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THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA

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EDITORIAL PREFACE

THE purpose of this series of small volumes on the leading forms which religious life has taken in India is to produce really reliable information for the use of all who are seeking the welfare of India, Editors and writers alike desire to work in the spirit of the best modern science, looking only for the truth. But, while doing so and seeking to bring to the interpretation of the systems under review such imagination and sympathy as characterize the best study in the domain of religion to-day, they believe they are able to shed on their work fresh light drawn from the close religious intercourse which they have each had with the people who live by the faith herein described; and their study of the relevant literature has in every instance been largely supplemented by persistent questioning of those likely to be able to give information. In each case the religion described is brought into relation with Christianity. It is believed that all readers in India at least will recognize the value of this practical method of bringing out the salient features of Indian religious life.

THE RELIGIOUS UFE OF INDIA

RAMDAS AND THE
RAMDASIS

BY

WILBUR S. DEMING, Ph.D.

AMERICAN MARATHI MISSION

ASSOCIATION PRESS

(Y.M.C.A.)

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To
ELSIE S. DEMING

PREFACE

IN the preparation of this book I am under deep obligation to several kind friends who have given me invaluable assistance. Mr. Sankar Sri Kjishna Dev, of Dhulia, has devoted a life-time to the study of Ramdas and was instrumental in establishing the Sattkaryottejak Sabha at Dhulia, for publishing his works. To all my queries Mr. Dev has given the greatest consideration, treating me with the utmost kindness throughout. Mr. Balchandra Saiikar Devasthali, of Ahmednagar, has been my faithful *pandit* for several years, examining various books with me, and is responsible for most of the translations herein given. The first ten chapters of the book were originally prepared as a thesis for the Ph.D. degree and submitted to the Faculty of the Kennedy School of Missions in the Hartford Seminary Foundation. In putting together the material, I have worked under the direction of Prof. LeRoy C. Barret, who has given generously of his time, both in reading the manuscript and in making many helpful suggestions. Dr. J. E. Abbott, another member of the Committee, has been always ready to give his judgment concerning difficult points. To the Editors of the *Religious Life of India* series—Dr. J. N. Farquhar, Dr. Nicol Macnicol and the Rev. E. C. Dewick—I am also under heavy obligation. They have read the manuscript; suggested certain alterations; and have helped with the proof-reading. To all these kind friends, and to a number of others, both missionary and Indian, fellow-students of Marathi literature, I express my grateful thanks.

The writer fully realizes the many imperfections of this volume, which simply serves as an introduction to a large and interesting subject. Ramdas lived during a critical period of Maratha history, playing an important part in that period, with the result that interest in his life is keen to-day throughout Western India, and Indians may well feel proud of his achievements. As a poet, teacher and practical sage, he stands high in the religious history of Maharashtra. In preparing the volume, I have had occasion to consult quite a number of the standard works on Hinduism, a few of which have been mentioned, but I am particularly indebted to those books which deal especially with the Hinduism of Western India. The dates given in the book are according to the Christian calendar, the Hindu dates being always specified when given. By adding seventy-eight to the Hindu *iaka* date, we arrive at the Christian date. The phonetic spelling is according to the system of transliteration which has been used of late, with the exception of those words which have come to have a definite English spelling, such as personal names or geographical places. I have used anglicized words whenever possible. The Marathi translations given in the book have been free, rather than literal, so that the meaning might be as clear as possible.

In closing, I wish to mention the many friendly contacts with Indian scholars and students which this study has brought, and which have been one of the most delightful phases of the work.

Satdra, India.

December, 1927,

WILBUR S. DBMING.

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<i>Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics</i> , edited by Dr. Hastings	E.R.E.
<i>History of the Mar&fha People</i> , by Kincaid and Parasnis, Vol. I	H.M.P.
<i>Outline of the Religious Literature of India</i> , by Dr. J.N.Farquhar	O.R.LJ.
<i>Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems</i> , by Dr. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar. (Encyclopoedia of Indo-Aryan Research)	V.S.M.RS.
<i>Sivaji and his Times</i> , by Jadunath Sarkar ..	Sarkar
<i>The Life of Sivaji Mahardj</i> , by N. S. Takakhav and K. A. Keluskar	Keluskar
<i>The Life and Teaching of Tukar&m</i> , by J. N. Fraser and Rev. J. F. Edwards	Edwards
<i>Rise of the Maratha Power</i> , by Justice M. G. Ranade	Ranade
<i>The Rites of the Twice-Bom</i> , by Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson	Stevenson
<i>Indian Theism</i> , by Dr. Nicol Macnicol	Macnicol
<i>Hindu Ethics</i> , by Rev. John McKenzie	McKenzie
<i>Maharashtra Sarasvat</i> , by V. L. Bhave. (History of Marathi Literature)	Bhave
<i>Dasopant Digambar</i> , by Dr. J. E. Abbott. (Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. XLII) ..	Abbott
<i>Vividh Visaya</i> , Vols. 1 and n, published by Satkaryottejak Sabha, Dhulia	V.V.
<i>Sri Ramdasancht Kavita</i> , published by Satkaryottejak Sabha, Dhulia	Kavita,
<i>Sri Samarthatpratap</i> , published by Sattkaryottejak Sabha, Dhulia	Pratap
<i>Sri Sampradayachi Kagadpatre</i> , published by Sattkaryottejak Sabha, Dhulia	Patre
<i>Saffangad and Samartha Ramdas</i> , by G. C. Bhate ..	Bhate
<i>Sri Ramdas Svamiche Charitre</i> , by Hanumant Svami	Hanumant
<i>Santavijaya</i> , by Mahipati. (Life of Ramdas) ..	Mahipati
<i>Sri Samarthachi Don Juni Charitre</i> , published at Dhulia	Don Charitre
<i>Siva Chhatrapati</i> , by Surendranath Sen	Sen
<i>Suladh Dasdodh</i> , by S.K. Altekar.. .. .	Altekar
<i>The Hindu Religious Year</i> , by M. M. Underhill ..	Underhill

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTORY SKETCH

No one can read Marathi papers and magazines at the present time without frequently seeing the name *Ramdas*. His volumes of poetry are for sale in the Marathi book shops, and his picture is familiar to students of Marathi history. Who was this man who has recently come to be the centre of much heated discussion? Where did he live and what did he do? The student of Marathi poetry will answer that Ramdas was a poet-saint, who resided in the Satara district during the seventeenth century, A.D. This district is located in the Bombay Presidency and stretches north and south, just east of the Western Ghat mountains. Satara, a city of 20,000, is the capital of the district and is about 150 miles from Bombay, being about midway between Poona and Kolhapur. It was in the towns and villages of this district that Ramdas spent most of his life. It was here that he wrote his poetry and also here that he organized a large number of *maths* (monasteries) in which the *advaita* philosophy (monism) was taught and the worship of the god Rama was cultivated. The mere fact that about 9,000 copies of his *Ddsbodh* have been sold during the past twenty years is sufficient of itself to draw our attention to this remarkable man. The *Ddsbodh* is considered to be the greatest work of Ramdas, being a gold-mine of information, instruction and inspiration. Its twenty chapters expound the Vedanta philosophy, and give much practical information concerning the cosmogony of the universe, together with sincere advice about various ethical matters; and, especially in later sections, constructive counsel as to political activities.

