice through the four ages.

The Spouse hath come to my house, the place is adorned by Him.

His instruction hath adjusted mine affairs.

I applied the great salve of Divine Knowledge to mine eyes, and saw God's form which filleth the three worlds.

Meet me, O companions, sing with zest a song of rejoicing, since my Spouse hath come home to me.

My soul and body are bedewed with nectar : and in my heart is the jewel of Love.

In my heart is the precious jewel and I ponder on the Primal essence.

Thou art wise : Thou possessest Divine knowledge ; Thou art the searcher of hearts : Thou thyself didst create the world.

Listen, my friends, the charming Bridegroom hath fascinated me, and my soul and body are bedewed with nectar.

O Supreme Spirit of the world, True is Thy

play. True is Thy play, O Incomprehensible and Infinite One : Who can cause us to understand but Thee ?

Without Thee how many can call themselves Sidhs, strivers or wise ?

The Guru hath stayed the soul which was maddened with the misery of death.

Nanak, he who removeth his sins by the word, obtaineth God through his aggregate of merits."

Such love of God is a beatitude in itself

“ Were rivers to become kine, and the springs to become milk and clarified butter,

Were the whole earth to become sugar so that the heart might ever rejoice ;

Were the mountains to become all gold and silver and be studded with diamonds and rubies ;

I would even then magnify Thee and the desire to do so would not cease as I spoke. ”

As religion consists in pure devotion and loving service, pilgrimages and ceremonials are a hindrance and of no use.

“ God maketh Himself manifest and beholdeth men.

He is not pleased by obstinate penance nor by many religious garbs.

He who fashioned the vessel of the body and poured into it His ambrosial gifts,

Will only be satisfied with man's love and service.

They who, though ever reading, forget God's name shall suffer punishment,

And, notwithstanding their great cleverness,
undergo transmigration.

He who repeateth the Name and thus eateth
the food of fear,

Shall become a pious worshipper and be absorbed
in God.

He who worshippeth stones, visiteth places of
pilgrimage, dwelleth in forests,

And renounceth the world, wandereth and
wavereth ;

How can his filthy mind become pure ?

He who *meeteth* the True One shall obtain
honour."

"There is no impurity in songs, there is no impurity
in knowledge ; there is no impurity in
the moon's or the sun's different phases ;

There is no impurity in corn, there is no impurity
in ablution ; there is no impurity in rain
which falleth everywhere, there is no impurity in
earth, there is no impurity in water ;

There is no impurity contained in air.

There are no virtues, O Nanak, in the man who
is without a guru.

It is he who *turneth away from God* whose
mouth is *impure*."

The following poems preach true fear of God
and trust in Him.

"The fear of God is very great and very heavy.
Man's wisdom is of little account, and so is his
chatter.

← Walk with the load of fear on thy head ;

Meditate on the Guru who is kind and merciful.

No one shall be saved without the fear of God.
~~His fear doth adorn man's love.~~ The fear of transmigration is burned away by the fear of God.

- By fear, the Word is fashioned and decorated.
- What is fashioned without fear is altogether worthless:

Useless is the mould and useless the stroke thereon."

"Thou art the Lord, to Thee be praise,

—All Life is with Thee.

Thou art my parent, I am Thy child,

All happiness is from Thy mercy.

No one knows Thy ends.

Highest Lord among the highest,

All that is from Thee obeys Thy will,

Thy movements, Thy pleasure,

Thou alone knowest.

Nanak, Thy slave, is a free-will offering unto Thee."

"The priest, the Sheikhs, and the potentates of the world are all beneath the Earth.

~~Emperors pass away, but God ever flourisheth.~~

There is only Thou,

There is only Thou, O God.

Neither the just nor the generous

Nor the seven regions beneath the earth shall remain.

There is One ; is there any other ?

There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God.

Not the regions of the sun and the moon
 Nor the seven continents, nor the seven seas,
 Nor corn nor wind shall abide.
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God,

Our maintenance is in nobody's power but
 God's.

To all of us but one hope abideth ;
 There is One : is there any other ?
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God.

Birds have no money in their possession,
 They only depend on trees and water,
 God is their giver, There is only Thou !
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God !"

The following poems are full of true mystic
 insight and poetry. In them is also to be found
 a great and intimate love of Nature and Her
 Beauty.

"All hail to the great month in which spring
 ever beginneth !

Ever and ever remember the Sustainer of the
 earth and thy heart shall rejoice.

O, silly Man, forget thy pride. Subdue thy
 pride and meditate on God in thy heart ; adopt
 the most excellent virtues.

Good acts are the tree, God's Name its branches,
 religion its flowers, divine knowledge its fruit ;

Attainment of God its leaves, and the dispell-
 ing of mental pride its dense shade.

They who behold God's power with their eyes,
 hear it with their ears, and repeat the True Name
 with their tongues,

Obtain the full wealth of honour, and tranquilly meditate on God.

The great season hath come, be careful and do good works.

• Nanak, the pious, who continue absorbed in God, shall be perennial and never wither."

"The Sun and Moon, O Lord, are Thy lamps: the firmament Thy salver: the orbs of the stars, pearls enchased in it.

The perfume of sandal is Thy incense, the wind is Thy fan, all the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of Light!

What worship is this, O Thou, Destroyer of Birth? Unbeaten strains of ecstasy are the trumpets of Thy worship.

Thou hast a thousand eyes and yet not one eye: Thou hast a thousand forms and yet not one form."

"The light which is in everything, is Thine, O Lord of light!

From Its brilliancy, everything is brilliant;
By ~~the Guru's teaching the light becometh~~ manifest.

• What pleaseth Thee is the real worship."

"When bronze, gold and iron break, the blacksmith weldeth them by means of fire.

When husband falleth out with his spouse, a reconciliation is effected in this world through children.

When the king asketh and his subjects give, a bond is established between them.

When the hungry man eateth, he establisheth an alliance with the world.

Drought formeth an alliance with rivers when they are flooded with rain.

There is an affinity between love and sweet words.

If any one speak truth, he formeth a bond with knowledge.

By goodness and truth, the dead establish a bond with the living.

Such are the affinities that are established in the world.

By praising God, man establisheth an alliance with God's Court.

Nanak sayeth this deliberately."

"God speaketh, preacheth, and listeneth ;

He who reflecteth on himself is a wise man.

The body is earth, the wind speaketh therein,

Consider, O wise man, what it is that dieth.

It is the quarrelsome and proud understanding.

The conscious soul dieth not.

The Precious Jewel, for which men go on pilgrimage, dwelleth within the heart.

Pandits read and argue but know not that which is within themselves.

When my spiritual ignorance dieth,

I die not myself.

He who is everywhere contained dieth not.

Says Nanak, when the guru showed me God,

No one seemed to me to die or to be born.

All seasons are good for those who love the True One.

The woman who knoweth her husband enjoyeth happiness day and night.

The ferryman calleth out at the ferry 'come on, make haste, you delay.'

I have seen at the other side those whom the Guru put into the boat.

Some have loaded their baggage, some have set out with it and others are weighed down by their loads.

They who have made true traffic are with the true God.

I am not good nor do I find any one bad.

Nanak, he who effaceth his pride is as the True One.

In the teachings of Nanak, morality holds a very high place. Few of India's, even of the world's, religions have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of the *Granth*.

Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour. Nothing to which man can attain is more acceptable to God. With-

out it, even faith is unavailing. Loyalty, honesty, justice, mercy, charity and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid; while evil-speaking, covetousness, anger, selfishness, extravagance and cruelty are denounced with equal rigour. The daily practice of cleanliness, of almsgiving and of abstinence from animal food, is strictly enjoined and obedience to the guru is demanded of every Sikh as his first duty. But as

regards the last, it is but proper to acquit Nanak of the height and extravagance to which the doctrine was pushed in latter days.

