

SPIRITUAL VALUES

By K. SANTHANAM

INDIA is going to be a secular State. Special provisions are to be put in the new constitution to ensure this objective. Any form of religious instruction is to be prohibited in educational institutions, maintained by the State which term includes Central and Provincial Governments and local bodies.

Even in schools and colleges, maintained by private individuals and bodies, compulsory religious instruction is to be prohibited. No kind of privilege or discrimination is to be allowed on the ground of race or religion. The atheist will have the same rights as the devout believer and the Muslim and the Christian will be entirely on a par with the Hindu so far as the rights and responsibilities of a citizen are concerned. There is to be also a directive that attempts should be made to evolve a common civil code which means that such matters as marriage and inheritance will be taken out of the field of religious rights and become civil rights exercisable according to uniform law.

Does all this mean that India will lose her sense of or attach less importance to spiritual values which have been the distinguishing characteristic of her history during all the past three to four thousand years? Even in the worst periods of her political subjection under Muslim or British domination she was able to throw out spiritual giants who enabled her people to survive all the vicissitudes of her political and economic fortunes. If the establishment of a secular State meant that she was exchanging spiritual life for economic prosperity or political power, it will certainly be a matter of serious concern. The makers of her destiny will have to consider whether they are not selling the soul of their great country for a mess of pottage.

Basis Of Spirituality

I do not, however, believe that this will be the result of the establishment of a secular, sovereign republic in this country. I feel rather that it will provide a freer and more healthy basis for the revival in a truer and greater form of her intimate craving for the life of the spirit.

The reader may ask what I mean by spiritual values and spiritual life. They are among those things which are generally taken for granted. They are not capable of precise definition, for they relate to matters which are on the extreme frontiers of human consciousness and cannot be confined within the strict bounds of analytical reasoning. The Indian scriptures and following them the great men of India have preferred to define them by the Upanishadic formula of *Neti* not this that is they are not the things which by his lower nature man instinctively seeks. If it is assumed that ordinary human

consciousness is the highest form of consciousness attainable, then there is no sense in speaking of spiritual values. It is only when one assumes that higher forms of consciousness are attainable and that in some way or other human consciousness can be related to those forms, that a discussion of the nature of the spiritual life and the manner of its pursuit can arise. It should not be assumed that because one has no belief in God,—in the sense in which this term is used in any particular religion— or in the survival of the individual soul after the death of the body he is indifferent to spiritual values. The dream of a perfect society in which every man and woman will take the minimum of what he or she needs and give the maximum which he or she is capable of, is as much an affirmation of spiritual purpose of humanity as any doctrine postulating the existence of a personal God or the individual soul.

It is the yearning after a truer, fuller and higher form of consciousness that constitutes the certain criterion of spirituality. When it is claimed that India has been a spiritual nation, all that is meant is that the noblest representatives of her culture possessed this distinctive characteristic. I do not want to go into the great personalities of the past. I shall confine myself to our own generation. I think the two greatest men India has produced in recent times are Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Mahatma Gandhi.

Ramakrishna And Gandhiji

They were apparently as poles asunder. Their careers were as different as they can be. Yet in spirit, in faith, and in their outlook and behaviour, Mahatma Gandhi was more akin to Sri Ramakrishna than to the other great religious men of modern India. Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chander Sen, Dayanand Saraswati and I may add, Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi.

It was the passion of Sri Ramakrishna to identify himself with all communities. He perceived in each man and woman the incarnation of the divine *Shakti* whom he saw in almost a permanent vision before his very eyes. Gandhiji never had any visions. He used to speak of a divine call before he took his great decisions to fast, or to inaugurate his satyagraha movements. This was always understood to be an expression indicating supreme conviction charged with intense emotion. Yet it was the one unalterable direction of Gandhiji's life that he should become the symbol and representative of all humanity, the lowest of the low and the highest among the high. Sri Ramakrishna's desire for identification led him to don the clothes of a woman, put on the robes of a Muslim and other curious experiments. Gandhiji's dress consisted of merely a loin cloth and his diet was

strictly regulated. These were essentially similar experiments. Having seen him in loin cloth for many years the people of India and even foreigners had come to regard it as natural but I can remember the great distress felt by all his intimate co-workers when he took the decision during a South Indian tour.

Humility Of Spirit

Swami Ramakrishna, whose birthday is to be celebrated this week, saw God face to face in the forms of Kali, the Great Mother, and Rama and Krishna the puranic avatars. But he had never any doubt that Allah of Muslims, and Christ of Christians were the manifestations of the same God. Gandhiji did not believe in avatars nor in the possibilities of seeing God in material forms. But it was also his abiding faith that God-consciousness was the only real pursuit of life. The name of Rama was the breath of his spiritual life and his Rama was only another synonym for Allah and other names of God.