It is not, however, the poetical genius of Ramdas which has called out so much controversy. It is because 'the Svami' (Ramdas) was the spiritual preceptor of Sivaji, the founder of the Maratha State, that his name is so frequently mentioned. The present interest of Maharashtra (the area in which the Marathi language is spoken) in political matters has naturally focussed the minds of the people upon those earlier days when the Maratha kingdom was an independent state and a formidable factor in the affairs of India. It is not surprising, perhaps, that opinion is divided to-day concerning the stirring events of those earlier years and that caste-feeling has entered into the controversy. The Brahmans, who became the decisive influence in the religious movement established by Ramdas, have a special reverence for the Svami and are inclined to emphasize his influence over Sivaji, in political as well as in spiritual matters. The non-Brahmans, on the other hand, resent any reflection upon the genius of their hero and assert that the Svami's influence was essentially negative in so far as political events were concerned. The controversy of *Ramdas vs. Sivaji*, or *Brahmans vs. ?wn-Brahmans* is very much in evidence at the time of writing, and will be rather fully discussed in the succeeding chapters.

Before entering into a detailed description of the Svami's environment, it may be well to give a brief outline of his life. Ramdas was born in A. D. 1608, at Jamb, a village in the Nizam's territory, near Jalna. Suryajpant and Ranubal, his father and mother, were very eager to have children—a wish that was ultimately realized in the births of two sons: Gangadhar, born in 1605, and Narayap (later called Ramdas), born three years later. It was a happy, devout family into which these boys were born, but unfortunately the father died when Narayan was only seven years of age. The latter was much averse to the thought of marriage, and it was only after much persuasion that his mother prevailed upon him to go through with the ceremony. When, during his marriage the word *Savadhan* was uttered, Narayan (as recorded below, p. 28) suddenly rushed from the scene, and finally made his way to Panchvati, on the banks

of the Godavari river, near Nasik. For about twelve years he lived at Takerji, a village two miles distant; spending his time in worship and study. Then, taking the name Ramdas (servant of Rama), Narayan set out on a pilgrimage to sacred places in other parts of India, the tradition asserting that he wandered thus, up and down the peninsula of India, for twelve years.

At the end of that time, he returned to Maharashtra and made Chaphal his headquarters. The latter village is not far from Karad. Here he built a temple of the god Rama, together with a math, where those who desired to become disciples might live and study. As his influence extended, disciples flocked to his side and other maths were established. In 1654 he retired, for a while, to the village of Sivthar, in order to write poetry. Many thrilling incidents are told of these busy years, and many miraculous events are ascribed to him. The fame of Ramdas finally reached the ears of Sivaji, the Maratha chieftain, and the latter became one of his disciples. In the later years of the Svami's life, Sivaji presented him with the hill fort at Paraji, near Satara. This was renamed Sajjangad (good fort), and it was here that Ramdas spent the last years of his life, secure in his friendship with Sivaji, and greatly beloved by all his disciples. He passed away in the year 1681, scarcely a year after the death of the great Maratha leader.

THE LAND

When Ramdas was born, the word Maharashtra referred to the western part of the Deccan plateau in Western India, an area which to-day includes the whole, or portions of, the following districts: Nasik, Ahmednagar, Poona, Aurangabad, Sholapur, Koihapur and Satara. In other words, it was the stretch of territory just east of the mountain range called the Western Ghats, and reaching inland. It is difficult to state just what the geographical limits were, estimates varying from 28,000 square miles to 100,000 square miles; but it included all the area where the Marathi language was spoken, with the exception of the strip of sea-

coast called the Konkan,¹ which was a land of rich tropical vegetation, rice fields and fruits. While the people there spoke Marathi, it did not come until later into the Maratha national movement, largely because of the geographical and cultural differences between it and the Deccan. The latter is a plateau, 1,500 feet or more above sea-level, with little vegetation, a poor soil and an inadequate rainfall. The climate is hot during the hot weather but cool during the winter season, with cool refreshing nights most of the year, so that in many respects it is superior to the climate of many other sections of India where the humidity is excessive or the temperature more constant. Ranges of hills break the monotony of the landscape and occasional oases of green fields, watered by wells, relieve the eye, which everywhere meets an expanse of withered brown fields or parched earth, most of the year round. Periodic famines keep the people poor, but with the increase of irrigation and industrial facilities, these no longer bring the disaster that they brought in the time of Ramdas. At that time there were more forests than there are to-day, and probably less cultivation of the fields. The chief crops were of grain—*jowari*, *bajri* and maize. The most notable physical features of the Deccan were its natural defences, the approach to the Ghats from the sea often being a solid wall of rock precipice, while the mountains on the Deccan side were generally rugged and easily defended. As a result, this area lent itself to the building of a series of hill forts, to which the Maratha warriors could retire when necessary, and which became, with very little additional fortification, almost impregnable; a fact which had much to do with the growth and establishment of the Maratha kingdom. The Deccan was protected on the north by the peaks and forests of the Vindhya and Satpura mountain ranges.

THE PEOPLE

The inhabitants of this area were generally called Marafhas, although that word has been somewhat loosely

used and has occasionally referred to the Maratha *caste* as distinguished from the Kunbi or other castes.¹ The people themselves were the product of the land. Because of the rugged nature of the country, the number of forests and the difficulties of travel, there were few large prosperous cities inhabited by wealthy, pleasure-loving people. The inhabitants were too segregated, and too busy struggling against the adverse forces of nature, to allow for any such development. They lived in small villages and all had to work hard to maintain themselves, from the village headmen down to the servants and the sweepers. The only wealthy class was composed of the bankers, who conducted most of the trade, financed the crops, and frequently owned a large part of the land.