NANAK AND AFTER

Nanak, as might be seen already, was simply a teacher of religion. Regarding his followers merely as disciples, he had no views of political advancement. As a preacher of peace and goodwill to man, he told them "to fight with valour but with no weapon except the word of God." His care was to prevent his followers from contracting into a narrow sect or into monastic distinctions; proving this by excluding his son, a meditative ascetic, from the ministry after him, though he in the end became the founder of a sect called the *Udasis*, men indifferent to the world, who still exist in large numbers among the Sikhs. The religion thus established by Nanak differed in no wise from the one founded by Kabir and, but for great historical circumstances, would have developed into a quiet and quaker-like faith. The persecution of the growing faith, however, by the Mahomedans gave it a sharp military character; and when a century of cruelty and distress passed, there came to the guruship an intrepid and mystic youth who, fired with the indignities

inflicted on his people and filled with a noble patriotism and love of men, welded the Sikhs into a strong and powerful nation and made possible the establishment of a small yet historic republic, which along with the rise and consolidation of the Marathas, forms one of the most interesting and remarkable episodes in the history of modern India.

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GURU GOVIND

(1666-1708)

WHEN Guru Nanak felt that his end was approaching, he appointed as his successor in the Guruship one of his most faithful followers, passing over his two sons despite their remonstrances, one of them being an ascetic and the other a man of the world. He selected one whom he thought most fit by moral courage and devotion to the cause to carry on his ministry unimpaired. He did not consider the office a hereditary one, but this was later on brought about by a father's strong affection for a devoted daughter. The man so chosen by Nanak was a humble labouring man, Angad by name, who spread the religion by scrupulously adhering to his master's doctrine and commands. Before his death, he, also deeming neither of his sons worthy of the office, nominated as successor one of his most earnest followers, a petty carrier by trade; Guru Amar Das (that was how he was called), had great devotion to the faith and sent out missionaries to the various parts of the country to sow the seeds of the Sikh faith. His daughter, to whom he was devotedly attached, married Ram Das, a Jat youth of good family of the Sôdhi tribe, who became a zealous Sikh. The Guru at her request not only nominated him

as his successor, but also made the office hereditary in her offspring. Under Ram Das who became the fourth Guru in 1574, the Sikhs greatly increased and by their offerings he was enabled to live in state. He was of a quiet and peaceful disposition, given to literary pursuits and devoted to the interests of the Sikh community. He laid the foundation of the city of Amritsar (Nectar Tank) upon a site granted to him by the tolerant Emperor Akbar, and excavated the holy tank from which the town derives its name. In its midst on a small island he erected a temple, the future centre of Sikh devotion. He died in 1581, after having appointed his son Arjun as his successor. The Guruship had now become hereditary.

Arjun, the fifth Guru, established himself at Amritsar and completed the sacred tank and temple. A flourishing town grew up around them, which became the rallying point of the Sikhs who had now rapidly increased in numbers and importance. Up to this time the Gurus led a quiet life, averse to outward show, but Arjun, by means of the wealth resulting from the offerings of increased numbers of disciples, lived like a prince and kept a numerous band of adherents about him. He was now looked upon by them as a king as well as a spiritual leader; with system and method, he organised them into a community, and in order to raise their status, to separate them from the mass of the Hindus and to unite them by one common religious tie, he compiled a sacred code written in the mother tongue of the Jats. In this were incorporated

the sayings and Psalms of Nanak, his own compositions and those of the other gurus with selected works of the religious reformers of other provinces like Kabir, Ramanand, Namdev, etc., with which the works and teachings of the Sikh gurus had a good deal of spiritual affinity and even historical connection. This "Granth" supplanted the Hindu Vedas and Puranas which the unlettered people could not read. He named it the *Granth*, the Holy Book, which to the present day is held in the greatest veneration by the Sikhs as binding on all true disciples. Guru Arjun also instituted daily public worship at the temple of Amritsar, where crowds came daily to bathe, when the "Granth" was recited all day long with songs of praise to the accompaniment of stringed musical instruments.

Up to this time, the income of the Guru had proceeded from voluntary offerings. Arjun now reduced this to a regular religious tax levied by deputies appointed in the various districts, who presented the amount to the Guru in the annual General Assembly at Amritsar. The Sikhs were thus gradually accustomed to a domestic government of their own and began to feel themselves an organised and powerful community. The teaching of the new faith having met with much success and taken firm root among the Jat peasantry by means of this secular policy, the Guru's personal power and means greatly increased, thereby attracting public attention to him. Accordingly he excited the jealousy and enmity of the Imperial Governor of Lahore, was charged with treason in espousing

the cause of the Emperor's rebel son in one of the numerous family disputes among the Moghuls, and was thrown into prison at Lahore, where he died in 1606, his death being ascribed to torture. His last message to his people was : " God is the strength of the strengthless ; He neither cometh nor goeth, He is permanent ever." Guru Arjun's death was looked upon as that of a martyr to the faith. It inflamed the religious passions of the peaceful sect, converting them into a warlike community ready to defend their religion with the sword. This became the turning-point in Sikh history and developed the struggle which changed the whole character of the reformatory movement.

Har Govind succeeded his father as the sixth Guru in 1606, and found himself at the head of a powerful and widespread religious order whose influence was felt far and near. Of a warlike spirit, he armed his followers and inspired them with his own spirit of revenge and of hatred to their oppressors. At an audience with the Moghul Emperor, he proved the treachery against his father and secured the execution of his powerful murderer. Political leadership now developed in this young Guru who assumed the character of a soldier, while his Sikhs became a brotherhood in arms as in faith. Like a fighting bishop of the middle ages in Europe, he led his warriors in person, when impelled to side with any combatant, and took service in the Moghul army. After a time he fell under suspicion and the Emperor imprisoned him in the Gwalior fort for twelve years. On being released at the accession of the new Em-

peror, he re-entered the Moghul service, but, later on, suspecting treachery, he fled to Amritsar, where the Sikh ecclesiastical headquarters had remained under the system established by his father.

On three occasions after desperate fighting, he defeated the royal troops sent against him. He was now looked upon as a hero and a master of the art of war, and the Sikhs were always ready to rally round his banner; but, being satisfied with his success so far, and knowing the strength and resources of the Moghul Government, he retired to the sub-Himalayan hills to preserve his power and recruit his followers. The sect had now risen to the dignity of persecution and, despite repressive measures, crowds of Jat peasantry joined it.

Har Govind quite changed the character of the peaceful Nanak's disciples who now laid aside their rosaries and buckled on the sword in defence of their faith. His popularity increased with the warlike Jats, who, oppressed in their villages, joined him in large numbers. The camp became their home and the plunder of the Mahomedans their lawful prey. He died in 1638, after nominating as his successor his grandson, Har Rai, the son of his eldest deceased son. The fighting spirit of the Sikhs having been roused and their quality proved, they became a power to be courted. Under the new Guru, they soon joined a son of the Moghul Emperor in rebellion, who was friendly to them, but eventually the Sikhs were forced to retreat to the hills. Guru Har Rai died; his

young son, six years of age, succeeded him as the eighth Guru; but a contest now arose among the Sikhs regarding the succession which, curiously enough, was referred to the arbitration of the Moghul Emperor who summoned the boy to Delhi where he died.

Tegh Bhabhadur, the younger son of the martyr Har Govind, the sixth Guru, was now selected as the ninth Guru. His mother, when the succession went some years before to Har Govind's grandson, remonstrated at the decision; but the dying Guru gave his arms to her to keep for her son Tegh Bhabhadur, who, he said, would yet become Guru. Tegh Bhabhadur seems to have been at first unwilling to accept the office, saying that he would rather be *Degh* Bhabhadur (Lord of the Cooking-pot—Hospitality) than Tegh Bhabhadur (Lord of the Sword) meaning that he preferred to support the poor and feed the hungry rather than be a leader or warrior. The assembled Sikhs hailed this as a most auspicious offer of unbounded hospitality and acted up to their maxim "*Jiska degħ us ka tegħ*" (my sword is at the service of him who feeds me) by flocking in great numbers to his banner. He built a fort near Sutlej, now the city of Anandpur, in the year 1665; he established therein his military and ecclesiastical headquarters and continued the fitful life of struggle with the hated Mahommedans. Finding, it is said, that Aurangazib had given orders to convert all people in the Punjab and Kashmir to the Mahommedan faith, Guru Tegh Bhabhadur resolved to visit the Emperor in person and expostulate with him on the cruelty and injustice of

his doings. The Emperor on meeting him addressed him saying that it was his pleasure that there should be but one religion in the world and that Hinduism and all other religions were false. The Guru replied, "O Emperor, Thou and I and all people must act according to God's will. If it were the will of God that there should be only one religion, He would not have allowed the Mahomedan and the Hindu religions to exist at the same time. He hath no partner and He can do as He pleaseth. Neither thou nor I can oppose Him." Tegh Bhahadur was at last ordered to be imprisoned and, finally on an absurd charge of some breach of etiquette and propriety, beheaded by order of the Emperor.