Even a more remarkable feature common to both of them was the profound humility of spirit. Sri Ramakrishna was almost unconscious of his greatness and Gandhiji disliked nothing more than to hear or read of the adoration of his followers.

Speaking about his Great Master in New York in 1896, Swami Vivekananda summarized the former's teachings in these words: "First be spiritual. Have something to give and stand before the world and give it. Religion is neither words nor doctrines nor theories; nor is it sectarianism. Religion cannot live in sects and in societies. Religion consists in the relation between the soul and God." "The second lesson that I gathered from this man was, do not hurt any one. Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. Give him something better if you can, meet him, if you can, where he stands and lend him a hand upwards but never destroy his faith in what he already has.... We have to learn the central secret that truth may at the same time be one and many, that we may from different standpoints have different visions of the same truth."

Renunciation—The Background

"Renunciation is the background of all religious thought wherever it be and you will always find that in proportion as it diminishes in proportion as the senses creep into the field of religion, so in the same ratio, will spirituality die out. This man was the very embodiment of renunciation. He was a triumphant example, living realization of the complete renunciation of lust and money. He was far beyond any idea of them and such a man was necessary for the present age."

"There was no rest for him. The first part of his life had been spent in acquiring spirituality and the last

few days were devoted to giving it out. Men came in crowds to hear him and he would talk some times 20 hours out of 24 and that not for one day, but for months and months, until at least the body broke down under the terrible strain."

These quotations are as much applicable to Mahatma Gandhi as to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. If the greatest political leader of India can have so much in common with the most saintly ascetic, can there be any fear that the spiritual life of India will not survive the secularism of her politics? The Ramakrishna Mission contains the largest body of Indian public workers who seek no power and no personal fame or profit. I earnestly hope that a similar body of workers will gather round the name of Mahatma Gandhi to perpetuate his work and his message. Sri Ramakrishna was the child of God, and Mahatma Gandhi, His servant. Both of them together represent the noblest traditions of India at her best.

Akbar's days and of the Hindus, especially Todar Mull's part in strengthening the Moghul Empire.

FIELD SONGS OF CHHATTISGARH:

By S. C. Dube, Universal Publishers Ltd., Lucknow; pp. 95, Rs. 3-12.

This is a nice collection of 40 field songs on various topics of family life. The story of Dhola Maru has also been included in it. Mr D. N. Majumdar has a critical note on the cultural mosaic of the United Provinces and tries to show the exact significance of civilization. He has also added the story of Sahadeva, the old man, and the little king and other seven folk tales of the Mundas of Singhbhum district in Bihar. Mr Majumdar has given the text without diacritical marks and then translated them into English. There is a note regarding the source and the important words have been explained. It would have been better to give the texts in Devanagari script and translate them into English for those unacquainted with the original. It contains five good profiles.

GANDHIGRAMS: Compiled by S. R. Tikkar, Hind Kitabs, Bombay;

cluding the Latin American Republics that had accompanied us into war against the Axis, an imposing list of nearly 30 nations was arrayed against the Axis.

My first idea of the unity the Allied Nations should take was based on the Conferences at Lima and Havana, with regard to the Western Hemisphere. This was that, when danger developed, a united resistance must be organized. In my mind I extended that policy to the world situation, for from the Montevideo Conference on I had often stated that our Pan-American policies were capable of being applied to the world.

PAST POLICY

I asked my associates to go back over the period from 1938 on with regard to Latin America, to review what the President had said on the subject of unity among the nations fighting the Axis, and to scrutinize the procedures followed in the First World War, including the subject of unity of command and military alliances.

Then on Saturday, December 13, 1941, I asked Maxwell M Hamilton, Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, to draw up a draft of a declaration to be made by the nations fighting the Axis, which would bind them together until victory and would commit them to the basic principles that we upheld. The following morning, Sunday, exactly one week after Pearl Harbour, I met with a group of my associates to discuss this declaration and another declaration setting up a Supreme War Council.

ALTERNATIVE DRAFT DISCARDED

Hamilton had prepared two alternative drafts of a declaration by the Allies. These differed only in that one brought in all the Allies, whereas the other consisted of two separate declarations, the first to be signed by all the Allies with the exception of Russia, who was not at war with Japan and the latter to be signed by Russia. We quickly decided to discard the second draft, believing it would be far more effective to have Russia included with the rest of the Allies. After further exchanges of views, I requested Assistant Secretary Berle, Economic Adviser Feis and Hamilton to go to another room, incorporate in the draft the changes suggested, and bring it back to the meeting. This they did, and returned in half an hour.