As a result of this struggle for existence, certain qualities were developed in the Maratha people which later stood them in good stead. They became self-reliant, courageous, fearless, and democratic, both in their attitude toward women and toward each other. A Chinese traveller of the seventh century A. D. speaks of them as proud-spirited, warlike, kindly toward the helpless but merciless in revenge.² Living so close to the soil and leading such active lives, they necessarily developed hardihood and a certain shrewdness which, when not supported by moral scruples, often became a capacity for trickery. The women had an equal share in the field-work with the men, and they came to occupy an important place in the Maratha social group. Even the outcaste and village servants responded to the democratic tone of the community by developing self-respect, and the class of professional beggars was not much in evidence. While the physical features of Maharashtra developed the qualities referred to above, they also produced some unfortunate results. Because of the hard conditions in which the people found themselves, they had little opportunity for culture or refinement, and therefore they knew almost nothing of aesthetic development and luxuries. The Muhammadan leisured classes regarded them as crude, ill-mannered and lacking in the social

¹ Sarkar, p. 15. ² *Ibid.*, p. 9,

graces. Their best buildings were insignificant as compared with the marvellous gems of Muhammadan architecture; and it is said that the Marathas during all their Ascendancy gave no cultural gift to India in the form of a building or a picture. This was the price they had to pay because of their absorption in the more elementary and rigorous pursuits of life. Mr. Sarkar also points out that the Marathas were decidedly weak in their business capacity, and produced no great captain of industry.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

In all probability the word Maratha comes originally from the word Rastika, which was the name of a people living in the Dantfaka Forest (Deccan). References to these people are found in various inscriptions carved on rocks in North India which tell of the missionaries sent out by Asoka. These people began to call themselves Maharastikas or Maharashtraikas (great Rashtrikas) in token of their independence, or for a similar reason; and the territory eventually became known, therefore, as Maharashtra, inhabited by Marathas.¹ This is only one theory among several, and the whole problem is still under discussion. Marathi has been classified as an Aryan language; but it undoubtedly contains many non-Aryan elements, and Mr. V. L. Bhave holds that it is probably an admixture of the language of the Aryan invaders with that spoken by the aboriginal inhabitants of Maharashtra.² According to Professor Patwardhan, in his *Wilson Philological Lectures*, there was a language called Maharashtri at the time of Vararuchi, who wrote about 380 B.C. From that time till the tenth century A.D. there is a gap in our knowledge of the language, because practically no literary documents have come down to us.³ It is generally assumed, however, that modern Marathi is a development of the earlier Maharashtri, a fact made clear by a comparison of the various forms in the two languages.

¹ *H.M.R.*, p. 5. ² Bhave, p. 8.
³ W. B. Patwardhan, *Ferguson College Magazine*, Vol. VIII,
 No. 3, pp. 104-10,

Until the eighteenth century, Marathi literature was chiefly composed of religious poetry in various metres, and had very little prose worth mentioning, the earlier prose being found in letters and documents which contained many Persian words. Since many of the people could neither read nor write, the absence of dignified prose literature was perhaps not important, inasmuch as the people had a spoken literature of their own. Heroic ballads were sung by travelling minstrels, who gathered large crowds about them to listen to the hero-stories of bygone days; and even religious poetry was memorized, until the peasants could repeat the *abhangs* of their favourite poets by heart. In making Marathi the medium for giving their religious instruction, instead of the time-honoured Sanskrit, the Maratha saints and *bhaktas* were a great help in popularizing that language and lifting it to its present position of influence and dignity.

SOCIAL LIFE

The social life of the people was built around the village, where there was a clearly defined system of organization, each member of the community contributing his or her share to the well-being of the group. The joint-family system prevailed and the family bond was a strong one, the sons bringing their brides home to live under the paternal roof; and every member of the family was surrounded by social and religious obligations which followed him (or her) from birth to death. The women performed practically all the manual work in connection with the household and shared in the discipline and training of the children. Although most of the people lived in the villages, there were a few cities in Maharashtra; but it was in them that Moslem influence was predominant, and therefore there was very little in common between the inhabitants of these larger centres and the village folk. While there were many representatives from the three higher castes among the Hindus of Maharashtra (namely, the Brahmans or priestly class, the Kshatriyas or warrior class, and the Vaigyas or trading class), the chief group among the Marathas

was the agricultural class, which formed the backbone of Sivaji's army and which contained the two sub-castes of Kunbis and Marathas. With their background and training, these men made splendid soldiers, and the name 'Maratha*' became famous in Indian history. Although the outcastes in each community had no privileges to speak of, they seem to have been well treated, and proved to be helpful in the national movement.

POLITICAL LIFE

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, the political history of the Deccan was a struggle for mastery between the resident Muhammadan kingdoms and the Mogul emperors from the north. Ahmednagar and Bijapur fought for supremacy, and each in turn was called upon to repel the northern invader. For a period of three hundred years the Deccan Hindus were ruled by Moslems; and during the lifetime of Ramdas the Mogul power was centred at Ahmednagar, which had been captured by Aurangzeb. As a result of this foreign yoke, the Hindus had become demoralized and, to a certain extent, denationalized. Their idols were hated by the Moslems, who, when occasion arose, often despoiled their shrines. In the course of the frequent fighting, fields were laid waste, booty captured, and the whole countryside ravaged; while bribery and political corruption were practised on every hand. In short, the story of the Moslem supremacy in the Deccan makes unpleasant reading; and, although the period of the Maratha Kingdom and Confederacy was turbulent, it had many redeeming features, which resulted in its being considered the 'heroic age' of the Marathas.

