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THE INFLUENCE OF HINDUISM IN AMERICA
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

By

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A Thesis

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Dedicated

to

ELIZABETH IRENE,

whose loyalty and unselfishness

made it possible for me

to undertake this study.

FOREWORD

Most people have come to think of the influence of the West, its culture, its science and wealth, and its religion, upon the East; to many, therefore, the reversing of this process to the influence of the East, its culture, its philosophy, and its religion, upon the West is entirely a new idea. This was my experience also.

Seven years ago, beginning work as a missionary in India, I was startled and a bit upset by the repeated question of educated Indians: "How many Hindu converts are there in America?" Being acquainted with the gullible nature of great masses of American people, I merely stated that there might be some, though I had met none.

The Hindus further informed me that one of their great gurus (teachers), Vivekananda, went to America and there, proving the superiority of the Vedic scriptures, converted thousands to Hinduism. Not so much later I read in a Hindu fourth grade reader the same story of Vivekananda's successful missionary career in America. This was a revelation. Is it true, I thought, that there are Hindu missionaries in America converting Americans to Hinduism even as I am in India converting Hindus to Christ? To me this became a problem for further study and research. The present dissertation is the result.

GIFT OF Author

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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A. The Relevancy

Unprecedented changes are taking place in the world. It is simply impossible for any one person to understand, interpret and evaluate what is happening. There are tremendous events of far-reaching consequence. There are influences and counter-influences; there are actions and reactions. It is not likely that in the future any one nation will be able to live exclusive of another; or that any one nation can remain uninfluenced by other nations regardless of their remoteness. No wise man would now dare predict what the world will be like in the next twenty-five years, or even decade.

The well-known, commonly accepted quotation of Kipling, "The East is East, and the West is West, and never the twain shall meet," has long since been proved to be a short-sighted prediction. We have always been accustomed to thinking in terms of Western influence upon the East. That day, though not past, is being modified before our eyes by a reversal of the process; namely, the influence of the East upon the West. And I am convinced that this is considerably greater than many naive Americans realize. The influence of the East upon America is

conscious and unconscious on the part of both America and India.

Figuratively, the world is becoming smaller and smaller. To understand correctly developments and changes in our own country as well as to solve our problems of international relationships it is now extremely essential that we become familiar with the history, background, and religion of other countries of the world. Our own government understands this. It now offers a special course in cooperation with Columbia University, and other universities, for the special training of select young men in international problems and relationships who are scheduled to go to foreign countries immediately after the war to help rebuild those countries devastated by war or, perhaps, taken over by the victorious nations.

Many books have been written the past fifty years to show the influence of Christianity on Hinduism and to make a comparison of Hinduism and Christianity. Few have been written to show the influence of Hinduism on America.¹

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1. The first to deal with the particular problem as far as is known was Elizabeth A. Reed: Hinduism in Europe and America, 1910; and a well-written book by Wendell Thomas: Hinduism Invades America, 1930; and more recently an Englishman, L. S. S. O'Malley, C. I. E.: Modern India and the West, 1941, has made a more general study of the interaction of Eastern and Western civilization.

B. The Problem

It is not my purpose to duplicate what has been done, but rather to use what limited facts are available on the subject and, in as far as possible, to continue the study, with special interest in the activities of the Ramkrishna Mission. Some questions are pertinent to the subject: What is Hinduism? How and why did Hinduism come to America? What is the extent and nature of Hindu missionary effort in America? Is Hindu missionary effort progressing or declining? What explanations can be found as to the basis of the appeal of Hinduism to Americans?

The limitations of time will not make it possible to make as exhaustive a study as should be made. The field is large. But my study should be wide enough and inclusive enough to make it possible to draw certain conclusions as to the general trend of the influence of Hinduism in America, its nature and extent, and to evaluate the future possibilities. Further, this study is not a comparison of Hinduism and Christianity, though the reader may be led to make such, but rather it is an unprejudiced, objective effort to study such facts as are available.

C. The Method

For a thorough understanding of the subject it will be necessary, in the first place, to go into the

historical background of Hinduism. But this I will do as briefly and simply as clarity and understanding will permit.¹

Secondly, we will trace the beginning and development of Hindu mission effort. Thirdly, Hindu Missions in America will be studied, especially since 1930, concluding with some evaluation of the future of Hindu Missions in this country.

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1. For exhaustive studies of historical Hinduism the reader is referred to such authorities as Max Mueller, J. N. Farquhar, H. D. Griswold, Edward Washburn Hopkins, L. S. S. O'Malley, etc.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Early Hindu Period (about 2000 B.C. - 700 A.D.)

1. The Aryan Invasion of India

Few seem to be aware of the fact that about one-fifth of the people of the world,¹ or about four hundred millions, are Indians.² In population that great country, which the Hindus like to call Hindustan, is second only to China. It is a vast country composed of 1,318,347 square miles, or about the same as all of Europe, excluding Russia.³

There are in India in round numbers, according to the 1941 census, 239 millions of Hindus; 77 millions of Moslems; 12 millions of Buddhists; 6 millions of Christians, about one-half Catholics; 4 millions of Sikhs; 8 millions of tribal peoples; 1 million Jains; one hundred thousand Zoroastrians; and twenty-four thousand Jews.⁴

The people of India speak 225 languages and

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1. Minoo Masani: Our India, p. 1; also Hindustan Year Book for 1942, pp. 110, 217.
2. The Hindustan Year Book for 1942 gives the census for 1941 at 388,000,000 souls (p. 221). The population of India is rapidly increasing. The rate of increase from the 1921 to the 1931 census was ten per cent; and from 1931 to 1941 was fifteen per cent.
3. Masani, op. cit., p. 2.
4. Hindustan Year Book for 1942, p. 217.

dialects¹ and come from four leading racial ancestry.² It is not known when nor from whence the first ancient settlers came into India. They are called the Dravidians. These aborigines dwelt in the plains, hills and jungles all over India. They have distinct physical characteristics which are still easily distinguished. But then, when other races began to migrate into India from the northwestern and northeastern passes, intermingling and intermarrying, these distinctive physical characteristics more and more disappeared. However, in South India most of the people are of the purer Dravidian racial group, the Aryan infiltration not having been so extensive there; and in the extreme northern part of India, as in Kashmir and in the Punjab, more of the people are purely Aryan, being tall, fair, and strong.³

Somewhere in Central Asia about four or five thousand years ago in the dim history of ancient civilizations there was some great upheaval, starting immigrations of the mighty Aryan race. To the northwest went that part of the Aryan family which was destined to be the ancestors of the Germanic, Slavonic and Celtic nations of Europe. Another division of these disturbed peoples began migrating east. Later, due to a split, a

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1. Hindustan Year Book for 1942, op. cit., p. 219.
 2. E. W. Thompson: History of India, pp. 3-6.
 3. Ibid., p. 4; also see O. E. Burton: A Study in Creative History, p. 162 ff.

part settled in Persia, and the remainder pushed on into India through the high passes of the Northwest.¹ They were a tall, handsome race, light in complexion, not a great deal different in appearance from their European cousins and just as proud of their Aryan heritage.² Other racial groups entering India were the Scythians, who came from Central Asia about one thousand years later, and the Mongoloids who entered through the northwestern passes.

It was the Aryans who were fated to play the leading role in the development of that great religion popularly known as Hinduism, a term so elusive as to make its definition almost impossible. Back in that early historic age when Abraham was being called out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees to go into another land, "Unto a land that I will show thee," not too far from that center of world culture the stage was being set for the formulation of a religious culture that has been the wonder of the world; and has been the cause of the wielding together of hundreds of millions of people in a vast country composed of many races.

The life and faith of the early Aryans was simple. For information concerning the life and religion of the time we are indebted to an ancient collection of

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1. Thompson, op. cit., p. 6.

2. See Adolph Hitler: Mein Kampf, 1940 Edition, Reyan and Hitchcock, esp. p. 40 ff.

Aryan hymns called the Rig Veda.¹ There were wars with the native Dravidian tribes. These were easily conquered by the superior Aryans, who killed many of them; others fled to the hills and interior; many also were made slaves. They either married the Dravidian women or made them concubines.

Modern Hindus speak of their early Vedic age as the Golden Age of Hinduism in contrast to the present-day kaljug.² It was in general a time of prosperity and consolidation. Harvests were plentiful. Cattle multiplied. Barter was carried on with cattle and grain, which formed their chief wealth.³

2. Conquest and Religious Development

a. Social and religious customs

Social and religious customs were very different from what we now find them in modern Hinduism. There

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1. This collection of 1,017 hymns was preserved by oral transmission of father to son from generation to generation by Brahman priests, only to be written about 1200 B.C. See G. H. Singh: *The Hindu Religious Quest*, p. 4; and J. N. Farquhar: *Outline of Religious Literature of India*, pp. 6-15. In addition to the Rig Veda there are three other Vedas, making a total of four. The Sarma Veda contained sacred formulas, called mantras, and is of later date than the Rig; so also the Yajar Veda is of later date and contains hymns taken from the Rig Veda and prose mantras used at times of sacrifices. Atharva Veda, compiled between 600 B.C. and 500 A.D., contains charms and black magic from which Hindu medical science draws its chief inspiration.
2. The age of darkness, sin and evil.
3. Thompson, Farquhar, Singh, and others:

were no hard and fast rules. There was no caste system;¹ the Aryans, however, considered themselves superior to the older Dravidian races; there was no child marriage;² widows could remarry;³ sons were not required to follow the trade of their fathers;⁴ there were no Zenanas.⁵ Sati was not practiced;⁶ but as in most primitive tribes exposures of girl-babies and old people was customary.⁷

The Aryan ancestors brought with them their animistic beliefs, deifying especially the phenomena of nature: sun, moon, atmosphere, clouds, rain, lightning, the earth, and a liquor called soma. There was elaborate worship in connection with the latter. In fact, every great and wonderful thing in nature was worshiped and made a god.⁸ They also rigidly practiced ancestor wor-

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1. Though there was no caste system, yet the people were more or less divided into the three general classes of soldiers, priests, and common. Intermarriage was permitted.
2. This practice is being somewhat modified today as a result of the law making it illegal; also, no doubt reform movements within Hinduism and Christianity have had their influence.
3. This is still impossible today.
4. The caste system as practiced today makes it next to impossible for the son to do otherwise.
5. Seclusion of women among higher castes is still rigidly observed. The custom was brought into India by Mohammedans.
6. The practice of widow-burning has been entirely abolished.
7. See J. N. Farquhar: A Primer of Hinduism, on the social and religious customs of early Aryans.
8. Thompson, op. cit., p. 11; Farquhar, op. cit., p. 22. The worship of the early Aryans was much like that of their Persian Zoroastrian brothers, commonly called the Parsees in India, who still worship no idols but the five elements: earth, fire, water, light, air.

ship.¹

At that early date they did not yet make temples and images. They worshiped their gods by sacrifices, often of animals, on simple altars along with the singing of songs composed by Brahman priests. The Brahmans were influential among the people who thought that they were able to prevail with the gods in their behalf. Thus the priests made themselves indispensable to the common people. Each chieftain ruler had his own Brahman priest who acted as a spiritual and temporal advisor in all his undertakings.² The rise and power of the Brahmans was not a little due to the Brahmanical schools established for Brahman boys.

In these schools from generation to generation, first by oral tradition and memorization and later by writing, were kept alive the hymns, the rules for ceremonial worship and sacrifices, the mantras; in brief, the scriptures of the Vedic Aryans.³ Out of these schools also gradually developed the sacred scriptures called the

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1. There still is observed in modern Hinduism a festival called Pitara, at which time a special feast is prepared and some of the food is first taken and placed on the roof of the house for the ancestors to come and partake of. Usually the crow turns out to be the ancestor.
2. J. N. Farquhar: Outline of the Religious Literature of India, p. 25.
3. H. D. Griswold: The Religion of the Rigveda, p. 48; Singh, op. cit., p. 3.

Brahmanas.¹

During this time changes were taking place. A great culture was in process of development. There was gradual conquest of India. The first Aryan tribes were moving east into the Jumna and Ganges Valleys, even on into South India. The exact time of the conquest of South India is not known. While some of the first invaders were moving on east and south new groups of invaders were coming in from the north. Tribes were organized which later developed into smaller and greater kingdoms. These provided the historical and partly mythical background for the great Indian epics, the Ramayan, and the Mahabharat. The conquest of India was not only accomplished by the sword, but also by the powerful influence of the priests. They were called gods. They worked out more and more elaborate systems of sacrifices, charging heavy fees for their services. This eventually was to be the cause of their undoing, resulting in the great reform movements of Buddhism and Jainism.

b. Developments during period of Sruti scriptures

Religious ideas were undergoing changes. In the Vedic period there was no karma nor awagaman, also no

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1. The Brahmanas were prose containing practical guidance for priests in their rituals and sacrifices. Also in this later period between 1200 B.C. and 800 B.C. came into being the scriptures called Aryankas, which were written as practical guidance for world-renouncing ascetics living in the jungles.

sansara.¹ No conception of one God as Creator, or as a mysterious, divine essence filling and inherent in all the universe. But in the Upanishads² we have the beginning of all the major modern Hindu conceptions: the beginning of caste, of a search for one God or universal Spirit and unifying world principle, individual souls not as separate entities but as emanations of the universal spirit. We must not think that these were well-formed doctrines by the time of the Upanishads. This was not true; only fragments of these ideas are found so early. A summary of teaching of the Upanishads is here given:

a. God as universal-soul-in-all-things, in all life and in man.

b. World and life negation. Man to gain freedom and union with God must live completely detached from all that is earthly.

c. Doctrine of reincarnation.

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1. Karma is the law of cause and effect; awagaman means transmigration; the word sansara literally means world, and denotes the abnegation of life and the world, both of which are undesirable and to be escaped from as quickly as possible by emergence into the divine, impersonal, universal spirit.
2. Farquhar and Hopkins, both authorities, agree on the date of the Upanishads as about the sixth century B.C. See Farquhar: Outlines of Religious Literature of India, p. 55. They are definitely later than the Brahmanas, but like the Vedas and the Brahmanas they too were handed down from mouth to mouth in the gurukulas (Brahmanical schools). It is not known when writing came into use among the Indo-Aryans, possibly as early as 890 B.C., but their scriptures were not written down for many centuries later; Albert Schweitzer thinks after the time of Christ. See his "Indian Thought and Its Development," p. 32.

d. Brahman mysticism has nothing to do with ethics; it is super-ethical, above it.

e. The teaching of the Upanishads is not a homogeneous, self-contained system; it lacks unity and completeness.

f. The Hindu Trinity: Brahma, the God-trinity--(1) Brahma, the creator, (2) Vishnu, the preserver, (3) Shiva, the destroyer.¹

The development of karma and transmigration grew out of consideration of the varying fortunes of men and the apparent inequalities of life. From a consideration of these facts came the conception of sansara (the world) as evil and undesirable. To be free from the world and its endless wheel of rebirths was desirable. Since salvation as prescribed by the Brahmans of expensive and elaborate systems of sacrifices was difficult from the practical point of view, they began to look for new ways of salvation, as bhakti, gyan, and tapasia;² and by the end of the period of the Upanishads³ two of the most characteristic Hindu customs were regarded as right, namely, the use of idols in worship and child marriage.

