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Dasnami Sannyasis

HISTORY OF HINDU MONACHISM

CHAPTER I

Life of Shankar-acharya

The entire course of Hindu life and thought after the age of Buddhism has been dominated by the influence of two intellectual giants and made to flow in two nearly allied channels which were laid down in their teachings. Between them they have divided the empire of Hindu philosophy and religious organisation. Other leaders of thought, I admit, there have been among us ; but they were men of lesser note; they have influenced smaller or local sections of the population only, and the philosophy that inspires their teaching has derived itself from one or other of these two originators of thought, sometimes in a modified, sometimes in a hostile form. Among the founders of Vaishnav theology, Nimbārka and Mādhwa Āchārya, Chaitanya and Vallabh Āchārya occupy the highest places and exert the widest influence ; Chaitanya dominates the religious life of Bengal, Orissa and

(partly) Assam, while Vallabha's sect prevails in Gujrat, Mewar and some other regions.

These two directors of Hindu religious thought as we know it to-day, are Shankarāchārya and Rāmānuja. Both combined saintly purity with Shāstric learning and intellectual acumen of the highest degree ; both have continued to be venerated by millions as two incarnations of the God-head. Of them Rāmānuja was later in point of time, and his influence has spread over a smaller circle of men and a more restricted empire than Shankar's. Moreover, the school of Rāmānuja is professedly a breakaway from that of Shankar, it carries his philosophy on to a new line and therefore implies the previous existence of the latter.

So much for Shankar's place in the history of the evolution of Indian philosophy. His influence on the daily life of the people has been equally great, and this marks him out from mere abstract philosophers, however eminent such philosophers might be in thought.

Europe has long debated the question as to how Christianity could convert the Roman empire. A century and a quarter after Gibbon's famous analysis of the causes of this marvellous success, English scholars have come to the conclusion that

the early Christian Church' by imitating the administrative organisation of the Roman Empire, built up a system of work which no other religion had adopted and which made its conversion of the Roman world so easy and speedy. The organisation of the Dasnami orders is the eternal monument to Shankarāchārya's disciples who completed the great Master's mission on earth, as will be described in Chapter V of this book.

Long before the birth of Shankar, monastic orders, or organised brotherhoods of religious devotees living together under the discipline of a superior authority and co-ordinating the efforts of different houses of the same sect, had been given to India by Buddha. He had valued his monks as instrument of his religion so highly that he had made the Monastic order called *Sangha* a member of the Buddhist Trinity, equal to Buddha and *Dharma*: "I seek refuge with the Buddha; I seek refuge with the *Dharma*, I seek refuge with the *Sangha*." this is the cardinal prayer of the Buddhist in every land where that faith is still pure. And monastic regulations called *Vinaya*, are an essential part of the Buddhist scriptures. Solitary anchorites and religious ascetics living apart from the busy world and seeking their individual salvation had been known in India from the

Vedic age, or probably even earlier, from the first dawning of conscience in the human race. But the Dasnami orders made Hindu monachism serve the good of the vast body of Hindu society, of which the only parallel was supplied by Mahāyān Buddhism in its best days.

The Dasnāmi monks have held the twofold ideal of *Astra* and *Shastra* (sword and scripture), i.e. the cultivation of theology for the spiritual education of the people and the pursuit of arms for the defence of their religion against the attacks of brute force. In this respect they have anticipated the fighting monks of Christianity, who originated as late as the twelfth century,* while the *Nagas* or militant Sannyasis of India first appear in history several centuries earlier. Therefore, a study of these orders must start at its source, with the life and work of Shankarāchārya.

The extant biographies of Shankar were all composed several centuries after his death. Two of them hold a prominent place, namely (1) *Samkashēpa-Shankara-jayah*, written in verse by

*The monastic order of Knights Templers was founded in 1118 A. D. and that of the Teutonic Knights in 1190 A. D.

Mādhavāchārya, and (2) *Shankara-Digvijay* by Ananta-Ānanda Giri. This second work is much later than Mādhav's book, though it has been wrongly ascribed by some to Shankar's personal disciple Ānanda-giri, the famous commentator. Both these works profess to derive their information from a now lost life of Shankar, which is traditionally supposed to have been written by a direct disciple of Shankar. Nearly 800 verses alleged to be quoted from this lost book, are given in the old commentary on Mādhava's work by Dhanapati Suri, and some more in Ananta-Ānanda-Giri's book. Thus, the modern historian of Shankar is left with only the legend of Shankar as developed by pious tradition, and he must try to judge of the narratives in the light of probability and the known facts about the Indian world in the supposed age of Shankar.

Leaving out the supernatural legends that have gathered round the name of Shankar in the course of several centuries, we shall trace the outline of his career as far as it is now possible to reconstruct it. There may be questions about the exact epoch of Shankar and the incidents of his life; but there can be no two opinions about his profound influence on Indian religion and philosophy in all subsequent ages. It is his synthetic monist

philosophy (*Advaita-vad*) which is of primary concern to mankind. Therefore, only a brief summary of his legendary life will precede our exposition of his philosophy and our description of the organisation of his church.

More than a thousand years ago, at the village of Keledi in the Kerala country (or Cochin) in the extreme south of the Indian Peninsula, near the bank of the Purnā river, there lived a Brāhman named Vidyādhirāj. He was devoted solely to learning and piety, as the entire village had been granted as a free gift (*Agrahar*) to a Brāhman colony which settled round a temple to the god Shiva, built by an ancient king named *Rajashekhar* (who must not be confounded with the historical personage, the author of (*Karpura manjari*)). His scholarly son Shiva-guru and saintly daughter-in-law Sati, were devoted adorers of Shiva, and by the grace of that god they were blessed with a son of marvellous beauty and superhuman intellectual power. The boy, having lost his father in infancy, was sent at the age of five to a teacher's house, where in two years he mastered the entire cycle of Hindu learning that others normally take sixteen years to go through. Returning to his mother's lonely home, this infant prodigy set up as a teacher of the Shāstrās and drew crowds of pupils by his

wonderful genius and scholarship. Even the local Raja besought his aid in correcting and improving his own three dramatic compositions in the Sanskrit language. At the age of eight, the boy-professor was inwardly seized with Vairagya or the passion for renouncing the world and its joys, while his found mother was scheming to marry him to a suitable bride and to settle him at home. But home is not the place for a redeemer of mankind. Shankar persuaded his mother to set him free and work out his evident destiny. He took up the robe of Brahmachari or theological student and set out from home with a view to learning the rules and practices of monastic devotion from a master of spiritual knowledge (*Brahma-vidya*).

Going to Onkār-Māndhātā, a rocky island in the middle of the Narmadā river, Shankar entered himself as a disciple of the celebrated philosopher Govinda-pāda, who was popularly believed to be the ancient sage Patanjali himself, living a thousand years in a state of yogic trance in a cave nearby. The primeval sage awoke at the arrival of his destined disciple and heir to his philosophical mission. Here under his expert teaching, Shankar mastered the full theory and practice of *Yoga*. At last the preceptor addressed him thus : "My son ! I have nothing more to teach you, I know that you are

Siva himself, come to earth in human shape for teaching the divine lore of Monism (*Adwaita Brahma-vidya*).....I have fitted you with knowledge for the task, and I now throw away the earthly body which I had preserved these thousand years solely for this object". Here Shankar was initiated as a Sannyāsi by Govinda pāda and clad in the red robe which is the outward mark of Hindu monks. Then after bidding Shankar to go to Benares, the religious centre of all the Hindus, as the best place for his propaganda. Govindapada passed into the *Nirvana* of voluntarily suspended animation by yogic power. (Cf. *Kalidas : Yogen-ante tanu-tvajam*).

At Benares, Shankar's new exposition of the Shāstrās and his persuasive commentary on the *Brahma-Sutra* (aphorisms of God-knowledge) and the supernatural genius displayed by such a youthful teacher, created the greatest astonishment among the circle of scholars and devotees who had assembled there from all parts of India. The pandits who presumed to challenge him to controversy, were quickly silenced by his wonderful scholarship, logical keenness, and gift of lucid exposition. At this holy city he made his first disciple, Sarandan, a Brahman youth from the bank of the Kaveri in the Chola country (Eastern

Karnatak), who had come there on a tour in search of a true teacher ; he was instinctively drawn towards Shankar, and after having been tested for some days was found to be of the true stuff, and was initiated by Shankar as a monk. He became the great Master's first apostle under the name of Padmapāda. This disciple lived to be his right-hand man in theological writing and propaganda work.

A charming story is told in Mādhav's poetical life (Canto VI, Stanzas 25-51). One day Shankar, on his way to the holy river at Benares, met a man of the lowest caste (*Antyaja*) and shouted to him "Be off; dont pollute me with your touch". The seeming sweeper replied, "You consider me as separate from yourself, and yet you profess to be a Monist and to hold that the Divine Soul animates all creation and that the material world is a mere illusion without any real existence ; You thus admit that there is a material distinction between a pure and an impure man". The argument was unanswerable. Shankar was dumb-founded and humbled himself before the stranger, who then revealed himself as the God Shiva in disguise and vanished after pronouncing this blessing, "You will triumphantly establish the

Monist view of the godhead (*Adwaita-~~pad~~*), in the world”.

And at Benares, too, Shankar had another very interesting encounter. (*Mādhav*, Canto VII. St.: 1-57). One day, he is said to have been accosted by an old Brāhman looking like a simpleton. It was really Vyās, the composer of the sacred Vedas and the epic *Māhābhārat*, who had come to test him. The course of their controversy is of extreme interest, but it can be fully appreciated only by readers who have a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and philosophy. At last, the highly gratified sage Vyās revealed himself as his trueself and left after pronouncing this blessing : —

“My child : Fate gave you eight years of life; you have earned eight more by your genius (*Sudhiya*). And by the grace of Shiva you will enjoy sixteen additional years of life, while your commentary (*Bhashava*) of my (*Brahma-Sutra*) we will as long as the sun, the moon and the stars shall endure. During these sixteen years, with your words which are ever vigilant in uprooting the sprouts of pride in the champions of false faith (*Dualism*), you will make the opponents of Monism give up their belief in the distinct existence of the Creator and Creation (*Bheda Vidya*)”.

Thereafter, Shankar was seized with a longing to meet Kumārila Bhatta, the first great Hindu scholar who had raised his head against the dominant Buddhistic philosophy and tried to restore the supremacy of the Vedic religion. He was a Brāhman of the Chola Country* and the paternal uncle of the famous Buddhist philosopher Dharma-Kirti.

Shankar met the aged Kumārila at Allahabad. That venerable scholar was then on the point of death. But he was so impressed by reading Shankar's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra* that he blessed the young scholar and predicted that Shankar would establish Vedantic monotheism (*Advaita*) for more extensively and triumphantly than he himself had succeeded in doing. (Madhav. VII. 62 end).

Then, as directed by Kumārila with his last breath, Shankar went to Mahishmati on the Narmada, in order to meet Mandan Mishra whom Kumārila held to be his best pupil and almost his second self. Mandan was the highest expert prac-

* Kumarila's south-Indian origin has been disputed with admirable arguments by Ramaswami and a Bengali scholar. (See the *Bharatvarsha*, Bengali Magazine, for Jyāishtha, 1947.)

itioner of the Vedic sacrifices and other rituals in that age. He was blessed with a wife named Saraswati (*a'ias* Ubhay Bhārati) who even surpassed him in learning and was popularly held to be the Goddess of Learning (Saraswati) incarnate. She alone was fitted to act as Judge in the ensuing theological controversy between her husband and Shankar.

The story goes that when our shaven-headed youthful mendicant from the Kerala country, was rudely turned out by the porters at the gate of Mandan's palatial residence, he displayed his supernatural yogic powers and effected an entrance into the hall by vaulting over its wall, to the surprise and anger of the aristocratic Mandan. Then ensued a word-combat between the two philosophers which is the delight of all who can understand Sanskrit. The play on the double meaning of words and the logical thrust and parry of their rival tongues, which had been sharpened by the constant practice of grammatical and philosophical disputation, in the course of this short preliminary skirmish between the two, have been given in Madhava's biography, Canto VIII. It is unique in Sanskrit literature, but defies translation into English without spoiling its full effect.

Then followed a regular intellectual duel. For 18 days in succession the two debated before the lady Saraswati seated in the Judge's seat. At last Mandan admitted himself beaten by the superior learning of Shankar, became his disciple and agreed to write a Vārtika on Shankar's famous Bhashya of the *Brahma-Sutra*. This work was destined to establish Vendantic monism against Buddhism and other hostile Creeds in the Indian world of scholarship. Mandan renounced the world and turned Sannyāsi ; his wife gave up her earthly body because a Sannyāsi cannot be accompanied by a wife. Such is the legend.

After his long drawn out victory over Mandan Mishra, Shankar set out on the conquest of the then known world of scholarship. This is the famous *Digvijaya* or world-empire of the intellect, in the course of which he defeated the champions of Buddhism Jainism, Tantricism and every other religion that refused to accept Monism. The details fill many pages in his extant biographies (Canto XIV).

