

on vigorously, will lead us to the destined goal. It will manufacture bands after bands of sturdy, practical, resourceful and liberal citizens and set on foot a powerful reformatory movement that will solve all the important questions of village sanitation and its economic, moral and spiritual uplift. Then all the paraphernalia of an ideal village commonwealth,—good drainage, pure drinking water, charitable dispensaries, co-operative credit societies, arbitration courts, cottage industries, agricultural and industrial exhibitions, etc., which a sociologist dreams of, will ere long become, in their natural course, accomplished facts.

SWAMI VIVIDISHANANDA.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE.

BY SWAMI SUDDHANANDA.

(Concluded from page 119)

One thing more, however, we are tempted to deal with in the light of Swamiji's message before we take leave of the reader. It is the Hindu-Mahommedan problem, which is now engaging the attention of the Indian people more than anything else.

Every reader of Swamiji's works knows that he wanted to have a Vedantic brain in an Islamic body in his ideal rejuvenated India. In order to bring home to the reader the true significance of the expression, we quote almost the whole of a letter written by Swamiji to a Mahommedan gentleman at Naini Tal :—

“Whether we call it Vedantism or any *ism*, the

truth is that Adwaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. We believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; yet practical Adwaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, is yet to be developed among the Hindus universally.

“On the other hand, our experience is that if ever the followers of any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable degree in the plane of practical workaday life,—it may be quite unconscious generally of the deeper meaning and the underlying principle of such conduct, which the Hindus as a rule so clearly perceive—it is those of Islam and Islam alone.

“Therefore we are firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of *the religion* which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

“For our own Motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta Brain and Islam Body—is the only hope.

“I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.” (*Epistles, 3rd series, 1st edition, Page 21*).

In order to bring about this consummation, comparative study of Hindu and Islamic cultures, by both the Hindus and Mahommedans is absolutely necessary. But this can be undertaken by only a few cultured minds belonging to both these great systems. We would suggest here two other methods, following, of course, those indicated by Swamiji himself, which can be undertaken by the lesser minds at once and with comparative ease.

All the antagonism between different religions or any two different sections of people arises out of ignorance, as Swamiji used to call in the language of the Vedanta—‘Avidya’. He wanted to have it overcome by spreading universal education. How should the Hindus begin according to Swamiji? It is by bringing all their knowledge, especially their Vedas—the source according to them of all knowledge, to the masses. Let the Hindu learn his own ancient history and understand that the present customs of his own little village are not the whole of his religion. Let him travel at least in the different provinces of India, and observe the divergent and almost contradictory customs prevailing everywhere in the name of the Hindu religion.

For instance, one who has travelled in Bengal, the Punjab and Madras, will find that in these provinces the rigidity or laxity regarding the caste and food questions is widely different. In Madras,

there is so much rigidity that the Brahmana there does not touch the food even seen by a Sudra, whereas Bengal just stands midway between Madras and the Punjab which is more lax in these matters. But in order to justify all these divergent practices the authority of the same Hindu religion is invoked. So also regarding the marriage customs. In Nepal they still follow the laws of Manu, and according to the custom of *anuloma* marriage the Brahmanas there do not hesitate to marry Kshatriya or even Vaisya wives, while in Bengal marriage is strictly confined to the particular sub-caste to which one belongs. In Madras, the strange custom of marrying one's cousin prevails, and often the orthodox Brahmanas will not look for marriage anywhere else if they can get their maternal uncles' daughters as their wives. Besides observing all these different customs, if a Hindu studies also his own Vedas, or even the Smritis or Puranas, he will be astonished to find many things which the ancients considered sacred, but which according to present notions are looked upon as shocking.

What will be the result of this study and travel? The views of the Hindu will surely broaden, and certainly he will not be able to remain in his narrow groove. He will remain, of course, a Hindu of Hindus, but still he will not be able to look down upon his Mahomedan brethren with contempt and term them 'Mlechchhas'. For, after this travel and study, not only will he not consider a certain social custom as indispensable for becoming a pure and orthodox Hindu, not only will he learn that the

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Spirit resides in the body of a Hindu as well as of a Mussalman, not only will he learn that Ram and Rahim are the same and identical, but also he will find in turning over his own holiest scriptures—the Vedas—that what he considers in a Mlechchha the most abominable thing, namely, the killing and eating of the bovine species, has not only been tolerated by his ancestors but oftentimes has been considered even sacred! So with this knowledge growing within him, will he have the heart to insist on his Mahomedan brethren in season and out of season to desist from cow-killing?

Our Mussalman brethren will have equally to spread the knowledge of their Koran and other holy books among their masses. They will have also to study their Sia, Sunni and other sub-divisions, undertake to travel at least in a few of the Indian provinces and Mahomedan countries, and find out for themselves what the real Islam consists of. Let the Hindu Sangathans and Moslem Leagues be such centres of education and educative propaganda, both religious and secular, and we ferevently believe that both the mighty limbs of our body-politic will grow equally strong and become ultimately not antagonistic but helpful to each other.

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