Just before execution, he is said to have sent the following *slok* to his son :

"My strength is exhausted ; I am in chains and have no resource. Saith Nanak, God is now my refuge ; He will succour me as he did the elephant."

"My associates and companions have all abandoned me ; no one remaineth with me to the last ; saith Nanak, in this calamity God is mine only support."

It is said that the other hymns of Tegh Bhahadur occurring in the *Granth* were composed during this captivity and sent by the messenger to Anandpur. The head of Tegh Bhahadur was recovered by some daring men of low caste called Muzhabis, who were afterwards as a reward for their courage, enrolled by Govind as Singhs, a charter which gave them higher status as brave fighting men and Sikhs. Several

thousands of this class are in the Indian army at the present day.

GURU GOVIND'S BIRTH

During Tegh Bahadur's journey to the Eastern provinces, he left his mother and his wife who was then pregnant at Patna. While at Patna, Tegh Bahadur's wife gave birth to the child Govind Rai, on the seventh day of the eighth half of the month of *Pot* in the year 1666 A. D. (Samvat 1723). On the birth of Govind Rai, the Sikh historian remarks, "It hath ever been usual that, when God seeth his people suffering, He sendeth a saviour of the world." The grandmother, mother and child lived for some time at Patna, supported by the faithful Sikhs of the locality and returned to Anandpur only some time before Tegh Bahadur's fateful journey to Delhi. As a child, Govind Singh seems to have been greatly fond of sports and martial exercises and, gathering a few companions, often engaged in shooting and the chase. When he came to Anandpur, he was affectionately received by his father who at once made efforts to give the boy mental and physical equipment. The times, however, were hard and Govind Rai was not long to enjoy Tegh Bahadur's care and affection. On the representation of the Hindus of Kashmir who complained that they were much persecuted by the Mahammedans, Tegh Bahadur, as has been said, started for Delhi to visit the Emperor in person. He knew that death was before him and calling his child, his family and his devoted Sikhs together, took leave of them. He then invested his son Govind Rai, then only

nine years of age with the sword of his father, Har Govind, who had first used it in defence of the faith, hailed him as the future 'Guru of the Sikhs and exhorted him to recover his body. The tragic story of Tegh Bahadur's journey to Delhi which ended in his death has already been narrated. On his death, Govind Rai was installed as the tenth guru at the tender age of nine years (1675 A. D.)

GOVIND SINGH'S YOUTH AND EARLY LIFE

After his father's death and his installation as a Guru, Govind Rai continued with greater diligence than ever to prepare himself for a life of military defence and national achievement. Beginning with his few cousins, the sons of his aunt Viro and his uncle Suraj Mal, he gathered large numbers of followers, supplied them with arms and arrows and with them practised archery and musket shooting. As increasing numbers came, Govind Rai formed a regular army and, in order to complete his military equipment, had a big drum constructed. The activities of the youthful Govind Rai were not, however, free to develop; they aroused the suspicions of the hill Rajahs who now began to treat the Guru with hostility. Govind Rai's own mother and uncle expostulated with him, saying "Our business is with religion for which humility is required." The Guru replied, "Mother, dear, how long shall I remain in concealment? I am not going to take forcible possession of the hill Rajahs' territories. If they are jealous for nothing and allow their hearts to rankle, I cannot help it. This is the Guru's castle where men shall obtain their deserts."

The hill Rajahs, under the leadership of Rajah Fatah Shah of Srinagar made war on Govind Singh, aided by Mahommedan mercenaries. Govind Singh defeated the Rajahs completely, and his followers and countrymen rejoiced greatly. For twenty years from his accession to the Guruship, Govind Rai thus continued his life amidst the secluded valleys of the Sutlej, gathering followers, exercising them in arms and discipline, and occasionally fighting and conquering small bits of territory from the unfriendly hill Rajahs.

•GOVIND'S MARRIAGE

Two years after his installation, a man named Bikhia residing in Lahore went to visit the Guru, and seeing him handsome and well-proportioned, offered him his daughter Jito. The Guru's mother was pleased and the marriage was soon celebrated (1677 A.D.). Some time after, another Sikh who had a daughter named Sundari proposed to the Guru to wed her and make her the slave of his feet. The Guru did not desire another wife but it was pressed on him by his mother, and the Guru's nuptials were not long after solemnised. Four sons were born to Govind of whom two died in battle, and the other two, as we shall afterwards see, were cruelly put to death by the Mahommedans in Sirhind. The names of the two sons of Jito were Morawar Singh and Jujhar Singh; while those of Sundari were Ajit Singh and Falat Singh, these two being the eldest and the last.

•GOVIND SINGH AND HINDU SHASTRAS

It was during this period of his life—a period of study and warlike preparation—that Govind

Singh called in a number of bards to translate the Hindu Puranas and the Epics—the Mahabarata and the Ramayana, the stories of Durga, Rama, Krishna and other Hindu Deities. It is also said that Govind celebrated a great sacrifice in honour of Durga, hoping that the goddess would help him in his military pursuits and ambition. This chapter of his life has been criticised by many adversely to Sikhism as indicating a relapse on the part of Guru Govind into idolatrous Hinduism. From what we find in his great and authentic hymns and poems, there is nothing to indicate that Govind Singh was an idolater in any bad sense of the term. He often pours ridicule upon the worship of stones and stocks and meaningless rituals and rites. The proper explanation therefore of this incident of his life is perhaps the one advanced by the learned writer, Macauliffe, in his book on Sikhism. At that time it was the custom to recite on the eve of battle the praises and warlike deeds of the brave, so that the hearts even of cowards might be inspired with eagerness for the fray. On that account the tenth Guru maintained fifty-two bards to translate the Mahabharat, the Ramayana, the gallant achievements of Ram, Krishna, Chandi and others. It does not follow from this that the Guru worshipped those whose acts were thus celebrated; this was only done for the purpose of inciting to bravery, dispelling cowardice, and filling the hearts of his troops with valour to defend their faith. Thus the Guru himself declares in his translation of the tenth canto of the *Bhagavat* in which are

recounted the chivalrous exploits of Krishna. He says, "I have rendered in the vulgar dialect the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavat* with no other object than to inspire ardour for religious warfare."

THE FORMATION OF THE KHALSA

By this time, when the Guru was some thirty years old, Govind Singh had matured his plans of reforming the Sikhs and forming them into a compact and homogeneous people. The violent death of his father and the deep sense of the wrongs of his persecuted race of which reports were daily reaching his ears, had long rankled in his mind and he now resolved to put an end to them. The time too perhaps suited him, the bigot emperor Aurangazib having commenced a crusade against Hindu and Sikh alike.

