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INVOCATION

Only those of tranquil minds, and
none else, can attain abiding joy
by realizing within their souls the
Being who manifests one essence
in a multiplicity of forms.

- *Upanishad*

* * * * *

To live religiously is to live
naturally, to live naturally is
to act up to the dictates of
conscience. To live to nature
is to live to God..

- *Keshub Chandra Sen*

* * * * *

The Brahmo Samaj does not limit divine revelation to special miracle laws and supernatural channels but finds the operation of the Divine Spirit in all earnest seekers after truth. Accordingly it gives a hearing to all and sits as an humble disciple at the feet of the great and good of all lands.

- *Sivanath Sastri*

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Editorial

Our beloved Maghotsava has come again. It raises memories hopes and expectation in our mind. The ardently spiritual among us eagerly wish to join with their fellow believers in the house of God to recharge themselves from that infinite store house so that after seeking forgiveness for the lapses and transgressions they may start afresh on their lives journey to attain Him.

The Brahma Samaj is principally a religious organisation and all of us must take stock of their assets and liabilities of their spiritual endeavour. We are judged not always by actual achievements but by our aspirations and the sincerity of purpose. It will be enough if we can assure ourselves that we are stuck steadfastly to our principles in the face of obstacles and have not been blinded by prevailing trends and practice. But a Brahma is not interested for his own uplift and salvation only. He has a duty to every other being who is around him. It is the responsibility and obligation of each and every Brahma to work for the ideals with which the Brahma Samaj was started. To elevate the conditions of people in all departments of life political educational moral and religious; to liberate the souls of all persons from every kind of bondage and at the same time introduce direct spiritual worship of the one true God without the mediation of any man or book. The Brahma Mandir of the Brahma Samaj was consecrated on 11th Magh, To achieve these and establish a place of worship where any person from any part of the world could come and pray to the Lord Almighty and thus develop a universal brotherhood, universal belief and universal religion.

We who are of the Brahma Samaj have been given the great privilege to be of service to attain this goal. Let us join the Utsava with a resolute spirit to attain this goal .Let us join the Utsava with a resolute spirit performing that part of work for which we are fit.

Undaunted Rammohun

Dr. Saroj Mohan Mitra

Rammohun spoke on the improvement of the judicial system. The process was faulty. Court language was Pharsi. Most people were not acquainted with the language. Moreover Europeans were appointed as judges. Although being in charge of the judiciary Europeans were generally unable to carry out their duties in dependently and had to take the help of Indians. Furthermore as the judges did not know the local language and were unaware of the methods and customs of the people of the country it effected their decisions.

Because of these pitfalls Rammohun felt that people of the country should be appointed in these post. This would also reduce the expense. Rammohun also recommended that court language should be English instead of Pharsi to facilitate the functioning of the judicial process. He felt that application of law should be without bias. Well placed persons usually got favourable consideration which was unfair. For proper and adjudication a judge should knowledgeable in both of Hindu law and Muslim law. In his opinion eligible and Indians should be appointed to the higher echelons the government.

On being further questioned about the people of India he stated that those farmers and villagers who lived and worked in places far away from the big cities and the centre of governance had a higher moral level and were more blameless in comparison to people in other parts of the country . Living in distant parts they were also unaware of the government and its methods and functions. Rammohun had great respect for his fellow countrymen.

The full contents of the submissions made by Rammohun to the Parliamentary Committee was published in London in the form of book for the benefit of the public.

SADHARAN BRAHMO SAMAJ : ITS NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Jogananda Das

NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Sivanath Sastri says that the Indian Association (1876) a political organization and the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj (1878) were like twins – the same ideals and the same architects being on both sides. The majority of the founding members of the Indian Association were the same persons who, two years later, founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj were already politically influenced when they started this new Samaj. Hence,, nationalism and democracy were prominent features in the origin and development of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, in fact of the entire Brahmo Movement from Rammohun, only with a small break in Keshab's time.

Rammohun Roy in his Town Hall dinner given in 1820 mainly to the Spaniards in Calcutta delivered.

An after-dinner speech publicly on "Religious and Political Freedom" thus for the first time integrating politics with religion.

Mahatshi Debendranath Tagore became the first Secretary (the most important executive post in any organization) of the first all-India political body, the British Indian Association.'

Keshab Chandra never attached himself to any political organization. During his period (1866-1877), patriotism was not a strong feature of the Brahmo Movement as in other phases of the Movement it was. In this period, Rammohun Roy the Father of the Movement was completely thrown into the shadow.

The spirit of nationalism and democracy was strong in the formation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 1878 and has persisted ever since then. Ananda Mohan Bose became the President of the Samaj as well as of the Indian National Congress. Dwarkanath Ganguli was the Asst. Secretary of the Indian Association as well as of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and was the first compiler of 'national' songs. From 1878 till the Swadeshi Movement of Bengal (1905-10), there were many in the Sadharan

Brahmo Samaj who have been both religious men and patriots. Even among the young revolutionaries in the first decade of the present century, many belonged to the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

A democratic Constitution of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj of international significance was framed in the same year, based on the principle of universal adult franchise for both men and women. At that time (1878) women were not entitled to vote in England, America, France, Germany or anywhere else. This Constitution of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj is thus, also, a great milestone in the international history of women's emancipation movement, because it gave equal right to the woman to vote with the man for the first time.