We now agreed on the main point of what became the Declaration by United Nations. The preamble first reasserted the principles agreed to by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill in the Atlantic Charter. It then stated that the nations fighting the Axis were "convinced that complete and world-wide victory of all of them is essential to defend and preserve life, liberty and independence, and to preserve human freedom and justice not only in their own lands but everywhere, and that the struggle in which they are now engaged is a common defence against savage and brutal forces seeking to subjugate the world."

THREE POINTS

Then followed the specific points of agreement, three in number. Each government pledged itself, first, "to employ its full resources against

Second, "to co-operate with the others to the entire extent of its capacity to effect full co-ordination of military effort and use of resources against the common enemies or any of them."

Third, "not to cease hostilities against or conclude a separate armistice with the common enemies or any of them, except by common agreement."

ADVANCE ON 1941-18

Here, I felt, we were taking two long and helpful steps forward in comparison with our position during the First World War. First, we intended to try to bind all the nations fighting the Axis to the acceptance of certain principles already stated in the Atlantic Charter. These were the right of peoples to choose their own form of government; no aggrandizement; no territorial changes opposed by the peoples concerned; access to trade and raw materials; improved labour standards, economic advancement, and social security; international security; freedom of the seas; and disarmament.

Our Government, on entering the First World War, had not endeavoured to bind the Allies to any war aims. Various secret accords had already been agreed to by the Allied Governments whereunder territorial changes would be made if they won the war. Wilson's Administration was subsequently criticized severely for not having tried to get the Allies into a common agreement on war aims. His problems at the Peace Conference were greatly complicated by the fact that no such agreement existed.

ADHERENCE ON PRINCIPLES

This time I felt that the Allies should all be committed in advance to certain principles, leaving details of boundary adjustments and the like to be settled later. If the principles were strongly enough proclaimed and adhered to, the details would find readier solution when the time came to solve them.

It was naturally necessary for us to know whether any secret agreements again existed among the Allies. When I had this question put to them they assured us that there were no such agreements.

Secondly, we were willing this time to join in a full alliance with the other nations fighting the Axis. During the First World War we had considered and called ourselves an "Associated Power," not an Ally. The Declaration we now prepared was in the nature of an alliance. It embraced the two main points of the usual military alliance, namely, a pledge of full support and co-operation in conducting the war against the common enemy, and a pledge not to cease hostilities against the common enemy except by mutual agreement.

SUPREME WAR COUNCIL

From December 15 to December 19, my associates and I spent considerable time perfecting drafts of the document that became the United Nations Declaration. We also discussed another document that would have created a Supreme War Council, composed of the heads or representatives of the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, China, and the U.S.S.R.

Prime Minister Churchill arrived in Washington. During the next few days the President went over with the Prime Minister our texts of

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The President sent me on December 27 his written comments on the two texts. Churchill had received recommendations from the War Cabinet on the Joint Declaration and the President said he had taken these into account.

"I think," he said, "every effort should be made to get religious freedom into that document. I believe (Soviet Ambassador) Litvinov can be induced to agree to this."

He thought the language in the pledge to continue the fight against the Axis was difficult for the Russians. This was because they were not at war with Japan. He suggested a slight change in the wording so that the pledge would apply against the Axis forces of conquest with which the signatory was at war.

A UNIFIED DOCUMENT

The President said he had been trying to think of a way to obviate the necessity of two different documents, the Joint Declaration and the Supreme War Council proposal.

He suggested that the list of countries mentioned in the opening paragraph of the Joint Declaration should embrace all the nations at war against the Axis, including the Latin American Republics. "It seems to me a distinct advantage," he said, "to have as long a list of small countries as possible in this Declaration."

The President believed that China and the U.S.S.R. should be lifted from the alphabetical listing and placed with the United States and Britain at the head of the list. "I have a feeling," he commented, "the U.S.S.R. would not be pleased to see their name following some of the countries which are realistically making a minor contribution."

WAR AIMS

In general he concluded: "I am anxious that the most careful thought be given to the language in this Declaration, which will supplement the Atlantic statement, particularly in reference to the real purpose for which we fight.

"As soon as you and Halifax have reached a meeting of minds on the Joint Declaration, I think we should have a prompt conference between yourself, Halifax, the Prime Minister and me."

Later, the President called a meeting of these four persons to be held at the White House at six o'clock that evening.

NEW DRAFT

During the Conference it was apparent that the President and Mr Churchill were not yet in agreement that a Supreme War Council should be set up. Most of our discussion was devoted to this subject. We therefore, agreed to adopt the new draft of the Joint Declaration, standing alone, leaving the Supreme War Council draft for further discussion.

Following the meeting the President called in Soviet Ambassador Litvinov and handed him a copy to be sent immediately to his Government for comment.

Two days later, Litvinov came to my office with three amendments suggested by his Government.

RUSSIAN APPROVAL

The President agreed to the incorporation of the Soviet amendments. I thereupon sent him a new draft