The Guru invited all his Sikhs to attend the great Baisakhi fair at Anandpur. Many were the men to respond; they came in crowds and joined him. On finding them assembled, the Guru ordered that carpets be spread on a raised mound which he indicated, and that an adjacent spot should be screened off with tent walls. When this was done, the Guru ordered a confidential Sikh to go at midnight, tie five goats in the enclosure and let no one know what he had done. Next morning, the Guru rose a watch before day, performed his devotions and put on his arms and uniform. He then proclaimed that there should be a great open-air gathering. When all were seated, he drew his sword, and asked if there was any one of his beloved Sikhs ready to lay down

his life for him. No reply was given. All grew pale on hearing such a proposal. The Guru asked a second time but with the same result. A third time he spoke in a louder voice, "If there be any true Sikh of mine, let him give me his head as an offering and proof, of his faith." Daya Singh, a Sikh of Lahore, rose and said "O true King, my head is at thy service." The Guru took his arm, led him within the enclosure and gave him a seat. He then cut off a goat's head with one stroke of the sword, went forth and showed the dripping weapon to the multitude. The Guru asked again, "Is there any other true Sikh who will bestow his head on me?" The crowd felt now quite convinced that the Guru was in earnest and that he had killed Daya Ram, so no one replied. At the third time of asking, Dharm Das of Delhi answered, "O Great King, take my head." The Guru, assuming an angry mien, took Dharm Das within the enclosure, seated him near Daya Ram and killed another goat. The Guru, then looking very fierce, came forth and said, "Is there any other Sikh who will offer me his head? I am in great need of Sikhs' heads." On this some remarked that the Guru had lost his reason, others went to the Guru's mother to complain. When the Guru began to call for the fourth Sikh, the Sikhs thought he was going to kill them all. So, some ran away and some hung down their heads. Sahib Chand, a resident of Bidar was the fourth to place himself at the disposal of the Guru. The Guru took him into the tent and killed another goat. The Guru then came out and asked for the

head of another Sikh. On this many ran away. Himmat of Jagannath was the fifth to offer himself. The Guru took him inside the tent and killed the remaining goat.

The Guru was now ready to sacrifice his own life for the five Sikhs who showed such devotion to him. He clad them in splendid raiment, so that they shone like the sun, and thus addressed them: "My brethren, you are in my form, and I am in yours. He who thinketh there is any difference between us erreth exceedingly." Then seating the five Sikhs near him, he addressed the assembly, "In the time of Guru Nanak, there was found one devout Sikh, namely Guru Angad. In my time there are found five Sikhs totally devoted to the Guru. These shall lay anew the foundation of Sikhism, and the true religion shall become current and famous throughout the world." The people became astonished at the Guru's expedient, and fell at the feet of the five devoted Sikhs, saying "Hail to the Sikh religion! You, brethren, have established it on a permanent basis. Had we offered our heads like you, we too should be blest." The Guru again addressed the Sikhs: "Since the time of Baba Nanak, *charanpahul* hath been customary. Men drank the water in which the Gurus had washed their feet, a custom which led to great humility; but the Khalsa can now only be maintained as a nation by bravery and skill in arms. Therefore I now institute the custom of baptism by water stirred with a dagger and change my followers from Sikhs to *Singhs* or Lions. They who accept the nectar of the

pahul shall be changed before your very eyes from jackals into lions and shall obtain empire in this world and bliss hereafter."

According to the Persian historian Ghulam Mūhaiul Din, the newswriter of the day sent the Emperor a copy of the Guru's address to the Sikhs on this occasion. It is dated the first of Baisakh, Samvat 1756 (1699 A.D.) and runs as follows: "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules for their guidance abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration, and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of with reverence in the Shastras or adore incarnations such as Ram, Krishna, Brahma and Durga, but believe in Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."

The newswriter, while forwarding the report, thus makes his own comment thereon: "When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd, several Brahmans and Khattris stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and the other Gurus. Others on the contrary said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teaching of the Vedas and the Shastras and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several refused to accept the Guru's religion, about twenty thousand men stood up

and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission."

The Guru caused his five faithful Sikhs to stand up. He put pure water into an iron vessel and stirred it with a *khanda* or two-edged sword. He then repeated over it the sacred verses which he had appointed for the ceremony. *viz.*, the Japji, Guru Amar Das's Anand, and certain Sawaiyas (which will be found in a latter part of this sketch) or quatrains of his own composition. While this was being done, Mata Jito, wife of Govind, passed by, carrying some sweetmeats. Govind Singh said that she had come at an opportune moment and asked her to throw the sweets with the holy water. He had begun, he said, to beget the Khalsa (this word coming from the Arabic *khabs* meaning 'pure' and was applied by Guru Govind to the Sikhs who accepted the baptism of the sword), and without a woman, no son could be produced. Now that the sweets were poured into the nectar, the Sikhs would be at peace with one another, otherwise they would be at continual variance. The five Sikhs, fully dressed and accoutred, stood up before the Guru. He told them to repeat 'Wah Guru' and the preamble of the Japji. He then gave five palmfuls of the *amrit* to drink. He sprinkled it five times on their hair and their eyes and told them to repeat 'Wah Guru jika Khalsa, Wah Guru jiki Matah.' On this he gave them the appellation of Singhs or Lions. He then explained to them what they might or might not do. They must always wear the following articles, whose names begin with a K,

viz., *Kes*—longhair, *Kangha*—a comb, *Kripan*—a sword, *Kaech*—short drawers, *Kara*—a steel bracelet. They were enjoined to practise arms and never to show their backs to the foe in battle. They were ever to help the poor and protect those who sought their protection. They must not look with lust on another's wife or commit fornication, but ever adhere to their wedded spouses. They were to consider their previous castes erased and deem themselves all brothers of one family. They were freely to intermarry with one another but must have no social or matrimonial relations with smokers, with persons who killed their daughters, with the descendants or the followers of Prethe Chand, etc., and the *masnads* who had fallen away from the tenets of Guru Nanak. They must not worship idols, cemeteries or cremation grounds. They must believe only in the Immortal God. They must rise at dawn, bathe, read the prescribed hymns of the Gurus, meditate on the Creator, abstain from the flesh of an animal whose throat had been cruelly jagged with a knife in the Mahommedan fashion, and be loyal to their masters.

When the Guru had thus administered baptism to his five tried Sikhs, he stood up before them with clasped hands and begged them to administer baptism to himself in the same way as he had administered to them. They were astonished at such a proposal, and represented their own unworthiness and the greatness of the Guru. They asked why he made such a request and why he stood in a suppliant posture

before them. He replied, "I am the son of the Immortal God.. It is by His order that I have been born and have established this form of baptism. They who accept it shall henceforth be known as the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me. As Guru Nanak seated Guru Angad on the throne, so have I made you also a Guru. Wherefore, administer the baptism nectar to me also without any hesitation." Accordingly the five Sikhs baptised the Guru with the same ceremonies and injunctions he himself had employed. He thus invested his sect with the dignity of Gurudom.

The Guru called the five Sikhs his *Panch Piyare* or the Five Friends, and styled himself and the rest who had been baptised Singhs, so that his own name Govind Rai was changed into Govind Singh (a name which we have already anticipated in the sketch).

Many others assembled followed suit and prepared to receive baptism. Govind Singh next issued a supplementary ordinance that if any Sikh cut his hair, smoked tobacco or associated with a Mahommedan woman or ate the flesh of an animal described before, he must be re-baptised, pay a fine and promise not to offend any more, otherwise he must be held to be excommunicated from the Khalsa. The place where this historic meeting took place is now known as Kesgarh.:

THE NEW ARMY AND ITS CHARACTER

Govind Singh's next move was to issue orders that every Sikh house inhabited by four adult males should contribute two for service under him.

In a short time, 80,000 were gathered round him. In addressing them he commenced by praising God as the Almighty, the Omnipotent, Invincible and Merciful who must be worshipped in truthfulness and in sincerity. He could only be beheld by the eye of faith in the general body of the Khalsa. All Sikhs must live like brothers. A number of these remarkable addresses of Govind Singh to his followers given on the battle field or in the camp or in the general meetings which were held on stated occasions or when large numbers of Sikhs came to be baptised, are preserved in the Sikh chronicles and attest his eloquence, his strength of mind and ideal and the perseverance with which he ever kept the Sikhs in memory of the great ideals he had dedicated himself to work for :

“O Sikhs, borrow not, but, if you are compelled to borrow, faithfully restore the debt. Speak not falsely and associate not with the untruthful. Practise truth, love, truth, clasp truth to your hearts. Live by honest labour and deceive no one. Let not a Sikh be covetous. Repeat the Japji before eating. Look not on a naked woman. Act according to the *Granth Sahib*. Cling to the boat in which thou hast embarked. Wander not in search of another religion. Marry only into the house of a Sikh. Preserve thy wife and children from evil company. Eat regardless of caste with all Sikhs who have been baptised.

“Habitually attend a Sikh temple and eat a little sacred food therefrom. . . . Let a Sikh contribute a tenth part of his earnings for

religious purposes. Let him bow down at the conclusion of prayer. When a Sikh dieth, let sacred food be prepared, and after his cremation, let the *sohila* be read and prayer offered. Let not there be much mourning. On such occasions let the Guru's hymns be read and sung.