Then, at the end of a long tour of pilgrimage, (Cantos XI and XII), after visits to Srishailam (an all but inaccessible hilltop in the heart of the Nala Mālāi forest of the Kurnool district), Gokarna on the West coast, and other famous

shrines, Shankar settled for a time at the forest-village of Shrīnga-Giri (Sringeri) in the Western Chalukya empire. At a Brāhman village named Sriveli, he gained as his disciple, an infant prodigy thenceforth known as Hastāmālak Āchārya. In the pure, lovely and solitary environment of nature which he found at Sringeri, Shankar founded his first monastery, on the bank of the Tungabhadra river, around which a colony of his lay admirers and followers soon sprang up. The Raja of the country and his officers gave every help, thatched cottages for residence were built by the hundred for pilgrims and devotees, so that the place grew into a hermitage or *Tapovan* of Rishis. Among the permanent structures the first to be built was a temple to the Goddess of learning (*Sarada*) This typified the combination of theological learning with daily devotional rites, which is the cardinal point of Shankar's creed and the subject of his constant charge to his disciple.

Shankar passed many years at Sringeri, composing books and teaching his followers. This was the most fertile period of his brain and the

*There is a different legend too, which states that she was allowed to go to Sringeri to pass the rest of her life in the hermitage there.

literary products of this period have remained as his permanent legacy for the instruction and consolation of seekers after truth.

He had previously enlisted among his disciples three men destined to be leaders after him : Padmapād, Sureshwar and *Hastamalak*, and now at Sringeri he secured another genius, Trotak Āchāryā, formerly called Giri.

These four with other disciples formed a great school of learning and wrote many Sanskrit works popularising Shankar's teaching in a clear charming style. Sringeri thus became a living fountain of God-knowledge and Hindu scholarship.

From Sringeri Shankar paid a visit to his native village in order to attend his mother in her last illness, perform her funeral, and dispose of her property. The king of the Kerala country highly honoured him and by his advice turned to the improvement of the condition of his kingdom and people in many ways. Then followed another four of intellectual conquest or *Digvijaya*, this time south wards to Cape Comorin Mādhav, Canto XV). In the course of it, every sect that he met with at last came over to his concep-

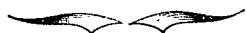
tion of religion and worship. At Conjeveram he established temples which became in time a centre of Hindu learning famous throughout the continent. At Jagannāth Puri he extinguished the predominance of Buddhism and of founded the Govardhan Math as the second or eastern centre of his church, the other two being the Sāradā Math of Dwārkā in the west (Kathiawad) and the Joshi Math of Kedārnāth in the north (Himalayas).

No part of India and 'Greater India' from Balkh to Cambodia was, so runs the tradition, left unvisited by Shankar, and everywhere he reformed the peoples religion, established his own faith, and founded schools of learning. At the Sārdā-pith in Kasmir, situated at the confluence of the Krishna Gangā and the Madhumati, embosomed among seven snow-clad hills, the assembled Pandits representing all the schools of Indian thought conferred on him the title of Omniscient (*Sarvajna*), and the Godless Saraswati acclaimed the justice of this award. (Mādhav, Canto XVI). At last travelling to Badri-Kedārnāth in the Central Himalayas, he cast off his mortal body there at the age of thirty-two. (Madhav, Canto XVI, St. 93-end).

The Math at Sringeri is situated in the midst of a tract of land about eight miles long by six miles wide, which was given as a rent-free endowment (*Jagir*) to the head of the Shiva Monastery, by Harihara, the first Emperor of Vijaynagar, in 1346, according to an inscription preserved at the Math. The inscription mentions among the donors, Harihara's four brothers Kampanna, Bukanna, Narappa and Mudappa and his son-in-law Ballappa Dannayaka and the latter's son Savanna. It is now included in the Koppa Taluq of the Mysore kingdom. The river Tunga runs through it from the south-west to the north-east.

The village of Sringeri stands on that left bank of the Tunga, about 15 miles south-west of the Qasba of Koppa, in 13° 25' North latitude and 75° 19' East longitude. The name Sringeri is a corruption of Sringa giri or *Rishya Sringa-giri*, the place where Vibhāṇḍaka Rishi performed penance and where *Rishya Sringa*, a character celebrated in Valmiki's *Ramayan* was born. Shankar Āchārya settled here as directed by the image of Sārada-mā or Saraswati; which he had brought from Kashmir. There are 120 temples in this sacred village.

Sringeri consists of a long street, with a loop on one side, encircling a small hill called Sringeri, on which stands a temple of Mallikārjuna. At the head of the street is the Math of the Jagat-guru, within which stands the temple of Sārada-āmmā, whose image is said to be of pure gold. At the side of the Math is the temple of Vidyā Shankara, an ornamental building of the Chalukyan style, on a raised terrace. Round the outer wall are sculptured image of various gods. At an angle on the right of the front entrance is a statue of Vyās, wearing a conical cap, the sacred thread and a *choti*, his right hand is raised in the *Abhaya* posture. He is imparting instruction to Shankar Āchārya, whose statue is at right angles to him. Shankar has a palmyra leaf book in his left hand. Towards Vidyāranya-pura on the bank of the Tunga, is a small temple with an image of Shankar Āchārya seated as an ascetic (*Yati*) (*Mysore Gazetteer*, II. 407-409).



CHAPTER II

The date of Shankar-acharya.

For nearly a hundred years now, the exact time of Shankarāchārya has been a point of dispute among scholars, and the range of difference of opinion as to the year of his birth has varied from 44 B. C. (held by Swāmi Prajnānanda, Sarswati, a highly erudite modern Bengali Dean and monk) to 788 A. D. (held by Prof. C. B. Pathak, and accepted after him by Max Muller and almost all the other modern scholars). In between the two, a very learned and widely travelled Bengali scholar named Rajendra Nath Ghose who later became a Dasnāmi monk under the name of Swāmi Chidghanānda, has suggested the year 686 A. D. and he has refuted at great length and with wide critical learning and convincing arguments, the theory of Swāmi Prajnānanda. All other proposed dates, including K. T. Telang's conjectural "end of the sixth century A. D.", may

be dismissed without consideration, because modern Indology has advanced so far since Telang wrote that we are on surer ground as to Shankar's times and can now confine his career within a short time range with almost absolute certainty. Our difficulty is due to two facts : (1) No life of Shankar-āchārya has been preserved that was not written at least six centuries later than his death, and (2) No authentic old historical record has been preserved in Shankara's first great monastery, the Sringeri Math.

Taking the first point, the earliest biographies of Shankar are two Sanskrit works. (a) the *Shanhar-Jaya* of Mādhavāchārya, (b) the *Shankar Dig-Vijaya* of Ānandagiri. Scholars are now agreed that this Mādhav was not the same person as the famous Vidyānanya, who is credited with having helped in the foundation of the Vijaynagar empire in the 14th Century A. D., but a later and more obscure scholar. They are also of opinion that the other biographer Ānandagiri, who calls himself in his own work 'Anant-Ānand-giri' was not the famous commentator Ānanda-giri who was a personal disciple of Shankar, but some Brahman who flourished in the 15th century. All other lives of Shankar are still more modern.

What authentic old record did these two earliest biographers of Shankar use in compiling their books? None at all; they merely put the current popular traditions down in writing, and we know how historical error by the hundred creep into a narrative which has been handed down from mouth without writing, for more than six centuries. Mādhav states that his *Samkshepa Shankar Jaya* is based on materials compiled from an earlier work—"Verily I am collecting here the substance of the old *Shankar Jaya*". But he now here quotes from this old source, nor does he tell us who wrote that biography and when. In a commentary on Mādhav's biography written by Dhanapati Suri, nearly 800 verses alleged to have come from the old and now lost *Shankar Vijaya*, are quoted, and some more in Ananta-Ānanda Giri's book, but they do not give us much historical information, nor is their genuineness beyond doubt.

Secondly, the succession list of the gurus at Sringeri Math from Shankar downwards, is now shown to visitors, was compiled about 1875, by the then Mohant Narasingha Bhārati VIII. R. N. Ghose when visiting Sringeri during the Mohantship of the next pontiff, Shiv-abhinav Nrishingha

(1818-1912 A. D.), was told by the latter, "At the request of modern archaeologists, my gurū constructed this list, in which Shankar Āchārya's birth date is given as 14 Vikram Samvat and his immediate successor Sureshwar is stated to have lived as the head of the monastery for eight hundred years, during in 757 A. D. You may take it as true or false as you like". (Bengālī V. D. Vol. ip 98 n).

Now, in this succession list no other *mohant* is given a supernatural life of eight centuries, but all (except one) of 85 years or much less, like normal human beings. This credibly long life of Sureshwar has been explained away by some modern writers by the theory that Sureshwar died after a normal life of 70 or 80 years, but that the names of all his successors till the year 757 A. D. have been lost through the perishing of the old records, so that the next *mohant* who came to the office in 755 A. D. has been wrongly described as Sureshwar's immediate successor. This very defence condemns the entire list of names before 757 A. D. as untrustworthy. No paper earlier than the 19th century has been preserved on the Sringeri Math, and the name list can be accepted as correct at the best from the 13th century downwards, but not earlier than that period.

R. N. Ghose has suggested a plausible theory, that Shankar's alleged birth date, year 30 of the Vikram era, means, not the 30th year of the famous Vikram Samvat beginning in 57 B. C. and named after Vikramaditya of Ujjain, but the 30th year of the reign of Vikramānka I, of the western Chalukya dynasty (which would make the year equivalent to 700 A. D)

A copper-plate shown at Sringeri, ascribing a pre-christian antiquity to Shankar Āchārya has been similarly rejected by scholars as a modern fabrication, on epigraphic, linguistic and historical grounds. The mere fact that something is found inscribed in the Sanskrit or Kanarese language on a copper-plate does, not, in itself, make it a genuine document or even prove that it was produced at the time alleged in the inscription. A genuine inscription of King Harsha tells us that forged copper plates (*Kutashasana*) were known in his time (7th Century A. D.).

We are thus left to the internal evidence of Shankar's writings and to dated authentic references to him, in determining his age. Happily modern researches in Tibet, China and Cambodia, besides India, have helped to throw reliable sidelights on him, which will be now discussed here.

According to the two earliest lives of Shankar, he met Kumārila Bhatta, an old man and his senior. Now, we know from other sources that Kumārila was certainly alive about 650 A. D., and came after Bhartrihari, whose verses are quoted in Kumārila's *Tantra-vartika*.

Secondly, the same authorities say that young Shankar was initiated by Govinda Yati, whose guru was Gaudapāda. This Gaudapāda's *Bhashya* is known to have been translated into Chinese about 570-600 A. D.

Thirdly, one of these two writers of tradition (Mādhav) speaks of the famous Sanskrit authors, Bāna Bhatta, Mayura and Dandin as having lived in the age of Shankar, and, we know that Bāna Bhatta lived in the first half of the 7th. century.

Leaving traditions aside as of doubtful value, we must now examine Shankar's own writings and see what light they throw on his age. In his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra* Shankar quotes the *Alambana Pariksha* of Dignāga (who lived 550-600 A. D.). Shankar's own disciples Sureshwar and Ānandgiri quote Dharma-kirti, a famous Buddhistic scholar, who lived between 640

and 660, because Itsing mentions him as a recent celebrity, while Yuan Chwang who had left India earlier in 39, does not mention his name. Secondly, Shankar in his *Bhashya* mentions a king named Purna Varmā, and there was such a king in Magadh between 590 and 630 A. D. Shankara was unknown even by name or fame to Yuan Chwang and Itsing who travelled in India between 629 and 682 and who have mentioned all the great Buddhistic scholars and their Hindu opponents then living or dead sometime before.

So much for the internal evidence. Beside this, a date between 688 and 788 A. D. for the birth of Shankar Āchārya is exactly in agreement with the known history of Buddhism in India and the course of the changes in the religious thought of this land, Kern, writing on the authority of the erudite historians Tārānāth and Wassalief, states, "It is in the sixth and seventh centuries that Buddhist scholasticism had its palmv days...On the whole Buddhism was still flourishing when Yuan Chwang visited India (630-613 A. D.). The decline dates, roughly speaking, from A. D. 750. Kumārila and Shankar live in the traditions of the Buddhists as the most formidable enemies to their creed, as the two great dialecticians whose activity

caused the ruin of Buddhism in India" (*Manual of Indian Buddhism* 130-131).

Finally, when we make a comparative study of the style and words of Shankar's writings side by side with the works of other Sanskrit poets and prose writers of known dates, it becomes indisputably clear that Shankar wrote after Kālidās and Bhartihari, but before the growth of the wordy logic and worthless conventional poetry which characterised the Sanskrit literature produced in the 10th century and later. Hence, Shankar's place in the 8th or 9th century A. D. exactly fits in with the known course of the development of the Sanskrit language and literature in India.

In the above discussion on the age of Shankar, use has been made of the following authorities mainly :—In English (1) Mahamahopadhyay V. S. Shastri in *I. H. Quarterly*, Vol. vi p 169 and vol ix. p 979. In Sanskrit. (2) P. G. Ranade's Introduction to the Anandashram (Poona) edition of the Mādhav's *Shankar Digvijay* (3rd ed. 192), (3) Gurunath Venkatesh Kittur's *Shri Shankar Vijay Churnika* (Nirnay Sagar Press, Bombay, 1898). In Marathi, (4) Gosavi Prithvigir Hari-

giri's *Gosavi Tācha Sampradaya*, vol. i (1926), pp. 216-228. In Bengali the most valuable and detailed source is (5) Swāmi Prajñānanda Saraswati's *Vedānta Darshaner Itihas*, vol. i as edited and criticised by Rajendra Nath Ghose, (1925), vol. i. pp. 90-140; (6) R. N. Ghosh's *Shankar O Ramanuja*.