In spite of the fact that the Moslems were in control of the Deccan for about three centuries, they never entirely subdued the country or changed the habits of the people. After being in power in North India for two centuries, they had invaded the Deccan about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and it took them thirty years or more to subdue the Hindus upon the plains. In the hilly sections their influence was slight, being easily thrown off by

Sivaji. Mr. Ranade, in his *Rise of the Maratha Power*, gives the steps by which Hindu influences reasserted themselves.¹ Inasmuch as the Muhammadans were unable to control adequately the inaccessible parts of the country, the villages were largely left to themselves, and the resulting quarrels or feuds were many and bitter. In his book, *The Administrative System of the Marafhas*, Dr. Surendranath Sen gives several instances of these desperate family quarrels. The genius of Sivaji early showed itself when he broke the power of these local village tyrants, and they became loyal adherents of his cause. On the whole, the political background for the life-work of Ramdas was stormy, and witnessed the emergence of a Hindu national movement, under the brilliant leadership of Sivaji.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

The most notable feature of religious conditions in the village was the domestic worship in each home, where a small shrine was set apart, and every day the head of the family performed the religious ceremonies. In her book, *The Rites of the Twice-Born*, Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson gives the details of this worship in the higher-caste homes. As a rule, each family worshipped a particular god, the image of which was put in the place of honour, among the other gods. At the hour of worship, scented oil is poured over the images, which are then bathed in a saucer, dried and besmeared with a sandalwood preparation; flowers are offered to them, lights are waved around them, and a small bell is rung; after which food is presented to them and the family sit down to their own meal. During this worship of about half an hour, prayers are uttered by the male head of the household, except during special ceremonies, when the services of the family priest may be required.² Once a year the members of the family offer prayers to the spirits of the departed ancestors (*Sraddha*); and at various times, during the day or the evening, pious Hindus visit the small village temples, salute the god and depart, perhaps

* Ranade, pp. 27-34. ² Edwards, p. 8.

giving a small offering to the Brahman attendant. In practically every Deccan village there is an image of Maruti, the monkey god, Rama's attendant, and also a temple of Siva, which is visited by devotees morning and evening. Mr. Justice Ranade states that, during the days of the Peshwas, about two hundred and fifty Deccan temples were receiving State help, namely, fifty-two temples of Maruti, eighteen temples of Rama, nine of Vishnu, thirty-four of Vithoba, twelve of Balaji (Krishna), forty of Mahadev, thirty-six of Ganapati, and thirty-two of the aboriginal gods.

In contrast to the more formal Hindu worship, there were many meetings in which the priest had no share; these were the musical services, called *bhajan*, *katha* or *kirtan*.¹ A *bhajan* is a choral service in which all those who are present have a share. A *kirtan* is a service in which a leading singer expounds a theme and invites a group of attendants or the audience to join in a refrain; a *katha* seeks to arouse patriotic or religious fervour by the musical narration of the exploits of heroes and gods. The chief singer, or *kirtankar*, may do this work as a voluntary religious duty or as a recreation, if he is a layman, or it may be his sole occupation. Such a man travels from village to village, and through his songs he teaches devotion to a Hindu god, generally incarnations of Vishnu, like Krishna or Rama, although there are some singers who belong to various sects of the god Siva. A less attractive side of the religious life in the village was the prevalence of superstitious practices, and this is still true. Outside many Deccan villages there is a ring of white stones, representing Veta], the prince of demons.² During epidemics an image of the cholera or plague spirit is often set up outside the village, in the hope that it will not enter but will pass by. Belief in omens was common to all classes; and sorcerers, in the form of wandering ascetics, went about frightening people and spreading the doctrine of evil spirits. During times of famine large sums of money were spent in employing Brahmans to pour water on the gods for long periods

¹ Edwards, p. 10. ² *HM.P.*, Vol. I, p. II

at a time; and in many other ways penances were resorted to in order to appease the angry spirits.¹

What was the place of the Brahmans in the religious scheme of things? Contemporary records seem to show that their spiritual influence had waned before the time of Sivaji. This may be explained by the fact that the Brahmans of Western India took an active part in the administrative work of the country, and therefore probably neglected the spiritual duties which were their normal inheritance. This situation was unique and unparalleled elsewhere, since they not only acted as officers in the Maratha army, but also filled many of the posts in the Government service; and they seem to have given satisfaction in these tasks, but they became very superior and looked down upon Brahmans from other parts of the country. In one part of the *Dasbodh* Ramdas refers to the Brahmans thus: 'The Brahmans, distracted in mind and lacking in virtue, have lost their respectability and have become disciples of other disciples.'² In another place he says: 'Friends, you have been reduced to such a condition that you needs must wander about from day to day begging for food, which does not prove sufficient. What is the reason for this, and why are you blaming each other? What is gone is gone; from now on you should seek wisdom/³ Ramdas evidently was not sympathetic with their situation, and felt that the Brahmans should have retained their religious leadership instead of becoming worldly. In the general religious confusion, and because of the Moslem depredations, it is possible that many Brahmans became discouraged and gave up trying to assert their religious leadership. The Svami (Ramdas) describes that era thus: 'Several idols have been forcibly broken/⁴ and 'many images have been polluted, some being thrown into the water and some trodden underfoot. All the sacred places have been polluted by the wicked.'⁵

* Everywhere differences of opinion are evident and every-

¹ *Miscellaneous Writings*^ Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade, p. 374.

^a *Dasbodh*, ch. xiv, sec. 7, v. 31. * *Ibid.*, ch. vi, sec. 3, v. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. xiv, sec. 8, v. 1. • /6itf.,cb. vi, sec. 6, v. 35*

one is acting as he likes, without thinking of the welfare of others/* If we are to judge from the picture given by Ramdas, we must conclude that while some Brahmans had climbed to a prosperous estate in the secular world, others were living in poverty and were more or less unpopular; which was due, according to the Svami, to their own past failings.

There is, however, a brighter side to the picture, and this is connected with the development of the *Bhakti* movement. In his book on *Indian Theism*, Dr. Macnicol has shown that there were theistic tendencies as far back as the *Ijig Veda*, in spite of Vedic polytheism. 'Henotheism' was the tendency to concentrate their worship upon one God at a time, as Max Mfiller has pointed out. But in the philosophical reaction against Brahmanic sacerdotalism, the theistic note was gradually submerged by pantheism, which lifted religion to a reflective and intellectual sphere. Notwithstanding the popularity of the *Uflaniskads*, however, the spiritual hunger of the common people remained unsatisfied, and a more emotional expression of religion continued to manifest itself among them, chiefly in the form of poetry and legend. Even at this early date the name of Vishnu had become associated with theistic devotion, as opposed to pantheistic tendencies. Dr. Macnicol refers to an ancient legend found in the *Brahmanas* which tells how, in the performance of a *sattra* or great sacrifice, Vishnu obtains pre-eminence among all the gods. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar emphasizes the important place that Vishnu occupied in the ritual of domestic life, such as the marriage ceremonial, and says that possibly the legend of his 'three mighty steps' furnished the mysterious background which made it possible for him to be elevated to the supreme place he later came to occupy. From the earliest Vedic times Varuna also was connected with the deliverance of mankind from distress; and Varuna's power in this respect was eventually transferred to Vishiiu, who had evidently manifested his willingness to help men in their extremity.