The Upanishads end the period called the

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1. See Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 32.

2. Bhakti denotes devotion; gyan, wisdom or knowledge; tapasia refers to ascetic practices, includes self-inflicted torture of various kinds.

3. 600-480 B.C., see Farquhar: Primer of Hinduism, pp. 42-47.

Sruti, during which the caste system, the supremacy of the Brahman, the doctrine of karma and transmigration were generally accepted axioms. Sruti means revelation and refers to the primary Hindu scriptures: the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Brahmanas, and the Vedanta. The Bhagwat Gita, though much later, is also considered Sruti scripture as eternal and direct revelation from God.¹

The Aryans were growing in wealth, power, and religious influence. They, by then, had pretty well penetrated the whole of the peninsula of India. Many political changes took place; powerful kingdoms were formed. It is beyond the purpose of this study to give historical-political developments of the Aryans, though to a student of Hinduism this development is important and does have a definite bearing on religious development. It will, however, be of interest for the reader to know about the invasion of northern India by Alexander the Great in 326 B.C. He gained control of only the Punjab, and as soon as he died in 323 B.C. a revolt broke out under the leadership of Chandragupta, who founded the first empire of India in 321 B.C.²

c. The Smriti scriptures

In contrast to the Sruti, and of later date, are the Smriti scriptures. Smriti means "tradition" and

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1. See Singh, op. cit., p. 62.

2. See Farquhar: Primer of Hinduism, pp. 58-59.

refers to the more recent scriptures since about 600 B.C. They are thought of as human composition, except the Bhagwat Gita. They are based on tradition and include, in addition to the codes of Manu, the Epics, the Puranas, and the Agamas. The Smriti are secondary scriptures.¹

Among these are various codes of law; the best known and most important are those of Manu. Scholars think he lived in Bengal sometime after 600 B.C. He likely wrote his codes about 500 B.C. They are important for they crystallize the teaching of caste and also have become the basis of jurisprudence of an entire Hindu community.² Manu emphasized the infallibility of the Vedas. The caste system was also given a fixed character and definitely taught.

Undoubtedly the most read Hindu scriptures today are not the Sutri, but the Smriti epics called Mahabharat, Ramayan, and the Gita. The Bhagwat Gita composes a main section of the Mahabharat. Mahabharat comes from Maha, meaning great, and Bharat, which is another term for India. The epic Mahabharat is the mythical, semi-historical story of a great war of the Bharatas, containing over 100,000 couplets--the longest epic in all world literature. The story takes place with Delhi as center. It likely was not written at once, but

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1. See Singh, op. cit., p. 62 f.

2. See Singh; and M. Williams: Hinduism, p. 53.

passed through many stages of growth until it reached its final form. This work is so important to us because it gives us information about the customs, beliefs and religion of the time. It is also the background for the Gita.¹

The Ramayan is of later date than the Mahabharat. Most of the original story is believed to have been composed by one Valmiki, living about 600 B.C. The story grew with the years and was finally completed in its present form about 250 A.D. The story is about Rama and Sita. These two epics (that is, the Mahabharat and Ramayan) are well known to even the most illiterate and ignorant villagers. They are continually being dramatized in the villages by professional and unprofessional dramatists. How they love to see them! The purpose of the Ramayan was to popularize and teach by legend and history the principles of the Vedas.²

Bhagwan is a commonly used word for deity, while git is the word meaning song; so we have the title of this best known and most loved of Hindu sacred literature, the Gita, literally called, The Song of the Gods. It is the New Testament of the modern Hindu. There are now popular pocket editions which are carried around even to work or on trains to be read much as we might take the

1. See Farquhar, Schweitzer, Singh, etc.

2. See Sharma, op. cit., p. 10 ff.

New Testament with us for devotional reading in spare time. The Ramayan is for the Hindu, their Old Testament. The Bhagwat Gita composes a section of the Mahabharat, giving a collection of the utterances of Krishna, the charioteer, in conversation with Arjuna, while on the battlefield. Arjuna is in the dilemma of having to face an enemy who are his relatives. How can he kill them without committing sin is his problem. The answer given by Krishna composes the main burden of the book. The solution says Krishna is to perform without attachment what is imposed by deity, that is, have no personal interest in the fruit of the action, thus is the soul freed from guilt. In the first part Krishna appears as a historic character, the charioteer of Arjuna in the battle; in the end of the poem he is deified and made the object of worship. There are a few things worthy of notice for our study. It was an attempt to reconcile the many systems of thought which already in the time of the Upanishads were beginning to develop. The Gita expresses a strong desire for an incarnate personal savior. The idea of an incarnation of Deity is not found in the Vedas but in the Gita. Krishna is deified, having become the incarnation of God, to be worshiped, who alone can save.

"Thinking on me, thou shalt overcome all obstacles by my grace..... Merge thy mind in me, be my devotee, sacrifice to me, prostrate thyself before me, thou shalt come even to me."¹

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1. Eighteenth discourse, from a popular translation by Anne Besant.

The Gita was written to check the first reform movements, those of Jainism and Buddhism. The first conflict between Hindu world and life negation and world and life affirmation is found in the Gita.¹

d. Early reforms--Jainism and Buddhism--sectarian scriptures

In the period after 570 B.C. we have early beginnings of reformations. As already noted, the priests had built up an elaborate system of sacrifices and worship, making it difficult for ordinary poor people to observe. The reformations were also a protest against idol worship.

One of these groups was the Jains. Jainism was founded by Mahavira in the first part of the fifth century B.C. It is one of the eleven living religions of the world and has a following in India, according to the 1941 census, of 1,252,105.² They claim that their religion is eternal. They do not believe in God, oppose caste, accept the Hindu idea of matter as evil, also the philosophic doctrines of karma and transmigration. They do not believe women can obtain salvation. The chief virtues are asceticism, mendicancy, and ahimsa (non-violence). The doctrine of ahimsa grows out of their conception that all life and even all matter of earth,

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1. See Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 181, ff.
2. Hindustan Year Book, op. cit., p. 217.

air, water, etc., has a soul. They still today are most rigid in their practice of ahimsa. They will always eat before sundown so no light need be used in eating, lest the light attract insects which inadvertently might be eaten, causing them to commit a sin by taking life. About 1 A.D. there was a schism of the Jains; the question at issue was whether monks should wear white robes or discard clothing. They divided on the question into the Svetambara (white clothed) and the digambara (the naked) sects. The groups today still remain divided, the gurus of the latter wearing no clothing whatever. In Drug, C. P., a year ago this group had a large jamboree which lasted a week. One of their famous naked monks came for the occasion. Thousands of people were present, some from as far as Bombay and Calcutta.¹

Buddhism was another of the major early reform movements within Hinduism. Hinduism now definitely claims Buddhism as one of its children. Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born about 560 B.C. The basis of his system is the well-known four noble truths: all life is misery; misery comes from desire; destroy desire and you will be free; and the eight-fold path to freedom from desire: right belief, right resolve, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort, right watchfulness, right concentration. Gautama Buddha (from

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1. See Farquhar, Singh, Hume, Hopkins, on the Jain sect.

the stem of the noun meaning wise) accepted the doctrine of transmigration, but not caste. Like the Jainists he greatly stressed the necessity of preserving all life. The founder of Buddhism did not attempt to overthrow the system of the Brahmanic priesthood. Coming from the warrior caste (Kshatriya) he denied the value of Brahman birth or wisdom. His doctrine, like Hinduism, is life-denying. He early became a most austere ascetic, seeking salvation through severest self-discipline, but received a divine revelation, an enlightenment. He felt the call to preach salvation to the world through the four noble truths. This was Buddha's religion for the masses: the four noble truths and their application to others, which implied kindness and love to humanity. Buddhism flourished until about the tenth century, when it practically died out in India but continued strong in Tibet, Ceylon, China, and Japan.¹

Jainism and Buddhism grew rapidly. To counteract further their influence Hinduism developed the sectarian scriptures called the Agamas.² They reveal the innate longing of man for a personalized religion.

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1. See Hume, Farquhar, and Hopkins.
2. The Agamas contained Vedic ideas, but there were also instructions regarding temple ceremonies, religious practices, temple-building, image making. Singh places their date about 250 B.C., while Farquhar in his "Outline of Religious Literature of India" places the date of the earliest Agamas in the seventh and eighth century A. D. There are about two hundred of these sectarian scriptures.

Brahma, or Ishwara, was thought of as a trinity: Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; Siva, the destroyer.

Each of these were also given wives: "Brahma married Saraswati, the goddess of learning; Vishnu married Laxmi, the goddess of wealth; and Siva married Sakti or Kali, the goddess of destruction."¹ Sakti is common to all three of these and as such is called Mother. The appeal to the popular mind, popularizing the worship of Vishnu, Siva, and Sakti was Hinduism's method of stemming the tide of the reforms. Temples were built for these gods, images were made of them. Religion was being personalized, and this appealed to the popular mind and was most effective.

By about the second or third century B.C. there were many systems of thought. An effort was made to classify and unify these systems. The result was the Shaddarshan;² that is, the six philosophies. These six schools of philosophy are often divided into three pairs, according to their similarity: the Nayaya and Vaishesika; Samkhya and Yoga; Mimansa and Vedanta.

The Nayaya system is the basis for the Hindu

1. Singh, op. cit., p. 20, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, though spoken of as three, are a trinity, only three aspects of the same God. He is one God called Brahma as he creates, Vishnu as he preserves, and Siva as he destroys. One God with three forms. See Sharma, op. cit., p. 76.
2. The word literally means the six visions.

system of logic and was founded by Gautama, and systematized about 1 A.D.; the Vaisheshika is a materialistic philosophy classifying phenomena, and holds the atom responsible for the origin of the universe. It also became a system about 1 A.D.

Samkhya is an atheistic system founded about 600 B.C. by Kapila. His ideas deal with matter, soul and the three qualities of matter. "Salvation is attained by a clear knowledge of the distinction between matter and soul."¹ Yoga is allied with the Samkhya system because, though not altogether atheistic, it has atheistic tendencies. Yoga is from a Sanskrit verb, Yuga, meaning to join (with God, as used here). It "appertains to various techniques of self-discipline involving mental concentration and leading to mystical experiences and intuitions."² The system was founded by Patanjali. It is based on the theory that the way to God is by knowledge which is to be gained through concentration, and gives guidance on this kind of discipline. There are six kinds of Yoga: Karma (works), Bhakti (devotion), Gyan (knowledge), Mantra (repetition of sayings, prayers, etc.), and Raja (means kingly) Yoga, which is a synthesis of all. In fact, Hindus do not divide them. It is more true to say that they blend into each other. There are also stages of

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1. Farquhar, Outline of Religious Literature of India, p. 122.

2. Paul Brunton: The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga, p. 20.

Yoga: pure thoughts, posture, exercises, rhythm of breath, nerve control, mind control, meditation, ecstasy.¹ Ecstasy or Samdhi is the highest; and Samdhi really means union with God, a Yogic experience in which individual personality is lost in union with impersonal God, resulting finally in the loss of consciousness. Paul Brunton, in his last book referred to before, is most interesting and illuminating on the subject of Yoga. Hindu mystics, however, would not agree with him. The Yoga system should be studied in greater detail because of its popularity in modern Hinduism. As a system it has also been much emphasized by Hindu missionaries in America. The term has found its way into the vocabulary of most of the cults of America.

The remaining two systems of Darashans are the Mimansa, which recommends karam marg (way of works and observance of ceremonies and sacrifices) as a way of salvation, and the Vedanta (literally, end of the Vedas). The Vedanta is perhaps the most important of the Darshanas.

"The work is a manual of exegetics for students of the classical Upanishads, and is based on the belief that these treatises are in the fullest sense revelation and therefore contain a harmonious body of truth."²

All Hindus hold the Vedanta in highest respect and as infallible. It contains the following main doctrinal ideas:

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1. See Singh, op. cit., pp. 21-23; Farquhar, op. cit., pp. 122-126.
2. Farquhar, Outlines of Religious Literature, p. 126.

Brahma is one, formless, intelligence; he is the source of scripture and omniscient, can be known only from scripture; he is the final cause of the universe, but as such he is purposeless and inactive; the world though created by him has no beginning or end; so also scripture is eternal; the individual soul is eternal, intelligent, and all-pervading; this is true because it is a part of Brahma; knowledge alone of our relation to Brahma brings us salvation; chastity and meditation on Brahma is the path to knowledge; karma, transmigration, and release come from Brahma.¹

These philosophies are well known today and are frequently referred to by all literate Hindus.

The Puranas² are a popular, widely known and widely used literature of the common people. They are largely composed of stories and myths and rather vulgar legends of the doings of the gods. This may account for their popularity. Their purpose was to teach conceptions of creations and origins, about the universe and early history to the masses of illiterate people.

3. Summary of the Early Hindu Period

Let us break the story of historic Hinduism to

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1. See Farquhar, loc. cit., ff.
2. The word means "ancient", really "ancients". There were 18 in number but more were added later. They were a growing literature with roots down in the fourth and fifth century B.C. They were finally edited about 650 A.D. (Singh, op. cit., p. 23). Farquhar puts their date earlier.

summarize its characteristics here at the close of the period of the creative scriptures. From the foregoing study it is easy to see how difficult it is to define the religion of the Hindu. Some of them would say: "Don't call our religion Hinduism. It is not an 'ism'. It is a way of life." And, in many ways, it is not a religion as other religions are. It has no single founder or leader. It has no fixed beginning, as Christians date from the time of Christ or as Moslems from the time of Mohammed's flight to Medina. Hindu pundits teach that the Vedas are eternal. Further, it is not a single, organized system. It has no fixed creed. Growth and change are characteristic. We noticed how the faith and religious practices of the early Aryans were very simple. There was simple nature worship of natural phenomena without even temples or idols. Only gradually did the ideas of temples, idols, elaborate sacrifices, gods, karma, transmigration, god as the universal-soul-in-all-things, caste, world and life negation, all become a part of Hinduism. But by the end of the period of creative scriptures these were all characteristics in varying degrees of development.

Not only were growth and change a distinctive feature of Hinduism, but also tolerance. Hinduism already at that time was a composite of many religions¹

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1. See Sharma, op. cit., p. 6; and Williams, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

with doctrines as wide apart as atheism and belief in God; pantheism and theism; that is, from God as an all-pervading spirit, impersonal, inactive, without purpose, to God as personal, the soul and world as real and purposive, and more or less distinct from God.¹ The latter, however, is not a general concept of Hindus. The former pantheistic conception is most characteristic.