"Worship not an idol and drink not the water in which it hath been bathed.

"My face is turned towards him who calleth out to a Sikh, 'Wah Guru jiki fatab,' my right shoulder towards him who returneth the salutation with love, my left shoulder to him who returneth it as a matter of custom, and my back towards him who returneth not at all. To him who abideth by these rules, I will grant a position to which no one hath yet been able to attain, and which was beyond the conception of Shankaracharya, Dattatre, Ramanuj, Gorakh and Mahommad."

"As when rain falleth on the earth, the fields yield excellent and pleasant fruit, so he who listeneth to the Guru and attendeth to all his instructions shall assuredly receive the reward thereof."

"Let those who are baptized according to my rites bear arms and live according to their means. Let them remain true to their sovereign in the battlefield and never turn their backs to the foe."

"Let not any Sikh of mine worship Hindu and Mahomedan cemeteries or give alms to one who weareth any religious garb. . . He who feedeth the traveller, who giveth alms on the occasion of the Gurus' anniversaries and who hath faith in the Guru, shall hereafter go to the Gurus' abode. Let my Sikhs abide apart, and be ever full of thoughts of God."

“ He who giveth his daughter to a Sikh and taketh no money is a Sikh of mine.”

“ Let Sikh men and women sit together and hold divine discourse. Let them worship God themselves and teach their children to do so.”

• “ Let him who calleth himself a true Sikh of mine accept baptism and do good acts: Let him renounce the service of demons and spirits and the worship of stones and false gods.”

On another occasion :

“ O Sikhs, act as follows—Clothe and feed your brother Sikhs, as far as your means allow, shampoo them, bathe them, wash their clothes, fan them when they perspire, draw them cool water from the well and cook them food.

“ Let them night and day do similar offices unto each other, commit to memory the Guru's hymns, and repeat the True Name.

• “ On seeing any person in trouble, take compassion on him, and remove his sufferings to the best of your ability. Then the Primal Supreme Being will be merciful unto you.

• “ Wear not dirty clothes, associate not with thieves, adulterers, gamblers, etc. Remember the sinner is worse than the sin, for he is the cause thereof.

• “ Bathe in holy Amritsar. Behold the God's temple where the Guru's words are ever repeated. Sit down therein respectfully, and allow your minds to think of nothing but God. Ever look with devotion on where His Light is resplendent. If he who deemeth himself a Sikh behold not Amritsar, why did he take birth in the

world? Unprofitable is his advent and he shall afterwards regret his negligence."

Govind Singh thus appealed to the eternal instincts of equality, liberty and brotherhood, broke for ever the caste prejudices and received into the Khalsa people of all classes who had hitherto been debarred from bearing arms and participating in religion. The Singhs of the Khalsa should have felt themselves at once elevated and equal to the proud and martial Rajput. Personal pride and strength were infused into them, and Sikhism knitted them together into one common brotherhood, animated by a common faith, one social life and national longing.

The effect of these new teachings, it is said, was immediate and profound. The Sikhs began to manifest great chivalry and courage and live in sweet social love and harmony among themselves. Wherever there was oppression or cruelty, the Sikhs were there and with ready heart and brave arms, helped the persecuted. Among themselves they lived like brothers; they used to feed one another, shampoo one another when tired, bathe one another, wash one another's clothes, and one Sikh always met another with a smile on his face and love in his heart. Their devotion to their religion and the Guru also grew, and morning and evening they could be seen in the camp or their village homes devoutly repeating the Japji and the Sohila and the hymns of the Gurus.

STRUGGLES WITH THE MAHOMMEDAN EMPEROR

The increasing power of Govind Singh and his nation, the new courage and faith he had infused

into them, filled the neighbouring hill Rajahs with fear and even roused the suspicions of the Delhi Government. An army was therefore sent under Sayid Khan to subdue Govind Singh; Sayid Khan however seems to have betrayed his command and joined Guru Govind. A second time, another army was sent under Wazir Khan with strict orders to capture Anandpur and destroy Govind Singh's forces. Wazir Khan's army advanced and soon laid siege to Anandpur. Hill chiefs too came and joined the Mahomedan general with their army. The siege was long and protracted. Govind Singh defended the city with great courage and heroism. But brave and valiant as they were, they were face to face with a highly equipped and more numerous army; at last Govind Singh and his few surviving followers were forced to evacuate the city. Govind Singh marched south by way of Kirtapur, while his mother and his two children (the other two had already fallen in the battle) went to Sirhind where they took refuge in a Brahman's house. The treacherous Brahman robbed the mother of the wealth she was carrying, and, more horrible still, betrayed their arrival to the local Mahomedan governor. The tragic story of the children's death is well known; how the two heroic youths were asked, on the penalty of death, to embrace the Mahomedan faith, how they nobly refused to fall away from the faith of their father and their Gurus, how they were at last cruelly buried alive under a wall.

GOVIND SINGH'S LETTER TO AURANGAZIB

The news of the tragic fate of his children

reached Govind Singh while he was staying at a village called Jatpura, fifty miles from Sirhind. It is said that the Guru on hearing the narrative, dug up a shrub growing by with his knife and uttered, "As I dig up this shrub by the roots, so shall the Turks be extirpated." The Guru next went to Dina and it was here, where his stay appears to have been somewhat protracted that he wrote his celebrated Persian epistle to Aurangazib in reply to an invitation from the Emperor to come and see the latter. The evidence as to whether the letter reached Aurangazib or how he received it is meagre, but, as it is, nothing can excel the remarkable strength and courage, and the noble indignation, it reveals. Withal it is instinct with a great religious and moral fervour, little known to the iconoclastic faith of the Mahommedans. In it are combined the righteous indignation of the saint as well as the woes of the patriot. We give the letter below. It is styled *Zafar Nama*.—

"I have no faith in thine oath to which thou tookest the One God as witness. I have not a particle of confidence in thee. Thy treasurer and thy ministers are all false

As to my defeat at Chamkaur, what could forty men do when a hundred thousand came on them unawares?

The oath-breakers attacked them abruptly with swords, arrows and muskets. I was forced to engage in the combat and I fought to the utmost of my ability. When an affair passeth beyond the region of diplomacy, it is lawful to have recourse to the sword.

Did I not know that thou, O faithless man, wert a worshipper of wealth and perjurer? Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion. Thou knowest not God, and believest not in Mohammed. He who hath regard for his religion never swereth from his promise. Thou hast no idea of what an oath on the Quran is, and canst have no belief in Divine Providence. . . . When thou didst swear by Mohammed and called the word of God to witness, it was incumbent on thee to observe that oath. Were the Prophet himself present here, I would make it my special object to inform him of thy treachery If thou hast spoken truly, then come to me If thou come to the village of Kangar, we shall have an interview. Thou shalt not run the slightest danger on the way, for the whole tribe of Bairars are under me.

I am a slave and servant of the King of Kings and ready to obey His order with my life. Should His orders reach me, I will go to thee with all my heart. If thou have any belief in God, delay not in this matter. *It is thy duty to know God. He never ordered thee to annoy others.* Thou art seated on an emperor's throne; yet how strange are thy justice, thine attributes and thy regard for religion! Alas! a hundred times, alas! for thy sovereignty! Strange, strange is thy decree! Promises not intended to be fulfilled injure those who make them. Smite not any one mercilessly with the sword, or a sword from on high shall smite thyself. O man, be not reckless, fear God. He cannot be flattered or praised. The King of kings is without fear. He is the true Emperor

of earth and heaven. God is the master of both worlds. He is the creator of all animals from the feeble ant to the strong elephant. He is the Protector of the miserable and Destroyer of the reckless. His name is the support of the unhappy. It is He who showeth man the way he ought to go. Thou art bound by thy oath on the Quran. Bring the matter to a good end according to thy promises. It is incumbent on thee to act wisely and be discreet in all thy actions. What though my four sons were killed, I remain behind like a coiled snake? What bravery is it to quench a few sparks of life? Thou art merely exciting a raging fire the more. How well spoke the sweet-tongued Firdausi, 'Haste is the devil's work!' I would have gone many times to thee, had thy promise been kept when the bullocks were plundered. As thou didst forget thy word on that day, so will God forget thee. God will award thee the fruit of the evil deed thou didst design. *It is good to act according to thy religion and to know that God is dearer than life.* I do not deem thou knowest God, since thou hast done acts of oppression. Wherefore, the great God knoweth thee not and will not receive thee with all thy wealth. I will not enter thy presence, nor travel on the same road with thee, but if God so will it, I will proceed towards thee.