Dr. Farquhar says that there were three distinct stages

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. xi, sec. 2, v. 25.

in the theistic movement which had Vishnu for its centre. The first stage was represented by the original heroic poems called the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, which narrated the historical legends without any attempt at transformation or enlargement. In this stage, for example, there was no attempt to gloss over the faults of the heroes. The second stage was represented by new additions to the great epics, in which the fame of the heroes was enhanced and the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, were raised to the chief place and considered to be equal. The two heroes, K^lish^a and Rama, were now represented as partial incarnations of Vishnu, and it is therefore clear that at this time there was an organized sect which exalted Vishnu to a place of special honour and claimed for itself the heroes of both the popular poems. Thirdly, the *Bhagavadgita* carries the process a step further when it identifies Vishnu not merely with Krishna, the hero of the epic, but also with the great Brahman-Atman of the *Upanishads*; and therefore he becomes the Absolute, the One without a second, the Source of all things and all beings. Whereas the *Upanishads* had taught that release was possible only to the three higher castes, the *Gita* now taught that release was possible to all men and women of the four Hindu castes, laymen as well as professional ascetics. Vaishnavas had also come to revere the *Bhagavat-Sastra*, which is a group of works extolling Vishnu as Bhagavan (blessed); and those who particularly stressed this doctrine were called Bhagavatas, the Maratha Vaishnavas generally belonging to this group. The doctrine of *avatars*—which means a descent; i.e., the appearance of a god on earth, and adding the idea that these appearances were for the sake of helping men—was further developed, until Vishnu's incarnations were fixed at ten, although an extreme estimate mentions as many as twenty-eight.

In many respects, Vaishnavism, whether connected with the worship of Rama or of K^lish^a, was a reform movement, and attempted to soften or counteract the extreme rigidity of Vedantic pantheism. It taught the reality of both God and man (dvaita) as opposed to monism

(advaita), which was so successfully expounded by the great Sankara and upheld by the Vedanta school of philosophy. It generally used the vernaculars, rather than Sanskrit, for giving religious instruction. As a matter of fact, Vaishnavism stopped short of breaking with either caste or Brahmanism, and, with their usual capacity for adjustment, the Brahmans quietly took possession of Vaishnavite shrines and saw to it that peace was preserved. Although the *Gita* taught three different ways of achieving release, the doctrine therein which is most emphasized to-day is that of *bhakti* or devotion, salvation being attained by loving devotion to a personal god; and this doctrine has always been one of the outstanding characteristics of Vaishnavism. It was chiefly taught by wandering singers or religious teachers, who travelled over India and sang to the people in the vernaculars. This resulted in the development of a number of sects in various parts of the land, particularly during the years A.D. 900 to 1350, and the bhakti doctrine developed along a number of different lines. After the sixteenth century, the sects began to diminish in number and in influence, many of the worshippers drifting back into polytheism.¹

About A.D. 1400 a worshipper of Rama, named Ramananda, became famous in North India. He may have belonged to a sect which produced the *Adhyatma Ramayana* (spiritual Ramayana). He taught that all the servants of God are brothers, and that faith in God, not caste or position, is the thing that matters. Tulsi Das (1532-1623) popularized the worship of Rama in the north by his translation of the *Ramayana* into Hindi (although it is not strictly a translation), and he helped to identify Rama worship with a noble morality. The Krishna cult was preached by Vallabha and Chaitanya (1486-1534), the latter becoming the founder of a great movement in Bengal, where he was shocked by the evil practices, sacrifices and superstitions of Kali worship.³ The Chaitanya movement unfortunately was emotional almost to the point

* O.R.L.I., pp. 220,292. * O.R.L.J., p. 323. ^a Edwards, p. 37.

of hysteria, and it was concerned all too much with the love affairs of the pastoral Krishna, resulting in an unwholesome moral atmosphere. The sect of the Vallabhas descended to unrestrained sensuality.¹

The bhakti of the Maratha area was, on the other hand, much more wholesome and restrained, but none the less genuine. Dnyanesvar may be called the father of this movement. He is famous for his commentary on the *Bhagavadgita*, called the *Dnydneivart*. He lived at the end of the thirteenth century, and while he taught pantheism (advaita doctrines) and stressed *yoga* ideas, he also showed that he was influenced by the Bhagavatas and wrote like an enthusiastic bhakta.² The next important Maratha bhakta was Namdev, who probably lived at the end of the fourteenth century.³ He is famous because of his denunciation of idolatry, although he continued to use idols; and it is said that every member of his family could compose poetry. He was a tailor by birth and occupation, but spent most of his life in propagating bhakti, not only in Maharashtra but also in the Punjab, where there is a shrine dedicated to his memory.⁴ Like the other Maratha bhaktas, he was a devotee of Vithal, the Pajdharpur god.

Eknath (died 1608) was a Brahman of Paithan who at times broke caste rules and suffered persecution for his zeal. On a number of occasions he befriended outcastes (Mahars) and was a man of very saintly character. His philosophy was monistic, resembling that of Dnyanesvar or of Mukundaraj. Tukaram (1608-49) was a contemporary of Ramdas and was a shopkeeper before he heard the call of Vithoba and gave himself to the life of a poet. His poetry, which is of a deeply devotional nature, reflecting his own religious moods, has gripped the hearts of the simple Deccan villagers. His great theme was loving devotion for Vithoba of Pandharpur, and he has given to us deeply stirring abhaijgs telling of his longing for God, his sense of need, his humility and his trust. He did not delve much into Hindu philosophy,

¹ *E.R.E.*, Vol. IX, p. 116.

⁸ *VS.M.R.S.*, p. 92.

* *O.R.L.L.*, p. 235.

* *O.R.L.L.*, p. 299.

but there are a few strands of monistic thought in his poetry, although most of the time he was a consistent bhakta. He helped to popularize the Paithan worship; and as the pilgrims march to that sacred shrine, they still chant the names of two of their most revered teachers: * Dnyanoba, Tukoba ; Dnyanoba, Tukoba!'¹

THE POETS AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Until the publication of *The Rise of the Maratha Power*, by Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade, it was not clear just what share the Maratha poets had in the upbuilding of the Maratha nation. Ramdas has always been regarded as the one poet who had political interests and who contributed materially to the development of the national spirit; but the other poets were regarded as teachers of religion only, and it was not thought that they had exerted any particular influence in the national movement. Mr. Justice Ranade has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of many students, that the bhakti poets of Maharashtra had a considerable share in the work of preparing the way for Sivaji. In his book, *The Marathas and the English*, Mr. N. C. Kelkar, the Editor of the *Kesari*, one of the few scholars who has not accepted this conclusion, asserts that the teaching of the bhakti poets was negative, dealing only with renunciation. But Principal Bhate, of Willingdon College, Mr. C. A. Kincaid, Rev. J. F. Edwards, Prof. J. Sarkar and others have accepted the conclusions set forth by Mr. Justice Ranade.