"Hinduism is more a name given to a league of religions rather than being one simple, homogeneous religion. In its comprehensive and tolerant fold we find all types of religions from the highest to the lowest."²

From the beginning Hinduism was not static. India is a land of religious experiment. From time to time it made adjustments of racial laws and customs of the people to meet the needs of the time. When the Aryans subjugated the aborigines, in place of destroying their gods they simply made them Hindu gods. Any newly conquered Dravidic tribe was given a place in the scale of caste and then permitted to retain its own social and religious practices. Hindus claim that their tolerance of viewpoint constitutes the strength of their religion and the reason why it did not perish like the religions of the Romans

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1. Ramanuja living about 1100 A.D. believed in a personal God. We noticed also how that in the Gita an effort was made to deify Krishna and make him an avatar (incarnation) of God. I could from my own experience give many illustrations to show how the longing for a personal deity is very strong in India, just as it is in the hearts of all men.
2. Sharma, op. cit., p. 25.

and Greeks. No doubt they are right. Hinduism does not consider any religion false. The following quotation from the Gita shows this: "However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Partha."¹

The genius of the Hindu religion is in its assimilation and compromise. It is relatively much more tolerant than any other living religion. To the reader this long discussion trying to define Hinduism may seem irrelevant. Later, when we come to Hinduism in America, the pertinence of this characterization will be seen.

B. The Mohammedan Period (about 700 A.D.-1500 A.D.)

1. Political Events

We are now about to enter another period in the history of India, roughly around 700 A.D. Political events² and religious developments were interwoven. Hindus call this period the beginning of decay of Hinduism. This in a sense was true as we shall see. The year

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1. Near the beginning of the fourth discourse. The translation is from Anne Besant's popular seventh edition.
2. For anyone wishing more complete information about the political developments I recommend the reading of Farquhar, Griswold, Monier-Williams, Hopkins and others. It is beyond the purpose of this study to give detailed information on that subject. I have purposely avoided historical names and places and other events not relevant to this study and not of special interest to average lay readers.

712 A.D. marks the entrance of the Mohammedans into North India by the way of Sindh. For several centuries they over-ran North India, persecuted the Hindus, desecrated temples, destroyed idols, looted the country and, by the edge of the sword, converted them to the faith of Islam. The Moslem rulers conquered most of India except the Deccan (South India) and by the first part of the thirteenth century had established an empire with Delhi as capital. The Hindus were finally saved by the rise of the Rajputs who were a brave warrior tribe of North India.

In Persia the Zoroastrians,¹ being persecuted by the Moslems, migrated to India in the beginning of the seventh century A.D., settling especially along the western coast all the way to Bombay where the community is still found in its greatest numbers.

Buddhism was being persecuted by both Hindus and Mohammedans. The Hindus destroyed their monasteries and killed their monks. As a result of persecution, by the end of the twelfth century Buddhism was practically wiped out except on the northern border of Tibet, which is still strongly Buddhist.

2. Changes in Hinduism

The foregoing political changes had repercussions on the religion of the Hindus. The coming of the

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1. The modern Parsees of India.

Mohammedans, who were polygamists and given to the vicious habit of taking Hindu wives as their concubines, led to the custom of Purdah.¹ Also during this time sati² came into practice. Hinduism had come a long way from the teaching of the Vedic scriptures. In place of Vedic sacrifices it was the worship of the temples that held the minds of the people. Hinduism was breaking up into many sects, the most important of which were Vaishnavism, Saivism, and Saktism.³ These were again divided into sub-sects. Worship in these various sects was much the same in some; different in others. The difference in the system of worship of Vaishnavites and Sivaites was largely in detail. The worship of the Saktas or Kali was phallic. Each sect had its symbol which the worshiper usually put on the forehead with ashes or color. The worship of a number of these sects, but not of all, was immoral and degrading.⁴

Mere mention can be made of such important figures of the sectarian period as Sankara,⁵ Ramanuja,⁶

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1. The custom of seclusion of women; if appearing in public, the covering of the face.
2. The burning of widows.
3. Vaishnavism worships Vishnu; Saivism worships Siva; and Saktism worships Kali. For a definition of these terms see page 22. Lengthy discussion of these sects here is impossible. For full discussion of these important sects the reader is referred to Hopkins, *Religions of India*, Chapters XV and XVII.
4. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 472 ff.
5. Lived sometime between 750 A.D. and 850 A.D.
6. Ante p. 27.

Madhava,¹ Ramananda,² Tulsidas,³

3. Reforms

During the fifteenth century effort was made to unite Hinduism with Mohammedanism. The two leading characters in this type of reformation were Kabir and Nanak. They rejected both the Koran and the Vedas.⁴ Kabir was a Mohammedan weaver but a disciple of the Hindu, Ramananda. He preached against the doctrine of incarnation, caste, and idol worship. His followers are called Kabirpanthis,⁵ and are found in many Hindu castes, mostly Sudras,⁶ and especially among the Satnamis of the Central Province. There are also Mohammedan disciples. The permanent influence of Kabir's teaching is rather doubtful, since today the Kabirpanthis lay most stress on ahimsa (not taking life) rather than against caste and idol worship.

Nanak,⁷ the founder of Sikhism,⁸ seems to have been a stronger character. Sikhism is one of the eleven religions of the world, according to R. E. Hume, now having a following of about four million people. Nanak

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1. Twelfth century A.D.
2. About 1450 A.D.
3. 1532-1623, poet and author of the world known Ramayana.
4. Singh, op. cit., p. 40.
5. Panth means way, so literally we have, the followers of the way of Kabir.
6. Lowest in the Hindu scale of caste.
7. He was born in 1469 A.D. of Hindu parents. His mother was very religious and influenced him greatly. At the age of 36 he renounced the world, much like Gautama, and went in quest of the true religion.
8. "Sikh" is the stem of the verb "to learn".

attempted to bring together the Hindus and Mohammedans; preached against caste and idol worship. Yet today the Sikhs are more pro-Hindu and rather bitter against the Mohammedans. Their chief emphasis today is the sacred book, called the Granth, and their central shrine at Amritsar, the world-famous Golden Temple. They were a brave people and are highly respected all over India as men and as warriors.

C. The British Period (about 1500 A.D. to date)

1. The Beginning of Western influence

One can conveniently divide the history of India into the Hindu, Mohammedan and British periods respectively.¹ In 1498 A.D. Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and landed in Calicut on the west coast of India. This marks the beginning of western influence. There were wars between European countries for supremacy in India. There were wars with Indian rulers. In the end Britain established itself. This was also the time of the beginning of Christian missions. Western education, through schools established by the English, combined with the work of missions, their schools, philanthropy and evangelism brought about revolutionary

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1. For a good brief study of the history of India the writer suggests E. W. Thompson: History of India, Seventeenth Edition, available at Christian Literature Society for India, Madras or Allahabad.

changes in India. Politically nationalism was beginning to take hold of the country; religiously there were again reforms. Some of the reformers became not only national but international figures.¹ Noted among them were Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), father of the famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1942), Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884), Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), Ramakrishna (1834-1886), Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-), Pundit Nehru (1889-), Swami Ram Tirtha.

These men were reformers. Hinduism is spoken of as having fallen into decay. They brought new wine for the old bottles. They had heavily imbibed western education, culture and religion. Most of them were deeply impressed with European life and world affirmation, and the New Testament teachings of Jesus on love. Jesus to them was an ideal. They devoted themselves to the study of all religions. There was much about the teaching of Jesus on love that seemed like their own doctrine of Ahimsa. The simple, almost ascetic life of Jesus naturally appealed to them. They were open minded and willing to learn from all religions. This was especially true of Ramakrishna.

2. New Reforms

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1. See Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 209 ff; Singh, op. cit., p. 43 ff.

The reforms of the foregoing men were the most significant development of modern Hinduism. A more detailed study of some of them is necessary because of their relation to Hindu missions in America. The Ramahrishna sect will, however, be reserved for the next chapter.

The Brahmo Samaj was formed about 1828 A.D. by Ram Mohan Roy. He was greatly influenced by both Christianity and Mohammedanism. He attempted a reform of Hinduism, rejecting especially superstition, idolatry and caste. He believed that the essential teachings of Christianity could be found in the Upanishads. He had acquired a remarkable knowledge of the religions of the world. He was acquainted with seven languages, including Greek and Hebrew which he learned so that he might be better able to understand the Bible. He was earnestly engaged in social reforms, and it was through his propaganda and effort that the British Government finally passed a law against sati (widow-burning). His conception of God was deistic.

The work of the samaj¹ continued under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore, also of a high Bengali Brahman family. He organized the society and drew up for it a doctrinal statement, including the following main teachings: God is personal and moral, yet not incarnate

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1. Samaj literally means society.

in historical persons; because He is personal He hears and answers prayer; God is a Spirit and must be worshiped in spirit and in truth, not with form; all races and castes may worship Him; salvation is by confession and cessation from sin; no book or scripture is authoritative.¹ In this latter point he differed from Ram Mohan Roy who accepted the authority of the Upanishads.

Keshab Chandra Sen, who was even more liberal than his predecessors, joined the samaj in 1858. He changed the Saturday day of worship to Sunday. His teachings were ethical and theistic. He went further in reform than did either Roy or Tagore, especially against caste and child marriage. The samaj would not follow him so he broke away and formed a new young church. This was made more Christian.

"In 1880 he announced in fervid language that Christianity was the only true religion: 'It is Christ who rules India not the British Government. England has sent a mighty moral force in the life and character of that mighty prophet to conquer and hold this vast empire. None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus ever deserved this precious diadem, India, and Jesus shall have it . . . Christ is a true Yogi.'"²

The new samaj practically broke up and Sen was ousted from leadership. Later he reverted to more true Hindu philosophy.

There was also the reform society called the Satsang, founded by Siva Dayal Saheb sometime between

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1. Albert Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 212.
2. E. W. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 521.

1818 A.D. and 1878. Compared to other reforms with teachings along the same general line, the Satsang is not so important.¹

Of greater importance is the reform movement of Dayanand Saraswati, founded about 1875 A.D. He too was a Brahman, but of Gujarat. The emphasis of Dayanand was back to the Vedas. "They are all we need to know," was his teaching. To put it mildly, he was bitterly opposed to other religions, especially Christianity and Mohammedanism. He wrote fierce denunciations against them in his "The Satyarth Prakash". This book has become the Bible of his society called the Arya Samaj.² This samaj is very strong today and the chief opponent of Christian Missions, which they oppose by means fair and foul. Regarding Christ, they try to prove that He was not a historical character but a myth. They further believe that the cow must be protected; that caste and idolatry must be abandoned. The latter ideas have become more or less theoretical since in modern days they themselves would not give up their castes and on the question of idolatry they are divided. They have been active in social, educational, and philanthropic work on lines similar to those of Christian missions.

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1. See further, G. H. Singh, op. cit., p. 46.
2. The Society of Aryans.

D. Summary

Since it was necessary to go so fast in covering a period of nearly four thousand years, let us pick up some of the loose ends in a brief summary of the chapter in order to clarify the general trends and larger movements which will help us to understand Hinduism, especially as found in America.

The invading Aryans had a simple faith with simple nature worship which gradually developed into belief in many gods, the worship of idols, and a complex priestly system of worship. The supremacy of the Aryans and economic problems were solved by the caste system. The Aryans from the beginning were tolerant toward other religions. The Dravidians were given a place in the system of Hindu castes. Their gods were placed in the pantheon of Hindu gods. Tolerance continued to be throughout even up to the present time one of the most distinguishing features of Hinduism. The first or early period was a time of consolidation, formation, development of the sacred scriptures, social, economic, religious beliefs and practices. The second period is thought of by the Hindus as the beginning of decay. The Mohammedans over-ran the country. In place of formation there was already the beginning of reformation in the Buddhists and Jainists. The third period is characterized as the period of Western influence. The English

came. There was widespread reformation, in several directions. The Brahmo Samaj leaned heavily towards the culture and religion of the West; Arya Samaj fought fiercely for a return to the Vedas. We might further characterize these periods by saying that early Hinduism moved castewise; later Hinduism was sectarian, and resulted in the founding of new sects and religions within Hinduism; in modern Hinduism we also have sectarian movements, but in addition there are individuals exercising tremendous national influence, such as Tagore, Nehru, and Gandhi. It is a period of the awakening of nationalism. India is growing up. There is definite feeling that India has a contribution to make to the world. So almost naturally Hinduism becomes a missionary religion, and this will now be discussed in chapter three.

CHAPTER III

HINDUISM BECOMES A MISSIONARY RELIGION

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HINDUISM BECOMES A MISSIONARY RELIGION

A. Ramakrishna, the guru

1. Introduction

There were numerous contributing causes for the reforms in Hinduism. It has always been changing, developing, and adapting itself to conditions without and within. We have already seen that Buddhism and Jainism were the result of a condition within Hinduism. But Hinduism was able to overcome these conditions, took over the main doctrines of Buddhism and made adaptations so that Buddhism, which was well on the way to becoming one of the major religions of India by about the twelfth century, was practically eradicated.

In the Mohammedan Period when large numbers of Hindus were converted to the Moslem faith there wasn't much that could be done about it. It was a conquest of the sword, of one Eastern religion by another. From the beginning of the nineteenth century on to the present time Hinduism was again face to face with a new enemy. But with the coming of the English came a new kind of conquest--a conquest of India's culture by Western religion and culture. With the English came missions, Western education, and Western materialism. In addition to

that, Hinduism within was again in need of reform. Hindus definitely felt their religion to be in a state of decay.

Western education was making a tremendous impression upon India. Christian missions were bringing to the foreground certain obvious weaknesses of Hinduism. Christianity was life and world affirming. It gave new value to human personality. It emphasized the need of helping the down-trodden, illiterate, ill-fed, and sick of India's poverty-stricken masses. To survive this new enemy Hinduism had to do something. Three things happened. These are not unrelated or exclusive one from the other. First, neo-Hinduism returned to the Vedas for new strength and life. This was particularly exemplified by the Arya Samaj.¹ They felt that a return to Vedic scriptures would bring about a revival of Vedic glory. Second, neo-Hinduism absorbed much from Western religion, culture, and materialism. Here again Aryan genius for syncretism was manifesting itself. This had always been its strongest weapon of self-defense. It was easier to swallow the enemy than to destroy him. Hinduism would gladly have taken over Christianity in total and made it another of its many systems. But Christianity refused to be swallowed. This led to a third most interesting development in view of the nature and teaching of Vedantism. Neo-

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1. Ante, p. 36.

Hinduism strangely enough became an aggressive missionary religion. This perhaps was all that could be done in self-defense in view of the rapid inroads of western religion and culture. In addition to this, India was awakening. The nineteenth century was a period of strong nationalism, which eventually in 1857 led to the Mutiny, and later to many other revolts, violent and non-violent. These continue down to the present day. There also came to be a feeling that India, though admittedly inferior in material ways, had a definite spiritual contribution to make to the world; and that the Vedanta as a philosophy and religion was far superior to what the West, so thoroughly materialistic, had to give. The West, it was admitted, could teach the East efficiency and the practical things of life; but to learn religion and philosophy the world had to sit at the feet of India's spiritual sages. Thus India became conscious of having a message, a gospel for the world.

