

advances in spiritual life and learns to look upon the world as the manifestation of God, the distinction between work and contemplation disappears from his mind. He discovers that the same Spiritual Reality with which he communes in deep contemplation is also the Cosmic Being whose universal form he worships while engaged in selfless work. When this intellectual conviction has ripened into practical experience, he derives from work the same beatitude that the contemplative derives from the Yogic trance. Such at least has been the experience of some of the greatest of men who have combined work and meditation in their lives. Or some may develop, after they have undergone a period of discipline in the school of work, the capacity to devote most of their time and

energy for an exclusively contemplative life and fit themselves for that way of living so dear to the old order of Sannyasins.

We conclude, therefore, that the modern monk does not signify any decadence in monastic life, but simply points out a new expansion of its ideals in response to the altered conditions of life in general at the present day. His appearance indicates that monasticism of our time has become a more comprehensive institution which shelters not only the spiritual adept but also the youthful idealist who finds certain aspects of modern life uncongenial for his spiritual growth. Though it has apparently taken up some features of the so-called secular life, it has not really descended from the sublimity of its spiritual ideal.

SYNTHESIS

By Nicholas Roerich

THE most all-containing and most well-wishing synthesis can create that benevolent co-operation, of which humanity is so very much in need at present. From the highest representatives of the spiritual world to the lowest materialist shopkeeper all will agree that without a synthetic co-operation no activity can be built up. We see in the culture of whole countries, that wherever a wide synthesis is understood and admitted, the creativeness of the country bears fruit and proceeds beautifully. No separation, no chauvinism can create such progress, as is reached by the radiant smile of synthesis.

Let us not think that this statement is a useless truism. Especially now many conceptions have been deeply perverted in the non-understanding or in a personal desire to give to the con-

ception some casual meaning. Beginning with the very highest conceptions, one may even say of God, down to the smallest personal feelings, how often are conceptions maliciously mutilated and misconstrued!

What should humanity do in such cases of evident distortion of fundamental conceptions? Should it not cleanse them immediately and restore their natural, original meaning? One may certainly create entirely new conceptions and expressions, but it is absolutely inadmissible to attach to old conceptions, established centuries ago, new egoistic meanings. If the latter be permitted, then our whole life instead of becoming better and crystallized, will turn into unbearable chaos and into a confusion of tongues, of which the Bible tells so symbolically in

the narrative of the tower of Babel. Of course everything progresses; life requires new definitions for discoveries and for circumstances caused by them. We have new names for rays, gases, various energies, planets and for everything unknown yesterday. Perhaps some entirely new language will be formed. This may be so, and in containment we will understand and accept it; but it would be a great mistake, which may lead to regrettable and prolonged consequences to set under immemorially old conceptions, created and ordained to us by past cultures, our new arbitrary and often presumptuous meaning. This would be a peculiar activity towards disunity and decomposition, whereas it is the duty of every thinking being to create towards synthesis, co operation and constructiveness of the Good.

A research of all misused and perverted expressions would no doubt form a considerable scientific work. Let us hope that someone will find it possible to work on this problem, which is of such importance for humanity. But now, here, I would like to refine the definition of two conceptions, which one meets with daily. We often repeat the most significant conceptions of culture and civilization. To our surprise we find that even these conceptions, which seem to have such refined roots, have also already been subject to misrepresentation and perversion. For example, up till now many people considered it fit to replace the word culture by 'civilization', forgetting completely that the very Latin root "cult" has a very deep spiritual significance, whereas "civilization" has as its root a civic social structure of life. It seems quite clear that every country passes through certain social steps, viz., civilization, which in its highest synthesis forms the

eternal and indestructible conception of culture. As we see from many examples, civilization may perish, may be altogether annihilated, but culture creates a great heritage on indestructible spiritual tablets, nourishing the future generation.

Every maker of standardized articles, every manufacturer, is of course already a civilized person, but no one will insist that every owner of a factory is necessarily already a cultural person. And it may easily happen that some lower workman of the factory may be the bearer of indubitable culture, whereas the owner himself remains as yet within the limits of civilization. One may easily imagine a "Home of Culture", but "Home of Civilization" would sound absurd. The conception "cultural worker" is quite definite, but "civilized worker" means something entirely different. Every university professor will be fully satisfied with the denomination "cultural worker", but try to call an honourable professor a "civilized worker"; every scholar, every creator would feel some inner uneasiness at this nickname if not even be offended. We know the expression "civilization of Greece", "civilization of Egypt", "civilization of France", but they do not in the least exclude the conception, far greater in their unalterableness, when we speak of the great culture of Egypt, Greece, Rome, France.....

I have elsewhere defined culture as cult of Light. After all we shall not leave this definition. Cult will always remain the adoration of the principle of Good, and the word Ur reminds us of the old eastern root, which always meant light, fire. But perhaps I am too enthusiastic about the conception of culture; therefore, let us turn to most prosaic definitions of dictionaries and encyclopedias. Webster defines civili-

zation; as a civic act or a civilized condition, and as a relative advancement in social culture. The same dictionary defines culture, as an act of improving and developing by education, discipline, etc; enlightenment and discipline acquired by mental and moral training; refinement; the characteristic attainments of people or social order, as, "Greek Culture".