In the narrow sense it is probable that the bhakti poets taught many religious themes that had little to do with the political regeneration of the country; themes which seemed to oppose such a regeneration, like that of renunciation and turning away from the things of this world. Indirectly, however, the bhakti poets stirred the Hindus with their poetic songs and began a religious and social upheaval which had far-reaching consequences. In the first place, these poets helped to purify the Hinduism

¹ Edwards, p. 38.

jo of that day and stressed bhakti as the chief means of salvation. Secondly, it was against the rigid maintenance of caste; including, as it did, people from all classes, some of the leaders being Brahmans, tailors, carpenters, potters, shopkeepers, barbers and Mahars. It was a Hindu movement in a country dominated by Muhammadans, who had destroyed many Hindu shrines and brought about a condition of religious indifference, resulting finally in a feeling of hopelessness. It was essentially a non-Brahman movement in an area where the Brahmans had control of the temple-worship, in addition to the many secular tasks which they had taken up. It was a popular movement as opposed to the groups of privilege, and in some particulars has been compared with the Protestant Reformation of Western Europe.¹ Forgetting rigid caste distinctions, united in a passionate loyalty to God, whether Vithoba or Rama, and increasingly conscious of their Hindu nationality as opposed to the Moslem invaders, the common people of Maharashtra gradually acquired a group-consciousness and a racial pride which made them a ready instrument for Sivaji's plans. The seed had been sown; and under his able leadership the shackles of Muhammadan control were broken. It was in such a background and under such stirring conditions that Ramdas lived and preached, not merely as an onlooker, but as one who had a definite share in the work of those busy years, finally becoming the spiritual guide of the great political leader.

¹ *Tukaram, the Poet and Saint*, by Mr. G. R. Navalkar.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF RAMDAS

INTRODUCTION

IT is not possible to write a strictly historical life of Ramdas, because the absence of references to him in the historical writings of his period makes it difficult for us to judge accurately about many details of his life. If by history we mean facts supported by neutral observers or eye-witnesses, then, in the case of Ramdas, we are often left in the dark, and indeed Dr. J. E. Abbott is right in saying that we must treat the narratives of many of India's poet-saints as traditional rather than as historical.¹ For example, among the numerous *bakhars* (biographies in verse) of this great Svami, there is none that carefully follows a chronology or arranges the events of his life in orderly sequence; and while it is barely possible that further documents will be found to throw more light upon this point, this is rather doubtful. On the other hand, we are fortunate in having a wealth of material upon which to draw and are therefore able to give a more complete picture of Ramdas than can be given of many other poet-saints of Western India. There are a number of devoted scholars who have made Ramdas their life study, the most notable being Mr. Sankar Sri Krishna Dev, of Dhulia. He was instrumental in establishing an historical society to produce literature and carry on research in the subject of Ramdas and his movement. Established in 1893, and supported by subscribers and members, it has published a great many manuscripts, and it also is publishing a bi-monthly maga-

¹ Abbott, p. 255.

.zine, called *Ramdas and Ramdas*. In the office of Mr. Dev there are hundreds of manuscripts which have not yet been published, but which are being slowly catalogued and which will, no doubt, be given to the world as time goes on.

HISTORICAL DATES

There are a few dates in the life of Ramdas which are verified by original letters or documents, and which, therefore, can be considered authentic. For example, there is a letter of Divakar Gosavi, addressed to Bahiram Bhat, stating that from A.D. 1654 Ramdas planned to live in Sivthar for ten years in order to write poetry.¹ There is a letter, dated February 13, 1659, from Bhaskar Gosavi to Divakar Gosavi relating an interview with Sivaji. In answering a question of the latter regarding Ramdas, Bhaskar informed him that his master lived at ChaphaJ (near Satara) where he had founded a hermitage and established a temple of the god Rama. ChaphaJ evidently was his official residence, even though he had withdrawn to Sivthar for literary activities. A letter of Keshav Gosavi to Divakar Gosavi, dated April 4, 1672, says that Sivaji was about to visit 'Samartha' (Ramdas) at Singanvadi. Portions of some of these letters have been translated by Mr. Takakhav in the *Life of Sivaji Maharaja* page 536 and following. A letter from Sivaji to Dattajipant, dated 1672, says that Ramdas is living at ChaphaJ. Another letter, written by Ramdas himself to Raghunath Bhat, shows that he was living at Helvak in 1674. A letter, dated 1674, from Vithal Gosavi to Divakar, refers to the above letter as being actually written by Ramdas, thus verifying the evidence in the letter itself, and stating that Ramdas lived at Helvak for four months and then went to ChaphaJ. In a letter to Jijoji Katkar, dated 1676, Sivaji says that Ramdas of Sivthar is about to visit the Sajjangafal fort. There are many letters extant giving information about money grants given by Sivaji to the religious activities of Ramdas and his followers. One such letter, dated September

¹ Keluskar, p. 542.

3,1677, written by Dattaji TrimaJ, gives a list of *inam*, lands (grants) conferred upon the Saint for the benefit of the temple and the worship, and there are other letters telling of land grants. Thus, by means of these original records, we are able to follow the movements of the Svami to a limited extent, to know the places he visited, and to catch a glimpse of him, first here, then there.

SOURCES FOR THE LIFE OF RAMDAS

Early Sources

1. For the sake of convenience, we will roughly grade the sources for his life into two groups, the early and the later. Biographies of the Svami are still being written, and one must discriminate carefully between those which are primary sources and those which are secondary or merely copies of earlier writings. First, there are numerous references in his poetry which have biographical value, such as his references to the Muhammadans, the Brahmans, or to the political conditions of the country. In one of his poems, which was found in the Takerli math (monastery), near Nasik, he tells of the evil conditions prevalent in the land and of his desire to improve them. He frequently refers to geographical places in his poetry, and there is also a great deal of subjective matter, showing his moods, his yearnings and his hopes. In his preface to the published volume of the *Dasbodh*, Mr. S. S. Dev has carefully analysed the teachings of the Svami and has drawn certain biographical conclusions from them.¹

2. Second, among the early sources, we would mention the letters which have come down to us, many of which have been published at Dhulia, one volume containing 420 letters and documents (*Srtsampraddyct Kdgadpatre*). The first fifty letters are very important, many of them being from one disciple to another, or letters that passed between disciples and government officials. The first letter in the volume was written by Ramdas to Sivaji.

