





THE Amrita Bazar Patrika

CALCUTTA, MARCH 10, 1898.

NUDDEA AND ITS PROPHET.

TO-DAY is a sacred day with the Hindus of all parts of India, and with the Hindus of Bengal especially. The Hindus to-day celebrate the Holi or Dolejatra festival all over the country; but, in addition to this festival, the Vaishnavas of Bengal, who form the majority of the population, will also celebrate the anniversary of Sree Gauranga or Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabu, the Prophet of Nuddea. It is four hundred and twelve years ago that Sree Gauranga was born in the village of Myapore, in Nuddea. But this Myapore had been in the bosom of the Ganges for a couple of hundred years or so. It has, however, re-appeared since some time; and the exact site where Sree Gauranga was born, has at last been discovered. The devotees of Sree Gauranga have built a temple there, and worship his image and that of his consort, Sreenatee Vishnupriya, with all the honour due to the Avatar of God Krishna.

Professor Max Muller thus spoke of Buddhism enthusiastically in one of his public utterances:—

As to the religion of Buddha being influenced by foreign thought, no true scholar now dreams of that. The religion of Buddha is the daughter of the old Brahmin religion, and a daughter, in many respects, more beautiful than the mother. On the contrary, it was through Buddhism that India, for the first time, stepped forth from its isolated position, and became an actor in the historical drama of the world.

It is a pity that the Professor knows nothing of Sree Gauranga who came after Buddha. The pity is the greater because the sayings and doings of the Prophet of Nuddea are in a perfect state of preservation. Of all Prophets, his triumph is the greatest; for, he made his hundred thousands of followers regard him as the Incarnation of the Supreme Being Himself, even while He was on this earth. He flourished in the city of Nuddea at a time when the inhabitants had gone mad after knowledge, and produced some of the brightest intellects that the world has ever seen. So, this Nuddea Prophet extorted the allegiance, which a man owes to the Supreme Being, not from the ordinary herd, but from the brightest intellects of that or of any age.

At no time and at no place really was seen such a state of commotion as the town of Nuddea saw during the life-time of Gauranga. War would sometimes drive a city or a town into paroxysms of madness; sometimes the townspeople would go mad over a new way of acquiring wealth; and sometimes a new religion, or some social or political change, would convulse society. Nuddea went mad over attainment of learning. All other ideas were relinquished, and the all-absorbing thought of the time was that the acquirement of learning was the highest object of existence.

The prevailing idea was that he alone had utilized his life who had acquired knowledge. The learned only were human beings; they alone were beautiful to look at; they alone were noble and happy. Pursuit of learning began at the very early age of four. Mothers were inspired with the one wish that their sons should be learned; and fathers had naturally the same desire. Daughters would be bequeathed in marriage to learned youths only. The rich would spend large amounts of money in patronising the learned. All classes of people, even Rajas and Maharajas, would stand aside in reverence when the learned Pundits were met with in the streets. The very manners and features of the town were altered. The ladies discussed shastras at bathing ghats; boys held learned disputes all over the place; and devotees of learning occupied the whole town. They strolled over in groups, and gathered in thousands on the banks of the Ganges for the same learned culture. Thousands again flocked into the town daily from various places in the interior. They had always their books in their left hands, and without granthas they could not step out of doors. Books were their ornaments, their sole companions, their dearest friends; and books alone were their source of comfort and real strength.

There were toles even in lanes and by-anes, and each such educational institution claimed thousands of students. They all met at the bathing-ghats where they held

learned debates. The disciples of one Professor often quarrelled with those of another; and such contests, ending very often in hand-to-hand fights, would compel many to seek safety in swimming across the Ganges. The river would be all muddy at bathing times, in consequence of the splashing of waters by the students.

Many had only temporary lodgings at Nuddea. Some had arrived there for the education of their sons; some for their own mental culture, or perhaps only to see the town; others, again, to have a look at the famous Professors, or to give the finishing touch to their education at Nuddea; for, education was at best regarded as incomplete without some years of studentship at that great seat of learning. Any one, ranked newly amongst the learned, would come to Nuddea to secure a diploma or perhaps to conquer a compeer in some learned disputes. Nuddea at such time became all agitation.