Fortunate art thou, Aurangaibz, king of kings, expert swordsman and rider. Handsome is thy person, and thou art intelligent. Thou art generous to thy co-religionists and prompt to crush thine enemies. Thy generosity is profuse,

and in battle thou art firm as a mountain. *Thou art monarch of the world, but far from thee is religion.*

I wanted to kill the hillmen who were full of strife. They worshipped idols and I was an idol-breaker. Behold the power of the good and pure God who by means of one man killed hundreds of thousands. What can an enemy do when God the friend is kind? His function it is, as the great Bestower, to bestow. He giveth deliverance and pointeth out the way to His creatures. He teacheth the tongue to utter His praises. In the hour of action, He blindeth the enemy. He rescueth the helpless and protecteth them from injury. The Merciful showeth mercy to him who acteth honestly. God bestoweth peace on him who heartily performeth His service. How can an enemy lead astray him with whom the Guide of the way is well pleased? Should tens of thousands proceed against such a person, the Creator will be his guardian. When thou lookest to thine army and wealth, I look to God's praises. Thou art proud of thine empire, while I am proud of the kingdom of the Immortal God. Be not heedless; this caravansary is only for a few days. People leave it at all times. Behold the revolution which passeth over every denizen and house in this faithless world. Even though thou art strong, annoy not the weak. Lay not the axe to thy Kingdom. When God is a friend, what can an enemy do even though he multiply himself a hundred times? If an enemy practise enmity a thousand times, he cannot, as long as God is a friend, injure even a hair of one's head."

Govind Singh was still pursued by the Mahomedan troops and seems to have retreated further east. While at Baghaur, he heard of Aurangazib's death. On Aurangazib's death, there was a scramble among his sons for the throne, and Bhahadur Shah who eventually became Emperor, sought Govind Singh's help. The assistance rendered by the Guru's army was valuable and earned him the gratitude of Bhahadur Shah. The Emperor went and met the Guru and expressed his affection and gratitude to the Guru. The Guru then marched on an expedition with the Emperor to the south, having been placed by the latter at the head of 5,000 horses. While they reached Nander on the banks of the Godavari, the Guru was mortally wounded by a Pathan assassin. The current Sikh account is that he was stabbed by one Gul Khan, a grandson of Painsa Khan, in revenge for the death of the latter at the hands of Guru Har Govind. Another account is given in Bhahadur Shah's history viz., that the Guru used often to address assemblies of disciples and strangers on religion, that, on one such occasion, some words fell from his lips which sounded to a Mahomedan as blaspheming his faith and that the latter at once stabbed the Guru with a poniard.

GURU'S LAST ADDRESS

As Govind Singh lay mortally wounded, he gathered himself and thus addressed his assembled followers, "O, Dear and Beloved Khalsa, the immortal God's will can never be resisted. He who is born must assuredly die. Guru Arjun hath said 'everything we behold shall perish.'—It is the Immortal God alone who ever abideth. . . .

..... Know that the light of the Imperishable God whose attributes are permanence, consciousness, happiness ever shineth in you. Wherefore always abide in cheerfulness, never give away to mourning..... For the love of creatures, the Guru assumed birth. He hath instructed them in the True Name..... O Khalsa, ever remember the true name. The Guru hath arrayed you in arms to procure you the sovereignty of the earth. Those who have died in battle have gone to the abode of bliss. I have attached you to the skirt of the Immortal God and entrusted you to Him. Read the Granth Sahib or listen to it, so shall your minds receive consolation." Again he said, "I have entrusted you to the Immortal God. Ever remain under His protection, trust no one besides. Wherever there are five Sikhs assembled who abide by the Guru's teachings, know that I am in the midst of them. I have infused my soul into the Khalsa and the Granth Sahib." He then bathed and putting on new clothes said "Wah Guru jika Khalsa. Wah Guru jiki Fatah. O beloved Khalsa let him, who desireth to behold me, behold the Guru Granth. Obey the Granth Sahib. It is the visible body of the Guru. And let him, who desireth to meet me diligently search its hymns."

Few lives, in or outside India, of saint or national leader, have had a more noble close.

SOME ESTIMATES OF GURU GOVIND'S WORK

AND CHARACTER

Says Cunningham, "It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to

lay the broad foundations which enabled his successor Govind Singh to fire the minds of the countrymen with a new nationality and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes. . . . In the heart of a powerful empire, he (Govind Singh) set himself to the task of subverting it, and from the midst of social degradation and religious corruption, he called up simplicity of manners, singleness of purpose and enthusiasm of desire." In another place, the same historian observes, "Success is not always the measure of greatness. The last Apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his two ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Govind Singh saw what was yet vital, and he revived it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Guru Govind Singh has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames In religious faith and worldly aspirations, they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community of inward sentiments and outward objects unknown elsewhere." In a short history of the Sikhs written by Mr. Payne, we find, "Like Nanak, Govind Singh attached the utmost importance to purity of life,

but on a level with it he placed brave deeds and devotion to the Sikh cause." The same writer observes elsewhere, "The martial spirit is the life of the Khalsa. As a man of peace, a Sikh is apt to allow his religious fervour to cool; but at the first sound of the call to arms, the spirit of Govind Singh stirs him anew, and he straightaway returns, sword in hand, to the paths of orthodoxy." We shall quote at the end the interesting tribute paid to Govind Singh by Latif in his History of the Punjab. He writes, "Awakening his countrymen to a new and noble life, and rousing their latent energies to a sense of common duty, he blended the undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of the devotee, and inspired the peaceful ploughmen with ideas of military glory. . . . In him were united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. He was a law-giver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his masnad, and a faqir in the society of the Khalsa."

GOVIND SINGH'S POETIC WORKS AND RELIGIOUS- ATTITUDE.

Govind Singh has left a number of works, some of them, the poems and hymns, being his own composition, and the others, the work of the fifty-two bards he employed, consisting chiefly of translations from the Hindu Epics and Puranas. These were collected together into a single work, called *Govind Singhi Granth*, or the *Granth* of Govind Singh, and form an object of devoted study and worship among the Sikhs, next to the older *Granth* of Nanak and his immediate successors. The original works in this collection consist of a

number of poems, hymns and prayers and the autobiography of the Guru, called the *Vichitra Natak*. These works fully embody the religion and teachings of the tenth Guru and also his great national and warlike ideals. Spite of the eager notes of warlike ambition and secular glory one often meets with in these poems, they are not without a strong mysticism and faith of their own and discover a great and beautiful conception of Godhead and of true religion.

We shall first quote from the *Vichitra Natak* some noble passages in which Govind Singh describes his mission and life-ideal. They lie together in the book with much common verse dealing with the worldly doings and history of of the Guru; but otherwise those poems are remarkable in many ways. They are full of a deep religious passion and spiritual insight. The legend of how the several avatars and saints sent by the Supreme Being to redeem the world became each absorbed in his own glory and praise discovers striking poetry and imagination. But though thus full of noble religion and poetry, the verses are not however untainted with something of the spirit of the very superstitions which they condemn.

“ I shall now tell my own history,
How God brought me into the world as I was
performing penance,

* * * * *

God remonstrated earnestly with me,
And sent me into this world with the following
orders—”

“ When I created this world;
I first made the demons, who became enemies and
oppressors.

They became intoxicated with the strength of
their arms,

And ceased to worship me, the Supreme Being.

They became angry and at once destroyed them—

In their places, I established the gods:

They also busied themselves with receiving sacri-
fices and worship,

And called themselves supreme beings.

Mahadev called himself the unperishable God;

Vishnu too declared himself to be God;

Brahm called himself the Supreme Brahm,

And nobody thought me to be God.