WOMENS' EMANCIPATION

In Maharshi's days women were not admitted into the Mandir. In Keshab's time they were allowed to hear the Divine Services and lectures but from behind a screen. Thus far and no farther.

The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj boldly and courageously broke all the social shackles that bound down the women. They came to the Mandir

without any 'purdah,' mixed with men freely, formed associations amongst themselves without barring out men, introduced co-education and were admitted into the realm of higher education.

Women began to sing openly in and outside their homes, taking part along with men in the Samaj choir and in public meetings. They began to walk in the streets boldly and openly.

The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj produced women teachers, professors, principals of colleges, nurses, midwives, doctors and what not,-a thing unthinkable in Bengal of those days, Brahmos of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj opened Widows' Homes with facilities for vocational training for the first time in India. It produced juvenile litterateurs.

The spirit of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj produced women delegates to the Indian National Congress. It went even much more ahead. On October 27, 1907, when the dead body of the famous patriot under trial Brahmabhadhab Upadhyaya, was lain on the funeral pyre in the cremation ground, Hemangini Das (wife of Dr. Sundari Mohan Das of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj), while standing at the foot of the pyre, suddenly got

inspired and delivered extempore a fiery patriotic speech before a huge crowd who had followed the dead body. Repeated loud cries of 'Bande Mataram' rose from thousands of throats. The Times of London of October 28 said: "A Bengali, Mrs. Dass, delivered an oration. She said that Pandit Upadhyay had taught a lesson in patriotism, and had shown them how to die when their usefulness was threatened by an alien bureaucracy." Monorajan Guha, a socialist leader and worker in the village reconstruction centre, 'Sikshaniketan' at Nabakalagram (Burdwan), in his book *Brahma-bandhah Upadhyaya* described this "oration" as a 'flash of fire' and said that it was an 'amazing, unprecedented, historic event.' This was possible only due to the spirit of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, the emancipator of women. Such another courageous Brahmo was Jyotirmoyee Ganguli, the daughter of Dwarkanath Ganguli.

The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj infused a new life and a new spirit into the shackled and cramped women of Bengal. It opened before them a new wide vista of life, -spiritual, moral, intellectual, literary, economic and

political. It paved the way for future Matangini Hajras.

With the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj came the complete freedom for women. The spirit of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was only intensified and more widely spread by Mahatma Gandhi over the length and breath of the Nation.

YOUTH MOVEMENT

In fact, the entire Brahmo Movement is a Youth Movement. The birth of the first Youth organization- 'Students' Association'-was in the hands of Surendranath Banerji in 1876. Ananda Mohan Bose of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was his closest associate in this new venture.

In 1879, the 'Students' Weekly Service under the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was formed by Ananda Mohan Bose and Sivanath Sastri, Surendranath associated with them.

The next Youth organization in the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was the Brahmo Yuba Samiti which was born in 1917 with the blessings of Sivanath Sastri and Satish Chandra Chakravarty. The leaders of the Movement were Sukumar Roy, Subinay Roy, Jivanmoy Ray, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, Jatis Chandra Sen, Kalidas Nag, Nirmal

Kumar Siddhanta, Ajit Kumar Chakravarti, Prafulla Chandra Ganguli, Santa Devi, Sita Debi and others.

The Youth movements in the Brahmo Samaj had always been in close cooperation with and under the guidance of the elders. This spirit of mutual cooperation is very unlike the modern tendency of pushing out the old and the experienced by the new modernist Youth- a fascist policy of creating division between the brawn and the brain imported from the West and not inherent in the traditional culture of India, nor in the culture of the Brahmo Samaj Movement.

CONCLUSION

The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj achieved many other brilliant successes. It has done many philanthropic works without begging for aids from an alien Government. In 1885 it gave relief to over one hundred villages in and outside Bengal before any other national organization came in to the field. In 1943-44, with the help of contributions from all India Samajes and outside help, it fed daily over 6000 hungry people at free gruel kitchens for months together in Calcutta and eight villages. The

Samaj opened cheap grain shops and charitable dispensaries for them, distributed clothes and blankets, and provided them with work. It organized night squads with volunteers to feed the footpath dwellers with milk and biscuits or bread. Free milk kitchens were opened.

The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj did pioneer work in harijan upliftment over large parts of India before Mahatma Gandhi. The Prarthana Samaj of Bombay also gave signal service to the harijans through Mahatma V.R. Shinde. The spirit of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj introduced new trends in juvenile literature and journalism. India's first labour journal Bharat Sramjeebee was born. Dasee edited by Ramananda Chatterjee on social service alone, came out and enjoyed a large circulation. Prabasi (Bengali) and Modern Review (English) set new standards of journalism introduced certain innovations which were followed by other journals and became the leading journals of India, founded and edited by Rammananda Chatterjee of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj who had his first training in journalism in the Indian Messenger.