Previous to these Mr. C. N. Krishnaswami Aiyar's *Shankar Acharya : His life and Teachings* (4th ed. Madras), had summarized the views of scholars. All earlier and now more or less absolute writings on this questions, have been left out of account.

Most fortunately for our inquiry, there exists the record of a man who had personally studied under Shankar Āchārya and who caused this fact to be stated in a stone inscription carved in his life-time, in a certain year between 878 and 887 A. D. This inscription has been discovered by the French and given to the world by the famous scholar G. Coedes in his *Inscriptions due Cambodge*, Vol. I (1937), pp. 37 ff. Dr. R. C. Majumdar has made it known to us in an article in the *Indian Review*, 1940. On a pillar of the temple known as Prasat Kāṇḍol Dom in Cambodia

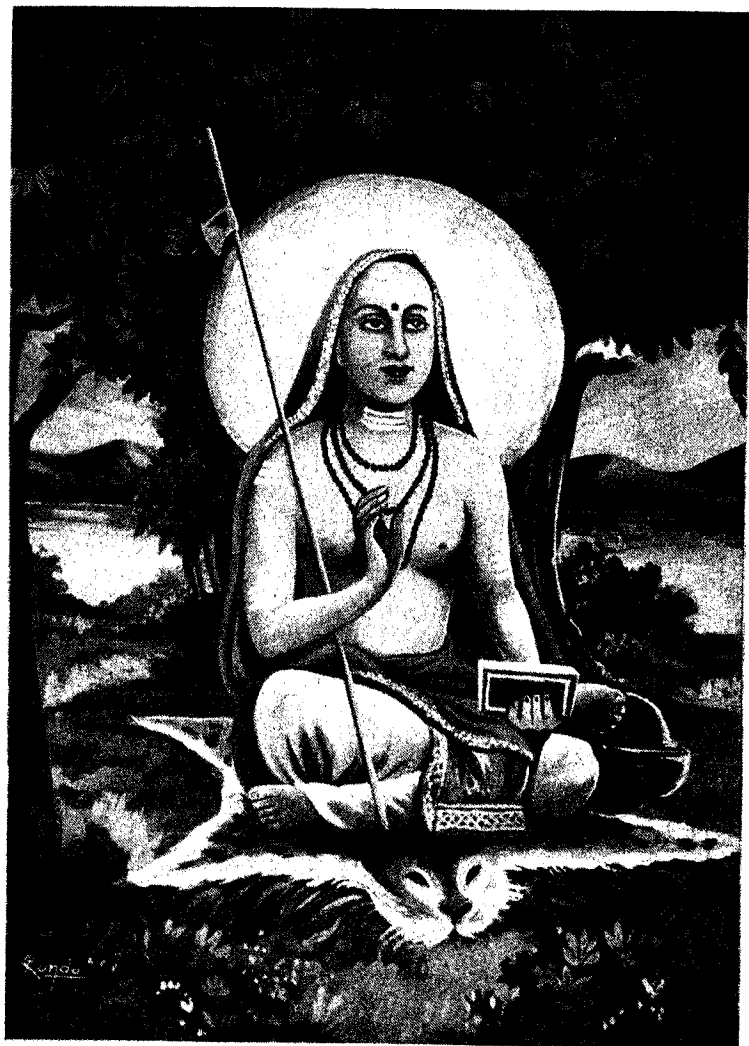
(Indo-China) there is an inscription in Sanskrit verses recording that an image of Shiva entitled Bhadreswar, was installed by a Pandit named Shiva Soma, who was the Guru of King Indra-Verman of Kamboja, between 878 and 887 A. D. Among the verses describing the scholarship and piety of this Shiva Soma there is one (verse no. 39) which tells us that "He learnt the Shāstra from Bhagvān named Shankar himself, who lotus-like feet were rubbed by the heads of scholars coming to him like rose of bees".*

This proves that Shankar-Āchārya was living and teaching in the first half of the ninth century, and that scholars from all parts of the Hindu world were drawn to him by the fame of his scholarship and sanctity.

This date is supported by the *Jagat-guru Paramparastotra*, still read at the Sringeri math, which says that Shankar was born in Kaliyuga era 3889-710 Shālivāhan Shanka-788 A. D.

*Combodian Sanskrit inscription :—

येनाधीतानि शास्त्राणि भगवच्छंकरा हयात ।



ADYA. SHANKARACHARYA

CHAPTER III

Shankar-acharya's Teachings.

The greatness of Shankār Āchārya is best expressed in the following sentences by Sister Niveditā of the Rāmakrishna Vivekānand Order:—
“Western people can hardly imagine a personality like that of Shankar Āchārya. In the course of a few years to have nominated the founder of no less than ten great religious orders, of which four have fully retained their prestige to the present day, to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy and impress himself on the Scholarly imagination of India, is a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake ; to have written poems whose grandeur makes them unmistakable, even to foreign and unlearned ears, and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant love and simple pathos of the saints, this is the greatness that we must appreciate but cannot understand.

We contemplate with wonder and delight the devotion of Francis of Assissi, the intellect of Abelard, the virile force and freedom of Martin Luther, and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyola; but who could imagine all these united in one person?"

Shankar's philosophy is known as *Adwaita-vaḍ* or the Theory of Monism. Briefly speaking he held that matter or the created universe is a mere illusion, as it has no existence apart from the creative Mind (*Atman* or *Brahmā*), who is the sole Reality. This Universal Soul dwells in every individual man, other creatures and materials objects; hence the recognition of one's own separate personality or individual existence, feelings and interests (in Sanskrit, *aham-kar*) is a supreme folly, and the highest sage or saint is the man who, by constant meditation and righteous conduct, has attained to the truth that he is noway different from other created beings, but stands as the personation of the Universal Soul which dwells within all of us (*Aham Brahma*, *Aham-Shiva*).

Detailed expositions of Shankar's system will be found in every book on Indian philosophy, and this volume is not the proper place for repeating the same. But in order to prove that Shan-

kar's doctrine was not a dreamy pantheism; I give some quotations from his own writings (translated by me) which will show that he insisted on as high a standard of right conduct or holy living as any revealed religion of the world. The objective method followed by me will bring the subject home to even the most unphilosophic common reader.

Translation.

"Who is thy wife and who thy son? This world is a very strange place. Brother, just ponder on the question, "Whose thou art and whence hast thou come?" Boast not of your wealth, followers, or youth; in a twinkle of the eye Time snatches them all away.*

Cast off this unreal universe and quickly enter into the Supreme Brahma through knowledge. Tremulous as a drop of water on a lotus-leaf is human life; it is only the society of good men,

*many centuries later an English poet unconsciously copied this, when wrote—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,

And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,

Awaits alike the inevitable hour,

The paths of glory lead but to the grave. (Gray).

however momentary, that can enable us to be ferried over the ocean of existence.

Day follows night, evening follows morning, autumn and spring seasons follows each other in regular succession. Time plays, Life oozes out and yet man will not abandon his windy hopes. His limbs are falling off, his head is grey, his mouth is toothless, the stick in his hand is shaking and yet he will not give up his bag of vain desires.

Dost thou wish to attain to Vishnu-hood promptly ? Then be the same to all; make no distinction, as of love and hate, in thy attitude to friend and foe, sons and friends; Vishnu is present in three, in me and in all other men. Why then do you vainly lose patience with me in anger ? Behold the Soul of all others as present within thee ; everywhere give up the notion of the difference of individual personality. Recognise the soul within you, realise who thou art, by conquering lust and anger, greed and delusion. Fools who have not attained to self-knowledge will not deep down in hell. (*Moha-mudgar*).

Who is a captive ? He who is devoted to earthly things.

What is liberation ? The conquest of desire for earthly things

What is the darkest hell ? Your own body.

What is heaven ? The total removal of passions.

Who is the happy man ? He who is absorbed in religious meditation.

Who is wakeful ? The man whose conscience can distinguish between good and evil.

Who are your enemies ? Your five organs of the senses; but conquer your passions, and your very senses will be your friends.

What is highest of ornaments ? A moral character.

What is the holiest place of all pilgrimage ? Your own mind when pure.

What things are abominable ? Women and gold.

What should we constantly hear ? The counsel of our religious preceptors and the teachings of the scriptures.

How can we attain to God ? Through associa-

tion with the good, charity, right judgement and contentment. (*Mani Ratna Mala*).

Verily, blessed are the monks with loin- bands (*Kaupin*) for all their clothing.

Blessed indeed are the *Kau pin*-clad, whose bed is the root of trees, whose hands are not employed in gathering food, and who fling away Fortune like a tattered old quilt.

They, they alone are blessed, who find eternal solace in the natural delight of their hearts, all of whose passions are controlled and pacified, and who reveal day and night in divine communion.

Truly they alone can be called blessed who constantly chant the name of Brahma (The Universal soul), who reflect, "I am Brahma", and who wander in the four quarter, living on food given as alms (*Kaupina-panchak*).

"Who art thou, child ? and whose son ? with her art thou going ? What's thy name, and whence hast thou come ? Tell me clearly".

"I am not man or deity or aerial spirit ; I am neither Brāhman, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Sudra by

caste; I am not a celibate student, householder, forest-dweller nor homeless mendicant by my stage of life. I am the self-conscious soul...I am the eternally perceptive soul ...boundless and free from all distinctive attributes such as the sky is, and the cause of the activity of the mind and the senses”...

“I am that eternally-intelligent soul which is inherent in all objects, though no object can touch him; I am ever pure and clear as the sky. As pure crystals take the colour of the object in which they are set, so different minds imagine the diversity of personality (instead of preceiving the unchangeable oneness of all, who are inspired by the same *Atma*). [*Hastamalak*].

I am not body nor any organ of the senses ; I am not consciousness of individuality, nor life, nor intellect. Away from wife and son, land and wealth, I am the Eternal Witness merged in the individual soul, I am *Shiva*.

As a fool mistakes a rope for a snake, so do mankind mistake the All-pervasive Soul for a creature.....He who is truly enlightened in God-knowledge gets rid of this illusion; he realises “I

am not a creature, I am Shiva (the Universal Soul)”.

This world is no other than my own self. The countless things we see outside ourselves are a mere illusion of the mine (and possessed of no real existence) like the images which a mirror produce by reflection. All things manifest themselves in me, the one (*Adwaita*). Therefore I am *Shiva*.

I am not a body; how then can I have birth or death ? I am not life; how then can I have hunger or thirst ? I am not heart; how then can I feel grief or stupor ? I am not active; how then can I be subject to bondage or liberation ? (*Atma-shatak*).

I am companion-less, beyond doubt; I manifest myself as *Sat-chit* and *Ananda*. I am that changeless I (*i.e.* Brahma).

I am eternally pure and detached. I am formless, imperishable ; I manifest myself as the Perfect Bliss (*Bhumananda*). I am that absolute I (*i.e.* Brahma).

I am pure Consciousness, I am the self-revelling

Soul, I am the one indivisible bliss, I reveal myself by myself alone, I am made up solely of consciousness (*chit*), I am the Supreme Soul (*Atma*), the ever-constant I.

No name have I, nor form; in Consciousness (*chit*) am I known, I am the changeless imperishable I, manifested in bliss.

I am beyond growth, beyond action, I am the soul of all and eternal, the deathless I, (*Brahma Namavali Mala*). The pitcher is made out of clay; therefore a pitcher has no existence independent of clay, the term 'pitcher' being merely a technical name. Brahma is the soul Existence (*Sat*), therefore all that is created by Brahma is existent (*Sat*), because creation has no real existence apart from the Creator (*Brahma*).

He who denies this truth has a mind engrossed in error, and talks like a man in a dream. (*Kavaloham*). •

Study the Vedas constantly, practise the rites laid down therein, and thus realise within your soul the Divine Presence. Cast off all desires for pleasure, wash off your sins, trace out the transitor-

iness of earthly joys, pursue self-knowledge, and quickly issue forth from your own 'house' (House' here is interpreted to mean the body, and 'to quit the house' means to realise the difference between the body and the indwelling soul).

Live in the society of holy men; direct your undeviating devotion (*bhakti*) to God; set yourself to cultivate peace of mind, the spirit of self-sacrifice, self-control, abstinence. Venerate the truly learned, daily pray that you may attain to Brahma in one syllable (*Om*), and enter into the spirit of Vedantic teaching.

Live blissfully in a lonely place, set your heart finally on the Supreme Brahma. So look at the world that you can realise the truth that the subtle all-pervasive Supreme Soul is diffused through the universe,—and dwell in the essence of Brahma. (*Sadhana-Panchak*).

Shankar and other 'Philosophers,

"Kumārila vindicated the ancient Vedic rites... Following the *Mimansa* school, he ascribed the universe to a divine act of creation, and assumed an all-powerful God as the cause of the existence,

continuation and dissolution of the world. The doctrine of this personal deity, the one existent and universal soul without a second, or *Advaita*,—embodies the philosophical argument against the Buddhists...Shankar Āchārya moulded the later Mimāṃsa or Vedānta philosophy into its final form and popularised it as a national religion, and since then every new Hindu sect has had to start with a personal God.

