

Theosophy and Science Meet

Where Theosophy and Science Meet—III. From Humanity to Divinity. Edited by D. D. Kanga, I.E.S. (Retd.). (Adyar Library Association. Adyar, Madras, India), 1939. Pp. 260. Price Rs. 2-4-0.

IN the course of my review of the first two parts of this undoubtedly stimulating series of monographs, I had pointed out that in view of basic fundamental differences between laboratory science and Theosophy (in the sense of knowledge of God and all it involves and implies) in investigational procedure and methodology and in the goal contemplated, a meeting between the two would not be productive of any good either to Science or to Theosophy, and a careful study of the *third* volume or part, now under notice, only further strengthens me in the conviction that when Science and Theosophy are detected in the act of kissing, the kiss is bound to be the kiss of Judas culminating in a betrayal of both. The progress of evolution on this planet from "Humanity to Divinity" (the *terminus ad quem* still lies lost in misty horizon) is perhaps the subject-matter of this part. The volume opens with a contribution by Therese Brosse on "Physiology". "Individualism and Functionalism" would describe the "trend of modern physiology, with reference to the hierarchy indicated by the "humoral, autonomous, and the voluntary" levels. In reference to the pituitary gland, it is claimed, that "recent discoveries of physiology" contain "some vindication for the contentions of Theosophy" (p. 20). The inevitable vitamins A, B, C, D and E are mentioned, and the author's conclusion is "Theosophy should co-operate with Physiology...." (p. 27). (2) J. Emile Marcault writes on "The Etheric Double". What is it? "It is the mediating principle between Karmic heredity of the evolving Ego and its physical vehicle" (p. 31). Modern Science has discovered "an electric organization lining up the material organism....electro-structure" (p. 34). Quite simply, the "electro-structure, highly organized electric body is the etheric double" (p. 38). (3) Edith F. Pinchin writing on "Mythology" refers to the "seven keys", and to the three schools of modern mythological research, i.e., the Anthropological, the Psycho-analytical, and the Sociological schools, and concludes with an Appendix on the story of the Bridge Bifrost in Norse Mythology. (4) A. G. Pape sums

up modern anthropological conclusions reached in the year of grace 1936, by European investigators, and by those in the U.S.A., and seeks to maintain that the Plan of Evolution "postulated" by Theosophy is most needed in Anthropology. (5) B. L. Atreya's contribution on "Philosophy and Theosophy", contains a brief survey of the different systems of European Philosophy and the Indian *Darsanas*. (6) That modern Psychology is slowly struggling towards the viewpoint of Theosophy is the conclusion arrived at by L. J. Bendit. (7) Viswanath Keskar writing on "Yoga" sums up the essentials of the theory and practice of the technique of Yoga. The Editor in his Epilogue maintains that "There is everything to gain and nothing to lose in this collaboration" (p. 236) between Science and Theosophy, and that a correlation "between Philosophy, Science and Religion, is necessary".

From the fore-sketched summary, it must be obvious that the different contributors have summed up, in some cases admirably, the conclusions arrived at by the Sciences as the result of experimental investigation. For this part of their performance, I have not merely no quarrel with them, but, have profound admiration which many of your readers will easily and readily share. When the other—doubtless the more important—part is examined, only vague and hazy lines of parallelisms are drawn between Sciences and Theosophy, with no attempt at scientific verification. Consider for instance, the doctrines of localization of cerebral centres, and the doctrine of conditioned Reflexes on which more and more light is still being thrown with advancing researches and investigation. In the extensive mass of theosophical literature, one will find, to be sure, some vague and hazy reference to glands and vitamins, to levels and strata of consciousness and concepts and phenomena like those, and from these references to demonstrated truths of modern sciences it is indeed a far, far cry. Thus, Theosophy's "postulates" in regard to "Physiology" are mentioned. But, "postulates" are not demonstrated truths or verified laws. Of course, every science is bound to have its own postulates on the foundations of which its superstructure must stand erected. A postulate ill-assorts with a demonstrated doctrine. I grant for the sake of argument that Theosophy has its own set of

verified truths, but, the striking fact is that "verification" in Theosophy is not verification by methods of qualitative analysis and quantitative measurement known to sciences.

Be that as it may, one must refuse to believe that the "Prana-mayakosa" is the "etheric double". The well-known Upanishadic view is that the self (not yet grappled by the methods of sciences) is enveloped by five sheaths — Anna-maya, Prana-maya, Mano-maya, Vijnyana-maya and Aananda-maya. Every sheath has potentiality of re-birth, and the outcome of previous existence. This is a metaphysical doctrine. The Yoga-program is intended to enable one to escape from the enmeshment of these envelopes. Beyond the fact, that the nerve-impulse is electric in character, nothing has been established by modern sciences. The etheric double falls far short of the metaphysical ideal of the Upanishads, and I am not quite sure if the scientifically trained conscience of the laboratory worker would be tempted or persuaded to sing hallelujas in celebration of its glory.

The articles or monographs on "Philosophy" and "Yoga" are very disappointing indeed. That the world is at present looking towards India for "light and inspiration" is either an imbecile's illusion or political propaganda of narrowest nationalism. "It is needless to say that there is hardly any difference between the outlooks of the Vedanta and Theosophy", and "In Theosophical teachings we also find all that is great in Indian wisdom" (pp. 148 and 161) are uncritical verdicts based on superficial similarities. I shall put a direct question—Advaita-Vedanta recognises as its vital truth the doctrine that Brahman is the Absolute—attributeless (Nirguna-Brahman). Does Theosophy admit this? The summary of Advaita-Vedanta on page 145 is defective. A Creator is spoken of. It should be explained that this Creator is a lower Brahman!

Does Theosophy believe in *Two Brahman*s admitted by Śankara?

I do not very much mind if the term "Jnyana" is wrongly printed (p. 178 for instance) but, I must protest against the elevation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* into "the greatest authority on Yoga" (p. 77). Nor am I able to understand why the perfectly flawless division of Yoga, into Mantra-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, Hatha-Yoga and Raja-Yoga is confused with the Gita-account.

No one can be more anxious to vindicate the prestige of ancient Indian culture than I am. But, I must rather hesitate to argue that because, mention is made in the *Ramayana* of "Vimana" civil aviation was quite an ordinary and familiar phenomenon in those days. In the Editorial Epilogue emphasis is laid on collaboration between science and theosophy, between science, philosophy and religion. Collaboration, negotiation, treaties, Round-Table Conferences and attempts and amenities in that line should be among equals. Nothing succeeds like success. Laboratory sciences are to-day successful. Success-intoxicated Science is not anxious to come to terms with Theosophy. I must refuse to live in a Fools' Paradise hugging the illusion that Science is genuinely anxious to take advice from Theosophy. Rather nervousness and neurotic flutter are visible in Religion and Philosophy bewildered by the success of Science. I take it therefore, Theosophy is anxious to get recognition at the hands of Science. It remains to be seen. As the result of the kiss of Judas, I do not pretend to be able to predict, which party will perish in the bargain—whether Science or Vedanta! It is better both keep separate without shaking hands and kisses of Judas. Then both would live. Nervous Theosophy may coquette with sciences. Vedanta stands grounded on the Rock of Ages wedded in happy harmony to Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

R. NAGA RAJA SARMA.