Sree Gauranga was taken as Avatar of God when Nuddea was thus at its zenith of intellectual prosperity. A Hindu savant of such celebrity as Vashudeva Sarvabhoush, who was a class-mate of Gauranga's father, not only worshipped him as God, but had his image painted on the Temple of Juggannath, which image still exists. The then independent and powerful Hindu sovereign of Orissa, Protap Rudra Gazapati, who worsted the Mussalmans in many a battle, and whose sway extended over Madras, also accepted Sree Gauranga as God himself. Indeed, in Orissa, Sree Gauranga was called "living," and Juggannath "lifeless" God. In other words, the place of Juggannath,—God of the Universe,—which even King Protap Rudra himself could not think of occupying, was allowed to be filled up by the Prophet of Nuddea!

A few years ago, very few people even in Bengal knew anything about the marvellous doings of Sree Gauranga and the religion of love that he gave to the world. Thanks to the Bengalee works of Babu Shishir Kumar Ghosh, there are now thousands amongst the English-educated Bengalees who worship Sree Gauranga as Incarnation of Sree Krishna. His Life of the great Prophet of Nuddea in English, entitled "Lord Gauranga or Salvation for all," is a gift which has also been accepted by many a Christian, Mussalman and Rationalist in that friendly spirit in which it has been offered to them by the author. There is not only a demand for the book from the English-knowing people in America and England, but even in France, Germany and Switzerland. It is expected that the teachings of the Prophet of Nuddea will have a humanizing effect upon all, and serve to extend the Kingdom of Heaven and secure the progress of mankind. The grand and wonderful life of Sree Gauranga, though it reads like a romance, is based upon stern, historical facts and incontrovertible testimony. The second volume of the Life of Lord Gauranga by Babu Shishir Kumar is in the press, and is likely to come out in the course of a few weeks. This volume contains the kernel, as it were, of what the Avatar of Nuddea taught and did. His Sanyas and unparalleled sacrifices for the spiritual elevation of the human race, are simply marvellous, and have been graphically described in the forthcoming volume.

FURTHER ANALYSIS OF SECTION 108.

WHEN you place a loaded gun in the hand of a man and he sees a number of birds sitting before him, he is tempted to shoot at them though they did him no harm. If he, however, feels some compunction in killing a harmless pigeon, he will not do so when he happens to bring down a "carrion kite" with his shot; for, is not the latter a very vicious and dirty bird? This is human nature. Are the District Magistrates passionless Sadhus and Yogis? They themselves, we think, will frankly acknowledge that they have not been able to conquer their passions, and that they are subject to all those prejudices and frailties which govern ordinary mortals. Armed with the beak and claws of the eagle by the proposed section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code, who can therefore blame them if they are tempted to commit a dreadful havoc among the whole race of "carrion kites,"—we mean the political agitators who, we were assured by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, had been

hitherto treated with "silent contempt," but whose "irresponsible chatter" would no longer be ignored?

It is a pity that the whole country was engrossed with the amendments of section 124A of the Indian Penal Code; and section 108 of the Procedure Code Bill did not thus attract that public attention which it deserved. The Penal Code amendments are no doubt, very dangerous in their own way; indeed, in the hands of the authorities whose temper had been soured, these amendments might be used for the entire destruction of freedom of speech and writing. But there are at least some safeguards, however slight against the abuse of section 124A. No prosecution is to be instituted without the previous sanction of the Local Government. And we agree with Sir Alexander Mackenzie, to a considerable extent, when he says that, "the journalists must trust to the commonsense and dignity of the Government which would only expose itself to well-merited ridicule if it showed undue sensitiveness to fair criticism." Then again, an appeal lies against the decision of the Magistrate when he tries a sedition case, instituted under section 124A. Section 108 of the Procedure Code, as it stands, takes away both these safeguards, and thus places public discussion and criticism under the absolute control of the District Magistrate.

We have already noticed some of the features of the proposed monstrous innovation in the Code of Criminal Procedure; we shall to-day point out a few more which, when fully realized, will, we doubt not, create a feeling of blank despair in the country. In the original Bill, the section provided that a Magistrate might call upon only such disseminator of seditious or defamatory matter to execute a bond, as resided "within the limits of his jurisdiction." But the clause, as recast by the Select Committee, has been widened so that others, residing beyond his jurisdiction, might also be brought within his clutches.

The original section was worded thus: "Whenever a Magistrate has information that there is within the limits of his jurisdiction any person who disseminates seditious matter, etc." as amended by the Select Committee, the section stands as follows: "Whenever a Magistrate has information that there is within the limits of his jurisdiction any person who, within or without such limits, disseminates seditious and defamatory matter, etc." The words italicised in the above have been faded, and thus it has been made possible for a Punjab Magistrate to haul up a Calcutta man, if he happens to enter the limits of his jurisdiction on some business.