¹ Preface to the *Dasbodh*, published at Dhulia, edited by Mr. Dev.

These letters give valuable information about the close relationship existing between Sivaji's government and the Ramdasi movement, and contain illuminating references both to individuals and to events, thus affording an intimate picture of the Svami's life,

3. Mr. Visvanath KaSinath Rajwade has given his life to the acquisition and study of old Marathi manuscripts. Some years ago, among the papers of Pratap Sing Maharaj, he found two or three papers regarding Ramdas, one of which was a poem in *ovi* metre by his disciple, Bhimasvami Sahapurkar, telling of the Svami's death. The records claim that Bhimasvami arrived from the Tanjore math three days after Ramdas died; and if, therefore, this account is genuine, as seems likely, it is of great importance. Mr. Rajwade has a photographic copy of the manuscript.¹

4. At Chaphal, among the papers of Bapurao Upadye, Mr. Rajwade discovered a diary, which contains notes about the Svami's life and says that he died on the ninth of the dark half of Magna, saka 1603 (A.D. 1681), four days after which these notes were written. The diary says that Antaji Gopal was instructed by Divakar to write a brief account of Ramdas, four days after his death, and that this was done with the approval of the other disciples, adding that the rough notes of Antaji were copied four days later by Gopal Ambaji.² This document passed from the Sahapurkars into the possession of the Upadhyes of Chaphal and is now in the possession of Mr. Rajwade. It is written in *Balbodh* (large Marathi script) upon both sides of two sheets of paper. Some critics make light of it, on the ground that it contains legendary material; and they question its genuineness.

5. A brief biography of the Svami, called *Bhaktamanjall*, was written by Bhimasvami of Sahapurkar, and this is the only account which we possess written by an immediate disciple. Only half of the original bakhar is available to-day. Sahapur, the home of Bhimaji, is a village two miles from Masur. According to the Svami's instructions,

¹ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 20. » *Ibid.*, Vol. I, sec. 21.

Bhimaji went to Tanjore in 1675 and there established a math. The importance of this biography may be understood when we realize that most of the others were written a hundred years or more after the Svami's death. In the introduction to *Don Charitre* (published at Dhulia), Mr. S. S. Dev enumerates twenty-five points which are mentioned in this poetical biography, but which are not found in the prose biography written by Hanumant Svami; and Mr. Dev further says that, since this biography differs from that of Hanumant in regard to thirty or forty details, this must be a more reliable source.

6. Dinkar Svami was one of the original disciples, who had a math at Tisgaon, near Ahmednagar; and in Karegaon, in the Ahmednagar district, a manuscript copy of his poetry was found some years ago. This poetry contains general religious teaching and in the published volume, *Svdnubhav Dinkar*, chapter xvi, section 4, there is an account of the appearance of Rama before Ramdas, and of his own (Dinkar's) initiation.

7. Another important document in this early group is the *Samarthapraiap*, a biography of Ramdas, written by Giridhar, who died in 1728. He was a disciple of Bahyabai, who was a disciple of Venabai, one of the Svami's disciples; and he is said to have seen Ramdas when he was young. He probably wrote the biography about fifty years after the Svami's death. In his preface to the published edition of this work, Mr. Dev calls attention to the tradition that Giridhar spent seven years in the company of Ramdas.¹ Mr. Dev values the work highly, and Mr. V. L. Bhave quotes it freely in his life of the Svami, particularly those portions which describe the appearance and the habits of the poet.² As has already been stated, there are very few references to Ramdas in contemporary historical works, and the few that exist are not important in the historical sense.

¹ *Pratdp*, Introduction, p. 14.

² Bhave, ch. on Ramdas, pp. 213-14

Later Sources

1. Coming now to the later sources, there is, first of all, a poetical biography by Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, who came from Sirgaon, a village four miles from Chaphal. Ramdas often visited that village, and it was there that Kalyai? once lived with his mother and his brother, Dattatraya. Among a number of manuscripts which Mr. Dev found in the math there was this life by Bhimasvaml (*Bkaktallamrit*) written about 1797, and it has since been published. The family succession was as follows: Dattatraya, Raghusvami, Yesvant and Bhimasvaml. At first it was Bhimasvami's intention to write only about Ramdas, but later he extended the scope of the work to include the historical accounts of thirty-six other saints and heroes, including Krishna. Making practically no references to earlier sources, Bhimasvaml relied largely upon oral traditions in composing this work and included within it a good deal of legendary material.

2. Hanumant Svami was the great-great-grandson of Sresht, the brother of Ramdas, and wrote a prose biography of the Svami. It is the work upon which Grant Duff, and more recently, Mr. Kincaid and Mr. Parasnīs have depended.¹ Mr. Dev says that Hanumant wrote a small bakhar about 1793, and about 1817 he requested Malhar Ramrav and Ranga Lakshman to enlarge it, which was done.² It is possible that Hanumant reviewed the manuscript before he died. The bakhar has passed through many editions, and in the Satkaryottejak Sabha at Dhulia there are eight hand-written copies, which were found in such places as the Pimpajgaon math, Ambad, Takerli, Chaphal and Pomgaon. Without doubt, the work contains a good deal of fanciful material; and therefore Mr. Bhate and Mr. Keluskar discount it as a reliable source, although the former readily admits that it has a certain amount of reliable information.⁸ The historical student necessarily must distinguish between the simple traditions and the later

H.M.P., Vol. I, p, 182. ² *V.V.*, Vol. I, sec. 20.
³ Keluskar, p. 534.

embellishments which are more or less mixed up together* In my judgment, Hanumant's bakhar is the most serious attempt to give a *complete* picture of the Svami, the other biographies being much more fragmentary. In spite of the traditional dates and the numerous miracles, it has gathered together most of the known facts, and many of its conclusions are supported by the diary, which is supposed to have been written a few days after the death of Ramdas. It seems plausible to assume, therefore, that Hanumant had access to the diary when writing his biography. In so far as the miraculous is concerned, practically all of the sources contain a large element of it; and this is easily understandable, when we realize that even to-day devout Hindus have no difficulty in believing in miraculous events. Discounting the legendary elements, the fact remains that for a large number of details we are dependent upon the biography by Hanumant, supplemented by the poetical account of Giridhar.