2. The early Life and Religious Experiences of Ramakrishna

a. A pre-view

The spirit of aggressive missionary endeavor had its birth and beginning in one who came to be called Ramakrishna Paramahansa.¹ He is an important figure in

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1. Wendell Thomas in a note on the word paramhansa (p. 43) says that the word literally means "great goose". Param does mean great and hansa may mean goose, but it also is the word very frequently used (See next Page)

earlier neo-Hinduism. He has very definitely been the inspiration for foreign missionary enterprise as well as for national, social, religious, and educational reform movements, such as in Hinduism hitherto was unknown. His spiritual influence undoubtedly continues to be great even in modern India. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, otherwise known as Mahatma Gandhi, says this of him:

"The story of Ramakrishna's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. In this age of skepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women which otherwise could have remained without spiritual light. Ramakrishna's life was an object lesson in ahimsa.¹ His love knew no limits geographical or otherwise."²

The Ramakrishna Mission, founded in his name, is by far the most effective philanthropic organization within Hinduism.

b. His birth

Gadadhar Chatterji³ was born in Kamarpukur, a

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for soul or spirit. So literally the word used with a name is honorific, meaning "great soul" or "great spirit".

1. This is the word used to express the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence. Himsa means life or soul and likely is related to the word hansa. As a prefix "a" is a negative, so the word literally means "not taking life".
2. From the foreword of Swami Madhavananda's, Life of Sri Ramakrishna.
3. For source material on the life of Ramakrishna the writer has freely made use of both Western and Eastern scholars. For detailed study on his life the following books may be mentioned: Wendell Thomas, Hinduism Invades America; Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India; Swami Abhedanand, The Gospel of Ramakrishna, 1907; Swami Madhavananda, Life of Sri (See next page)

village of Bengal, on the 18th of February, 1836,¹ at 5:15 P.M., where he lived the carefree, irresponsible life of a village boy. He was born of poor but honest and generous Brahman parents. He is claimed by his devotees to have been supernaturally conceived by Vishnu and Siva. Khudiram, his earthly father, was away in Gaya worshiping in the temple of Vishnu, who spoke to him saying:

"I am well pleased at your sincere devotion. I am born again and again to chastise the wicked and protect the virtuous. This time I shall be born in your cottage and accept you as my father."²

While this was happening back in Kamarpukur his mother, Chandra Devi, was beholding visions. One day when she was standing before a Siva temple she saw a flood of celestial light issue from the Lord Siva and dart towards her. When the light entered her body she became unconscious. Upon gaining consciousness she felt herself with child. In connection with his birth and life

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Ramakrishna, 1925; Swami Nikhilananda, The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. There are many others.

1. In regard to chronological events, there are slight disagreements of no consequence, but I see no reason for not following the chronology given by Eastern scholarship. It is of interest to call attention to the time of birth of Ramakrishna, given by Swami Nikhilananda as 5:15 P.M. This is obviously an adaptation for the Western mind. Likely at that date there were no watches available in the village of Kamarpukur; and, if there were, it is not part of Indian genius to be accurate as to birthdays. Few villagers know their age or when they were born, much less the hour and minute. Similar details are given in connection with the life of Swami Vivekananda.
2. Madhavananda's, Life of Ramakrishna, p. 68.

there were other miraculous incidents which Indian biographers narrate as authentic historical events. J. N. Farquhar says these are clearly an imitation of the Christian Gospels. Studied from a critical and psychological viewpoint they give this impression.

One such story says that when he was only six years of age he saw a flock of white cranes silhouetted against dark clouds. The beauty of the scene caused the boy to go into his first ecstatic trance, which gave him great joy. Another story says that at ten years of age he solved a difficult scriptural problem for some learned pundits (religious teachers).

c. A village lad

Compiling the story of Gadadhar from various sources¹ one can piece together the main events of his life quite authentically. As a village lad he had a dislike for school. He liked to be free. However, he was greatly interested in art and in things religious. He early filled his mind with the stories of the gods. Being a favorite of the villagers he often dramatized these stories for their pleasure and entertainment. He gathered around himself a group of boys who became sort of an amateur dramatic club. Often while impersonating he

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1. Besides information given by Western scholarship there have been three "Gospels of Sri Ramakrishna" by Indian scholars, the last being a 1050 page volume by Swami Nikhilananda, 1942.

would lose his own personality in a religious ecstasy or trance, acting and thinking himself verily to be a Gopi (a milkmaid) or Hanuman (the monkey-god), both of which were ideals of the bhakti¹ way to God.

3. His Life as Priest and Seeker

a. In Calcutta

At the age of 17 he joined his older brother, Ram Kumar, in Calcutta, where he was to continue his studies and at the same time help in the household. But Gadadhar thoroughly detested any kind of manual labor or service. He had a natural abhorrence for material things. Later in life it was said that he would shrink from the very touch of money. He further was not interested in a "mere breadwinning education, but in that wisdom which illumines the heart, and which getting, satisfies forever".²

Two years later a low caste woman built a temple for the goddess Kali four miles north of Calcutta in Daksinesvara by the side of the Ganges River. His brother, Ram Kumar, was called to act as priest. But the owner was a low caste, so Gadadhar could not bring himself to serve. Finally, the brother was able to persuade

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1. Bhakti means the way of devotion, but is really a strong word, often meaning more a divine intoxication, an intense love and longing for God and realization of Him.
2. Madhavanada, Life of Sri Ramakrishna, p. 68.

him by pointing out that since the temple was built on the banks of the holy Ganges it could not be defiled regardless of who entered.

b. A devotee of Mother Kali

This was the beginning of a very important period in the life of the Bengali saint. Here he spent his time wholly in the service of the goddess Kali,¹ whom he clothed and decorated and worshiped.

He spent hours and hours worshipping her, eating and drinking in her presence, even taking of his food and putting it to the mouth of the goddess for her to eat. Trances such as he frequently had from childhood were now becoming a common experience; he would be lost in adoration and worship of the mother of the universe as her devotees conceive her. She became the dominating influence of his life. He was now wholly dedicated to her service. She was his guide in all matters. Without consulting her he did nothing.

c. The Samadhi, or Realizing God

Four years later, in 1856 A.D., his brother, Ram Kumar, died. Not being able to get relief from this

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1. Kali, the consort of Siva, is the goddess of destruction and frightful in appearance to her enemies whom she destroys, and lovely beyond description to those who love and worship her. She has four arms. In one hand she holds a sword, in another the head of a victim. She is adorned with a necklass of skulls and a girdle of the hands of many victims.

great sorrow, Gadadhar spent practically all of his time praying to the mother for a vision. And, like Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord, he too refused to give up until he had his request granted. Finally, when he was in despair and about to take his own life with a sword, the vision came. He lost all consciousness in an ecstatic union with God. Samadhi is the highest of ecstatic religious experiences in which complete self-consciousness is lost and God is realized. Having thus realized God through ecstasy and devotion to Kali, he wanted very much to get a similar experience through devotion to Rama, the hero of the famous epic, Ramayan,¹ referred to in chapter two. So he meditated upon Hanuman, the ideal, devoted monkey-god servant of Rama. In meditation upon Hanuman he lost his own personal identity, in truth imagining himself to be Hanuman. He began acting more like a monkey than a man; living in trees, eating only fruit and nuts; jumping around like a monkey rather than walking. The very form of his body was changed. This experience satisfied him that God could be realized through mad, ecstatic devotion to Rama as well as to Kali.

d. Mad after God

Many people now were calling him a mad man. Because of frequent ecstasies his health was failing.

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1. Ante, p. 17.

Reports were now coming to his mother who thought to cure the boy of his other-worldliness by marrying him off. Persuading him to come home she married him to a five-year-old girl. They never lived together as husband and wife, but some years later she came to him as a disciple. Their relation was more that of a mother and son. Upon his return to the temple in Daksinesvara he spent twelve years in devotion and meditation. Madhavananda says that for six years he got no sleep. His one purpose was to be able to get a vision of Kali at will. During this time there came to him at the temple a Brahman Sanyasini, a holy woman.¹ She became his religious teacher or guru. Her contribution to his life was this: When other people were now calling Gadadhar a mad man, she had the bold courage to proclaim him an avatar (incarnation of God). "The people are right," she told him in effect. "You are indeed mad; but mad after God."² Two Hindu pundits further verified that he contained the true marks of an avatar. She herself a yogini, following the bhakti method of God-realization, knew how to instruct him in the science of mental and physical discipline. When she had taught him all she knew, she suddenly disappeared.

The mad avatar's fame was now spreading. A

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1. In India there are holy women as well as holy men, who dedicate themselves to the service of God for life.
2. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 51.

naked monk¹ came, offering to teach him the higher knowledge of the Vedas. Gadadhar, having first taken permission of Mother Kali, consented to be his disciple. He was initiated into the order of monks. His name was changed to Ramakrishna. The disciple was apt. He was urged by the sage to seek the samadhi experience. Seeing the ease with which this was attained by his pupil, the master himself became the pupil. At this time for six months Ramakrishna remained in a trance most of the time.

e. Ramakrishna discovers the great truth about all religions

Ramakrishna had now become a master in the yogic experience, samadhi. At will he could get the vision. Having realized God through intense longing and meditation upon Kali and Rama, he was anxious to discover if God could also be realized by applying the same method to other religions. Were they also a way to God? He decided to find out. He had himself initiated into Sufism, a Mohammedan mystic sect. He dressed and ate like a Mohammedan, but didn't eat beef. He repeated the name of Allah. Banishing all Hindu concepts from his mind, he even gave up idol worship and the thought of idols. After three days the vision came; God was realized.

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1. Certain monks think that they are so holy they don't need to wear clothes and go about quite naked. This is to them a sign of complete detachment from the world.

But this was not enough. He wasn't satisfied. Next he tried the Christian way. He read the Bible. From somewhere he also was able to obtain a picture of the Madonna and Child. This is said to have made a tremendous impression upon him. After three days he fell into a trance, beholding Christ with large, beautiful eyes. "This is the Christ who gave His blood for the sake of mankind, the master-yogin in eternal union with the Godhead."¹ He felt Jesus entering into his soul and was convinced that he also is an incarnation of God. In a similar way he experienced Sikhism and Jainism. The validity of these experiences hardly need to be discussed here. The most he did was to exchange Christ and Mohammed as objects for his hypnotic experiences, for Hindu deities. His claim to have given up entirely all Hindu ideas is too absurd to need further comment. These experiences, however, have a special interest to us in showing the development of Hindu religious ideas. From these experiences Ramakrishna concluded that all religions are true and each is but a different way to God. This doctrine became a major emphasis in his teaching. It was taken up by his disciples, the most famous of whom was Vivekananda. He in turn brought it to America where he electrified the Parliament of Religions with this new gospel. This is still one of the most commonly preached

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1. Madhavananda, op. cit., p. 340.

doctrines of Hinduism in America. It is likewise the statement frequently heard in India in answer to the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

4. The Teacher and His Disciples

Ramakrishna now having realized God and having made the discovery that all religions are true, is now ready to be a teacher of others. In Hinduism God-realization is a prerequisite to being a teacher or true guru. No one is considered capable of teaching truth until he has first realized the truth. For Ramakrishna, this would mean through samadhic experiences.

The great sage was rapidly becoming known. Many were coming to him from all walks of life. Among them was Keshab Chandra Sen, the half-Christian and half-Hindu founder of the Brama-Samaj. A friendship developed between the two. Each influenced the other; but Sen honored Ramakrishna as his guru. Sen was largely responsible for the saint's introduction to the public (particularly to the English public), to large numbers of educated persons, young college students, and to the members of the Brama-Samaj. From among these young, brilliant devotees Ramakrishna chose his beloved disciples, a number of whom were destined to go as far as irreligious, unenlightened America to preach the gospel of universal religion.

Before 1879 he talked little. The last seven

years of his life he spake incessantly. Being practically illiterate, he wrote nothing. However, his disciples took down his sayings in Bengali, which were published in complete form as well as translated into English. The following are some of his sayings which particularly give light on his religious faith:

"As one and the same material, water, is called differently be different peoples . . . so Sat-Chit-Ananda, the Everlasting-Intelligence-Bliss is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by some as Jehovah, by some as Hari, and by others as Brahman."¹

"Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Mohammedan should follow Mohammedanism, and so on. For the Hindus, the ancient path of the Arayan Rishis is the best."

"Many are the names of God and infinite the forms that lead us to know Him. In whatsoever name or form you desire to call Him, in that very form and name you will see Him."

"Different creeds are but different paths to the Almighty. Various and different are the ways that lead us to the temple of Mother Kali; similarly, various are the ways that lead to the hand of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of such paths that lead to God."²

Other significant sayings of Ramakrishna, revealing his conception of God, of the avatars, and of the guru, cannot be included in this short treatise. The reader is referred to Swami Nikhilananda's new "Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" for more careful study.

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1. These quotations are taken from Swami Madhavananda's Life of Sri Ramakrishna and from Swami Abhedababda's Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna.
2. These are some of the arguments most commonly heard today from the Hindus by the missionary.

Summarizing, it can be said that his conception of God is essentially the same as that given in Hindu sacred scriptures. God is formless and with form. He is with attributes and without attributes, unchangeable, immovable. He rises from the impersonal to the personal and again emerges into the impersonal and disappears.¹ He is essentially impersonal, without attributes and inactive, and only as he is incarnated again and again for the purpose of creation and recreation and when religion has fallen into decay does he take the form and attributes of personality. His statement regarding the guru is so characteristic of Hinduism and so very generally accepted in modern popular Hinduism that it should be quoted:

"The disciple should never criticize his guru. He must implicitly obey whatever the guru says . . . Though my guru may visit the unholy rendezvous of drunkenness and sinners, still to me he is my own pure and faultless guru."²

True to Hindu idealism, he preached against worldliness and attachment. The world is unreal; the body is transient; salvation is attained when self-consciousness is submerged into the universal impersonality.

During the later years of his life, because he was constantly speaking, he developed a "preacher's throat", which resulted in cancer. Finally, in 1886,

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1. Abhedananda, op. cit., pp. 12-15.

2. From Swami Abhedananda's Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna.

August 16, at two minutes past one A.M., he entered the "mahasamadhi".¹

5. Summary and Evaluation of His Life and Contribution to Modern Aggressive Hindu Missionary Movement

Ramakrishna was the inspiration for Vivekananda and all who have followed him. A study of the literature used and of the content of the lectures of Hindu missionaries clearly reveals this. Back in about 1900 Abhedananda said:

"The life and saying of Bhagavan² have given a death blow to the sectarian bigotry and fanaticism of the so-called religious world . . . He showed that all sects and creeds were but the paths which lead sincere and earnest souls to the one universal goal of all religions."³

"We have neither seen nor heard of a character purer, simpler, more chaste, more truthful, more godly than that of this ideal mahatma."⁴

"He had power to heal diseases, perform miracles, to transform the character of a sinner."⁵

The most recent Swami Gneswarananda of the Vedanta Society in Chicago in his book, *Ramakrishna, the Man and the Power*, 1936, says:

"The personality of Ramakrishna is as vast and universal as the sky of which an admirer or critic can present only a partial view . . . Ramakrishna is a power which will vitalize human life for ages to come."⁶

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1. The great ecstasy of death, suggesting the eternal union with God.
2. God, referring to Ramakrishna.
3. Abhedananda, op. cit., p. 4.
4. Ibid, p. 14
5. Ibid, p. 20
6. Gneswarananda, op. cit., p. 7.