“Shankarāchārya taught that there was one sole and Supreme God, distinct both from any member of the old Brahma Trinity and from the modern Hindu pantheon. The ruler of the Universe is to be worshipped not by sacrifices but by meditation and in spirit and in truth. But Shankar realized that such a faith is for the few. To those who could not rise to so high a conception of the Godhead, he allowed the practice of any rites prescribed by the Veda, or by later orthodox Hindu teachers, to what so ever form of the Godhead they might be addressed. But Shiva-worship claims Shankarāchārya as its apostle in a special sense. It represents the popular side of his teaching, and the piety of his followers has elevated Shankar into an incarnation of Shiva himself.

“In strong contrast with the pomp of Vaishnava temples is the simplicity and solemnity of the worship of Shiva...The worship of Rudra and Shiva has continued from the time of the Vedic seers to be the cult of the Brāhmans. It was adapted by Shankarāchārya and his successors to popular worship.....Shankarāchārya's teaching gave an impulse to it throughout India, and in the hands of his followers and apostolic successors Shiva-worship became one of the two chief religions of India. As at once Destroyer and Reproducer, Shiva represented profound philosophical doctrines, and was early recognised as the first god or *Adidev* of the Brahmins. To them he was the symbol of death as merely a change of life...He thus became alike the deity of the highest and of the lowest castes.

“The moral code of the Shaiva school declares it to be a grievous thing to tell a lie, to eat fish, onion, garlic and similar forbidden articles as food, and to commit theft, adultery and offences against society. Followers are also enjoined to give up pride anger and ambition.....Every living soul being identical with Brahma, the destruction of animal life is strictly prohibited. So long as a man has not acquired the highest knowledge or

Brahmanajnan, he is bound to observe the ritual prescribed in the Vedas. It is only to obtain a correct notion of the impersonal Brahma that the worship of a deity endued with some tangible form is recommended. (Campbell's *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. II, part 1, pp. 533-542).

The philosophy of Shankar will be still more clearly understood by the general public from the following illustration of its difference from the systems of two other eminent saints :

“The doctrine of the Rāmānujis is called *Vishisht-Advaita*, that is unity with attributes or non-duality with a difference. Under this doctrine Brahma or Vishnu is a personal God (*Paramatma*) related to the individual soul *Chit* and nature *Achit* as the spirit is to the body, the individual souls being distinct among themselves and from God. The Rāmānujis worship Vishnu as Nārāyan.

“The Rāmānandi or Rāmāvat sect was founded by Rāmānanda a follower of Rāmānuj, owing to a difference on the single point, privacy in preparing and taking food, on which Ramanuja laid great stress. He inculcated the worship of Vishnu as Rām with Sitā and Lakshman..... Their brow-

mark is like the Rāmānujis and made of *gopi-chandan* clay...Marriage is allowed among a division of Rāmānandi Sadhus called *Sanjogi*, but forbidden to the division called '*Naga*' or naked. Their chief moral tenets are mercy, charity, and a virtuous life.

“The famous Vallabhāchāri sect...(holds) the philosophical doctrine called *Shuddh-Advaita* (of Shankārāchārya and Vishisht-Advaita of Rāmānuj. it teaches that God, though eternal is ended with a celestial form and all visible phenomena emanate from Him at His will. The individual human soul (*Jiv-atma*) is believed to be a part from the supreme soul (*Param-atma*) separate in form but identical in essence...In this new creed the element of love for the Deity predominates, and final bliss is held to consist in this love for the Deity in *Go-loka*...and obtainable only by offering worship to Krishna with loving devotion as a woman would towards her beloved.”

The system of Shankar and Ramanuja contrasted.

1. According to Shankar, God alone is real, and the Universe is an illusion, that is, it appears.

before the eye but hās no existence; the individual creature is not different from Brahma, and by means of salvātion is converted into Brahmā, there being then no distinction between the two.

Rāmānuja, on the other hand, hold that God, the Universe and the individual creature are all real, the latter two being only the body (or outward manifestation) of Brahmā; the Universe and the individual after attaining to sāluation are not turned into Brahma but dwell within Him.

2. According to Shankar, the Universe is the fruit of the illusion (*maya*) of the Creator, and creatures come into existence out of connection with this illusion.

3. In Shankar's philosophy salvation comes from knowledge of the One Brahma; in Rāmānuja's system, salvation proceeds from the grace of God and therefore knowledge of God is merely a limb of worship, and not the be-all and end-all of it as in Shankar's theory.

4. Shankar holds the Supreme God to be one, without duality, without individual differentiation and without attribute, Rāmānuja declares Brahma

to be one, non-dual, but particularised and possessed of attributes (*Sa-vishesh-gun*).

5. Shankar declares Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti (the female Energy or counterpart of Shiva) as different aspects of Brahma caused by connection with illusion, and that all the above deities equally deserve to be adored according to the worshipper's stage of spiritual development (*Adhikar-Bheda*). But Rāmānuja declares Vishnu as the sole object of adoration.

6. Shankār holds that the objects of our delusion are incapable of description, and they are born of ignorance while we are under a delusion.

Rāmānuja holds that the object of our illusion have existence; for example, we mistake an oyster-shell for silver because the oyster-shell really has some little particle (or attribute) of silver; or, in other words, there is no such thing as absolute illusion, it is merely a convenient application of the term.

7. With Shankar, creation is Brahma in its essence; hence God manifests Himself as *Sat*, *Chit* and *Anand*; the Ignorance and the work of

Ignorance in a creature merely represent the shadow of Brahma in the creature's mind.

But Rāmānanda distinguishes the Brahma made up of *Chit* from creation, and he holds that even after a creature's salvation this separateness will not be abolished, because even then the individual soul will not be endowed with the power of creation like the Universal soul.

8. In Shanker's opinion, Delusion, self-consciousness and Ignorance (*Maya, avidya, ajnan*) are identical and based on Brahma, Rāmānuja makes a distinction here namely the *Maya* and *Avidya* are expressions of the Creator's power, but ignorance (*Ajnan*) appertains to the creature and entangles him.

9. Shankar admits liberation of the soul (*Mukti*) to be possible even while a creature retains his body; but according to Rāmānuja, liberation is impossible while the soul inhabits the body.

10. According to Shankār true liberation is *Nirvan* (*i.e.* complete absorption of the individual soul in the Universal soul or Brahma); it

does not mean attainment of Vishnu's heaven (*Vaikunth*) or Shiva's heaven (*Kaliash*) which are mere spheres of bliss (*swarga*). But with Rāmānuja supreme salvation consists in arrival at *Vaikunth* and salvation in the form of *Nirvan* is an impossibility, and the very conception of it is an idea of self-extinction.

11. Shankar holds that the Vedānta leads to an attributeless (impersonal) Brahma who can be known only in terms of negation (*i. e.* stating what he is not, or how he is unlike all created things known to us). But Rāmānuja maintains that the Vedānta teaches a Brahma who is to be worshipped through his attributes.

12. A man may be said to have mastered the Vedānta according to Shankar, if he has achieved four kinds of devotion, (*Sādhan*); according to Rāmānuja, seven kinds of *Sāhan*.

According to Shankar, the Vedānta can be mastered by a man if he has studied the Vedas and the Upanishads and performed the four Sādhanas, even though he has abstained from all Vedic ritual. But Rāmānuja insists on the necessity of

performing Vedic ritual (*Kriya-karam*) plus at least six *Sadhans*, before a man can be said to have mastered the Vedānta. In Shankar's philosophy *Sannyas* (monastic ordination) is an indispensable condition, in Rāmānuja's it is ritual ; and each omits this first condition of the other. But the rest of Rāmānuja's system is included in Shankar's.

With Shankar the highest spiritual master is the *Sannyasi*, while men belonging to other orders (such as house-holders & c.) can reach only lesser kinds of spiritual advancement; but Rāmānuja holds that all orders of society can be first rate masters of spirituality.

13. Shankar's theory of creation :—

Creation has sprung from Illusion (*Maya*) characterised by the three attributes *Sattya*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, these are really not attributes, but a sort of rope binding Brahma. The fruit of Illusion, when attached to Brahma, is the universe. This Illusion is known variously as *Avidya*, *Ajan*, *Prakriti* *avyakta* & c. Form *Avidya* (i. e. belief in the seprate existance of myself as an indivi-

dual inhabiting my body) has originated the *sky*, from the sky *wind*, from wind *fire*, from fire *water* from water the *earth*. The combined *Sattya* essence of these five elements has formed the mind (of man) which contains, cognition, intelligence, heart and preception of individuality.

14. Shankar teaches that salvation comes from cognition or knowledge that the individual (myself) is identical with Brahma; worship and ritual merely purify the heart, so that some masters are above the need of worship and ritual in their progress towards salvation.

Rāmānuja holds that salvation can come only from devotion (*Bhakti*) in religious worship and throwing one's self on the grace of God as a suppliant (*Prapatti*); both knowledge and worship are necessary, because God-knowledge is a limb of worship.

15. According to Shankar, when an individual attains to 'living liberation' (*Jivan mukti*) he retains his body, but when he gains supreme salvation he discards his body. But according to Rāmānuja, after final sālvation a man retains

his atomic body (*Sukshma Sharir*) in which he (*i. e.* his soul) enjoys life in Vaikunth.

16. Both Shankar and Rāmānuja regard knowledge as self-revealing and self-evident; both of them regard the Vedas as the ultimate reason (*Praman*).



CHAPTER IV

The ten orders or Dasnamis.

The mission of Shankarāchārya has endured and will endure as long as Hinduism as a philosophy of life survives on earth, through the books that he wrote and the monastic orders that trace their origin to him. But it is highly improbable that he himself actually organised these orders. His life was too short, and that short span was too much filled with touring, disputation, lecturing and writing to allow him time to attend to the thousand and one administrative details and daily problems of a new and growing religious community. It would be more correct to hold that Shankar was the inspirer rather than the actual builder of the Dāsnāmi orders. This latter work is ascribed by learned Dasnāmis to Sureshwar-āchārya, the third in pontifical succession to Shankarāchārya at the Sringeri abbey.

What Shankar and his disciples did was to combine the scattered atoms of individual asceticism known in India from the Vedic age or even before, and place them together under regular discipline and the control of a central authority. This was no easy task, and its importance for the good of the community needs to be here explained.

Sannyas or the practice of renouncing the active world and becoming a homeless wandering religious mendicant, is as old as the dawn of God-consciousness in the soul of the primitive man. Even in the earliest Veda we meet with the long-haired ascetic or Muni dressed in rags of a reddish colour, to whom the Sun in the sky is likened (*Rg. Veda*, viii, 17, 59; x. 130). As Indo-Aryan society advanced, such wandering asceticism was recognised as the regular fourth or last stage (*Ashram*) in the life of a true Brāhma. The sixth Book of Manu's law code is entirely devoted to the rules for the guidance of the ascetic life. " old men, after having paid their debts to the gods and to the dead (ancestors), abandoned secular life and (embraced Sannyās) in order to reach holiness before dying". (Poussin).

But at first for many centuries the result of

this natural impulse was the growth of indisciplined individualism. As A. S. Geden writes :—

“Mysticism in India has shunned companionship... A second respect in which historically Indian monasticism in general has been distinguished from Buddhist or Christian, is the deficiency of co-ordination or of a central control. The ideal of the Indian ascetic or monk is not, and never has been, a fixed residence and occupation, but rather freedom to wander at pleasure, to visit various sacred places and shrines, and to dispose his manner of life and time independently”.

This absence of system and discipline required to be reformed and the reform first came with the Jaina and the Buddha. As the great French scholar De La Vallee Poussion observes :—

“From about the 8th to the 6th Century B. C., a number of religious leaders gave a regular form to the wandering ascetic life. The best of them had a high moral standard and a high intellectual standpoint. They preached a path to salvation and contrived to adapt to this lofty aim the penitential and ecstatic practices. They were great organisers and also great men; while the

brotherhoods which they had established were living, robust organisms, they themselves became the gods of new religions.

“The task of the religious leaders was in short (1) to group ascetics under a certain rule of life, and (2) to give a spiritual meaning to the ascetic, mystical and orgiastic practices” (*i. e.*, *ta-pas* and *yoga*). In the monastic orders founded by them, “while a mendicant, who was hitherto his own master, has to become a member of an organised body, to undergo a novitiate, to submit himself to the authority of a fixed rule or of the elders, he is expected to become at the same time, a philosopher ... for spiritual progress.”

Here De La Vallee Poussin is speaking of Mahavir and Buddha, But my readers will at once perceive that his words apply exactly to Shankar also, and fittingly describe his character and position in the phrases... “They had a high moral standard and a high intellectual standpoint” ... “They were great organizers and also great men” ... “they became the gods of new religions”.

The ten branches of the Adwaita school of

Shaiva-ism which Shankarāchārya organized (or as others hold, revived) are known as the Dasanāma or 'Ten Names', from the ten words which form the suffixes to the names taken by the monks of these orders after their initiation (*diksha*). These words are—*Giri* (hill), *Puri* (city), *Bharti* (learning), *Ban* (wood). *Aranya* (forest). *Parbat* (mountain), *Sagar* (ocean). *Tirtha* (temple) *Ashram* (hermitage), and *Saraswati* (perfect knowledge).

Tradition is not agreed as to the names of the four direct disciples of Shankar whom he placed as the first heads of his four great monasteries at the four strategic points of India, namely.