* * * * *

They who did not recognise the Primal Essence,
Worshipped them as God.

How many worshipped the sun and moon!

How many made burnt offerings! how many wor-
shipped the wind!

Some recognised a stone as God.

How many bathed in the water, according to
shastraic rites!

* * * * *

They whom I appointed to watch over creatures,

On coming into this world called themselves God.

They altogether forgot My Orders,

And became absorbed each in his own praise.

Then I created men,

They too fell under the influence of pride,

And made gods out of stones.

Then I created the Sidhs and the Sadhs,

But they too found not the Supreme Being.
 Whoever was clever in the world
 Established his own sect,
 And no one found the Creator.
 Enmity, contention and pride increased,
 Men began to burn trunk and leaves in their own
 fire*

And none of them went My way.

* * * *

They who follow true religion
 Shall have their sins of various kinds blotted out.
 They who endure bodily suffering
 And cease not to love Me,
 Shall all go to Paradise,
 And there shall be no difference between Me and
 them.

* * * *

I have cherished thee as My son,
 And created thee to extend My religion.
 Go and spread My religion there,
 And restrain the world from senseless acts."

* * * *

On this account God sent me,
 Then I took birth and came into the world.
 As He spoke to me, so I speak unto men ;
 I bear no enmity to any one.
 All who call me the Supreme Being
 Shall fall into the pit of hell.
 Recognise me as God's servant only :
 Have no doubt whatever of this.
 I am the slave of the Supreme Being,

(* Means "Big and little perished by their own contentions.")

And have come to behold the wonders of the
world.

I tell the world what God told me,

And will not remain silent through fear of mortals.

* * * *

As God spoke to me, I speak,

I pay no regard to any one besides.

I am satisfied with no religious garb ;

I sow the seed of the Invisible.

I am not a worshipper of stones,

Nor am I satisfied with any religious garb.

I will sing the Name of the Infinite,

And obtain the Supreme Being.

I will not wear matted hair on my head

Nor will I put on ear-rings ;

I will pay regard to no one but God,

What God told me I will do.

* * * *

I am imbued with Thy Name, O God !

I am not intoxicated with any other honour.

I am enamoured of Thy form ;

No other gift hath charms for me.

I will repeat Thy Name,

And avoid endless sorrow.

Sorrow and sin have not approached those

Who have meditated on Thy Name.

They who meditate on any one else,

Shall die of arguments and contentions.

The Divine Guru sent me for religion's sake :

On this account I have come into the world—

“ Extend the faith everywhere ;

Seize and destroy the evil and the sinful.”

* * * *

I will repeat God's name
 And all my affairs shall prosper.
 I will not close my eyes,
 Or do anything for show.

They who wear a religious garb
 Are deemed naught by the saints of God.
 Understand this, all men, in your hearts,
 * * * *

That God is not obtained by hypocrisy.
 * * * *

God is not found by mummery,
 Yet every one wandereth about thus searching
 for Him.

He who keepeth his heart in subjection,
 Recogniseth the Supreme Being.
 * * * *

God and God's servant are both one—deem not
 that there is any difference between them.

As waves produced from water are again
 blended with it.

God remaineth apart from those who indulge in
 wrangling and pride.”
 * * * *

Then follows a description of Govind Singh's
 birth and doings, his battles and victories. The
 poem thus concludes :—

“What can a miserable enemy do to him whom
 the Friend preserveth?
 He cannot even touch his shadow; the fool shall
 pass away.

All—death saveth all His saints.

He hath tortured and destroyed all sinners;

He hath shown wonderful things to His saints,

And saved them from all misery.

Knowing me to be His slave, He hath aided me ;
He hath given me His hand and saved me."

In the *Chaupai* and the introductory verses to the Puranas, we have Govind Singh's conception of the Divinity. As far as we can see, they alone, among all his poems, contain the nearest approach to any religious or philosophic theory of Godhead and-soul. The theory is clearly theistic : God is immanent in all creatures. "The Primal-Light which is called the One God, He at last infused into all His creatures." Though immanent in all, He yet transcends all and thus becomes an object of adoration and love.

"The one God is contained in all things
But He established them all separately
And He pervadeth them all unseen.

He hath given to all men their several entangle-
ments

He is separate from them and none of them hath
* . * * * found him "

"O God, thou dwellest apart from everything."

This was the theism that was current throughout North India in various forms, Vaishnavite and protestant; and, in spite of apparent differences of worship and mythology, was as much the religion of Vallabha as of Chaitanya, of the Maratha poets as of the Sikh Gurus.

"O God, give me Thy hand and protect me,
And all my desires shall be fulfilled.

May my heart be ever attached to thy feet !

Deem me Thine own and cherish me ;

Destroy all mine enemies ;

O Creator, may my family and all my servants and
disciples live in peace !

* * * * *

May the thirst for repeating Thy
name abide with me !
And may I not, forsaking Thee,
meditate on any one besides !

* * * * *

Be Thou always on my side ;
O Thou with the sword on Thy
banner, protect me ;
Preserve me, O Thou Preserver,
Beloved Lord, Protector of the saints,
Friend of the poor, Destroyer of the tyrants.

* * * * *

My obeisance to Him alone
Who Himself adorneth all His subjects,
Who bestoweth divine attributes and happiness
on His servants,
Who destroyeth their enemies in a moment,
Who knoweth what is within every heart
And the sufferings of the good and the bad.

* * * * *

He knoweth every one's sufferings,
And every secret of man's heart.
When the Creator projected Himself,
His creatures assumed endless shapes ;
Whenever thou drawest creation within Thyself,
O Lord,

All embodied beings are absorbed in Thee ;
All creatures endowed with speech
Speak of Thee according to their understanding—
Thou dwellest apart from everything ;

* * * * *

Men according to their different understandings
Give different descriptions of Thee, O God.

Thine extension cannot be conceived,
 Nor how thou didst first fashion creation.
*Thou hast but one form and that form is incompar-
 able.*

* * * *

O God, protect me now; —————
 Save those who are my disciples,
 And destroy those who are not.

(From the Charpai.)

O God, Thou art the Creator and the Destroyer—

* * * *

Thou dwellest apart and none can find Thee.
 Wherefore thou art called the Endless One.

* * * *

On seeing Thy saints distressed, Thou becomest
 uneasy;
 Wherefore thou art styled the Kinsman of the
 poor.

At last Thou shalt destroy the whole world;
 Wherefore the world calleth Thee Death.

* * * *

On beholding the poor, Thou art compassionate to
 them;

So we deem Thee the Friend of the poor.

* * * *

Thou didst appoint the forms of all things in the
 world;

Wherefore thou art called the Creator.

No one hath ever seen Thee anywhere;

Wherefore thou art called the Unseen.

Thou wert never born in the world;

Wherefore every one describeth Thee as Unborn.

* * * *

His form is incomparable and unequalled;

He hath no concern with garb or no garbs.
 He bestoweth on all but beggeth from none,
 Wherefore He is recognised as the Provider.

* * * *

He is not appeased by incantations, written or
 spoken, or by charms.

* * * *

Some go to places of cremation, others to
 cemeteries ;

But God is at neither ;

They who visit either are ruined by worldly love
 and contention.

And the Lord remaineth separate from them.

What is a Hindu or Mussulman to him

From whose heart doubt departeth ?

* * * *

They who are imbued with love for the one God

Disregard human opinion and are happy.

They who recognise the Primal Being as the one

God,

Allow no other belief to enter their hearts.

They who cherish any other belief

Shall be debarred from meeting the Friend.

* * * *

They who know not the virtue of the One Name

Belong neither to the forest nor to the house-

hold.

In the beginning God was the father of the whole

world ;

From Him light first proceeded ;

I have not sufficient ability to tell the tale,

Or to mention the names of the different

creatures he created.

Things strong and weak were produced ;

Things high and low were shown separately.
*The Primal Light which is called the One God,
 He at last infused into all his creatures.*

Know that the Light of the one God
 Is in all the souls which are in the world.
 The whole world shall be blended with God,
 Who is described as Kalarup.