"Under the influence of Ramakrishna, a new type of humanity, having higher ideals and aspirations, has already been evolved in different countries of the world. Today they are only a handful, but the future is bound to see a steady increase of numbers and influence."¹

Similar to the above statements, many more can be found magnifying and exaggerating the life and character of their guru. Yesterday, March 14, 1943, the birthday of Ramakrishna was celebrated in both of the Ramakrishna centers in New York. In his lecture Swami Bodhananda, in charge of the Center, located at 34 West 71st Street, said, speaking of the greatness of his guru:

"Ramakrishna is my God. I don't want any other. He is greater than God himself. I worship him and hold him higher than Moses or Mohammed or any god. He is enough for me."

Swami Bodhananda emphasized three chief characteristics of Ramakrishna which seem to be generally accepted: simplicity, sincerity, and selfless love and service. In illustration of the latter point he told the story one reads in literature on his life. It is said that Ramakrishna used to clean public latrines with ^{his} hands and wiped them with his long beard. In view of Gadadhar's (Ramakrishna) thorough dislike for any kind of service, it is doubtful if this story is anything more than a fabrication to glorify the man. However, the story may have a kernel of truth, for I am well acquainted with a so-called religious man of Drug, C. P., where

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1. Gneswarananda, op. cit., p. 122.

I was stationed as a missionary, who every morning went around to a certain large tank,¹ carrying away the filth because people were too careless to go further out into the fields. The life of Ramakrishna, as in Hinduism, is filled with strange contradictions and paradoxes. This man who was mad with love for God had no social sense whatever. He was quite satisfied with the world as it was. He felt no sense of mission to alleviate the suffering and burdens of the downtrodden low-caste, and the poverty-stricken masses of humanity about him. He was a man who loved God passionately yet was wholly indifferent to man about him. Strange that he should have become the inspiration for the most important social and missionary work being carried on by Hindus today.² Or was it the inspiration and example of Christian missions whose challenge Hinduism now had to face? At any rate, the man himself was a simple, uneducated soul of an extremely sensitive, emotional and religious nature. This, as Wendell Thomas correctly points out, is the key to his message and personality.² His emotional nature no doubt was the reason why he thought that the bhakti way of salvation was the best for this kaljug (a term used for this present evil age). The way of devotion and mad love for God best suited his emotional temperament. His em-

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1. The village tank is like a small pond in America where people bathe and get their supply of water.
2. The Ramakrishna Mission.

phasis upon love and that all religions are ways to God were the chief tenets of his faith. We will later note how his modern disciples have expanded their guru's conception of both of these doctrines as taught by Ramakrishna himself.

B. Vivekananda, Hinduism's First Foreign Missionary

1. A Sketch of His Early Life¹

a. Parentage, birth and childhood

Narendranath Datta was born of one of the oldest Brahman² families in Calcutta. In contrast to his guru, Ramakrishna, he came from a good, educated and wealthy home.

His grandfather before him had been a swami, while his father was a highly educated and successful lawyer of the high court of Calcutta. His mother was unusually intelligent, remarkable for her memory. Her son, fortunately, inherited the traits of all three. Bhawanewari had two daughters but no son. Like every mother she

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1. Sources: Roman Rolland (a Frenchman), *Prophets of the New India*; *The Bramavadin*, a monthly religious and philosophical journal started by Vivekananda and published at Madras, India; Vivekananda's *Complete Works*, 7 volumes; Swami Virajananda, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, 3 volumes; Thomas Wendell, *Hinduism Involves America*, etc.
2. It is entirely possible that Wendell Thomas' statement, op. cit., p. 62, that he was born of Kshatriya parents, January 12, 1863, is more correct. Authorities disagree. His devotees prefer to say that he was a Brahman.

longed for a son. Going to the famous holy city of Benares to worship Siva, she had a vision in which the god said that he was going to be her son. In a few months Narendranath was born at an auspicious time, six minutes before sunrise on the ninth of January, 1862.¹ The child early showed signs of being a prodigy. His parents evidently had a lot of difficulty keeping him entertained and out of mischief. At times they had to stick his head under water to cool off his fiery spirit. He was early sent to school where his teachers had the same trouble. School was too easy. He was a natural leader. "He was first in studies and first in pranks." It is said that he studied Herbert Spencer's First Principles at twelve years of age. Nevertheless, the boy was of a religious turn of mind. Siva and Rama were his favorite gods. Often, to the embarrassment of his parents, he was most generous to the religious mendicants who frequented their back door.

b. The college youth

In college he continued his brilliant career. Examinations were easy. His singing voice was excellent. He was a welcome addition to any crowd. There is no doubt about the personality of Narendranath. This, com-

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1. Western readers need not take such statements literally. The historicity of legends little concerns the philosophical mind of the East. Only the spiritual message has value.

bined with his handsome figure, had a lot to do with his later popularity, especially with the women of America. When only eighteen years of age he was graduated from the Christian Scottish College of Calcutta. By this time he had become well acquainted with Keshab Chandra Sen. He had gained a wide knowledge of the Bible and Christian teaching, partly perhaps through his father who was a reader of the Bible. The broad half-Christian teachings of the Brama Samaj appealed to him. He joined them, becoming their leading choir soloist. Yet he was not fully satisfied. He was disturbed in mind. He wanted a vision of God, and when the Bramos could not give him this he left them.

c. The young disciple

Just when Narendranath, having finished college, was beginning his law studies, his father suddenly died. This was a calamity to the family, shattering as well the dreams of young Naren, as he was affectionately called. His father, though having a good name, had been too generous and had not properly provided for the future of the family. Thus, immediately upon his death the family was thrown into dire poverty. It was difficult in those early days to get a position in the Bengali Province. The supply of B.A. graduates was greater than the demand. Many other young Bengali men in like situation drifted where the picking was better. This Naren did not do. It

was a time of great strain. He was often hungry and discouraged. In his trouble he remembered the sage out in the Kali temple of Dakshinesvara. Earlier while in college he often had frequented the place in company with Keshab or his college friends. The old saint had a special liking for him. He became almost aggressive in their friendship. This in itself is significant, because in India gurus accept disciples with reluctance and only after much testing. Some are never accepted. The saint seemed to have intuitive knowledge about the innate ability of this young man. He saw in him the message-bearer of his gospel. Very slowly Narendranath's confidence was won. But now the situation was different. Then, in his college days, his father was able to provide for him and his family every luxury of life. He was now poverty-stricken; life was hard and bitter; his life plan had failed. Wendell Thomas subtly suggests that these experiences had a lot to do with his going to Dakshinesvara and there, at the command of Mother Kali, deciding to become a sanyasi, ^{in order} "to renounce the world he could not conquer". This is possible. Yet he was of a religious temperament. His grandfather before him had renounced the world. Then, too, this is the highest ideal in India, and the last stage of the life of a Brahman. India is filled with thousands of these sanyasis, so-called seekers after God, or holy men, who easily make their living by begging. These self-styled gurus prey upon the poor

and ignorant villagers. If a few came to America to live off of a gullible American public one really should not object too much! But Narendranath was religious. Early he sought an experience of God. It was not strange that in this time of trouble he should seek solace in religion.

d. The sanyasi

Whatever may have been going on in Narendranath's mind we know that he went to Ramakrishna, who sent to Mother Kali for advice. She said, "Become a sanyasi." He decided to do this. As for his family, they would have to manage as best they could. This experience at Dakhinesvara marked the beginning of an intimate relation between Narendranath and his guru. He rapidly became the latter's foremost disciple. Ramakrishna had already decided upon him as his successor. The guru was getting old; it was now time to lay definite plans for the future. An inner circle of the most promising disciples was formed with Narendranath as their leader. They were initiated into the order of Monks. All their names were changed. Likewise, Western disciples who have been initiated have also changed their names. Narendranath Datta was called Vivekananda.¹ The guru chose well. There would be no Judas among them. Six of these educated, fine young monks were destined to follow their leader to

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1. Vivek means conscience and ananda means joy or bliss.

America. In 1886 Sri Ramakrishna passed beyond, leaving a bewildered and stunned group of young disciples. Sorrowing, most of them went to their homes. Vivekananda rented an old house in the village of Barangore, between Calcutta and Dakshinesvara. One by one the scattered disciples returned. One night while in meditation the Master came to him in a vision. This was to them a resurrection. The Master was not dead. They were together in an upper-room pentecostal experience. The fire of Pentecost filled their souls. Under the leadership of Vivekananda the order of Ramakrishna monks was formed. Vows of celibacy and renunciation of everything except a desire for realization of God were taken. As a distinctive form of dress the yellow robe was adopted. These are still worn by their brother monks in America. So it was that the dilapidated house in Barangore became the first Ramakrishna math, as their centers are called in India. With the fire and zeal of a pentecost in their souls they again separated, going to various places of pilgrimage. Vivekananda went to the Himalayas. Later returning he went as far south as Madras. From here he seems to have gone on to the southern tip of India.

e. The world-wide vision

Gnaneswarananda in his "Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" gives an interesting account of how Swami Vivekananda finally decided to go to America, though it may

seem a bit fanciful.¹ Arriving at the southernmost point of India, he was filled with the desire to be alone and to view India objectively. He wanted to meditate on India and her special heritage, to determine her future relation to the rest of the world. To do this he swam to a rocky point a mile out from shore. Here, away from India, surrounded by water, he fell into deep meditation. The Master revealed to him his mission. He must share India's spiritual heritage with the world. India in turn would receive the efficiency, activity and resourcefulness of the West. Between the two a bridge of understanding must be built. India would give the West spirituality; the West would give in turn her efficiency. So was formed the idea of modern Hindu Foreign Missions. He returned to Madras. Vague information was out about a World Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago. This was just the opportunity young Vivekananda needed. Gathering his friends together he announced his plan:

"The time has come for the Hinduism of the Rishis² to become dynamic. Shall we stand by whilst alien hands attempt to destroy the fortress of the Ancient Faith . . . Shall we remain passive or shall we become aggressive, as in the days of old, preaching religion unto the nations, the glory of Dharm?"³

Some interest was aroused--to the extent of

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1. Swami Gnaneswarananda, op. cit., p. 110.
2. Ancient sages.
3. Thomas Wendell, op. cit., p. 72. Dharm as used here refers to the ancient faith which is frequently spoken of as sanatan Dharam, or the eternal religion. The Vedic religion is accepted as eternal.

\$150.00. This was far from sufficient. He was called to Hyderabad, where plenty of money was given for the venture. By May 31, 1893, the first Hindu missionary to America was on his way, via the Pacific.

2. The Missionary

a. Events leading to and during the World Parliament of Religions

When Vivekananda arrived in Chicago he found that he was too early. The congress was not to meet until September. Traveling first class on the boat and living in the finest hotels rapidly depleted his funds. All along the way unscrupulous persons, finding him unacquainted with the ways of the Western world, relieved him of his money by excessive charges. He decided to find a cheaper place to live than Chicago. In every difficulty he found a friend. Making his way to Boston he was befriended on the train by a lady who introduced him into the delightful atmosphere of the unitarian cultural center of America. Here also, J. H. Wright, Professor of Greek, came to his rescue with money and friends who sent him back to Chicago well provided. When the Parliament finally opened Swami Vivekananda from India was there. The Swami, though not an official delegate to the congress, soon found himself on the platform amidst some sixty other religious celebrities of the world. It was a momentous occasion, the idea of which for years had been

evolving in the minds of eminent Christian leaders. Great men of all faiths sent their blessings to the meetings which lasted seventeen days. The handsome, well-groomed Indian monk "clad in gorgeous red apparel, with a huge turban of yellow"¹ made an impressive figure seated amongst the great of the world.

When Swami Vivekananda in his opening words of greeting "addressed the audience as 'sisters and brothers of America' there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes".² In this brief address he made an appeal for universal toleration, quoting from the Gita: "Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever form I reach him, they are all struggling through paths that in the end always lead to me."³ Later in the congress he himself did not maintain the spirit of toleration for which he had been pleading, and in violation of the rules of the congress ridiculed Christian missionaries.⁴

On the tenth day of the congress Vivekananda made his address on Hinduism in which his emphases were the Vedas as eternal, religion as universal, and man as divine. It was essentially an apologetic. That his address had a tremendous effect there can be no doubt. That it was all that was claimed by over-enthusiastic

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1. The World Parliament of Religions, Vol. I, p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 101.

3. Ibid., p. 102.

4. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 75.

Western and Eastern devotees needs to be more fully examined later. In his closing address the swami made some statements about conversion which were not too well received by some. The report says:

"Swami Vivekananda was always heard with interest by the Parliament but very little approval was shown to some of the sentiments expressed in his closing address."¹

However, newspapers singled him out for special mention:

"This man with his handsome face, magnificent personality and wonderful oratory, is the most prominent figure in the Parliament."² He had made a tremendous impression, especially among the ladies who flocked to shake his hand. For nearly two years after the Parliament he traveled the length and breadth of America in response to more invitations than he could fill. Churches were open to him. Even orthodox ministers were friendly. Everywhere he was entertained as a guest. These facts are well authenticated by Wendell Thomas and others.

Now the question arises: How had this obscure Hindu monk, comparatively unknown in India, so suddenly become famous here? The answer is really not so difficult. Americans are not so different from illiterate jungle and village people of India in some ways. When missionaries go to outlying villages where people seldom

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1. The Parliament of Religions, Vol. I, p. 171
2. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 76. For more detailed analysis of the effect of his message read Wendell Thomas, Chapter 4.

if ever have seen an American, frequently hundreds flock to see and hear this new specimen of mankind. No doubt in the case of Vivekananda curiosity played an important role in bringing the thousands who are said to have flocked to see the yellow-robed, Hindu missionary. Here was a chance to see a real Indian. And this one had personality. He knew how to dress. He spoke English fluently. He was well acquainted with the teachings of Christianity; spoke frequently of Christ. He gave to the West an entirely different picture of India, its people, and its religion from that given by Christian missionaries. And finally, but not less important, the Parliament of Religions was in itself evidence of a growing humanistic liberalism. Christianity was curious to find out what contributions the religions of the world had to make towards a universal religion. It is not surprising that the Vedic religion, which had always laid claim to being an eternal, all-inclusive religion, should have made a good impression on certain groups and individuals in America. Already at that time many were dissatisfied with the church and drifted from cult to cult seeking a hospitable environment for their unbelief. These, like the Athenians, were always ready to hear some new thing. Wendell Thomas makes the interesting observation from a questionnaire study of the members of the Hindu cults that most of the members were women, and especially the kind who had drifted from church to church and finally

into the cults. The story is a fascinating one.¹ Too easily we are led into by-paths which would lengthen our study. Let us now see how Swami Vivekananda capitalized on his success.

b. Organization and consolidation

There is little to indicate that before he came Vivekananda had any thought of organizing a Ramakrishna Mission in America. In fact, India confesses little genius for organization. Rather he was possessed with a conviction that the Vedanta had a spiritual message for the world. He would go to America and prove the superiority of Hinduism, and not only the needlessness, but the ridiculousness of America sending missionaries to India.² Did this teaching have any relation to the Layman's Missionary Report? Who knows? The order of monks founded under the inspiration of Sri Ramakrishna had no organization back in early days in India. They were only a brotherhood of monks until Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 and founded and organized the Ramakrishna Mission with headquarters at Belur, near Calcutta. Here let the Vedanta Society tell its own story:

"By some inscrutable plan of Divine Providence the New World was to be interlocked with the 'cradle of the human race'--India, the land of hoary antiquity! It

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1. Ibid., p. 116.