(i) South—The Sringeri Math, under Prithvidhar Āchārya, (popularly known as Hastāmālak). To this the Puri, Bharti and Saraswati branches are attached.

(ii) East—The Goverdhan Math at Jrgannāth Puri, placed in charge of Padmapād Āchārya (originally called Sanandan). The Ban and Aranya orders are attached to this centre.

(iii) North—The Joshi Math at Badri-Kedārnāth in the Himalyas, under Trotak-āchārya originally named (Giri).

To this the Giri, Parbat and Sāgar orders are attached.

(iv) West—The Sārādā Math at Dwārka, placed in charge of Swarup-āchārya.

The Tirtha and Āshram branches are assigned to this Math.

We may here clearly mark out the character and jurisdiction of these four great centres.

(1) *Sringeri* : Jurisdiction,—Andhra, Drāvid, Karnatak and Keral countries. Yajur-veda followed. Novices affix the title of Chaitanya to their names. Motto, *Aham Brahmasmi* "I am the Supreme soul". Branches attached, *Puri Bharti* and *Saraswati* (these titles being added to the name conferred on the fully initiated Goswāmis) *Bhuribar* section. Holy Shrine (*Kshetra*) Rameshwar.

(ii) Govardhan—Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Magadh, Utkal and Barbar. Rig Veda followed.

Novices affix the title—Prakāsh to their names. Motto *Prajnanam Brahma* or “The Divine is perfect knowledge”. Branches attached,—*Ba*”, and *Aranya* (these titles being taken by the Goswāmis at ordination) *Bhog-bar* section. Holy shrine (*Kshetra*) Jagannath-Puri.

(iii) Joshi (or Jyotir). Jurisdiction,—Kuru, Pāñchāl i e. Delhi-Punjab, Kāshmir. Kāmboj or Tibet &c. Atharva veda followed. Novices take the title of *Ananda*. Motto *Ayamatma Brahma* or “This soul is the Divine being”. Branches attached,—Giri, Parbat and Sāgar. Ānand-bar section. Holy shrine, Badrikāshram. (This Math has now been again placed under a Dasnāmi Gosain, the present head being named Swāmi Brahmānand Saraswati). The servitors of the Srisimha Badari have long been Smārta Brāhmans of the Tenjore district, under the Natu Chetti Math of Gayā.

(iv) Sārādā. Jurisdiction,—Sindhu, Sauvira, Saurāshtra, and Mahārāshtra, i. e. Western India and Kathiāwād, including Sindh. Sāma Veda followed. Novices are given the title of *Swarup*. Motto, *Tat-tvam-asi* “Thou art He”. Branches

attached, *Tirtha* and *Ashram*. *Kutibar* section, Holy shrine, Dwārakā.

The four great *maths* of the Dasnāmi orders have, in the course of centuries, come to adopt certain definite rules of affiliation and organisation. A sannyāsi must first of all enrol himself in a *Marhi*, which word may be roughly translated as a “recruiting or initiating centre”. A math can take members belonging to one *Marhi* only, but all the 52 *Marhis* or any smaller number of them can become members of an *Akhara*.

There are 52 *Marhis*, which were originally thus distributed : under the Giris, 27—under the Puris 16,—under the Bhāratīs 4,—under the Bans 4,—under the Lāmās one.

Of the ten names, the *Tirthas*, *Ashramas* and *Saraswatīs* and half of the *Bharatīs* are called *Dandīs*, while the remaining six and a half groups are entitled to call themselves *Gosains*.

There is some difference as to the exact names of the *marhis*, and the list given below is the one admitted by the Nirvāni *Akharas*.

List of 52 Marhis :—

A. *Giri*, Ānandbar section, Meghnath-panthi—

1. Ramdatti. 2. Durganathi. 3. Ridhinathi.
4. Brahmanathi. (Lesser) 5. Patambaranathi.
6. Balbhadranath. 7. Lesser Jnannathi.
8. Greater Jnannath. 9. Aghornathi. 10. Sanjnathi.
11. Bhavanathi. 12. Jagjivana-
thi. 13. Greater Brahmanathi.

B. *Giri*, Aparnathpanthi—

1. Onkari. 2. Paramanandi. 3. Bodhla. 4.
- Yati. 5. Nagendranathi. 6. Sagarnathi. 7.
- Bodhnathi. 8. Kumasnathi. 9. Shahjhnati.
10. Parsanathi. 11. Marnathi. 12. Vishwam-
bharnathi. 13 Taranathi. 14. Rudranathi.

C. *Puri*, Bhurbar section—

1. Bhagwanpuri. 2. Bhagwant Puri. 3. Ganga
Daryab. 4. Lahar Daryab. 5. Puranpuri. 6.
- Jarbharat Puri. 7. Sahajpuri. 8. Mani Meghnad
puri. 9. Bodha Ajodhyapuri. 10. Jnannath
11. Arjun Puri. 12. Nilkanth Puri. 13. Hame-
man Puri. 14. Vaikunthi. 15. Multani. 16.

Mathura Puri (Some add) 17. Keval Puri.
18. Dasnami Tilak Narad Puri.

D. *Ban.*

1. Shyamsudar Ban. 2. Ramchandra Ban.
3. Shankhadhari Ban. 4. Balabhadra Ban.

E. *Bharati.*

1. Narsingh Bharati. 2. Man Mukund Bharati.
3. Vishwambhar Bharati. 4. Padmanav Bharati.

F. *Lama marhi.*

Stages of spiritual advance among the Das-nāmi monks :

So much for the names of the ten orders. But within each order the monks are graded according to their spiritual progress or sanctity of character into four classes, namely *Kutichak*, *Bahudak*, *Hansa* and *Paramhansa*. The first two of these classes bear the title or *Tri-dandis** (*i. e.* holding

*Tri-dandis are found only among the Ramanujis, while the shiva Dasnamis have Dandis only.

there rods) to symbolise their vow of controlling speech thought and action, while a *Hansa* or a *Paramhansa* is called an *Ek-dandi* or *Dandi* (carrying one staff only).

A *Kutichak* (also called *Kavichar*) is an ascetic who has renounced the world and lives in a hut in the forest, engaged in religious contemplation and worship. He does not travel nor beg alms, but lives on the alms given to him unasked by the passers-by.

A *Bahudak* is a wandering religious mendicant, who collects alms in kind (never in cash) and must not stay for more than three days in one place.

The *Hansas* are ascetics versed in the Vedānta philosophy and pursue the aim of attaining to full knowledge of the Supreme Being in the *Brahmalok*. Remaining in one place they live on charity and devote themselves faithfully to the Yoga practices.

The *Paramhansa* represents the highest stage of spiritual evolution. He is a man who has attained to perfect beatitude and merged himself

in the Supreme Soul, and thus become a perfect master of spiritual knowledge and the highest religious teacher to mankind.

A *Kutichak* is, according to philologists, so called because he lives in a *Kutt* or hut (Sanskrit *Kutir*), a *Bahudak* because he drinks the wāter of many places (*Bahudaka*) in the course of his vow of wandering life. A *Hansa* is a swan floating in the holy lake of Mānas, the seat of Brahmā, who has thus become a master of God—knowledge by the direct communion of the individual soul (*Jiv-atma*) with the Divine soul (Param-ātmā). After attaining to the supreme truth the *Hansa* and *Paramhansa* have risen above the need of worshipping idols (which is necessary at the lower stages of a man's spiritual evolution); but some of them worship the *Devi* or the Great Mother of the Universe.

Naturally the Dandi Sannyāsis enjoy the highest esteem among the Hindus, as these ascetics are believed to have been spiritually elevated from humanity into the rank of the God Nārāyan himself.

There is further classification—or more correctly a cross-division, of the Sānnyāsis according

to their various observances or customs. These are :—(1) *Bhog-bar*, *i. e.*, those who are indifferent to all earthly things (*bhoga* means enjoyment except what is absolutely necessary for life, (2) *Kit-bar*, of those who attempt to eat only a small quantity of food, (3) *Anand-bar*, or those who abstain from begging and merely live on freely given alms (4) *Bhuri-bar*, or those who live in forest produce and herbs only.



CHAPTER V.

Rules and Practices of Dasnami monks

Qualifications of a Monk :—

People who seek initiation (Diksha) as monks, are moved by one of these two motives, namely, (1) disgust with the life of a house-holder, owing to misfortune or sorrow, and (2) a deliberate choice of the devotee's life as a means of the highest spritual improvement, Vyasa writes :—
“Any man, in any of the three earlier stages of life, whether a *Brahmachari* (student) a householder (Grihastha) or a forest dweller (Vana-prastha), if he withdraws his heart from all earthly desires, should take refuge in the state of a wandering monk (Parivrajak)”.

Again, the *Saura Purana* says.

“When your mind becomes detached from all

things, then only should you take to Sannyas (Monachism), otherwise you will be a sinner”.

Also, the *Atri Sanhita* declares.

“A man will not be released from sorrow and the chains of birth and death so long as he does not gladly embrace the sign of Vishnu (i. e., the begging friar’s rod)”.

Another Sanskrit work declares the following classes of men as eternally unworthy of being made *sannyasis*—licentious, wrathful, boastful, greedy, deluded, overcome by illusions (Maya), fond of company, devoted to luxury, subject to passion, or always sickly.

Castes entitled to become Sannyasis :—

On this point there is some ambiguity among the writers of ancient Smriti books, and this has led to much controversy and differences of opinion. All are agreed that Brahman are entitled to enter this fourth stage of earthy life. But some later writers restrict this option to the Brahmans, while others extent it to all the three twice-born castes, by using the word ‘*dwija*’ which includes Kshat-

riyas and Vaishyas in addition to Brahmans. In a work named "*Traivarik Sannyas-sar* Kailash Parvat quotes from Yajnavalka Smriti and Brahma Baivarta Puran verses to prove that the first three castes are undoubtedly entitled to receive initiation as Sannyasis. An example is quoted from the Kurma Puran (12th Chapter) which tells us that a Kshatrya prince named Sushil, the grandson of Prithu, was given Sannyas by a saint Swetashator Muni, and then taught divine knowledge. On the other hand, Gopalanand Paramhans, in his *Sannyas-grahan Paddhati* (Page 5) asserts that none but Brahmans have this right, and quotes various verses to prove that Kshatriyas and Vaishyas are specially excluded.

But in modern times we see that all the three higher castes are being made Sannyasis by the holy heads of monasteries, and the members are placed above caste and beyond caste after their full initiation.

The ceremonies and hymns of initiation as a Sannyasi :—

When a person has made up his mind to enter the monastic order (Sannyas Ashram) he signifies

F—5

his intention to the head of an institution of Sannayasis, and after being examined and granted permission as a worthy person, he grows through many ceremonies which are described fully below, on the authority of the '*Sannyas-Grahan Pau dhati*' of Paramhansa Gopalanand (Benares, 1998 Vikram Samvat) and the *Yatidharma Sangraha* of Visheshwar Saraswati (Anand Ashram Press, 1909 A.D.).

First of all, he purifies his body by undergoing four prescribed austerities (Krichchhan).

Next he must go through the act of *Sankaiipa* or determination.

On the following day, he should bathe, offer his Sandhya prayers and the day's worship of Vishnu, and then go to some river or other sheet of water and perform the Sradha (funeral obsequies) of all his ancestors. He should methodically offer oblations (Tarpan) to the eight gods connected with the funeral ceremony, chant the necessary vedic hymns and perform the gift (dana) and other duties of the occasion.

These funeral rites may extend over seven or

eight days, after which he must have his beard, moustaches and head shaved off, keeping only the scalp lock (Shikha).

Next he must give away all his earthly possessions except a lion-cloth (Kopin), a staff (danda) and a waterpot (Kamandal) with ceremonies and Mantras appropriate to such an occasion.

The sacrifice (Yajna) performed at this time is called the *Praja-pati-ahuti*. Having kindled the holy fire (homagni), the novice sits down before it, keeping faggots (Samidh), ghee (ajya) and milk pudding (charu) ready to obtain.

After this preparation the Sannyasi cooks the milk pudding (Charu) in the domestic fire, divides the ghee (Ajya) and performs the *Viraja-hom* or Purificatory sacrifice by chanting the sixteen verses of the *Purush Sukta* (Rigved, X. 90), and pouring out libation of ghee at the end of every verse.

The *Purusha Sukta*, or Hymn in the Creative spriit.

1. *Purusha* (the Universal soul, animating all creation) has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. He encircles the Earth in all directions and spreads beyond it for ten fingers. .. breadth.

2. Verily, *Purusha* is all this existing world, and all that was and all that will be. He is also the giver of immortality, because he has passed beyond His spirit-form and assumed the shape of the Visible Universe for the nourishment of all creatures.

3. The Universe of all the ages—past, present and future—is the manifestation of His glory. He is greater than all these : all beings are but one-fourth of Him; His other three fourths abide immortal as self-revealed.

4. This three-quarter of *Purusha* dwells majestically on high, above our material Universe. His remaining fourth-part enters again and again into this world of Illusion, and thus assuming diverse forms in spirit all animate and inanimate Creation.

5. From that primeval *Purusha* has sprung

this vast Universal Body (Virat), and from this Body has issued the Male Spirit (or the Creative agent), who brought into existence the gods and man, and thereafter the earth and animals.

6. When the gods performed the sacrifice with Purusha (imagined) as their oblation (Ghrita),—at that sacrifice Spring served as the butter, summer, as the faggots and autumn as the meat.

