

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

AMERICAN SECTION.

Oriental Department.

OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY:

First.—To form a nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, or color.

Second.—To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions, and sciences, and demonstrate the importance of that study.

Third.—To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

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COMMENTS ON JANUARY NUMBER.

HE Oriental Department has, since the publication of the first paper, received a number of comments on "Some Customs of Aryavarta." All of these proceed from members of the orthodox schools, and proceed from the belief that Swami Bhaskara Nand Saraswati is a member of Arya Samaj and, as such, a prominent advocate of reform in India.

Amongst the comments made are the following:

Aryavarta does not mean the whole of India, but only the upper half of the peninsula. The authority cited is the "Institutes of Manu," chapter II, verse 22. Baratavarsha is suggested as more appropriate to India in its entirety.

The "freedom" of woman as described in Paper No. 1 is denied existence before the Mohammedan conquest. Philology is called in and the words "suddanta" (the sacred inner apartments), "ab-aro dh" (literally, house of incarceration), "antappur" (the inner apartments) are cited to prove that women in those days did not have free access to the presence of men. The apartments were guarded by Kanchuki,—officers who frequently are found to

complain of their hard lot. The question whether veils were worn of old in India is also discussed. The poet Kalidas, who has never been assigned a more recent date than 600 A. D., speaks of a "veiled lady" in his drama, *Abhignana Sankuntulam*.

Comment is also made as to the domestic duties and their performance by women in India. The last Paper on the "Ginee" contains the statements made by the present critics to a large extent.

A very interesting statement is made concerning the practice of throwing children into the river. In the early decades of this century, we are told, the mothers whose children were often still-born or died shortly after birth occasionally made a vow to offer one of their live issues to the river Ganges, if they became happy mothers of living children. If their wishes bore fruit in the fullness of time, they generally make a make-believe of keeping their vows. It was always prearranged with a close relative that she would rescue the child as soon as it was thrown into the water. The mother on the appointed day, accompanied by the relative who was to take charge of the child, went to bathe in the river Ganges. When she got into the river she threw the child into the water and turned her back on it. The child was invariably caught up screaming as soon as its mother had tremblingly loosed her hold of it. The woman who rescued the child generally brought it up and the mother never claimed it as her own.

These are the not very appalling facts which have been converted into barbarous customs under missionary description.

The origin of Sutteeism as dating from the fall of Chittore is also disputed. It is definitely asserted that the *Shastras* contain many injunctions in regard to Suttee.

Angira, the sage and lawgiver, is quoted as praising "the lady who ascends the blazing pyre on the death of her husband." The *Mahabharata* is also quoted as mentioning the custom, as also the *Markandeya Purana*. The books on rituals and ceremonials also are said to regard Sutteeism as no suicide but an expiable sin. The enforced practice of Sutteeism is condemned as strongly as possible, but the self-immolation of the wife who feels that life is unendurable without the presence of her husband is not regarded with total disfavor. It is also stated that the *Shastras* hold out promises of heavenly bliss to the husband of the wife who so immolates herself, and that the spiritual prospects of the family are increased thereby. It is thus held as the greatest sacrifice which a most loving and faithful wife can make for the spiritual good of her husband. Suttee was not an everyday occurrence, and people would travel great distances to be present at the ceremony. Thus,

when the ceremony was a voluntary one, it was found that the woman had entered an ecstatic state in which the physical body felt no pain. Of course, even if regarded in this favorable light, it is easy to see what abuses could and did creep in, and how most unwillingly many were made victims to the desire of the family to benefit by their immolation. It is difficult, however, to know why when suicide is universally condemned the *Shastras* should contain praise of Sutteeism, unless we take into regard the voluntary motive underlying the act. In fact, from this point of view Sutteeism would be regarded as a species of self-martyrdom to an idea. As regards the origin of Sutteeism it is interesting to note the following: Suttee was the daughter of the Prajapati Daksha and wife of Siva of the Hindû Trimurti. A high festival was being held at Daksha's palace, to which all were invited with the exception of Siva, against whom Daksha bore a grudge. But Daksha prevailed on to invite Suttee, who accordingly came. Daksha indulged in a violent tirade against Siva, and Suttee was so deeply affected by the aspersions cast on her husband that she resolved then and there to die, and did so. The events so briefly narrated are embalmed in legends and dramas without number, and there is said to be hardly a household in India in which Suttee is not regarded as a pattern of loving and devoted wives.