2. The New York Herald stated: "After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation." O'Malley, The East and West, p. 771.

was Columbus who, seeking India in his innermost spirit, carried the thought of Hindustan on to the soil of America. The spiritual seed which was sown unsuspected by the great navigator started to sprout in the middle of the nineteenth century, through Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman and Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy."

"But not until 1893 had it grown into a plant sending its roots deep into the soil. The World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago brought to America, Swami Vivekananda, who took the United States by storm. After his first brilliant triumph in Chicago, Vivekananda traveled all over the United States, teaching and preaching the ancient wisdom of the sages of India. Men and women of all stations in life came flocking, hungry and athirst for the truth. They came 'from the salons and universities'--sincere and pure Christians, and sincere Free Thinkers and agnostics. His unique message of the divinity of the soul--that man is not born a sinner, that infinite possibility of soul growth lies potentially in man, and is capable of being roused into action by the discipline of yoga--made a deep impression on the Anglo-Saxon mind. People wanted to be taught the 'man-making religion' of Vedanta. They realized that Vedanta came to fulfill not to destroy--it helped them understand their own religion more deeply and logically."¹

Yes, the Hindu missionary had a royal reception in the land of freedom-loving people. But without further interpretation let us take up some factual history. In 1894 Swami Vivekananda settled in New York and laid the foundations for the permanency of his work. His method now was to give lectures and hold classes in an established center. Miss Waldo, who was later initiated into the order as Sister Haridasi², has this to say about the first center:

"It was just an ordinary room on the second floor of a

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1. The Vedanta Society's publication, Hinduism Comes to America, p.
2. Maidservant of God.

lodging house. The classes grew with astonishing rapidity and as the little room filled to overflowing it became very picturesque. The Swami himself sat on the floor and most of his audience likewise. The marble-topped dresser, the arms of the sofa, and even the corner washstand helped to furnish seats for the constantly increasing numbers. The door was left open and the overflow filled the hall and sat on the stairs. And those first classes! How intensely interesting they were!"¹

By 1896 the mission was progressing and pretty well established. In that year a new Swami in the person of Swami Sarodamanada came to relieve the over-worked, tired Vivekananda. Some Americans who were initiated into the order assisted in carrying on the work. Plenty of funds were available from influential and wealthy friends and followers. Upon the arrival of his co-religionist from India, Swami Vivekananda shortly proceeded to India. Before continuing this story it will be well to briefly sketch the establishment of mission centers in other parts of America.

c. Establishing other centers in America

The first center was established by Swami Vivekananda himself in 1894. Other centers were opened in the United States in the following order:² San Francisco,

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1. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 79, for Virajananda, Life of Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 359. This hall, located at 34 West 71st Street, New York, is still being used. Swami Bodhananda is in charge.
2. Hinduism Comes to America, a publication by the Society, gives a full and interesting account of the establishing, the leaders, and the work of all centers in America, pp. 26-42.

established in 1900, located at 2963 Webster Street, where since the first large, beautiful Hindu temple has been built; Boston, established in 1910, located at 32 Fenway. This center also owns a beautiful ashram (retreat) at Cohasset, Massachusetts, about twenty-five miles from the city where services are held during the summer. The Ananda (bliss) ashram, established in 1923, is located at La Crescent, California. This magnificent center, built on a tract of land surrounded by mountains, out away from the city in a peaceful, secluded place, is ideal for leading a life of "simplicity, freedom and contemplation". There is here among other buildings a "Temple of the universal Spirit". Portland, Oregon, established in 1925, is located at 1816 S. E. 32nd Place. Providence, Rhode Island, established in 1929, is located at 224 Angel Street. New England, where not too long ago a people came seeking religious liberty and later burned witches and persecuted dissenters, has now shown keen interest in the religion of the sages of the East. The center in Chicago was established in 1930. There is also in Chicago a printing press, located at 80 North Clark Street. The center in Hollywood, California, is located at 1946 Ivor Avenue. Until 1930 there were eight centers in all. They are being established more rapidly in recent years than earlier. For some time after Swami Vivekananda left there seemed to be a lull in American interest. In general, the centers are much alike, having the same pro-

gram of public lectures and semi-private classes. The ashram in California is the only one carrying on any other type of activity. They have industrial arts and a large apiary. Another striking feature of the Vedanta Mission in America is its apparent stability. They seldom change locations. Their work seems well supported, not from India but by friendly and sympathetic Americans. In some instances wealthy disciples have donated buildings and property in which the Mission carries on. There is little or no relation between the various centers. Each Swami is directly responsible only to the mother organization in Belur, India. Even the two centers here in New York seem to have no official connection. Each is independent. The Swamis are but guests, they claim, and are here only by the invitation of Americans. There is every evidence that Hindu missions are here to stay. Their message today to the West will be more fully discussed in chapter four.

3. The Triumphal Return

a. An Eastern interpretation

Swami Vivekananda was happy to be on his way to India again! America had been good to him, in fact had been most flattering. But he was tired. He had worked hard. Being a missionary in America wasn't exactly an easy life and was a far cry from the simple life of a sanyasi in India, who wore a loin cloth and got his food

from begging. Then, too, he had had his difficulties "in presenting Hinduism to an aggressively self-conscious Christian public".¹ During the years Vivekananda had been away news had seeped through of his conversion of thousands to Hinduism. India was proud of her son who had proved to the West the superiority of the Hindu religion. She was waiting to receive him. When he arrived in Ceylon in 1897, "the ovations accorded him along his triumphal march from Ceylon's palms to Himalayas' pines were tremendous. Bands, flowers, garlands, arches, flags, cheers, processions, and receptions sang his praise."² It is perhaps too much to expect a man so heroized to give a fair estimate of his own accomplishments. On his triumphal tour of India he made the following estimate of his work:

"The great Sri Ramakrishna today is worshipped literally by thousands today and tomorrow will be worshiped by thousands more."

"Before ten years have elapsed a vast majority of English people will be Vedantists."

"I helped on the tide of Vedantism which is flooding the world."³

On January 21, 1897, "The Indian Mirror", a Calcutta newspaper printed an editorial giving Swami Vive-

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1. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 82, from Virajananda, Life of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 3, p. 86.
2. Ibid., p. 82.
3. These statements are taken from a tract published by The Christian Literature Society of India, Swami Vivekananda and his Guru, Seventeen Lectures, p. 185 f.

kananda an enthusiastic welcome back to India. He was called "the conquering hero". It was hoped that he would not be a prophet without honor in his own country. The article spoke glowingly of the proportions of the work started, the need of new recruits, the many converts, the charming personality, and his impassioned eloquence. The success of Hindu missions was hailed as much greater than that accomplished by Christian missions in the East. The article closed with an original poem whose last lines run:

"How quick did Swami gain his end
And the ways of 'Mericans mend.
When Caesar went to conquer Gaul
He went and saw and conquered all!"¹

b. Swami Vivekananda evaluated by the West

At this time Dr. Wilbut W. White was in Calcutta as the secretary of the College Young Men's Christian Association of Calcutta. Reading this editorial stirred his fiery spirit. Apparently he immediately sat down and wrote a letter (also dated January 21st) to forty-five leading Christian men and college and university presidents of America to vouch for the truth of the report in India. It is impossible in such a brief dissertation to give more than a summary of their replies.² They were all shocked and amazed at the extravagant language used by "The Mirror". Some had scarcely heard of Vivekananda.

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1. Publication of the Christian Literature Society of Madras, Letters from Prominent Americans, p. 6.

2. Ibid., pp. vi to xli.

Many were sure that there were no converts. Others said that interest in Vedantism was merely a passing fad. Still others said that the Swami had either misunderstood American courtesy or deliberately misinformed his countrymen. One felt sorry for Mr. Barrows (the chairman of the Parliament of Religions) for having "lionized in Chicago the man who went home to lie so awfully in India".

c. The truth about Swami Vivekananda

To get a better understanding of what the actual facts were, a similar report made by a Japanese representative of the Congress to his co-religionists regarding Buddhism is revealing. He said that while the Parliament was undertaken in the interest of Christianity it resulted contrariwise in displaying the glory of Buddhism. So strongly has America been impressed with the inferiority of Christianity that Buddhist temples are now being erected in many places on the Pacific Coast. He added that in Europe also Christianity is decaying and Buddhism is gaining ground and showing promise of supplanting Christianity.¹ That Vivekananda's claims are Eastern hyperbole is self-evident. On the other hand, the replies to Dr. White reveal that Americans were either unwilling to admit that Vivekananda had made a permanent impression on America or were unacquainted with

1. Ibid., loc. cit.

what had really happened. However, it must be borne in mind that back in 1897 there still was only one Hindu center, and that in New York. Even now, with at least twelve Vedanta centers and twice as many Hindu yoga centers, rarely have I found anyone who knows Hindu mission activities. Whatever we may say about the influence of the Ramakrishna Mission, it is certain that Vivekananda's influence was vastly greater and more significant in India than in America. Here is one case where a prophet was held in greater esteem in his own country than abroad.

4. Vivekananda's Teaching and Its Relation to Hinduism and to Ramakrishna

a. Vivekananda and Ramakrishna

Again we must go back and pick up the main thread running through this thesis--changes and adaptations in Hinduism. We have noted how that from a simple, unaggressive faith it became an aggressive, missionary religion. We noted how Ramakrishna, a firm believer in the Vedic religion, had emphasized two things: that all religions were but separate ways to God and that the bhakti way of mad love for God was the easiest way for the present evil age. Vivekananda like his Master was a man of emotion, filled with a conviction that the Vedic scriptures had the essential teaching for a universal religion. He was different from Ramakrishna in that he added another element to his guru's emphasis of love for

God; namely, love for man. Immediately upon his return to India, Vivekananda incorporated the Ramakrishna Mission as a dual order of renunciations and service. What strange twins these two! Here we have a life denial and life affirmation combined in one philosophy. How did love for man become a fruit on Vivekananda's tree of philosophy? It was clearly a grafted fruit; grafted in the first instance by Christian influence in his early life, and, in the second place, the fruit was perfected while in America. But, "stranger than fiction," in America the Vedanta Society still teaches only life and world negation, bitterly denouncing the materialism of the West, and no concern on the part of Eastern or Western disciples for philanthropic enterprise. Not until the Vedantist returns to India does the graft of life affirmation come to fruition.

b. Vivekananda's teaching summarized

The above analysis immediately gives us the clue to the message of Vivekananda. He taught Vedic philosophy plus toleration of religions. He was possessed with the idea that the Vedic religion was superior. He was a true Hindu in every respect. "Swami Vivekananda's life work was a revival of Hinduism. He worked to reform the decayed religion of his time."¹ Applied to

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1. B. V. Athalye, op. cit., p. 22.

America this meant a revival of decayed Christianity. He again and again declared in America that he did not want to make Hindus of Christians, rather he wanted to make them better Christians by giving a correct interpretation of Christ. Vivekananda came to fulfill, not to destroy. It was his ambition to revive the old Vedic religion and at the same time incorporate the best from all reform periods, plus making required adjustments of a new day. To survive Hinduism had to keep on adding to in the present as it had done in the past. Likely for this reason, he was willing to include Christian world affirmation without being conscious of its contradiction to world renunciation.

To see how this has worked out in modern Hindu reformers is interesting, but requires a thesis in itself. In America our hero was a conservative Hindu; in India he preached:

"a religion which was not divorced from everyday life, a practical religion which gave hope and faith, which elevated people, gave bread to the needy, solace to the widow and orphan, which would refuse to trample underfoot the poor and low."¹

In America he preached:

"Renunciation is the beginning of religion. A religion of enjoyments is a religion of this earth, but a religion of renunciation is a religion divine."²

"We must not forget that we also have to teach a great lesson to the world."³

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1. Athalye, op. cit., p. 24.

2. Ibid., p. 32.

3. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 272.

He felt that the world was rapidly going astray through wealth and materialism. All the evils of Western society were due to its lack of spiritualism. America and Europe he held to be on the brink of collapse. Vedanta alone could resuscitate them.

"Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life. I am anxiously awaiting the day when mighty minds will arise, gigantic spiritual minds who will be ready to go forth from India to the ends of the world to teach spirituality and renunciation, those ideas which came from the forests of India and belong to the Indian soil alone! Up India, and conquer the world with your spirituality!"¹

Perhaps the best way to summarize the arguments of this chapter is in a parable. The Ramakrishna Mission is like a tree: the Vedas is the root; Ramakrishna is the trunk; Vivekananda is the main branch, and along with him have been many other brother-branches. The fruit has been a mixture which in America was of the same variety as the mother trunk, life denying, philosophic and speculative; in India it had in addition life and world affirmation, even tending to be like the fruit of Christianity. But it was the graft!

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1. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 274 f.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUTURE OF HINDU MISSIONS IN AMERICA

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A. Recent Developments Analyzed and Interpreted

1. Introductory

We have now come to the difficult part of our story. We must begin to evaluate and attempt to determine if possible what the future of the Vedanta philosophy in America promises to be. It is easy to do superficial and wishful thinking. The subject needs further study. Yet certain conclusions can be formed on the basis of the historical study made which has revealed the main trends and characteristics which have made Hinduism a truly living religion. Not until the West forced its culture and religion upon the East did it have to readjust itself in terms of a world religion. Politically, India was thoroughly subdued by the British; and through education and other processes even her culture was about to be westernized. To the latter there has been a terrific reaction in modern times, so that Western cultures are thoroughly despised by India as a whole. There is no doubt but that such noted scholars as J. N. Farquhar, and a dozen others, are quite right in their conclusions. The influence of Christianity in India has been tremendous--so much greater than Hinduism in the West. Yet

India is far from Christian. Too little attention has been called to the historical developments within Hinduism. In characteristic naivette of Americans, the mere incorporation into neo-Hinduism of certain Christian principles, which have appealed to Hindu reformers, has wrongly led some to think that these reformers are Christians and that India is now very soon to become Christian. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The historical developments within Hinduism have not been given due emphasis. This is merely the old process at work--eclectically adapting, adjusting--taking from other religions what is best suited to meet present needs. To understand this is most essential in order to evaluate the work of the Ramakrishna Mission in America.

Attendance at meetings¹ of the Ramakrishna Missions, the Hindu Truth Center, and a number of the various American cults such as Theosophy, Spiritualism, and Divine Science have all helped in the formation of certain conclusions. Interesting and lengthy interviews with many of the leaders of these organizations, particularly with Swami Nikhilananda and Swami Bodhananda have had their influence in the opinions suggested in this chapter. Swami Nikhilananda was most gracious in answering questions about the work of the Ramakrishna Mission.

In discussing the future of Hindu Missions in

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1. In New York City only.