7. They immolated upon the sacred grass, as their victim, that Purusha who was born at the dawn of Creation. The gods headed by Prajapati and the Rishis performed their sacrifice, while they regarded the Purusha as the sacrificial animal.

8. That sacrifice in which the Purusha (Universal soul) was immolated, produced the mixture of curds and butter (prishad-ajya). That sacrifice also produced those animals, both wild and domesticated, over whom the wind (Vayu) is the deity.

9. From that sacrifice at which the Universal soul was immolated, sprang the Rik and Sama

Vedas, Gayatri and other *Mantras*, and the Yajur veds.

10. From that sacrifice were born hores and whatever animals have two rows of teeth aud cows and goats and sheep.

11. When the gods thns sacrificed the Purusha, into what different parts did they divide him ? What was his mouth called, what hls arms, what his things aud what this feet ?

12. His mouth became the Brahma his arms the Rajanya, his thighs the Vaishya, and from his feet came the Sudra.

13. The moon was born from his mind, the sun from his eye, Indra and Agni from his mouth, and Vayu from his breath (Prana).

14. From his navel came the firmament, from his head the heaven (Dyuloka), from his feet the earth, from his ear the quarters of space (dik). Thus did the gods imagine the world.

15. At that sacrifice the seven meters were contemplated as the enclosures, the 21 substances

as the logs of fuel. And the gods who celebrated the sacrifice, bound the Purusha to the stake as the victim.

16. By means of sacrifice did the gods worship Him who is also the sacrifice in Himself. Therefore, whose were the first duties (Dharmam). That heaven where the ancient gods (Sadhyas) dwell, is also attained by the great-souled ones of the present age, who worship the *Virat Purusha*.

The Purificatory Sacrifice

(Viraja Hom).

Pouring out *ghee* into the fire with a wooden ladle, the *Sannyasi* should chant the following Mantras :—

Om : May the wind in all parts of myself,—such as life (Pran), feeling (akuti), intestines, throat, navel and all other limbs—be purified : I am a stainless, sinless light ; this ghee is poured into the fire for my good. I bow to the wind within myself.

May my speech, mind, eyes, ear, tongue, smell

intellect and intentions be purified : I am a stainless, sinless light ; this ghee is poured etc. (as in verse no. 1 above).

May my skin, flesh, blood, fat, marrow, nerves and bones be purified : I am etc. (as in verse no. 1 above).

May my head, feet leg, sides, back, belly, thighs, be purified : I am etc. (as in verse no. 1 above).

May the Divine Spirit (Devi) purify me. I am etc. (as in verse no. 1 above).

May Earth, water, Light, Air, and sky purify me. I am etc. (as in verse no. 1 above).

May Sound, Touch, colour, Taste and smell purify me. I am etc. (as in verse no. 1 above).

May my mind, speech form and action be purified.

May the Divine Light purify me from unexpressed thought and self-cognition (Ahamkar).

May my Atma, Antaratma and Paramatma be purified.

I pour this libation of ghee to hunger and thirst, to true knowledge (Vividya) and the precepts of the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharvan. And so on.

Having thus offered oblations of faggots, ghee and milk pudding to each of these separately at the end of each of the above verses (Mantra) of the Viraja Hom, he should pour *ghee* in the name of and make his bow to Fire, Prajapati, Atma, Antaratma, Pramatma, Jnanatma. This will be followed by hom with the sixteen verses of the Purusha Sukta each chanted separately.

Next he should pray with the Vedic and Upanishadic verses, such as.

Om : The Absolute Brahma (or Cause) is Universal, (or Perfect) the Brahma with attributes (or Active Brahma), also is Universal. From the Universal comes the Universal. When we have abstracted the fulness of the Perfect (or Universal), the Perfect (or Universal) Brahma indeed is left behind in our hearts: (Vrihad-aranyak-Upnishad, 5—1—1).

After performing these *Yajnas*, he renounces

his children and friends, saying 'Listen, all ye : By the grace of my teacher I am eager to go beyond wordly life (Sansar). I have given up my attachment to all. I have renounced my love for son, wealth and followers. You too should give up your attachment to me, and not obstruct my embracing of Sannyas. Taking water in the scooped palms of his hands, he should chant the full Vedic hymn, beginning with '*Ashup Shishanah*' and at the end of it pour the water on the ground as an offering to all the gods.

Next he should go to a sheet of water or river, perform his bath and Sandhya and take the vow that he would embrace the Sannyasi mode of life (Ashram) which removes man's numberless sorrows and enables him to attain to the highest bliss and the supreme perfection of manhood. After making oblations of water, he should recite the prayers for fearlessness and then call upon the Sun and the Moon, Wind and Fire, Earth and Sky, Heart and Mind, Day and Night, the Morning Twilight and the Evening Twilight,—as well as all the gods, to be witnessed to his resolution of becoming a Sannyasi. Going down into the water up to his navel, he should recite the *Gayatri*

verse—Om : Bhur Bhuvah, Swah, and certain other prayers, and make an oblation.

Standing thus in the tank or river, he should take some water out of it in the palm of his hand, and recite the *Praisha Mantra*,—‘Om : Earth, I have become a Sannyasi. Om : Heaven I have become a Sannyasi. Om : Hell, I have become a Sannyasi. “This is to be repeated thrice, with voice modulated to three pitches. After throwing into the water a full oblation of water taken into both his hands joined together, while facing the east and saying, “May all creatures be free from fear from me :—”

The next ceremony is that of discarding his sacred thread, and cutting off the tuft of hair on the crown of his head (Shikha).

The last stage of the initiation

After the new Sannyasi has come out of the water, cast of his clothes and taken five or seven steps with uplifted face, as naked as at his birth, his preceptor (Acharya), after prostrating himself before him, would induce him to wear a loin-cloth (Kopin) for decency before ordinary men, and

give him a staff (*danda*) to guard against horned cattle, snakes &c. and a waterpot (*Kamandalu*).

A dying Sannyasi is made to sit in an erect posture, with a wooden frame placed under his arms to prevent his falling back. The corpse along with the frame is buried in this posture in a *Samadhi* or grave dug in the ground, some *bhang* (cannabis sativus) and a hollowed gourd or water-flask being placed by its side. The dead faces the East or North-East. After this, salt and spices are thrown into the grave to hasten putrefaction. On a day between the 13th and 40th after death, or even within six months or a year, his disciple feeds a number of Brahmans and Sadhu. This is called '*bhandara*'. Over the graves of very holy men or rich *Mahants* temples or tombs are erected, and these lamps are kept lighted and daily worship is offered.

At holy places on the banks of the Ganges, such as Hardwar, Varanasi, and Prayag, the dead bodies of rich Sannyasis, especially Mahants and Mandaleshwars, are placed in stone coffins, called '*Tankas*' covered with a stone lid, which is tightly fastened down, and then thrown into the sacred

river. In the case of poorer monks, their corpses have two stones tied to the head and legs, and then buried in the water. Many examples of burial in stone or masonry tombs are to be found in Both Gaya and other inland *Maths*. It may be here pointed out that the Bengali Vaishnav monks of Chaitanya's sect always bury their dead in a hole in the ground, in a sitting posture, though this sect originated many centuries after the Dasnamis.

The Sannyasis worship Shiva in the ordinary way and Shakti (or Shiva's female consort) with a special secret ritual called *Marga* or path of Salvation. As Shiva himself wears a rosary of *rudrasha* seeds, every Sannyasi does the same. A *hauraksha* seed with only one line of depressions (*ek mukhi*) is considered to have the greatest sanctity and mystic power, and is often sold at incredible prices; the next lower degree of sanctity is possessed by a seed with eleven *Mukhs*.

The Nagas and Tapaswis smear their whole body with ashes (regarded as the Bibhuti of Shiva the Yogi), other Sannyasis only mark the *tri pundarik* (three lines) with ashes on their forehead, and

similar lines on eleven other places of the body,—the whole being known as *Dwadash bibhuti*.

The marks of an ideal Sannyasi are—an earthen pot (for drinking water); the roots of trees (for food), coarse cloth, total solitude, equanimity towards all.

कपालं वृक्षमूलानि कुचैलम् असहायता

समताचैव सर्वास्मिन् एतद् मुक्तस्य लक्षणम् ।

Rules to be observed by a Sannyasi in his personal conduct ; (1) When he goes out begging, he should wear one cloth round the waist above the knees and below the navel, and another over the shoulders, (2) He shall eat only one meal in 24 hours, (3) He shall live outside inhabited quarters, (4) He shall beg from seven, and not more than seven houses, except in the case of a Kutichak excepted, (5) He shall sleep on the ground. (7) He shall not salute any one nor praise or speak ill of anybody, (8) He shall bow only to Sannyasis of a higher order or of longer standing than himself, (9) He may not cover himself with cloth except one of the reddish colour (Gaurik)*

*H. K. Kaul in Census Report of the Punjab.

Succession to headship

Many Maths have their own special customs of rules of succession, but the majority of these monasteries have not. In their case the general practice is for the reigning Mahant to nominate a disciple (chela) orally or by written will. On the 13th day after a Mahant's death, his Bhandara is held, at which a dinner is given to the inmates of the neighbouring Maths. Then his *Karbhari* announces the contents of his will. The assembled monks have the right of setting aside the nominee of the dead abbot if they deem him unworthy; in that case they then and there appoint another Chela of the deceased to the vacant Gaddi. In case the late Mahant has left no instructions for the succession, nor any Chela the succession will fall to own Chela's chela, or to his *Gurubhai* or his *Guru-bhai's chela*, in that order of preference. If none of these categories is available, the assembled monks can take up a Dwija lad, cut off his scalp-lock (Shikha) on the tomb of the late Mahant and appoint him his successor.

Administration

All the *Maths* of a district taken together form a single unit, called Mandal; the head of

one of these Maths is elected as the local president (mahant of the Mandal) by all the monks of the district. He is paid Re. 1/4/- by every Math in his circle at every ceremony held in it. He appoints his minister (Kar-bhari) and provost (Kotwal). As Judge he holds the trial of offending monks in that district and issues orders regarding fine, expulsion etc.

Spread of learning

The chief work of the *Math-dharis* being the propagation of religion among the people, great attention is paid to the education of the monks in the knowledge of Sanskrit and theology. The head or *Mandaleshwar* whom we may compare to the Dean of an English Cathedral, or rather the President of a mediaeval Catholic University, must be a master of grammar, logic, astronomy, the Vedas and philosophy (Vedanta). He is called a *Paramahansa*, and tours the country at the head of a hundred to two hundred *Sadhus*, whom he teaches theology and the method of preaching *adwaita* (monist) philosophy. There are large Sanskrit colleges of this sect at Hrishikesh, Hardwar, Allahabad, Benares and some other cities. When the Mandaleshwar is out on tour, his best disciple conducts the teaching in the *Math* during his absence.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the

two sections of the Dasnamis, namely the fighters and the theologians (*Astra-dharis* and *Shastra-dharis*) are kept separate in watertight compartments as regards their functions. A good deal of valuable teaching in scriptures is also done by the *Akharas*. For examples, the Nirvani Akhara has established schools at Allahabad (the Nirvan Veda Vidyalaya) Hardwar (Kanikhal Pathshala) &c.



CHAPTER VI

The Akharas and their constitution Past History of the Akharas.

Unfortunately we possess no contemporary record of the origin and history of the different Akharas before the line of Gosāin Rajendra Giri, who became famous in the affairs of the Delhi Empire about 1750. Since that time we have detailed and correct accounts of the doings of the fighting monks (Nāgās).

A Hindi manuscript has been found in the possession of the hereditary bard (*bhat*) of the Nirvāni Ākhārā, which professes to give the dates of the foundation of the different Akharas and some of the battles which they fought with the name of the horses. This book merely gives the story as preserved by tradition from mouth to mouth among this family of bards, and the present manuscript (*pothi*) judging by its paper, hand-

writing, and colour of ink, cannot be more than 50 years old. Moreover, it represents the tradition current among the bards of only one Akhara, namely the Nirvāni, and therefore it can be argued that if any other Akhara had poets of their own, they might have told a different tale. Subject to the above warning and making full allowances for the natural distortion of history in passing from mouth to mouth for many hundred years, I give the following summary of the account found in this *pothi*.

1. Avāhan *Akhara*.

Mirich Giri, Dinānāth Giri, Ratan Giri Nāgā, Chaturi Giri Nāga, Dalpat Giri Janghāri, Bhavaharan Puri, Uday Puri, Ganesh Puri. Jharheshwari Mankaran Puri, Damri, Chandan Ban, Triloki Onkar Ban, Patakeshwari Ratan Ban Mauni, Maunse Jogdhāri.

Hirā Bhārāti, Siddha Gudarbāl Bhārāti planted the banner. Ganpat Bharati blew the trumpet. Hardwar Bhārati built the *Akhara*. V. Samvat 603, Jyaishtha dark 9th, Friday (If the figure for one thousand has been omitted before the year,—as used to be done in old writings. Such

as Portuguese official records, then the year would be 1603 V. S.—1547 A. D.)