ATMA THE ONLY REALITY.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:



IN compliance with your kind request I have rendered into English that well-known little treatise in Sanskrit which is entitled *Hastâmalaka*. The few stanzas it contains are of deep import, and embody principles of great authority. The illustrious Sankaracharya has written an admirable commentary on it. Who the author of the book is, is not known; but a story is narrated regarding its authorship in the work called *Sankara-Vijaya*, as follows:

There lived a great Sage of the name of Hastâmalaka, who was a yogi in his previous birth, and for some mysterious cause left his body and entered into that of a beautiful boy. The boy resided with a Brahmin who dwelt in a holy place, and had no childish freaks or inclination to play. He passed the age when children generally begin to speak, but his power of speech was not at all developed. The Brahmin, at this, became full of anxiety. About this time the great Sankaracharya visited the holy place, and the Brahmin having come to know of this, went to the glorious

Acharya and solicited him to come to his house. Sankaracharya accepted his invitation and accompanied him to his house. When the boy was brought before him, he immediately concluded that the boy was a man of true Wisdom, in disguise, and enquired of him thus: "Little boy, who art thou?" etc. The wonderful child, conscious of the power of the great Acharya, gave replies in 13 slokas. These replies comprise the stanzas of the admirable work called *Hastamalaka*.

I remain fraternally yours,

DURAHATH GANGULI,
President Berhampore Branch, (in Bengal),
Theosophical Society.

Hastamalaka.

1. Little boy, who art thou? Whose child thou art, and where wilt thou go? What is thy name; whence hast thou come? Satisfy me by giving clear replies to these questions. I am extremely delighted at seeing you.

2. The little boy thus began: I am not man, neither god, [Devota], nor demon, [Yaksa], not Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Sudra.* I am not Brahmachari, Grihi, Vanaprastha, or Mendicant.† I am Self-Consciousness—Atmaguyanam.

3. As the sun is the cause of Loka-chósta, [exertions of power by all in this world towards the accomplishment of their several objects], so He, who is the cause of the actions of the four Antora-indriyas (Manas, Buddhi, Ahankara, and Chitta †), of the five organs of sense, and of the five organs of action; who has no name or attribute, and is as pure as Akása, is the same as I am, the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

4. As heat is the nature of Agni [fire], so He, whose nature is eternal wisdom, who is without a second, and motionless, but is the moving spirit of the material Indriyas [senses or organs] in engaging them in their proper occupations, is the same as I am, the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

* The four great castes.

† These are the four ashrams, or stages or modes of life through which every true Brahmin is supposed to pass in the course of his life. They are, in the order given: (1) a celibate student of the *Vedas*, this stage in olden time lasting twelve years, from the twelfth to the twenty-fourth; (2) Grihi = Grihastha, a householder, the next stage or ashram to Brahmachari; (3) Vana-prastha, or anchorite; (4) Sanyasi, or mendicant.

‡ Vedantic subdivisions of the dual fifth, overshadowed by the sixth principle.

5. As the reflection of a face visible in a mirror is not different from the face itself, so is the image of Atma reflected in the mirror of Buddhi, which is called Jiva; I am that Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

6. On the disappearance of the mirror, the reflection disappears and the real face alone survives without any image; likewise, He, who exists without reflection as one without a second on the extinction of Buddhi, is the same as I am—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

7. He who is free from the bondage of mind and of the other Indriyas, but is the Mind of mind, the Eyes of eyes, and the Life of life, that is, He who though indwelling as the presiding power of the Indriyas is yet unperceived by them, is the same as I am—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

8. That Substance, which is without a second, and of its own nature reveals itself in pure Chitta [consciousness], like the image of the sun, which falling on the water in various vessels assumes varied forms, appears different in different Buddhis; I am the same as this self-revealing Substance—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

9. As the sun, though one, reveals simultaneously several eyes, this is, makes them perform at the same time and not by degrees their respective functions, so He who is one and who at one and the same time illuminates all Buddhis is the same as I am—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

10. As eyes, unveiled by the light of the sun, see clearly all things around, so the sun unveiled and enlightened by the Light of Him who is its moving Spirit, makes all eyes to see, I am the same as that Light of light—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

11. As the image of one sun reflected in the still and disturbed water collected in different places is perceived in various shapes, so He who is one, only reflected in the unsteady Buddhis of various natures, is perceived as many, I am the same as this one—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

12. The sun is not hidden by the clouds, they hide only the sight of men; but the extremely ignorant people think that the sun has become obscured by the clouds; likewise He who is eternally free from all kinds of bondage is thought of by the ignorant in their impure Buddhi as one in a state of bondage; I am the source—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

13. He who, though one, is in all, that is, all-pervading, yet no-thing can touch Him, and who is ever as pure and transparent as the Akāśa, is the same as I am—the Atma of Eternal Wisdom.

14. As the naturally white and transparent Sphatica [a kind of white gum] and other gums appear colored by the rays of any

adjacent object of other colors, so, O Vishnu! owing to the different natures of Buddhi, thou, too, art imagined to be different. Again, as the reflection of the moon falling on agitated water makes the moon seem agitated, so thou art perceived to be changeable in consequence of the varied nature of Buddhi.