Whatever is visible and perceptible by the senses,
 Man considereth *Maya*.

*The One God is contained in all things,
 But He established them all separately.*

And he pervadeth them all unseen.

*He hath given to all men their several entanglements,
 He is separate from them, and none of them hath
 found Him."*

The following poems, dealing with the majesty and power of God, are full of subtle poetry and mysticism, and recall some of the remarkable poems of Kabir and Nanak. One of them displays a beautiful sense for Nature and Her beauty:—

“ O mortal, touch the feet of the Supreme Being,
 Why sleepest thou the sleep of worldly love? Be
 sometimes wakeful and alert.

Why instruct others, O heart, since thou hast no
 knowledge thyself?

Why ever accumulate sin? Even now lay aside
 the love of it:

Deem such things simply as errors, and love truly
 religious acts.

Ever lay up the remembrance of God; renounce
 and flee from mortal sin.

If thou desire ever to have happiness of every
 kind, be absorbed in God's love.

God is peerless, imperishable, His throne is immov-
able;

He is peerless, endless, His praise is unrivalled;

He is the Indestructible and Invisible Lord.

He is everywhere king; He blossometh in the
forests and the glades—

His splendour is like the spring everywhere
diffused.

The Great One pervadeth the woods and glades,
birds and quadrupeds.

He everywhere blossometh; He is beautiful and
wise,

He blossometh like flowers, and glittereth like the
peacock.

His Power is perfect, He is the Bestower of food,
the Merciful,

The Treasury of Favour, the Perfect, the Bount-
eous.

Wherever we look, there appeareth His splendour.

He is free from anger and a treasury of grace.

He everywhere blossometh; He is beautiful and
wise.

He is the great King of the woods and glades, of
sea and land.

His splendour appeareth everywhere.

He is the Treasury of favour.

His light dazzleth, His glory is perfect.

The sky and the earth repeat His name.

Over the seven heavens and the seven hills,

His net of *karm* is spread unseen.

God ever cherisheth the poor, saveth saints and
destroyeth enemies.

Birds, hearts, mountains, snakes and kings—all He
ever cherisheth.

He cherisheth animals in sea and land,

He considereth not their evil acts.

Compassionate to the poor, an ocean of mercy,

He beholdeth man's sins, but wearieth not
of giving.

He destroyeth misery and sin; He crusheth an
army of evil men in a moment,

He smiteth the very valiant, but cherisheth love
for those who truly love Him.

The Beneficent one ever beholdeth man's secrets;

Yet He becomes not angry, and withholdeth not
their daily bread."

Like the other great mystics and preachers of this epoch, Govind Singh insisted on purity and love of God as the truest mode of worship. Some of his poems quoted below condemning superstition and idolatry have the force and *naivete* of Kabir's. The poem quoted first is remarkable for the prayer occurring at the end for a "mighty victory." Though religious and mystic in disposition, Govind Singh is at heart a born warrior.

"What availeth it if a crane sit closing his eyes
and displaying a religious garb to the world?

If man ever go about bathing in water like a fish,
how shall he obtain possession of God?

If man croak day and night like a frog, and fly
like a bird, how shall he obtain possession of
God?

Siam and all these saints say, hath anyone with-
out Love pleased God?

Of those who through greed of wealth continued
to loudly sing and recite God's praises,
And who danced but gave not their hearts thereto,
Hath any one found the way to God's wonder-
ful world ?

They excited laughter in the world and knew not
the essence of wisdom even in their
dreams.

The poet Siam asketh, if God hath been obtained
by any one without love ?

Several meditated in the forest, and returned
home weary.

Sidhs in meditation and Munis in deep research
have sought for God but found Him not.
Siam sayeth, all the Veds and the Mahomedan
books, and the wisdom of the saints have
thus decided.—

Hearken, O saints, the poet speaketh, they who
search with love obtain God.

I am the son of a brave man, not of a Brahman
how can I perform austerities ?
How can I turn my attention to Thee, O Lord, and
forsake domestic affairs ?

Now be pleased to grant me the boon I crave with
clasped hands ?

*That when the end of my life cometh, I may die
fighting in a mighty battle—*

What availeth it that men perform prostrations of
different kinds to God ? They are like wrest-
lers practising the exercise of *dand*.

What availeth it that men lie with their faces
turned up? If they do not heartily bow to
the supreme God, they are only as sick men.

If for ages thou do penance to a stone, it will
never rejoice thee.

O fool, it will never generously lift its arm to
requite thee.

Say what confidence can be placed in it? When
trouble ariseth it will not come to save thee.

O man, practise *jog* in this way—

Make truth thy horn, sincerity thy necklace,
and apply meditation as ashes to thy body;

Make restraint of thy heart thy lyre, and the
support of the Name thine alms;

Play the Primal essence as thy strings, *and*
thou shalt hear God's sweet song.

By the practice of the songs of divine knowledge,
waves of melody and exquisite pleasure shall
be produced.

Admonish thy heart, don the garb of self-
restraint and utter God's name inaudibly.

So shall thy body ever remain like gold and
death never approach thee."

The following poems deal with the cardinal
doctrine of equality of men, to which Govind
Singh's achievements gave a wide national scope
and meaning:—

"The temple and the Mosque are the same; the
Hindu worship and the Mussalman prayer are the
same; all men are the same; it is through error
they appear different.

All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same habits, —a compound of earth, air, fire and water.

Allah and Abhekh are the same; the Purans and the Koran are the same; they are all alike; it is the One God who created all.

As from one fire, millions of sparks arise; though rising separately, they unite again in the fire;

As in one stream millions of waves are produced; the waves being made of water, all become water;

So from God's form, non-sentient and sentient things are manifested, and, springing from Him, shall all be united in Him again."

In perfect unison with the new addition he had made to the old Sikh teaching and faith the linking of bravery and patriotism with purity of life and devotion to God—the linking of the devotion to God with devotion to the sword—he composed a new Jap or national prayer, which is still sung along with Nanak's and is held in equal veneration. New names are herein given to the Supreme Being who is figured as the Lord of the sword and the Lord of death.

"The tenth Guru spoke with his holy mouth—
God hath no chaki or marks, no colour, no
caste, no lineage,

No form, no complexion, no outline, no costume;
none can in any way describe him.

He is immovable, fearless, luminous, and measure-
less in might;

He is accounted King of Kings, Lord of millions
of Indras;

He is Sovereign of the three worlds, demi-gods, men and demons ; the woods and dales declare Him indescribable.

Lord, who can tell thy Names?

The wise call Thee special names according to Thy deeds.

(AKAL USTAT)

May we have the protection of the Immortal Being !

May we have the protection of All-Steel !

May we have the protection of All-Death !

May we have the protection of All-Steel !"

We may quote at the end the sawaiyas said to have been composed by Govind Singh himself and usually sung when the pahul is administered. The poems are characteristic :—

God is true, eternal, true to his promise ; He is from the beginning without beginning, unfathomable and invincible.

County, mercy, self-control, austerities, daily ceremonies, continence, fasting, clemency, religious observances—all are contained in the name of the Immutable One.

He is, from the beginning, pure, without a beginning, infinite, endless, without enmity, without fear.

He hath form and is without form or outline ; He groweth not old ; He is compassionate and merciful to his poor.

* * * *

O True and Eternal One, perpetual is Thy dominion ; it is Thou who madest the Vedas and the Quran.

Thou didst appoint demi-gods, demons, the Sesha
serpent, the past and the present.

From the beginning, before the ages, the stainless
the Indestructible, *Thy Light is seen, thou
Thou art unseen.*

O foolish man, Who hath come to tell thee of the
Invisible God ?

* * * *

The *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Quran*, all have
grown weary singing Thy praises, O God, but
Thou art not known unto them.

Thou knowest all hearts on earth, in heaven, in
the nether regions and in every direction.

*Thy praises fill the earth ; they entering my heart
told me this—*

* * * *

Some worship Brahma as God, others point to
Shiv as God ;

Some say that Vishnu is the Lord of the world
and that by worshipping him all sins are erased.

Think on this a thousand times, O fool ; at the
last hour, all thy gods will forsake thee.

Meditate on *Him in thy heart who was, is and ever
shall be.*