America--especially those of the Vedanta Society, which really is the only truly Hindu Mission; the others being more interested in the financial side of the proposition --we will take up three points: first, recent developments; second, the Vedanta Society¹ in relation to other Hindu cults and to the American cults; third, what in Hinduism has appealed to the West and to whom.

2. Recent Developments in the Ramakrishna Mission

After all, the future of any organization will at least somewhat be determined by its history. So let us now turn to the recent past.

Up until 1930, when Wendell Thomas wrote his book, *Hinduism Invades America*, there were eight centers. Since then four more were added, making a total of twelve. The new centers are located as follows: New York, located at 17 East 94th Street; Washington, D. C., 1712 N. W.; Philadelphia and St. Louis.²

By 1930 there had been in all only seventeen Ramakrishna Swamis direct from India,³ and then only eight at a time at most, one for each center. By 1933 there had been twenty-one.⁴ Since then more monks must

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1. The terms Ramakrishna Mission and The Vedanta Society are used interchangeably in this thesis.
2. It was not possible to get the address of the latter two centers, since they were added most recently and are not given in the Society's, *Hinduism Comes to America*, 1933.
3. Cf. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 105.
4. Vedanta Society Publication, op. cit., p. 4.

have come to take care of the new centers opened and also to replace any who returned to India. Considering the number of centers and the some fifty years that the work began in America, the number of Hindu Vedanta missionaries who have come is low. This means they stay a long time. Swami Bodhananda, who came to New York as the fourth missionary in 1906, is still here, though quite an old man. American climate seems to agree quite well with him.

Regarding their own work, Swami Nikhilananda said in an interview:

"Our work in no way is spectacular. Our growth has been modest. We do not try to appeal to a melodramaloving public. If I became popular I would consider that I have deteriorated. I preach a philosophy. Only the educated can understand and appreciate its truth."

The following quotation from the Society's publication will verify the above statements:

"'A plant of the season,' says a Hindu Proverb, 'grows quickly, dies quickly, yielding all its crops within a few weeks; whereas a perennial tree grows slowly, and gives a beautiful harvest, through many seasons, for a long time.' This simile aptly describes the major and minor religious movements of the world. It took three hundred years for Buddhism to take root in India . . . Christianity struggled for four centuries to be universally accepted in Europe . . . Many lesser faiths, cults, sects, and adventurous groups have occupied the attention of people, gaining prominence for a while, then vanishing like bubbles on the surface of the ocean . . . The Ramakrishna Mission is growing slowly and steadily, all over the world. It neither brags nor competes; it neither condemns nor criticizes; it never forced itself with arrogance upon an individual or nation. Instead it helps, it builds, renovates, and removes obstacles, thus ultimately bringing out the infinite perfection within man. By its light hundreds of thousands have grasped the fundamental unity

of all religions and are, therefore, tolerant, sympathetic and broadminded. It has made thousands of men stronger without identifying themselves with any creed or cult. Hundreds have attained the highest state of spiritual perfection, peace, love and happiness under its careful guidance."¹

The above is their own estimate of their growth and success. To challenge these claims is not necessary. The reader can form his own conclusions. Yet, for the sake of truth, I cannot refrain from referring to the claim made to tolerance. This is, after all, the kind of tolerance which extends to all that agree with them on the broad principles of a universal religion such as in the Vedas assents to all ways as roads to God. The Ramakrishna Mission is not so bitter in its denunciation of evangelical Christianity and of Christian Missions as is the Arya Samaj Society in India. Yet the swamis follow Vivekananda in their ridiculing of Christianity, the church in general, the minister in particular, and more especially the evangelical, proselyting missionaries. From the very nature of the teaching of Vedanta, the reasons are obvious. Swami Bodhananda said in one of his meetings: "Christianity is a poison." Swami Nikhilananda said to me: "When I see Christians coming out of churches I feel sorry for them." "Why, Swamiji?"² I asked. "In the church they are spoiled for religion by

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1. Op. cit., p. 53, 54.

2. Added to the end of a name or a title "ji" is honorific or shows respect, as "Mr." in English.

the minister." You ask: How can this be? Well, for the Hindu religion means Sanatan Dharma (eternal religion). Vedanta is not a religion; it is religion itself.¹ The essential teaching of Sanatan Dharma is the universality of religion. It teaches principles, not dogma or the authoritarianism of a creed or of a Christ. The heart and essence of Vedic religion is principles. The authority of a person Hinduism will never accept. Here is where the limit to Hinduism's tolerance is reached. It will accept any kind of a principle, philosophy, or abstract truth, but never The Truth as revealed in Christ proclaimed as the only true Son of God. It will accept gladly the principles of Christ (Gandhi is an example) but never the person of Christ. Liberal Christianity, which in modern times is so anxiously seeking for a universal religion, will only find a common meeting ground with the ethnic religions after it has substituted the teachings of Christ for His person. In fact, such outstanding men as Mahatma Gandhi and Sir S. Radhakrishna would tell us: We correctly interpret Christ. We understand Him because He is an Asiatic. Christians do not understand Him.

"Suppose a Christian approached a Hindu for spiritual guidance; he would not ask his Christian pupil to discard his allegiance to Christ, but would tell him that his idea of Christ was not adequate and would lead him

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1. Sir Radhakrishna, op. cit., p. 23.

to a knowledge of the real Christ."¹

This is essentially what Swami Nikhilananda and Swami Bodhananda again and again claim. The truth about Christ is not the Person of Christ; it is the Principle of Christ. Christ died for truth. Swami Nikhilananda says:

"I do not want people to stop going to their churches, or to break their relation with the church. I do not want them to become Hindus. I want them to go to church, but also to come here and learn the true interpretation of their religion."

So the claim of tolerance is made. The insidious nature of the argument is obvious. Sir Radhakrishna gives us a clearer insight into what is really meant by Hindu tolerance:

"Hinduism absorbs everything that enters into it, magic or animism, and raises it to a higher level . . . Its method is rather that of sapping the foundations than cutting the growths."²

The Vedanta teachers both in India and in America believe that once Christian faith is destroyed in the authority and person of the historical Jesus, Christianity can easily be absorbed into Hinduism.

3. The Growth of the Mission Analyzed and Interpreted

There are two pertinent facts mentioned in the quotation above, taken from "Hinduism Comes to America",³ which need to be emphasized and may be considered a fairly accurate statement of the truth. First, the growth of

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1. Sir Radhakrishna: The Hindu Way of Life, p. 46.

2. Op. cit., pp. 46, 52.

3. Ante, p. 85.

the Vedanta Society in America is slow but steady. This is verified by the history of the organization. The first center was established in 1894; now in 1943, just 49 years later, there are twelve centers. In the second place, the Ramakrishna Mission is building for permanency. As far as one can see they are here to stay. They seldom have changed their locations. They own many valuable properties. Their work is well supported by Americans and not from India. One factor in making it permanent, no doubt, is the type of men who are sent. They are not free-lancing fortune-seekers, but monks who have dedicated their lives to the service of the order, and that without remuneration. They are well educated men. In India also, the Ramakrishna order of monks is in a class by itself, quite distinct from the ordinary begging sanyasis or sadhus. Though they have missions in a number of other countries in the world, no country has proved so fertile a soil for the propagation of Vedantism, not even Europe or England, as has America. There are several reasons for this. Vedanta ideals are more novel to Americans than to other countries. There is little language barrier, because the swamis learn English in India before they come. No other country can provide funds for its propagation as does America. India itself would never give money for foreign evangelism. Isn't it strange that so spiritual a country, so much detesting Western materialism, would yet give no money for its

spiritualization? Then, too, America is the land of the free; it has become exceedingly tolerant towards all systems of philosophy, cults, religions, of even unbelief.

The growth of the Mission has not been in any way phenomenal. This they admit. As has been pointed out, it definitely does not cater to the popular mind. It consistently refuses to cheapen its religion by coming down to the level of the low intelligence of the "Super-Belief Cults".¹ American Vedanta is conservative Hinduism; its message is the philosophic message of the Vedas. It has done little to try to adapt itself to Western religion or culture. This no doubt has had much to do with its slow growth. Vivekananda's extravagant promise to India that in ten years most of the Western world would be converted to Vedanta reveals how little he either understood Christianity or deliberately misinformed the Indian people. Now, after fifty years, few people know that there is a Hindu Mission in America. It is obvious that Vivekananda's claims were extravagant nonsense.

B. The Vedanta Society in Relation to Other Hindu Cults and to the American Cults

1. Other Hindu Cults in America²

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1. As they are called by Dr. Wyckoff in his, *Acute and Chronic Unbelief*.
2. For a good description of these the reader is referred to Thomas Wendell, *op. cit.*, Chapters VI and VII.

Besides the Ramakrishna Mission, there are also in the United States: The Yogoda Satsang centers, founded by Swami Yogananda; Dharma Mandala, or Aryan Religious Association, founded by Kedar Nath Das Gupta. Certain free-lancers came to America as: Krishnamurti, Mrs. Besant's Christ, Yogi Hari Rama, Deva Rama, Swami Bhagwan, Bissessor, Swami Omkar.¹ There are a number of cultural movements and India organizations in America: The Three-fold Movement, the International School of Vedic and Allied Research, Indian Society, Hindustan Association. Finally, besides a great many imposters, there have come to America at various times certain outstanding lecturers.

With the exception of the Yogoda Satsang Centers it is doubtful if any of the above-mentioned individuals and organizations have had much to do with the spread of Vedantic Philosophy in the West. They are more interested in Western appreciation of Indian culture.

The Yogoda Satsang seems to have had a large following in America, in fact much greater than the Vedanta Society. Already in 1930 it had twelve centers and 25,000 Yogoda students.² Its more rapid growth has been accounted for by its more liberal tendencies. It has used Western occult methods and popularized its teaching.

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1. Rom Landau in his, *God is My Adventure*, gives interesting descriptions of personal experiences with some of the modern teachers of the East.
2. Wendell Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 173, footnote number 47.

All the Hindu cults except the Vedanta Society use Western publicity methods. The reason for this seems to be related to the price charged for membership to classes. At the Hindu Truth Center here in New York the writer heard two prospective students bargaining with the renowned (?) Sant Ram Mandal, M. A., D. D. After a free public lecture in which he had spoken on the "Teaching of the Adepts", the lecturer said that he did not claim to be an adept, yet he said many people see a nimbus over his head when he speaks. To verify what their swami said, ten devotees in the audience declared that at times they had seen it. Two visitors in the audience seemed convinced and remained to speak with Sant Ram Mandal who assured them that by paying fifty cents per class or fifty dollars for a permanent membership a new life would be opened to them.

Both swamis of the Vedanta Centers here did not hesitate to say, when questioned, that their Indian brethren of the other Hindu cult are charlatans, thriving at the expense of "easy" Americans. They should know! It has been said of the Christian Science Church that it is neither Christian, nor is it science. It could also be said of the Hindu Truth Center that it is neither Hindu, nor is it truth. But this type of Hindu cult has more popular appeal in America than the conservative Ramakrishna Mission. However, this does not mean that the former will be more successful in the spread of Hindu-

ism. It merely means that they may be more successful financially. The latter certainly will do more in teaching the real Vedanta philosophy to the West.

2. The Vedanta Society and the American Cults

Of the American cults, the Theosophical Society is most indebted to Hinduism. It was founded in 1875 by Madame Helen Petrovna Blavatsky, a Jewess, in cooperation with Colonel Olcott. She claimed to have received a revelation of esoteric wisdom from the divine masters or sages, also known as adepts, who invariably seemed to come from the high Himalayan mountains of northern India and Tibet. In its early history, under the leadership of Madame Blavatsky, the cult was more like American Spiritualism; but under the nurture of Mrs. Annie Besant it became more and more Hinduized. The latter's translation of the Bhagwat Gita had already run its seventh edition in 1929. She also wrote a book entitled, In Defense of Hinduism. Sir S. Radhakrishna¹ says:

"The Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, encouraged the Hindus at a moment when their religion was being discredited . . . a widespread contempt for Indian religion and customs, casting out ancient ideas and failing to put anything in their place."²

The Theosophical Society's headquarters since

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1. Sir Radhakrishna, Vice-Chancellor of Benares University is the greatest exponent of modern or neo-Hinduism. He lectured in America at the University of Chicago, 1926.
2. L. S. S. O'Malley: Modern India and the West, p. 347.

1906 is at Adyar, near Madras, India.

The Christian Science movement also is related to Hinduism. Mrs. Eddy's indebtedness to Hindu scriptures, especially the Gita, has been adequately proven by Wendell Thomas (op. cit., p. 229) and Dr. Albert Clarke Wyckoff in his scholarly book, The Non-Sense of Christian Science. The latter makes a thoroughgoing study of the society from a psychological point of view.

Other cults teaching doctrines similar to the Vedanta Philosophy are: The Unity School of Christianity, Universalism, Spiritualism, Unity, Divine Harmony, New Thought, Divine Science, etc. In all the above-named cults, their essential attitude towards God, man, the world and future life are the same as in Hinduism. Their conception of God is pantheistic. They accept the Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and karma. They have a spiritual kinship with the Vedanta teaching of a universal religion, the divinity of man. God as universal spirit, matter and evil as an illusion.

The Harmony Book Store (between Sixth and Seventh Avenue, on 49th Street, New York) symbolizes this interrelatedness by selling literature representing all the cults. The essential unity of God and man is a chief emphasis.

The most cursory study of Western cults will reveal their similarity to Hinduism. From Max Müller on down scholars have tried to show the influence of Eastern

philosophy on the West. Though debatable, this seems a plausible explanation for the use of such doctrines as reincarnation and karma in the cults. But that Mrs. Eddy and Mrs. Annie Besant, and perhaps others, got much of their philosophy directly from Hinduism--of this there can be no doubt.

Swami Nikhilananda in a conversation refuted the indebtedness of the cults to Hinduism but admitted the similarity of their teachings in a few points. He claimed that the American cults, taking a few Hindu doctrines, as Mahatmaism¹ and reincarnation, have distorted them. This seems possible. Perhaps the cults have been stealing a march on Vedantism in America by using their method of synthesizing, adapting, distorting, and adopting what they like. Certainly American interest in reincarnation, seance, and the horoscope is something different again. In view of what happened after the last World War, one can easily predict increased interest in the near future in this phase of occultism.

3. Summary

There are a number of essential differences between the Ramakrishna Mission and the Hindu cults working in America. Likewise, it may be said of the Ramakrishna

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1. The idealizing or worshiping of Mahatmas of whom in India Mahatma Gandhi would be an example; in America, Mrs. Eddy or Mrs. Besant's Krisnamurti would be examples.

Mission and the American cults, that though there is a definite relation between the two there also are differences worthy of note. The Hindu cults have appealed to a certain class of people similar to those who are interested in the American cults. Both popularize their message. They are esoteric. In the East a true adept, whose pupils the Western teachers claim to be, never accepts payment. Here in America this seems to be a prerequisite to being initiated into the secret wisdom of Eastern sages. In contrast to this, the Vedanta Society dislikes being called an occult,¹ an "ism", or even a religion. It is a philosophy, a way of life. It is not esoteric; it does not popularize its message; it is not primarily interested in financial success. Its primary interest is preaching the gospel of a universal religion as revealed in the Vedas, and as taught and interpreted by Ramakrishna.

