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INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

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The Renaissance of Hinduism

BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY

STUDIES
IN
THE RENAISSANCE
OF
HINDUISM

IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

BY
D. S. ŚARMA, M.A.

**"The Mahātmā of India, by his unique example, has made Hinduism
the noblest religion of our time."—J. H. Holmes of U. S. A.**

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GENERAL PREFACE

At a time when civilization is in peril and schemes of social reconstruction are in the air, it is wise to know what the seers of the past have said on the deeper problems of thought and life. The question of the nature and destiny of man, the purpose of society, its relation to the individual are near and intimate to each one of us. But only a select few care to spend the greater part of their lives over them, and fewer still their whole lives and energies. But these few, whatever divergent answers they may seem to have found, stand high above ordinary humanity and have struggled to heights which have been gradually won for us. Man is a teachable animal, and by a sympathetic study of the past gropings and stumblings of mankind, he can avoid, if not error, at least its repetition.

In India the problems of philosophy and religion have occupied for centuries an important place. While the leaders of philosophy have attempted to solve the riddle of existence, the teachers of religion have sought to supply us with an ordered scheme of life. The story of Indian thought gives us an important chapter in, what Lessing calls, the education of the human race. What is noteworthy is not the painful ignorance natural to a world over which generations of wild men have swept but the attempt to rise out of that ignorance. The greatness of the ancient thinkers of India is that they struggled persistently and often successfully to discover the spiritual values which enlarge the mind and add to the beauty of life. The progress of man, it is generally admitted today, is a continuous victory of

thought over passion, of tolerance over fanaticism, of persuasion over force.

In this series, it is proposed to bring out studies of Indian classics and thought by competent scholars who have looked at them with new eyes and greater freedom. The author of this book, Professor D. S. Sarma, has long been known to students of Indian Religion for a succession of stimulating studies on the *Bhagavadgītā*. He has a free and flexible English style, easy, natural and dignified. In this book, where he describes the Renaissance of Hindu religious thought in the last hundred years, there is an assessment of life which is of great value to the contemporary mind.

20—9—'44.

S. R.

PREFACE TO THE VOLUME

This book was originally intended to form a companion volume to my *What is Hinduism?*, giving a short account of the history of Hinduism from the beginning up to the present day. But when I proceeded with the work I found the material for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries so abundant and interesting that I thought it best to make this period my main theme.

It is well known that the reaction of Hinduism to the impact of Western civilization at first took the form of four great movements—the Brāhmo Samāj, the Ārya Samāj, the Theosophical Society and the Rāmakrishṇa Mission. That reaction has continued with greater intensity in our own generation and has thrown up two mighty personalities—Tagore and Gāndhi. There seems to be little doubt that the future historian will consider our age the Age of Tagore and Gāndhi. Though, strictly speaking, the sphere of the former is literature and that of the latter politics, both of them are essentially religious souls revealing modern Hinduism at its best and most creative phase. Therefore I make no apology for devoting what may appear at first sight to be disproportionately long chapters to their life and work. Mahātmā Gāndhi's life especially is so crowded with events that even a bare narration of them—which is all that has been attempted here—would make his figure dominate the picture of our times. He teaches his gospel of Truth and Non-violence not through books or discourses, but through deeds. So to give an account of his teachings, without an adequate narration of his doings, which reveal his character and personality, would be to deprive the most dominant figure in the

picture of all its colour and significance. I have no doubt that future generations would look upon the Gāndhian message of non-violence as the greatest contribution made by modern Hinduism to the spiritual progress of man. But that message would ever be inseparable from the life-history of the Mahātmā, who delivered it. The Renaissance of which he is the highest expression is still in progress. So its history which is implicit in the following series of studies of its leading personalities is not complete. But I believe that the achievements of Hinduism during the last one hundred years are sufficiently great to justify the title I have given to this book.

I am very thankful to my friend Sir S. Rādhākṛiṣṇan for not only encouraging me to write this book for the series to be published by the Benares Hindu University, but also for allowing me to include in it a chapter on himself and placing at my disposal the manuscripts of his Kamalā Lectures and his Lectures in China, which have not yet been published. He is undoubtedly one of the leaders of the present Renaissance, as the chapter in question would convince any unbiassed reader. It would have been very unfair to leave him out of this book, simply because he happened to be a friend of the author.

I have great pleasure in acknowledging the ready help given to me in the course of this work by Professor K. A. Nīlakaṇṭha Śāstrī of the Madras University and to my old friends and colleagues in Presidency College—Mr. K. Swāmināthan and Mr. M. R. Rājagopāla Aiyangār—who patiently read the proofs and offered many valuable suggestions. But for their kind and ungrudging help, this book might have been much more imperfect than it is.

In the original manuscript no diacritical marks had been used. They were introduced at a later stage on

the advice of Sir. S. Rādhākriṣṇan. But, as this involved in some cases a change in the spelling of well-known names, it was difficult for me to decide where to draw the line and so I had to be satisfied with a compromise. The consequence is that a few discrepancies have crept in. I hope the reader will not mind them.

MADRAS }
15—9—'44. }

D. S. S.

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