Hastings' Encyclopedia of Ethics omits the word civilization altogether, as not entering the sphere of higher ethical conceptions; and devotes the following lines to "culture":—"To Bacon the world is indebted for the term, as well as for the philosophy of culture (Adv. of Learning, 1605, II, XIX, 2). While of itself the notion of culture may be broad enough to express all forms of spiritual life in man, intellectual, religious and ethical, it is best understood intensively as humanity's effort to assert its inner and independent being. This effort is observed in a series of contrasts, due to the division of man's functions into intellectual and activist. The most general contrast is that between nature and spirit, with its dualism of animality and humanity. With the ideal of culture man is led to live a life of contemplation, rather than one of conquest, while his attention is directed towards the remote rather than towards the immediate. Viewed socially, culture is contrasted with industrial occupation, the two differing in their valuation of work."

Thus we see that speaking of culture as of adoration of Light, we have but synthesized the existing definition.

If someone in ignorance will insist that the conception of culture is connected but with physical culture, he will simply show thereby his limitedness. If anyone will recollect some previous unfortunate misuse of this high conception, he will simply cut off

for himself all possibilities of development, refinement of consciousness and containment. We have met with a very definite understanding of these two conceptions amongst people. The masses consider everyone who wears a white collar a civilized man, often even mispronouncing this word, which they heard somewhere; every literate person is already civilized; thus, although in primitive forms, the first principles of civil state are correctly understood. But all people of the world feel above this civil state, so easily reached, the existence of something higher, to which every searching human spirit invariably strives. For this higher conception even the most primitive people have their own word, which will tell you of mutual understanding, of higher spirituality, of higher knowledge and of joy of the spirit. These will not be merely clerical conceptions, but they will correspond exactly to our conception, inherited by us from great discoveries of the Latin culture. Perhaps we can take the same conception from Chinese or Tibetan writings, but the West had been enlightened by Latin sources of this great conception; therefore we can at present pervert it only if to please those who would like wilfully to change or pervert it.

For some reasons everyone easily understands the definition of a "World Day of Culture," but a world day of civilization may be interpreted in a rather strange way and perhaps even comically. The example of the relationship of these two accepted conceptions, culture and civilization, reminds us how many of the correlations were forgotten and misused. We know how many ancient commandments require a new translation, since many definitions of our nearest past turn out to be either non-defining or primitive, and let us not forget that the end of the

19th century did not contribute much towards refinement of scientific and philosophic terms. But now we are at the gates of a most significant time, at a time of conscious synthesis, when no perverted conditional conglomerations should obstruct our striving towards light and towards unconstrained knowledge.

Someone might think that already the pronouncement of the word culture contains in itself self-conceit and vanity. But this is not so; on the contrary every striving towards perfection is already the opposite to ignorant self-conceit. He who is self-conceited, being self-content, does not move, but the searching one strives and is ready to defend culture against all attacks of ignorance, if only to move untiringly along the Path of Light. This light is not an abstract conception. The discoveries of our best scientists tell us of those near possibilities, which only a quarter of a century ago looked like an unpractical utopia, and called forth even in scientific institutions of that

time smiles of pity. There are unfortunately too many examples of this. But we are happy to see, how the evolution of humanity, if even on peculiar paths, rapidly changes the meaning of the whole contemporary civilization. And after this the accumulations of culture will grow. And if people will begin to think of culture, will begin to introduce actively into everyday life the sacred conception of culture, this could by no means be considered as self-conceit, but will only prove their readiness for higher containment.

This benevolent synthesis will help to bring into life sound and high conceptions and will teach to absorb and apply all that, which yesterday seemed to be abstract absurdity, or inapplicable awkwardness, or simply ridiculous, from the point of view of conventional habits, prejudice and superstition. Has not prejudice and superstition spoiled so many beautiful conceptions? And the young generation has now to uplift valiantly the forgotten treasures in the name of a better and radiant life.

SANKARA-VEDANTA: A REVIEW *

THE book under review comprises the Srigopal Basu Mallick Fellowship Lectures for 1930-31, delivered by Professor Kokileswar Sastri Vidyaratna, M.A., the distinguished Sanskrit scholar of the Calcutta University. The name and writings of Professor Sastri are not unknown to the readers of the Vedanta Kesari, since most of the Fellowship Lectures that are comprised in this volume have appeared from time to time in the pages of this magazine. In these lectures, Professor Sastri has traversed through all the important works of Sankara and tried to

deduce from them what he considers to be the true Advaitavada of Sankara, as distinguished from the views that critics have wrongly attributed to him. In his introductory lecture he says, "Critics have understood Sankara's— सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म (All this is Brahman)— as an all-inclusive whole, embracing within it, and entirely immanent in, the individual selves (विषयी) and the objects (विषय), and that these, they have thought, are never reproductions of, or parts constituting, the whole..... In a different way, Brahman of Sankara has

* The Sree Gopal Basu Mallick Fellowship Lectures for 1930-31: By Kokileswar Sastri Vidyaratna, M.A. Published by the University of Calcutta.