THE GODDESS KALI.

THE Goddess Durga and Kali, who are one and the same, are, no doubt, extensively worshipped in Bengal. We confess it is by no means an easy affair to expound the real esoteric meaning of that highly suggestive divine symbol. It, however, appears to us that Shiva stretched under the feet of Kali is emblematic of absolute consciousness—the Sada Siva of *Sivapurān* and Mahavishnu of *Vishnupurān*. Kali herself is but a potent conscious emanation of the Absolute Consciousness—the all-pervading active principle in nature—the ruler of the universe—the Light of the Logos in the theological language of the West. In the light of the Vedānta philosophy she is the prototype of Iswar (the conscious ruler of the universe). This is what seems to us to be the deep esoteric meaning symbolized in the divine figure Kali—a meaning in perfect harmony with the teachings of the different schools of our philosophy,

Now when we are discussing this abstruse subject, the several manifestations of the Goddess Kali as recorded in our *Shastras* may with advantage be studied. Such a study will, we hope, make our meaning clearer.

Suttee, the wife of Siva, wanted to go to her father's place, as her sire (Daksha) was about to hold a very grand festival. Siva was not invited on the occasion, and he was unwilling to let her go. But Suttee was resolved to go there, and, in order to induce her husband to let her have her own way, she displayed before him the sublime indwelling latent powers with which she was invested, and assumed in succession ten different shapes (*dasamahavidya*). Those shapes are of the Goddess Sati. Siva was strongly impressed with her marvellous powers and allowed her to go her father's home. This is the first manifestation of the Goddess Kali.

There is a weird chant (*Chandi*, a part of *Markendayapurān*) extant among us: it is exclusively devoted to the glorification of the Goddess Chandika. In that sacred book of songs we meet with passages that throw light on the origin of the Goddess Kali. Purbatti (daughter of the mountain God), turned inky black when Kansiki or Ambika shot out of the pores of her body: this is, we believe, her second manifestation. Further, when Chanda and

Munda, two powerful demons, made a deadly onslaught on Ambika, the Goddess Kali sprang full-armed from her forehead, as Minerva did from Jove's. This is her third manifestation, to our knowledge.

The sectarians probably object to accept our interpretation of the divine symbol Kali. They regard it as the primal cosmic force from which evolves all this world: they are loth to assign her any position short of the Absolute Consciousness. Our devout schismatics, inspired by fervid faith, generally ascribe the very highest intelligence, excellence, and potency to their special deities, though philosophy may demur a little to invest them with all such attributes.

It may well be asked who are the demons (Asuras) with whom the goddess Kali waged such exterminating wars. They are, it seems to us, the incarnations of selfishness and sensuality who seriously impede the free evolution of the universe. In order that the universe may uninterruptedly evolve itself, the Logos always appears as a being incarnate, to set free the wheels of this revolving cosmos whenever it sticks fast in the mud of rampant selfishness.

PRASANNA ARANDRA ROW TREDHALA BHATTA,
Vokeelabad, Berhampore, India.

PARAMOUNT FACTS.

BERHAMPUR, *the 9th May, 1891.*

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:

WE often hear of our brothers of the West calling themselves a practical people, engaged with the—as they are pleased to call it—*practical side of Theosophy*; but can there be any practice without a corresponding theory or philosophy to strengthen and perpetuate it among the human kind? A theory in itself good may produce bad practice by ignorant interpretation or application for a selfish purpose, but what would be the fate of a good practice when not properly supported by a good philosophy or theory? Then, again, you are always wanting *facts* and nothing but **FACTS**. Facts are the mere phenomena of nature, the tiny leaves of the wide-spreading Tree of Sansara, having its root in Asakti (Sansara—this physical existence, Asakti—attachment); why are you always after the leaves? How can you hope to reform your practice unless you expand your mind by good theories? Your practice of Brotherhood would soon degenerate into a sort of Commercial Union (or whatever you choose to call

it) unless you can realize that the same Chaitanyam (Intelligence) is in each Ghatam (Upadhi or body). Establish this, now a bare theory, by every argument you can find, and the Brotherhood of Humanity follows but as a natural consequence. It is only by the right distinction between Prakriti (Matter) and Purusha (Spirit), says the Rishi Kapila, that one can be liberated.

To an Eastern philosopher there are only two facts worth his serious consideration and ceaseless attention, viz : (1) The *fact* of his being related in some way to the Logos, and (2) the *fact* of his being unable to realize it in his present state of consciousness; all other *facts* are the working (Seela or playfulness) of that Supreme Lord "knowing whom a man crosses [the ocean of] Maya". The following conversation between a Gurn and one of his Chelas would explain what I mean; I found it lately in one of our *Shastras* :

Bhakti Marga.