Babu A. is a resident of Calcutta, whose name is in the black book of the authorities for his well-known sympathy with the Congress movement. He goes to Amritsar. Information is brought to the District Magistrate that Babu A., having disseminated seditious matter in Calcutta, has come to reside within his jurisdiction. The District Magistrate will be perfectly justified to proceed against Babu A. in spite of his protest that he is a stranger to the place, that his witnesses are in Calcutta, and that, if convicted, no one in the district is likely to stand security for him. The public will, of course, know very little of the trial, for the proposed change dispenses with juries and assessors, and empowers the Magistrate to dispose of the matter in any way he likes.

But we have not yet touched the most important feature of the provision. The accused person, if convicted, shall have "to execute a bond, with or without sureties, for his good behaviour," for a period not exceeding one year. Now, the amount of sureties is not fixed. It may be twenty thousands, it may be fifty thousands, it may be a lakh of rupees. There are a good many pleaders in the Muffasil who are not in the good graces of the local authorities. An unscrupulous man, in order to curry favour with a District Magistrate, informs him that one of them has been disseminating seditious or defamatory matter. It so happens that the District Magistrate has a grudge against the particular pleader. The official is but human; the object of his dislike or hatred is at his mercy; and he uses the powers, vested in him by section 108, sixteen annas. The pleader is ordered to execute a bond in his own name for Rs. 50,000. He complies with the order to save his skin immediately.

But, he is further required to find a surety to the extent of a lakh of rupees. None is, of course, forthcoming to stand security for him; for, who, with a head on his shoulder, will venture to make himself responsible for such a large sum for the good behaviour of his friend for full twelve months, and incur the displeasure of the Magistrate, to boot? For aught he knows, he may forfeit the entire amount of the surety, as the convicted pleader may be charged under the section over again and convicted of the same offence a second time.

So the result will be this. The convicted pleader will fail to furnish any security, and, on failing to do so, will be rigorously imprisoned for one year! This is the law which is going to be fastened upon the unfortunate people of India. The section does not breathe a word of letters; it looks quite innocent in that respect; it is only a matter of bond and security, as far as the wording of the section goes. But any Magistrate may use it in such a way as to make it impossible for a person, accused of disseminating seditious and defamatory matter, to escape jail.

We have now to show the beauty of another clever arrangement in this connection. Like section 108, section 107 of the Procedure Code Bill also empowers the District Magistrate to require a person to execute a bond with sureties, when he is likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity. If he, however, fails to give security, he is, under clause (5) section 123, to suffer simple imprisonment. But, under clause (6) of the same section, if a man, convicted under section 108, fail to furnish security, in his case, imprisonment will be simple or rigorous! According to our wise legislators, then, one that threatens to disturb the public tranquillity, is entitled to simple imprisonment, but one who merely disseminates any seditious or defamatory matter, without any incitement to violence, deserves to be consigned in jail with rigorous imprisonment.

We must confess, we are getting sick of criticising these measures, the sole object of which is to make the executive irresistible. By the way, has it occurred to the authorities that, by thus arming themselves with powers from head to foot, they are only proving that they are not as capable men as their predecessors were? Just see. They could do without a Sedition Law from 1860 to 1870, though the minds of the people had then been disturbed by a great mutiny. When the country had been settled in 1870, the necessity for the Sedition Law was first urged and then the measure thrust upon the people. There were, however, safeguards attached to section 124A so as to protect public discussion and criticism. Twenty-eight years after, that is, in the year of grace 1898, when the whole nation has been almost emasculated and when it is impossible for them to live one day without British protection, the wise rulers come forward not only to discover sedition in every bush but proclaim it to the world to the topmost of their voice, to the delight of Russia and other enemies of England, and introduce a series of repressive measures, the like of which is perhaps to be found nowhere in the world. May we enquire, how did the early rulers manage without these powers, though the country was then not thoroughly subdued; and how is it that their successors absolutely need them, though the people have been disarmed and their martial spirit thoroughly crushed?

It is a misfortune to the country that both the branches of the Natore Raj family are just now in a bad way. Rajah Jogendra Nath, the head of the junior branch, is noted for his patriotism and public spirit from his very boyhood. It is an open secret that in consequence of his spirit of independence and utter contempt of *khairkhaisis*, he has never been able to ingratiate himself with the authorities. Yet such of the officials as knew him intimately, could not but feel an admiration for his manly virtues and other noble qualities. When the Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Natore last year, he was offered, as his position suited him, the chairmanship of the Reception Committee; but, being a man of a retiring disposition, he proposed that Maharajah Jogendra Nath, the head of the senior branch, should occupy the position. It is very well known that both Rajah Jogendra Nath and Maharajah Jogendra Nath did their best to further the cause of the Conference, and that it was owing mainly to their joint exertions that it proved such a great success.