In the work of social reform and fight against superstition and casteism, many members of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj bravely faced disinheritance, various kinds of tortures or were driven out of their homes. Yet they remained firm and never yielded. They were never cowed down either by the orthodox society or by an alien bureaucracy.

In education also, the contributions of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj were remarkable and creative.

In short, the story of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj is brilliant, fascinating and instructive and forms the most important chapter in the entire history of the Brahma Samaj Movement. It was in this phase of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj that the total Brahma Movement reached its highest peak. The history of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj played a leading role in shaping the national movement of the nineteenth century. India culminating in the Swadeshi Movement of Bengal of 1905 to 1910 which was the First Resistance Movement on a national scale against the British Government. The leaders of the Swadeshi Movement of Bengal were mostly either members of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj or sympathizers. The We

would do well to hold up the glorious history of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and national integration in the nineteenth century India before the nation and the world. Such a record may also serve as a source of inspiration to the New Youth of the Brahma Samaj.

Even today, if the Brahma Samaj Movement lives at all anywhere, it lives chiefly in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. So, we should boldly and unfalteringly go forward in a proper and useful way with a view to bring forth a new Creative Youth for the guidance of the country and the world.

We are to make this life like our poem in all its expressions; it must be fully suggestive of our soul which is infinite, not merely of our possessions which have no meaning in themselves.

- Rabindra Nath Tagore

Pandit Sivanath Sastri: Spirit Liberated

Enakshi Majumdar

[It is a common practice, particularly among the Hindu religious communities and groups, to regularly assemble and deliberate about the lives and teachings of the community heads and gurus. Thus the legacy is celebrated, thus they keep alive a tradition and put enthusiasm in the hearts of the community members. A very useful practice indeed, from the organizational point of view. Brahmos cannot do so because Brahma dharma does not acknowledge any preceptor, prophet or priest. But it will be useful to remember occasionally, if not regularly, what the Brahma personalities of yesteryear stood for. It might inspire some to do their little bit in a situation "where every man is for himself /And no one for all". True, the Brahma movement lost its vitality and direction long time ago. Now it is history. So much so, even an insider, a hard-core Brahma believer, would find it difficult to propose revitalization. Yet, the great mission of the Brahma Samaj remains unaccomplished, India is yet to become 'one Reformed Brotherhood under one Universal Church'. Social equality remains yet illusive. A society torn by caste and communal strife, a society engulfed by mindless consumerism, aggressive in speech and deeds, totally bereft of piety, compassion and

consideration for fellow human beings. No success story of 'Shining India' can obliterate this sorry picture. Remembering Sivanath Sastri at this sacred hour of Maghotsava may be useful. Here is a life of a Brahma missionary, who practiced what he propagated.]

Pandit Sivanath Sastri was born on 31 January 1847. The kulin Brahmin family of Majilpur village in which Sivanath was born was a family of Sanskrit scholars. Sivanath's father Harachandra Bhattacharya was an alumni of Sanskrit College and pundit in Majilpur High School. Sivanath was admitted in the Sanskrit College (Collegiate School) in 1856. He was a meritorious student and did very well in the Entrance (1868), B. A. (1870) and M. A. (1872) examinations. He earned the title 'Sastri' on becoming M. A. in Sanskrit.

He came in touch with the Brahma Samaj while he was in Kolkata as a student. The progressive mission of the Brahma Samaj, the Brahma ideology of spiritual and social equality based on the doctrine of

monotheism made a deep impression on Sastri's young mind. Finally in 1869 he was initiated in Brahmodharma by Keshab Chandra Sen. This shaped his future life. As Sivanath disowned idolatry and caste, his father disowned him. But the spirit of the young Brahma was indomitable.

Sivanath's life, from 1878, was dedicated in the service of god and humanity. The turning point was the establishment of Sadharan Brahma Samaj in that year. The name itself is suggestive of the great mission of the youngest of the three Samajes. It was for all- for common men and women, it was universal, it was forward-looking. Sadharan Brahma Samaj resolved to end all kinds of social inequalities – caste in the first place, inequality between men and women, between rich and poor, between the elite and the working men, and above all, between the vast mass of illiterates and the university-educated minority. One of Sastri's novel idea was to establish in 1892 Sadhanashram, or a commune of Brahma families, living austere and practicing equality. He also sought to sustain the religious movement by appointing ordained missionaries. Some of his revolutionary ideals

could not be translated into actions, though.

Sivanath withdrew from active public life in 1907. He passed away on 30 September 1919.

Sivanath: The Teacher-Educator

By his own admission, the teacher in Sivanath took up the job early. As a boy of nine he started teaching one of her widowed aunts the alphabet of Bengali.

He began his teaching career in 1873 as Headmaster of Harinavi High School. In 1874 he was appointed Headmaster of South Suburban School (Bhawanipore). He entered Hare School (Kolkata) as Head Pundit-cum-Translator Master in 1876.

His official career ended in 1878. He resolved not to work for money and resigned from government service.

In 1879 he got involved in the City School, organizing and teaching. Along with A.M.Bose he strove to organize the Students' Association. By this time he emerged also as a Brahma Pracharak (missionary) and began missionary tours.

[To Be Continued in next issue...]

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