The American cults are indebted to Hinduism for some of their doctrines. But they have practiced an eclecticism of their own. The Vedanta Society refuses to popularize its message. Therefore its influence in the sense of making large numbers of converts, even the possibility of receiving a hearing by large numbers of people, will not be so great. Large crowds flock to certain

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1. The word "occult" comes from the Latin, "occultus", meaning to cover up, to hide.

of the cults. The cult movement in America is not on the decline. Popularization of Hindu philosophy will more likely come through the cults rather than through the work of the Vedanta Society itself. The latter's influence thus becomes indirect rather than direct.

C. What in Hinduism Has Most Appealed
to the West and to Whom?

1. Vedanta Philosophy does not Require Faith in Any Absolute Dogma, or Any One Person.

The finality of Jesus Christ and of the Bible--that Christ is the only way of salvation; that the Bible is the only true revelation of God--these doctrines are exceedingly despised by the Hindus. Such authoritarianism is against his very nature and his understanding of religion. Our study of the development of Hinduism has clearly shown this. Most interestingly, this dislike for authority has had its counterpart in America, which in modern times has become more and more vocal. Many have sought freedom from the authority of the church and its dogmatism. This spirit had its beginning in America in a reaction to the revival started by Johnathan Edwards and George Whitfield in the eighteenth century. It is impossible to estimate the far-reaching consequences of Unitarian and liberal theology. But most assuredly they had paved the way for the message of Swami Vivekananda to

America in 1893. The World Parliament of Religions itself was evidence of this liberal spirit in Christianity. To many in the West tolerance has become the chief virtue in religion. Believe what you wish so long as you are sincere. So also Hinduism says: Let us unite in a common search for God.

2. Corollary to Modern Humanistic Liberalism is the Search for a Universal Religion.

Perhaps the World Parliament was the first step in this direction. It was the first major comparative study of religions in order to discover what each had to contribute toward a synthetic faith. Since then there have been innumerable books written on comparative religions. Every major college and university has its department of comparative religions. Out of that spirit of tolerance has now also come a number of Bibles of the world:¹ Seven Great Bibles of the World, Alfred W. Martin, 1930; Tongues of Fire, Grace H. Trumbull, 1929; The Bible of the World, Robert O. Ballou, 1939; The Bible of Mankind, Miraza Sohrab, 1939; Treasure House of the Living Religions, Robert Ernest Hume, 1932. These Bibles of the world have taken the next step beyond toleration to appreciation, which in some instances becomes admiration.

Robert O. Ballou in his introduction to The

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1. See Bibliography for publishers' names and addresses.

Bible of the World expresses this mood which again and again finds similar expression in the writings of the liberals of today.

"In times of world stress such as this second quarter of the 20th century, men's minds and hearts instinctively rise in revolt against the materialistic temper to which they justifiably charge much of social disaster and seek knowledge of the roots of life, the sources of their beings. Seeking at first release from their uncertainty, insecurity and pain, they find in their search a need for something more than mere escape. They must go on to a positive identification with the power within and behind and surrounding everything.

"The religious need of man today is for something greater than the dogma of a single sectarian church. Many deeply religious persons, whether churchmen or not, have constructed for themselves eclectic religions which, even though those who hold to them may not be aware of it, are probably composed of parts of the traditional beliefs of many other people, and probably include strong faith in an intangible universal realm which is basic to most religions, but which does not necessarily have within it any of the bigoted quality of narrow sectarianism.

"A philosophy for today needs knowledge of mankind's many paths to God."¹

Similar statements expressing a modern desire to construct "a universal ideology of truth" without narrow dogmatism, are everywhere found in liberal writings. It is hard to say whether this philosophy of religion is as widely accepted in America as they would have us believe. But the significant fact is that in such a time as this the Ramakrishna Mission came to America with her doctrine of a universal religion. It is more than possi-

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1. Robert O. Ballou, op. cit., pp. XIII and XIV.

ble that the Ramakrishna Mission has already given impetus to the West's broader search for a universal religion.

3. Humanism West and Humanism East Compared

From the study of the development of Hinduism and of the teaching of Hindu scriptures it came to me almost as a revelation that the humanism of the West and the humanism of the East are essentially the same. Universalism is basic in Hindu Philosophy. In the West only in modern times has it become popular. That the two should come together is natural. That Eastern universalism should be accepted in the West is not surprising. The wonder is that Vedanta Philosophy has not more rapidly spread in America. There may be several reasons for this. The fact that the Vedanta Society teaches a conservative Hindu philosophy without too much concern in adapting itself to Western propagation methods has already been emphasized. The Hindus in India after all have little concern in teaching their religion to people in other countries. And proselyting is inimical to the basic conception of Hinduism. Another answer may be that the influence of the Vedanta Society has been much greater than is commonly recognized. Perhaps momentum has been given to the search for a universal religion, and the many books on comparative religions and World Bibles are the result. Who can tell? Perhaps Robert O. Ballou is right that many within and without the church, rising

in revolt against the authority of the church, have formed eclectic religious philosophies of their own; and the Vedanta philosophy, unconsciously absorbed, has been one contributing cause for the revolution against the church. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible to determine all the factors involved in the prevalent Western mood, which on the one hand is rising up against authoritarianism and on the other hand is reaching out toward a universal ideology of religious truth. So Western liberalism and Eastern universalism have much in common. Both are humanistic and would arrive at a universal religion. But this one distinction may be made: Western humanism tends more to glorify the mind and the body, or materialism; Eastern humanism glorifies the spirit of man, proclaims the essential oneness of God and man, disdains the body and all things material.

It is further difficult to estimate the influence of Hinduism because the cults have often taken over Hindu doctrines without giving credit to their sources. Many occult speakers avoid using terms and names which reveal the Eastern origin of their teaching.

4. Occult Members

Back in 1898 Professor Hopkins said in regard to the influence of the East upon the West:

"Apart from philosophical influence there is at present more or less interest in Europe and America in Indic superstitions and spiritualism, and half-educated people will doubtless be influenced for some time

by mahatmaism and yogism."¹

Newspaper opinion classified the first Vedanta members as: "intellectual, odd, and venturesome; religious liberals, social rebels, and cultural fadists."² In 1930 Wendell Thomas made an interesting study of present-day members of both the Vedanta Society and of the Yogoda Satsang cult, and of the other important Hindu organizations in America. In reply to a questionnaire sent to the members of both societies he received an answer from only five per cent of the former and two per cent of the latter. On the basis of this meager information he concludes that: "It would seem that the estimate of the character of the Vedanta adherents in the time of Vivekananda still hold good today."³ He, in line with popular opinion on the subject, has emphasized that most occult members are eccentric, about thirty-five years of age, and that two-thirds of the members are women. Professor Hopkins would call them in addition, "half-educated people". Others would say that they are psychological cases. It must be granted that these abnormalities will be found in every cult, including the Vedanta Society. But it is too easy to make generalizations which are not a true statement of facts. Some of the same type of eccentric people can also be found in the church. Non-

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1. Op. cit., p. 562.

2. Wendell Thomas, op. cit., p. 116.

3. Ibid., p. 117, 118.

church-going people often look upon all Christians as abnormal. It is true that certain of the cults do attract more women and appeal to a certain type of "social rebels and cultural faddists". Many of them have psychological problems. Some are trying to develop their personalities in "Five Easy Lessons". The writer's observation from a study of the cults in New York City has led him to conclude that popular opinion regarding cult members is only partially true; and that it is more true of some cults than others. Emmet Fox's congregation of 4,000 Divine Scientists appear to be a normal American group composed of people from all walks of life; while in a Spiritualist service and in a Hindu Truth Center service there seems to be much more of the element of secrecy and that type of thing so appealing to a certain class of people.

Here it should be pointed out that a distinction is to be made between Vedanta members and the occultists (Vedanta Society really isn't an occult in the truest sense of the word). From the very nature of the message and purpose one would not expect to find the same kind of people attend a Vedanta and a Spiritualist meeting. They are miles apart. Dr. A. C. Wyckoff makes a very interesting statement which aptly illustrates the difference between the two:

"If the intellectual element is overbalancing the emotional, unbelief begins to appear. If it reduces the emotional element to a zero point, atheism develops. If the emotional element is overbalancing the intellectual, misbelief begins to appear. If it reduces

the intellectual to the zero point, occultism develops."¹

In Vedantism the emphasis is pure intellectualism, philosophical speculation at the farthest point from emotion. And, as Dr. Wyckoff has correctly pointed out, "unbelief begins to appear". In Hinduism there is no clear-cut distinction between belief and unbelief. The Sankya system, and even the Yoga system, tends to be atheistic. The former is definitely so. Agnosticism is common in philosophical Hinduism. Swami Bodhananda, who has been in America since 1906, said in an interview after one of his services: "I am an agnostic."

To classify Vedanta members as emotional, supersensitive, maladjusted, faddists, is to misunderstand entirely the nature, the method and the message of Vedanta in America. But to say that Vedanta members are an unbelieving, "unchurched group" is more correct. In spite of the fact that the Swamis plead with their devotees (so says Nikhilananda) to be faithful in church attendance, yet few, having become members of the Vedanta Society, thereafter take interest in the church. Vedanta teachers in America, from Vivekananda on down to our present day, claim to make Christians better Christians. The result, however, is the opposite. As Sir S. Radhakrishna has said: Hinduism doesn't cut off the top, it

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1. Wyckoff, op. cit., p. 7.

kills the root. Hinduism is out to destroy faith in the authority of a single creed or person, and it very effectively does this!

This chapter has merely called attention to trends, made comparisons, and pointed out some of the reasons why and how Vedanta Philosophy is growing in the West. These will now be brought together in a summary of the whole study in which we will finally try to discover the conclusion of the whole matter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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A. A Review

We are now back where we started. It was the purpose of this thesis to study historic Hinduism as the background for Hinduism in America. This led to the discovery that Hinduism was a religion without a founder and without beginning, always changing; growing from a simple animistic nature worship to a conglomerate of complex systems; unaggressive, yet absorbed all religions; ever reforming to meet the demands of each new day. Then came Christian Missions. It was thus brought face to face with another way of life or faith also claiming universality. The old methods of tolerance and gradual assimilation failed. To survive the aggression of Christianity it was forced into a new kind of reform. It continued to declare itself an universal, all-inclusive faith; it, itself assimilated much of Christianity; and, more important than this, it began to meet aggression with aggression. Here is where Ramakrishna and Vivekananda came into the picture. In a very real sense, aggression was her response to Christian Mission aggression.

B. Conclusions

The study of Hindu missionary effort in America, sketchy and inadequate as it is, yet does reveal several things:

1. There has been Slow but Steady Growth.

From the beginning of its establishment in America by Swami Vivekananda in 1903 there has been slow but steady progress. Success must be determined not so much by the number of followers, but rather in the light of its purpose and motive, which it continually declares is not to make converts. In reality it does this by breaking down faith in the authority of the church, of Christ, and of the Bible; substituting in their stead faith in a broader fellowship, in the sages of the East, and in the authority of the Eternal Vedas.

2. American Humanism is Congenial to the True Spirit of Vedantism.

America has proved to be a fertile soil for the growth of the Vedanta cult. American humanistic liberalism has been most congenial to the true spirit of Vedantism. This has decidedly made possible whatever success the Mission has had. There is, in fact, little difference between Western Humanism and Eastern Humanism. Western Humanism tends to be more materialistic, but both are groping for the True Light, and, in their common

search for truth, find true comradeship. Vedanta teaching is not likely to be more harmful to the cause of the Church than is Western humanism.

3. Will America Ever Become Hindu?

There is no doubt but that it is the avowed purpose of the Vedanta Mission to conquer the world by Eastern "Spirituality". The spread of Hindu doctrines and philosophy will become more effective through American cults rather than through the conservative Vedanta Society. As the world becomes increasingly small we can normally expect more and more fusion of cultures. From a cultural viewpoint, the East has a lot to teach us. All Americans should know, and many are beginning to realize, that our superficial, materialistic American way of life is not necessarily the most satisfactory philosophy of life. Since the first world war there has come disillusionment to many in America. There is more ahead! The East has much to commend itself to us. But neither the "spirituality" of the East nor the "materialism" of the West commend themselves to the true followers of the One who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life". Hinduism may more and more influence America, but America will do what India has done in regard to Christianity. It will accept from the East only what it feels best suited to her temperament. Hinduism as a whole, with its life and world denying philosophy, will never become overly popular.

Its denial of all authority is its very weakness, and will not satisfy the majority of mankind, East or West. It is even doubtful if man ever gives up some kind of authoritarianism; he merely substitutes one authority for another. The Hindu conception of God as impersonal, though it solves some problems, will never satisfy the universal heart created for fellowship with personal Deity. Should the "Gospel" of Sri Ramakrishna become life and world affirming in the West as it has in the East, then it will no longer be a Hindu, but a Christian philosophy of life. And the East will then have brought back to us the philosophy which was the very foundation upon which our Western civilization was built.

4. What Shall We Do About It?

In thinking over the history and background of the Hindu Missionary enterprise one has the intuitive feeling that the Ramakrishna Mission in America and in the world had its inspiration and origin not so much in a sense of mission to the world. Missionary zeal such as manifested in Swami Vivekananda is a strange element in Hinduism, and is utterly lacking in Hinduism untouched by modern nationalistic reformers. Evangelism and Hinduism together just do not make sense. If all ways to God are equally good and lead to the same goal, then why not the American materialistic way, or the Christian way? And why evangelize or why proselyte? This is Hinduism's own

argument. How then account for Hindu Missions? Two factors are involved. It has already been noted that aggressive Hinduism grew out of an effort to survive the impact of Christianity. But there is still more involved. India is a subject country. The West has gone to India, conquering her with superior worldly wisdom and political power. There is on the part of India a definite inferiority complex. The West in every way--politically, economically, educationally, and even religiously--has never ceased to impress the East with its superiority. "Inferiority complex" psychologically builds up defense mechanism. India consequently discovered that though admittedly inferior in every material and worldly way, she yet had a contribution to make to the world. In "spirituality" she was greater.

But must the West continue to impress the East with its superiority! Must the West keep on exploiting the East!

"Read the history of the West in the East for the last hundred and fifty years, and aside from missionary effort (which has never been enough of an effort) it has been nothing more or less than the history of exploitation. We had commercial axes to grind, big profits to make. But with the coming of the peace there will come a time when we must do away with that and go to the people of the East not to exploit them, but to help them build a higher standard of living."¹

Let the missionary remain aloof from the super-

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1. Vice President Wallace in an interview with Frank S. Mead, Christian Herald, January, 1943.

iority of the Western materialism and imperialism; let him preach Christ in sincerity, in humility, and in love; and the day will never come when in India there will not be a warm response to the message of the Saviour of Mankind!

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available on the subject of this thesis. The
books underlined are recommended to the reader as
worthy of more detailed study in regard to the
more general field of the background of Hinduism,
as well as in regard to its influence in the West.