The earthquake demolished the palatial houses of Raja Jogendra Nath, and he came to reside in Calcutta with his son and other members of his family. As luck would have it, the young Kumar, who was a jewel of a young man of 25, got remittent fever and died in the course of a few days, though he was placed under the treatment of the best physicians in the town. The Rajah has no other son, and he was deeply attached to him. The state of his mind can thus better be imagined than described. He has, however, borne the bereavement with his characteristic fortitude and, being a pious man, he is now passing his time in religious contemplation and in the study of Hindu Shastras.

As regards Maharajah Jogendra Nath he is destined to be one of the foremost men in the country if Heaven keeps him in health. During the Conference at Natore, he worked so hard that it affected his health, and he has been since then—these eight months—suffering from a sort of a head disease. The Doctors have advised him not only complete rest, but to live in the N. W. Provinces and Simla for the next six or eight months. The reader is aware that the Maharajah was elected a member of the Bengal Council by the Rajshyhe Division. On a previous occasion also, he served as a member of the Council with great credit. This time, however, he could not attend the meeting of the Council which came off on the 26th ultimo; and there is no knowing when he will be in a position to do it again. He might have, however, yet stuck to his seat, as many others in his circumstance would have done. But, being a highly honourable man and a sincere well-wisher of the country, he has thought it proper to resign his seat, so that a competent person may fill up his place; for, it is detrimental to public interest that an absentee member should keep his appointment only for the sake of show. Besides, important measures are now before the Bengal Council, and more important ones are shortly coming before it; it is, therefore, desirable that a strong representative element should be fighting for the interests of the people, though, it may be, without any prospect of success. Considering all these circumstances, the Maharajah has acted like a true patriot, by sending in his resignation. It is hardly necessary to say that, if health had permitted, the Maharajah would have done his duty at this juncture to the full satisfaction of his constituency. Indeed, very few noblemen have given such evidence of their willingness and capacity to serve the people as he. But, since his resignation has been tendered and accepted, it behoves the people of the Rajshyhe Division to elect another equally competent member, so that the interests of the country may be properly protected by him. What we want is a strong and able man, a man of independence, experience and large sympathies with all classes of the people.

We notice with very great regret that in filling up certain temporary vacancies in the rank of Commissioners of Divisions in Bengal, caused by officers proceeding on long furlough out of India, the Government has ignored the claims of a respected Indian member of the Covenanted Civil Service who has been always looked upon as a most capable administrator. We refer to Mr. Krishna Gobind Gupta, who is now an Excise Commissioner of Bengal, drawing the salary of a first-grade Magistrate. He came out to India in 1873, and is now forty-first on the seniority list. When in June last the Commissionership of the Dacca Division fell vacant temporarily, Mr. Launcelot Hare, standing forty-eighth, was appointed to fill up the post. We did not protest against the appointment, as we thought that in the state of unrest in the Backergunj district preference was given to Mr. Hare for his intimate knowledge of East Bengal. Now that, however, we understand that two more officers, Messrs. Manisty and Allen, below Mr. Hare are getting temporary steps, we feel bound to enter an emphatic protest against the arrangements.

In the February number of the *Review of Reviews* just to hand,—in that portion of the *Review* which Mr. Stead invariably keeps sacred for his own pen alone,—the following appears under the head line "Gagging of the Press in India":

"And yet when we are smiling at the folly of the Kaiser, let us not forget that at this very moment the demented rulers of our Indian Empire are endeavouring to force into law a monstrous Sedition Bill which throws the enormity of the *lese majeste* law of Germany far into the shade. In this measure it is provided that any one who publishes any writing which excites contempt, ill-will or hatred against the Government, may be transported for life on a charge of sedition. Of course, such a Bill cuts up by the roots all semblance of a free press. It is a confession of weakness and of a timidity born of weakness, which does more to damage the Government of India than all the articles ever published in the Vernacular Press. The autocratic bureaucrats who rule India, will now be deprived of the only means by which they can obtain any genuine expression of opinion on the part of their subjects. It is suicidal policy to bandage your eyes and stop up your ears, merely because you prefer to dwell in a fool's paradise of your own imaginings. If Ministers do no veto this monstrous Bill, it will