11. ATAL akhara.

Bankhand Bhārati, Sāgar Bhārti *Jahari*, Shiv Charan Bharati *Jangdhari* (or Jogdhari). Ajo-dhya Puri, Atal Nirvān, Dutta Puri, Tribhuban Puri *Urdhibahu*, *Chhote* Ranjit Puri, Sarvan Giri *Aloni* (abstained from salt) Dayal Giri *Mauni*, Mahesh Giri Nakhi (with long nails), Beni Mahesh Giri Bankhandi, Himachal Ban, Pratit Ban *Pauhari*, built the *Akhara*. Vikram Samvat 703, in the Gondwana country (*dharti*), *margashirsha* bright 4th Sunday. (If the year was V. S. 1704, it would be 1646 A. D.)

Mahesh Giri and Manohar Giri (*Abadhut*) released Shaikh Singh from captivity. Rājendra Giri the hero. Pratap Giri, in the country (*dharti*) of Narwar, took Rāmraj Singh prisoner. Rameshwar Puri beat the war-drum. Umrāo Giri gained victory in the battle, and forced Maur Bundela Ram Singh and Jawāhir Singh to turn their backs Sanja (?) Bharati took Shova Singh Bundela prisoner. Jangdhari Puri and Dip Ban took the life of Bhola Singh Bundela.



Shri Panch of Maha Nirvani Akhara.

Ratdevji *Bhat* sang of these heroic exploits Kānchan Hazāri received as reward a pearl necklace of 30 (beads ?) and three camels for carrying the flag.

III, NIRVANI *akhara*.

Rup Giri Siddha, Uttam Giri Siddha, Ram Swarup Giri Siddha, Shankar Puri *Mauni*, *Digambar* Bhawani Puri *Aloni Urdhbahu*, Dev *Mauni*, *Digambar* Onkar Bharati Tapeshwari, Purnanda Bharati Agnihotri,—in the plain of Garh Kunda,* in the country of Jhārkhand, lifted up the banner of religion, in the courtyard of the Siddheshwar temple (?), and planted their umbrella on the umbrella of Kal Bhairav Ganesh,

Joganand Chandan Puri *Naga*, Zorawar Puri *Naga*, Ram Narsingh *Mauni*, Narayan Bhopat Giri *Jangdhari*, Gautam Ban Singhasani. Amar Bharati, Nakkhi Giri, Narayan Giri, Sundar Giri, Anand Giri, Khusal Giri, Basant Giri, Rup Giri.

* Kunda in the old Palamau Kingdom of Chota Nagpur. Situated 24°.13 North Latitude. 84°.45. East Longitude. The fort of Kunda was conquered by Aurangzib's governor of Bihar in May 1661.

Vikram Samvat 805. Agrahayan bright 10th, Thursday. Akhara Shova Shital Nirvan, Sant, Mahant united and set up the flag. The Nirvān Akhara was built by Shuva-Karan.

(if the Vikram year was 1805, it would be 1749 A.D.)

The Nirvani Akhara gained a victory in battle over Bhavanand, Sur-Suranand and Kamalanand vairagis, in Samvat 1310 (—136 A.D.) in the Chauk of Hardwar, Chaib Giri Maharaj, Lachmi Giri Maharaj, Abhaynath Bharati *mauni*, Jivan Puri *Jangdhari* Vishal Puri Maharaj, Bankhandi Bharati Maharaj, Sahaj Ban Agnihotri, Bahadur Giri Maharaj, Dhyan Giri Maharaj, Parashuram Giri who held the sword, Indra Giri, Maul Giri Maharaj (held) the mace (*gadka*).

At Hardwar Kshetra they blew conches and planted their flags and standards. They destroyed the Rama *Dal*. Ram Bharati blew the trumpet. The Maratha troops after going to the *akhara*, unfurled the victorious banner called *Bhagwa*. The Nirvani akhara gained the credit of heroic valour, Khushal Bhat composed the song in honour of the fighting.



MAHANT ARJUNGIRIJI

BATTLE OF THE JNAN BAPI

At Benares *Kshetra*, near the Jnān Bāpi temple, Raman Giri, Lakshman Mauni, Desh Giri Nakkhi fought Raja Haridas Kesari, Narendra Das, and Hari Maharaj *Maha-mauni* Lakshman *Mauni*, Gopal *Mauni*, Bansha Gopal Muni (g), Har Sidh Mauni.....Sarada *Mauni* and Bal-bhadra *Mauni* did heroic deeds. Ghanashyam Puri planted the Rup Bhagwa banner. Dharam Puri Harihet—Jangsar (?) played the naubat music. Bishwambhar Bharati held the sword, Lalit Bhagwan Puri held the peacock fan. Jogindra received honour. Narayan Ban's family was holder of the mace. This victory increased the glory of Kashi.

At the Kashi *Kshetra* in Samvat 1721 (—1664 A.D.) they won the victory in a fight with the Sultan (? Aurangzib) and gained great glory. From sunrise to sunset the battle raged and the Dasnamis proved themselves heroes; they preserved the honour of Vishwanath's seat. They defeated the Muslims Mirza Ali and Turang Khan (?) and Abdul Ali.

Shuja-ud-daula, was about to be defeated by

Najib Khan Pathan.....But Shiva gave help and thus saved the honour of the Dasnami.

IV. ANAND *akhara*.

In Vikram Samvat 912 (856 A. D.) Jyaishtha bright 5th Sunday, in the country of Berar,—Kantha Giri Maharaj, Harihar Giri Maharaj, Rameshwar Giri Maharaj, *Khalsa*, Patan Giri Maharaj *Sawai-both*. Devdat Bharati *Chautal* Harihar Bharati *Siddha*, and seven others ? Shiva-shyam Puri Khemandal, Patar-Gopal *Dharma-bibhuti*, Hem Ban *Kevri*, Sarvan Puri *Falari*, Gangeshwar Bharati *Surati* built the Anand *Akhara*.

V. NIRANJANI *Akhara*.

Atri *mauni siddha*, Sarajunath Purushottam Giri, Hari Shankar Giri *Jaugdhari* Shripada Giri, *Paohari* Batuk Giri *Naga*, Jagannath Giri *Digambar*, Jaykaran Giri *Bhandari*, Ranchhor Bharati, Jagjivan Bharati *Patanbari* (clad in treebark), Arjun Bharati *Dankeshwari* (beat the big drum), Guman Bharati, Jagannath Puri *Falahari* Swabhav Puri, Kailash Puri, *Tuktukia*, Kharag Narayan Puri, Bakhtawar Pusi *Urdha-*

bahu, Uchit Puri *Naga Udambari*, Khem Ban Agnihotri, Uday Ban Fateh Ban Udambari, Bhim Ban *Kotwal*—built the akhara, in the Kachh country, place Mandavi, in V. Samvat, 960, Kartik dark 6th Monday, (—904 or 1904 A. D.).

VI. Juna *Akhara*.

(originally named *Bhairav*)

In V. Samvat 1202, Kartik bright 10th, Tuesday this *akhara* was built at Bādri Karan-Prayag in the Uttarkhand country, by Mokham Giri, Sunder Giri *mauni Digambar*, Dalpat Giri *Naga*, Lakshman Giri *Pratapi*, Raghunath Puri *Kotwal*, Dev Bharati, Raghunath Ban, Daya Ban *Thareshwari*, Parag Bharati *Bhandari*, Maha Bharati, Nilkanth Bharāti Dhvajaband (in charge of the flag), Shankar Puri *Avadhut*, Beni Puri *Avadhut*, *mauni* Devan Puri, Vaikuntha Puri.

Mahant Lakshman Giri, the then head of the Maha Nirvani Akhara, at Allahabad, wrote a Hindi account of the *akharas*, on 5th January, 1929, which has been printed. Important extracts from it are translated below :

“The Atal Akhara is the oldest of the seven

akharas. In the time of the Delhi Badshahs, there used to be three hundred thousand men in it. It used to be equipped with canon and zamburaks (i. e., long matchlocks mounted on the back of camels) The Atal Akhara has produced many heroes and fighters for the defence of the Hindu religion. It used to reside mostly in the Jodhpur State. When Muslims from Kabul and Baluchistan invaded Jodhpur and levied tribute from the Rajah, the force of the Atal Sannyasis arrived there, defeated the Muslims, took away their arms and made them swear on the *Quran* that they would never again invade Marwar, The Rajah in gratitude granted Nagor *taluka* to the Gosains, whose Nagor *berhe* still holds it.

“The Abahan Akhara produced many great heroes who were honoured by the Delhi Badshah, and the Lucknow Nawab, such as Anup Giri and Umrao Giri.

History of the Dasnami Monks

MANDALESHWARS

In British India at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, the attacks on Hinduism by the

missionaries of other religions and by the spread of modern thought and English civilisation, set our thoughtful leaders to organise a movement for meeting this challenge to our faith. A new line was opened for the activities of the Dasnami Sannyasis to meet the needs of the age. It was found necessary to send forth highly intellectual champions of Hinduism who would be able to meet the attacks on our religion by Christian missionaries and Indian free thinkers on more than equal terms and who would train up pupils in advanced Shastric learning for the purpose of acting as missionaries of our religion and removing the ignorance of the mass of the Hindu population. The Hindus must no longer stand aloof and silently see their religion attacked by other sects without making a proper defence with the help of learning and philosophy. So long as the two older divisions of *Astra-dharis* and *Shastradharis* lived each within its own monasteries, or toured the country without acting as teachers and missionaries of Hinduism to the outer public, they could not undertake this new work.

It was now decided to set up centres of Sanskrit learning and religious teaching under the

greatest scholars of this sect and prepare bands of competent monks for religious propaganda among the public. This was the best way of meeting the champions of other religions in controversy.

Holy men who were equally famous for saintly character and Shastric knowledge, were chosen as teachers. In former ages they were called *Param-Hansas*, but since about 1800 A.D. they have been called *Mandaleshwars*. This title is conferred only by the Dasnamis is one of their seven Akharas, or in the particular *math* of a lately deceased *mahant*, when his successor is Judged to be an intellectual giant. After his election; *tika* is applied to the new Mandaleshwar's forehead, a certain number of Rupees is paid as *nazar*, and a long scarf (*chadar*) is waved over his head and presented to him, by the other members of his own *akhara* or *math*.

One *akhara* may be so fortunate as to possess three or four such intellectual giants, and only the most learned among them is chosen for preeminence and installed as the *Acharya* of that *akhara*, His position is roughly equivalent to that of the Dean of a mediaeval Christian Cathedral

combined with some of the functions of the Head of a self-contained College of Theology.

Several of these Mandaleshwars have gone out of the parent *akhara* and established new *maths* of their own, which act as independent colleges, and their work is continued in these places after their death, by some equally eminent Sanskrit scholar and holy man elected from among the Dasnami monks.

The highly beneficial expansion of the work of the Dasnami sect will be best illustrated by some personal examples.

A *Nirvani Akhara*

The order of succession of mandaleshwars is—
 (1) Swami Sukdev Giriji, who lived and taught in Nichi Bagh, near the Company's Garden at Benares, (2) Swami Dhani Giriji, (3) Swami Govindanandji, who built the house in the Terhe Nim quarter in 1900 A. D. It is known as the Nirvani Govind Nath, (4) Swami Jain Puriji, (5) Swami Krishnanand Giri, who is the present Acharya of the Nirvani Akhara.

B. Juna Akhara :—

The line of succession of Mandaleshars is—
(1) Kutastha Swami. (2) Swami Phanindra Yati, called the “Yati Mandaleshwar” (3) Swami Paramatmanand, who built the house of the *math*. (4) Swami Swarupanand, (5) Swami Paramanand.

C. Niranjani Akhara :—

Line of succession of Mandaleshwars :—(1) Swami Ram Giriji (2) Swami Sachchidanand Yati (3) Ramanandji (4) Swami Nai Giriji.

Apart from these regular *Akharas* there are some independent *maths* under their respective Mandaleshwars, e. g.,

D. *Hrishukesh Kailash Math*.

Order of succession :—(1) Swami Ram Puri, (2) Swami Dhanraj Giriji, (3) Swami Janardan Giri, and when he left, his place was filled by Swami Ram Giri, (4) Swami Govindanandaji, (5) Swami Vishnu Devanand.

E. Swami Vidyanand, a Naga monk of the

Nirvani Akhara, (who, however, was not the Acharya of that Akhara), was a powerful preacher and founded the Gita Mandir at Ahmadabad, Baroda and other cities, and established the Gita Dharma Press at Varanasi with its own magazine.

F. Another Swami Krishnanand (also of the Nirvani Akhara) built the math at Amritsar.

G. Swami Bhagavatananda of Chantā Kothi (Kankhal) is a very learned teacher, and has a math at Varanasi (Jalpadevi). He joins the Nirvani Nagas at the Kumbh bath and dinners.

(Most of these teaching *maths* are called *Ashrams* or hermitages for teachers and disciples, guru-shishya, as celebrated in the *Ramayan* and the poems of Kālidās).

Development of theological colleges within the Akharas. At the beginning of the 20th century, the leaders of the Nirvani Akhara at their sea-bath at Ganga-sagar, assembled at shrine of their tutelary saint, Kapil Muni, and came to a resolution for establishing schools for teaching the Sanskrit language and the Hindu scriptures (the Vedas,

Vedāngas &c.) throughout the country, so as to give to Brahman lads and math-dhari disciples a sufficiently high education and thus supply a band of competent preachers of the Hindu *dharma*. Accordingly, in 1911 A.D., the Maha Nirvan Veda Vidyalaya was opened at Hardwar. But after some years it was found to be more fruitful to transfer this college to Allahabad, which was done in February 1916. The college is now directly under the supervision of the Maha Nirvani Akhara in Daraganj, Allahabad.