GURU.—Now tell me how to make spiritual progress or how can an aspirant gain the object of his pursuit?

CHELA.—By observing the duties pertaining to one's birth and condition in life.

G.—This is exoteric; proceed.

C.—By leaing the effect of all our karma to Sree Krishna, *vide Geeta*, ix, 27).

G.—This also is exoteric; proceed further.

C.—By sacrificing one's nature or natural tendencies for the sake of Sree Krishna (*vide Geeta*, xviii, 66).

G.—This, too, is exoteric; proceed.

C.—The best means, Wisdom mixed with devotion (*vide Geeta*, xviii, 54).

G.—That is also exoteric; proceed further.

C.—Pure, unmixed Bhakti.

G.—Yes; but go on further.

C.—The best is Bhakti with love.

G.—True; proceed.

C.—Of that love or attachment, that of the servant for his master.

G.—Correct; go on a little further.

C.—Then the next higher stage is when the attachment deepens into one of friendship.

G.—Excellent; go on.

C.—The next stage is the type of the most unselfish affection of the mother for her only beloved child.

G.—This is also good, but what next?

C.—The love of husband and wife, ("the heart-ache for the beloved").

G.—This is no doubt the last, but will you kindly speak further on the subject?

C.—I did not know that there is anyone on earth to realize all the above and yet ask for more.

* * * * *

And the Chela then became aware of the presence of his Guru, hitherto only a questioner or inquirer.

Some day this little translation would be of service to you as showing what Bhakti Marga, the Path of Devotion and Love, from which outflowed your original Christianity, is like. The fountain-source, the Path shown by our ancient forefathers, is more delightful, pure, and soul-refreshing, the only hindrance being our own narrowness of mind, ignorance, and attachment to this world—love of *facts*, not the Chaitanyam which is in everyone, the only true bond of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity.

Fraternally yours,

KALI PRASANNA MUKHERJI.

ASCETICISM DEFENDED.

BERHAMPORE, *the 17th April, 1891.*

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER :



ENCLOSE in this an English translation of the five stanzas on asceticism, written by the glorious Sankaracharya, called "*Jati-Panchakam*", also styled *Kaupeen-Panchakam*. It is esteemed as an invaluable little gem of profound wisdom. Almost all men believe that such as profess to have renounced all desire for worldly comforts and enjoyments, and wander over the face of this earth, wearing only a *Kaupeen* (langonti, a piece of rag worn between the two legs, covering the private parts, the ends of which are tied in a string encircling the waist) are the most wretched and unfortunate helpless paupers. But the high-minded Sankaracharya in his *Jati-Panchakam* had most lucidly and wisely, from a spiritual standpoint, shown that those who have embraced with a firm faith and unflinching devotion the great words of the *Vedas*, called *Maha-Vakyam*, and forsaken the four Ashrams* (Brahmachari, etc.) and have placed

*The four stages or modes of life through which every true Brahmin is supposed to pass in the course of his life. They are: (1) a celibate student of the *Vedas*, a stage which in olden times lasted twelve years, from the twelfth to the twenty-fourth. This was called Bramacharyi; (2) Grihi = Grihartha, a householder; (3) Vana-prastha, or anchorite; (4) Sanyasi, or mendicant.

themselves in the true state of Sanyas (perfect renouncement of the world) are, though possessing only a Kaupeen, the luckiest of all.

I remain fraternally yours,
 KANAI LAL BANERJI,
Secretary Berhampore Branch, Theosophical Society.

Jati-Panchakam.

1. Those men who ever delight in the teachings of the Vedanta, who are satisfied with what little is got in the shape of alms, who walk about with hearts free from all sense of sorrow, are the most fortunate in this world and happy, though clad with a Kaupeen [or langonti].

2. Those men whose only shelter is found under a tree, whose hands are not busy in procuring their food, who abandon wealth as if it were a Kantha [a torn rag], are the most fortunate and happy, though clad with a Kaupeen.

3. Those men who are all content and are of cheerful spirit, and whose Indryas [senses and passions] have all become calm and serene, who night and day delight in meditation on the Supreme Brahma, are the most fortunate and happy, though clad with a Kaupeen.

4. Those men who have ceased to identify themselves with their physical "self", and who see in their "self" the real Self, and who do not bring to their recollection anything internal, external, or intermediate, that is, who have entirely freed themselves from the impressions of all Vishaya [objects of sense], are the most fortunate and happy, though clad with a Kaupeen.

5. Those men who constantly repeat the purifying Pranava [aum], who always think themselves as one with Brahma, and who, without any care for the morrow, wander forth in this world, living solely upon alms from the charitable, are the most fortunate and happy, though clad with a Kaupeen.