It teaches for all the five Sanskrit grades—namely Entrance First, Intermediate, Shastri and Āchārya degree examinations, and in each class the subjects taught are Grammar, Logic, Vedānt, Literature, Scripture &c., following the curriculum of the Varanaseya Sanskrit University.

The Governing Body of this College consists of the members of the Executive Committee of Shri Panchayati Maha Nirvani Akhara, Daraganj, Allahabad.

The title of *Acharya* is of the highest dignity, and it is conferred on that one of the five or six



Late Mahant Balakpuriji
Ex-Secretary of Akhara Maha Nirvani.

Mundaleshwars living at the time who is recognised as the most learned man among them.

Right of Bathing of Kumbh

Every twelfth year, when the planet Jupiter (*Vrihaspati*) enters the sign of Aquarius (*Kumbh*), the event is considered most sacred and Hindus believe that they can wash away their sins by bathing in some sacred river. especially the Ganges, or the Godāvari (called the Dakshini Gangā) in Southern India. The occasion is called the *Kumbh Jog*. In addition to it, every year, the day when the Sun enters the sign of Capricornus (*Makar*) on the new moon of the month of Māgh (in January), is celebrated by purifying baths and religious ceremonies all over India; it is called *Makar Sankranti*, three months later than this i.e. in April, comes the *Mesh Sakranti*, or the day when the sun enters the sign of Aries (*Mesh*), which is celebrated similarly, especially at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna at Allahabad. These two *Sankrantis* become doubly auspicious every twelfth year when Jupiter happens to be in Aquarius (*Kumbh*) on the Makar and Mesh *San-*
F—7

kranti new moons, and then they are called the Makar *Kumbh* and Mesh *Kumbh* respectively. Extraordinarily large crowds of Hindus assembled at Hardwar and Allahabad on these *Kumbh* bath days,—(e. g., 20 lakhs at Hardwar in 1796 according to Capt. Hardwicke).

The Kumbh *Melas* are held at four different places at a stated time for each, namely—

(1) The *Makar* Kumbh bath at Allahabad, when the Sun enters Capricornus (*Makar*), Jupiter being then in Aquarius (*Kumbh*).

(2) The *Mesh* Kumbh bath at Hardwar, when Jupiter enter Aquarius, the Sun being in Aries (*Mesh*).

(3) The *Singh* Kumbh bath at Trimbak on the Godāvari, when the Sun enters Leo (*Singh*).

(4) The Kumbh at Ujjain in the Gwalior State.

The question of precedence in bathing on these occasions formerly led to bloody fights. But the British Government, after inquiring into

the old time-honoured practice, have laid down the following rules, which are strictly enforced by the Magistrate—First the Naga Gosains(i. e., *akharas*) will bathe, then the Vaishnav Bairagi *Sadhus*, next the Udasi Nanak Panthi Sikhs, and lastly the Nirmalā *Sadhu* Sikhs.

Among the *Akharas* the following order is observed and enforced,—At Hardwar *first* the Niranjani Akhara accompanied by the Juna, Abahan and Ananda Akharas; *Second* the Nirvani, accompanied by the Atal.

At Allahabad, *first* the Nirvani accompanied by the Atal Akhara, and then come the other four *akharas*. The first ceremonial bath is taken on the Makar *Sankranti*, the second on Magh *amavasyā* (new moon), the third on Vasant *Panchami*.

On this occasion, on the sand bank at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna, the Nirvani Akhara form the camp and plant two flags 52 cubits high, under which the holy *Chandi* is constantly read. While the flags are standing every comer is supplied with free food. After the

three baths mentioned above, a *hom* (fire sacrifice) is held, accompanied by *Chandi* reading and the feeding of Sādhus, learned scholars (mandaleshwars) and ordinary Brāhmans; which costs Rs. 525.

On each of the above holy days (*parv*) this Akhara gives away in charity one horse, $5\frac{1}{4}$ maunds of boiled rice and peas (*khichri*) and Rs. 525 in cash or as the price of other things.

Each mela costs the Nirvani Akhara at least Rs. 30,000. At the end of it, these monks move off to Varanasi.

The first English account of the Kumbh that we have was written in 1796 when Hardwar was in the possession of the Marathas. On 8th. April 1796, an English officer named Captain Thomas Hardwicke, accompanied by Dr. Hunter paid a visit to Hardwar during the mela held on that date which was the *Mesh Sankranti*.

“But every 12th year, when Jupiter is in Aquarius, at the time of the Sun’s entering Aries, the concourse of people is greatly augmented. The present is one of those periods, and the multitude

collected here on this occasion may, I think, with moderation, be computed at two million of souls.

“The Gosains...are the first here in point of numbers and power.....in the early part of the fair, this sect of *faqirs* erected the standard of superiority, and proclaimed themselves regulators of the police.....They Published an edict, prohibiting all other tribes from entering the place with their swords or arms of any other description..... The Vairagis, who were the next powerful sect, gave up the point, and next followed their example. Thus the Gosains paraded with their swords and shields, while every other tribe carried only bamboos through the fair.

“The ruling power was consequently held by the priests of the Gosains, distinguished by the appellation of *Mahants*, and during the continuance of the fair, the police was under their authority, and all duties levied and collected by them.....no part is remitted to the Maratha State. These Mahants meet in council daily, hear and decide upon all complaints brought before them either against individuals or of a nature tending to disturb the tranquillity, and the well management of this immense multitude.

“The Gosains maintained an uncontested authority, till the arrival of about 12 or 14,000 Sikh horsemen, with their families &c., who encamped on the plains about Jalalpur... The three chiefs of the Sikh force were Rāja Sahib Singh of Patiala, and Rai Singh and Sher Singh of Buria.

“On the morning of the 10th of April (which day concluded the *mela*), about 8 o'clock in the morning the Sikhs.....assembled in force and proceeded to the different watering places, where they attacked with swords, spears, and fire-arms, every tribe of faqirs that came in their way. These people being all on foot and few if any having fire-arms, the contest was unequal ? and the Sikhs who were all mounted, drove the Sannyasis Vairagis, Gosains, Nagas &c., before them with irresistible fury.....and having slaughtered a great number, pursued the remainder.

“Accounts agree that the faqirs lost about 5000 men killed, among whom was one of their mahants named Manpuri and they had many wounded : of the Sikhs about 20 were killed”. (*Asiatic Researches*, vol. VI).

A graphic description of the Makar Sankrānti

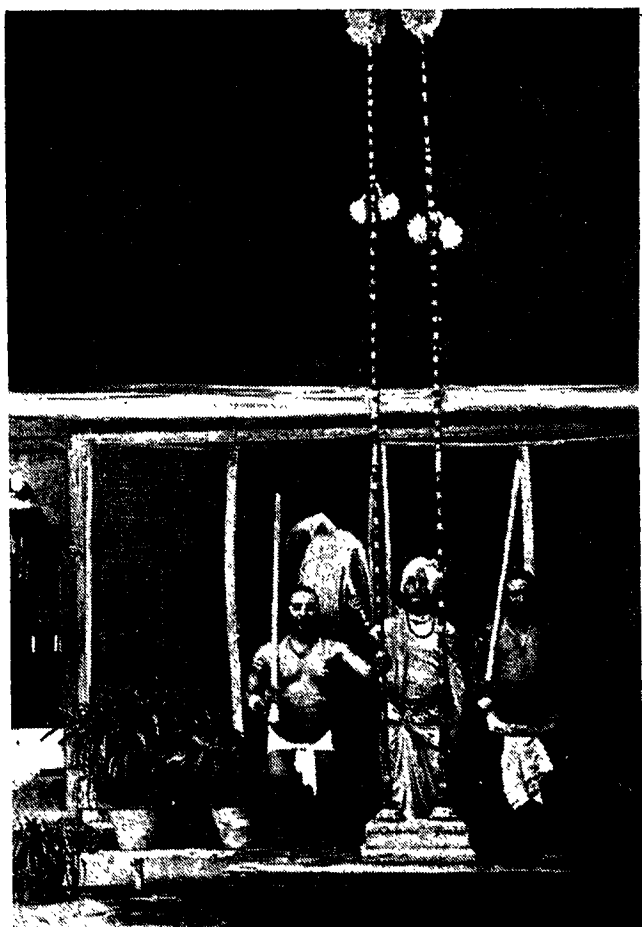
melā at Allahabad in 1840 is given by a Protestant missionary who visited it and spent ten days in preaching Christianity there. He writes—

“The *sankrant*...from which the melā began occurred on the 20th January 1840. Previous to that time people began to encamp in large numbers on the beach. Several sects of religious mendicants, began at an early period, to fit up quarters for themselves. Among these were two sects of *Nagas*, who came only once in six years. One of these sects is called *Nirvani* and the other *Niranjani*...They are divided into two sects, rather for the sake of convenience in their begging perigrinations than from any difference of (doctrinal) opinion among them, members of the former sect told us, that they at present number in their fraternity about 5000 persons, and of the latter that they number about 2000...The present Param Mahant is named Lal Giri. The two sects make regular tours to several different shrines, *viz*, Allahabad, Gaya, Jagannath, Godavari, Rameshwar, Ganga Sagar, Hardwar, and a few other places. They complete their circuit in six years.

“They marked out for themselves ground in a

somewhat tasty style; on this they erected in two lines, little grass huts facing each other at a distance of about 50 paces. These were built in neat rooms. In front of each hut is a mound of earth about four feet high, having a little parapet, or wall of a few inches high, extending all round the top. This is neatly smoothed over with cowdung. On the top of these chabutras they bask in the sun during the day, and read their sacred books, or talk or sleep as they feel inclined.

“Near the centre of each encampment they have a rather splendid flag, suspended on a very high bamboo.....Alongside the flag staff is erected a kind of pyramid of earth about 20 feet square at its base, and 15 feet high, ascended by flight of steps on the four sides. On the apex of this are placed a few sea-shells (*shankh*), a dish of flowers, a small image of Mahadeo, and a few rather elegantly polished brass candlesticks....Over it, at a well-adjusted distance, is a large awning, suspended by four corners. It consists of four separate awnings of beautifully fringed pink silk and crimson velvet; each one diminishing in size as its place is lower in the series, so as to suggest the idea of an inverted pyramid.



Symbol of Nirvani Akhara,
Surya Prakash and Bhairo Prakash.

“When they go out on public days, &c., the principal man of the Nirvani sect go paraded on seven large and splendidly caparisoned elephants, over which are spread a number of splendid flags. Others are mounted on the finest horses and camels, some of them armed. The whole is preceded by mace-bearers carrying enormous silver sticks, and much of the insignia of royalty ; then all this is followed by the mass of the sect clothed in all their uncouth, and ashy.....nakedness..... The other sect follows them in about equal parade, to the river side, where they all bathe.

“The Param Mahant of Abbot of a sect of Gosains whose head quarters are here at Allahabad, died a short time since, and the sect fixed upon the time of the *mela* to place another upon the *gaddi*. As a matter of course, or of etiquette, they had to invite the whole tride of Nagas, Gosains, Udasis &c. to a feast. On the appointed day they all assembled on an elevation extending from the corner of the fort. They seated themselves naked as they were generally, two and two facing each other on the smooth ground...They served out to each person two balls of a sweetmeat

composed of flour and saugar, and one or two other ingredients, fried in *ghi*... They had each a kind of platter made of leaves stitched or fastened together by wooden pegs... They ate them together. Afterwards a portion of *dahi* (curd) was served to each in a cup made of the same kind of leaf... The next morning, the sweetmeats, &c. that remained from the feast were distributed as charity to the Brahmans, Nagas, Gosains &c. There passed by our place 20 men with full baskets on their heads on their way to the quarters of the Nagas. These were preceded by mace-bearers and two men blowing trumpets...

“Both parties of the Nagas prepare at certain intervals of time, or on certain occasions, what they call *hom* (burnt offering). In this they burn insense with various ceremonies and reading *shlokas* from their sacred books. The incense is composed of *ghi* and various kinds of grain and flowers &c., all vegetable substances. The ceremony of burning is performed by the Param Mahant, aided by others high in rank”. (*Calcutta Christian Observer*, 1840, pp. 243-251, signed W.)

The Kumbh mela of 1882 is thus described by Mr. T. Benson, I. C. S., in his report :—

“To each corporation (*Akhara*) of religious ascetics was assigned a space of ground, within which it erected a temporary village or town for the accommodation of its members, in the centre of which moved the standards of the guild on a loftly flag-staff. These encampments were orderly and well laid out, and of a comfortable description...The various camps formed were,

- (1) Nirvani Naga Gosains.
- (2) Niranjani, with whom were associated the Juna.
- (3) Vairagis, Including three sects.
- (4) Chhota Akhara Panchayati Udasi Nanak-Panthis,
- (5) Bara Akhara Panchayati with the Bandhua Akhara (Sikhs).
- (6) Nirmala Sikhs, with the Vrinda-vani.

“On three great days (*Makar-Sankranti*), Amavasya, and Basant (*Panchami*) each of the six sects went separately down to bathe in formal procession, the most noiceable features being the body of naked *faqirs* closing the procession of each of the first two sects (the *Nirvani* and the *Niranjani*), and the gorgeous silken banners and elephant trappings of the wealthier guilds.