3. Another later source is the *Ddsa Vtfratitdhama*> by Atmaram of Yekhehal, of the Pomgaon math. Kalyan is generally considered to have been the Svami's most intimate disciple, and he established a famous math at £)omgaon, his successors being Sivram of Apchand, Ramchandra of Apchand, and Atmaram of Yekhehal. It was Kalyan's custom to take his disciples apart and tell them the story of the Svami's life,—a story that he could interpret better than most of the other disciples. Therefore this large work of four published volumes has a flavour that is lacking in some of the other accounts, because it gives us the story of Ramdas as remembered by his leading disciple, although it does not bring out anything particularly new.

4. Mahlpati wrote two biographical accounts of Ramdas, the larger one being known as the *Santavijaya*. It is a poetical account, written about 1774, and contains nothing new. The shorter biography by Mahlpati, *Bhaktavijaya*, written about 1762, also adds nothing to the general fund of information. Although Mahlpati records many legendary incidents, Mr. Edwards thinks that he does so without making undue exaggerations himself, and that he faithfully passes

on what he knows.¹ As a picture of Ramdas, Mahipati's account is important and gives us the atmosphere in which he lived.

5. A *Life of Ramdas* was written early in the nineteenth century by Uddhav Suta, and published in Bombay about forty years ago. It was written in ovi metre and is now out of print.

6. There is an unpublished biography by Rajaratn Prasadi of Charegaon, who lived about the time of Moropant of Baramati. It is called *Bhaktamanjalimala*, and has twenty-seven chapters devoted to Ramdas.

7. Atmaram Buva wrote a biography about 1867 and it was published in Bombay in 1891; but, like the other recent biographies, it contains no new material.

8. There are a number of short prose biographies which have been produced in recent years. Mr. V. L. Bhave has written an account in his *Maharashtra Sarasvat*, as also Mr. L. R. Pangarkar, in the preface of his edition to the *Dasbodh** Mr. M. A. Sahasrabudhe tells about Ramdas in his *Life of Sivaji*. Mr. G. C. Bhate published an important volume in 1918, entitled *Sajjangad and Samartha Ramdas*. Mr. S. K. Altekar has written a short account in his preface to the *Sulabh Dasbodh*. There have been a great many magazine articles published the past few years touching upon various phases of the Svami's life, but practically all in Marathi, as very little has been written upon this subject in English. There is a chapter in the *History of the Maratha People*, by Kincaid and Parasnis, Volume I, concerning Tukaram and Ramdas. In his *Life of Sivaji Maharaja* translated by Mr. Takakhav, Mr. Keluskar has many references to the Svami.

In one of his essays, Mr. S. S. Dev raises the question as to when the life of Ramdas ought to be written.² He has been successful in collecting hundreds of manuscripts bearing upon the subject, most of them being filed away in his office at Dhulia; and they are being gradually published by the Society in which Mr. Dev is the leading spirit. While it would seem that we have plenty of

* Bdwards, p. 70. 2 VV., Vol. I, sec. 27.

material out of which to construct a life of Ramdas, the fact remains that there are periods in the poet's life about which we know almost nothing. His years of study and his period of wandering are a closed book. Mr. Dev is hopeful that, after years of search, papers will be discovered to help to clear up some of these doubtful points and throw light upon these unknown periods of his life. He gives a list of definite places where manuscripts might be found, and suggests a search of all important maths and of the houses belonging to descendants of the early disciples. Since the biographical works say so little about the Svami's earlier years, it is my personal opinion that Ramdas told his disciples very little about them, perhaps feeling that they had no especial significance for them. Whether some of his experiences were painful and purposely passed over in silence, or whether a peculiar sacredness attached to them, or for any other reason, it is clear that the biographers and early disciples knew little of the Svami's youth and training. I am inclined to believe, therefore, that any further documents which may be found will add little to our present knowledge. One other difficulty about the Svami's life, which the historian meets, is the complete lack of any chronological arrangement in describing his activities, so that any attempt to arrange a sequence necessarily must rest largely upon guess-work. Some inferences may safely be drawn; but with our present knowledge, it is practically impossible to fix upon a definite chronology that carries us from year to year.

THE BIRTH AND BOYHOOD OF RAMDAS

In the present State of Hyderabad, eleven miles from the small railway station of Patur, is the village of Jamb. Patur is a few miles beyond Jalna on the railway line to Hyderabad City. Jamb is an attractive village, situated in the midst of fertile fields, and it was here that Ramdas was born in the year 1608. Hanumant traces his ancestry back to Kfishflaji Thosar, a Brahman, who lived in Bedar about A. D. 910. His eldest son was Ramajipant and the latter's

twenty-second descendant was Suryajipant, born 1568, who was the father of Ramdas. Records agree upon two points; namely, that the father worshipped the sun, and that he grieved because he had no children; and traditions tell of the many austerities performed by him and his wife, Ranubai, in order to have children. Finally Ranubai became pregnant, and, as is so often the case in the biographies of great men, she is said to have had longings and visions before Ramdas was born. Giridhar tells how she withdrew from the crowds, in order to spend quiet hours communing with the hills; also describing her preference for monkeys, thus anticipating the belief that her son was an incarnation of Maruti. Gangadhar, the elder brother, was born in the year 1605; Narayan, later called Ramdas, being born on the ninth day of the bright half of Chaitre, saka 1530 (1608),

As far as we know, it was a happy, devoted family into which Narayan was born, and he had a normal boyhood like any other Hindu lad of his day. The 'thread ceremonies' took place when each boy was five years old. The happy family circle was broken when Narayani was seven years of age, by the death of his father. Yet, like other boys, he seems to have adjusted himself to this fact very quickly and continued to perform his boyish pranks, at one time jumping from a tree into a pool of water where he struck his forehead, and the swelling from this accident remained throughout his life. Gangadhar, later called Sreshth, or Rami Ramdas, was married at the age of seven to a girl called Parvatibai, a daughter of Ambadkar Desmukh. Some of the biographers, such as Giridhar and Mahipati, describe Narayan as a very precocious lad, even able to perform miracles. The former says that the boy quickly learned his alphabet and spent only eleven days in learning to keep accounts. It is probable that he received the schooling that was customary for boys in those days, and showed aptitude in his studies. All the writers agree that he was a boy of keen religious interest, sometimes going away from the others and sitting in solitude; and when his brother was given a *mantra*, Narayan asked to be likewise favoured, but was refused, presumably be-

cause of his youth. A poem found in the Pomgaon math,, written probably by Jagganath Maharaj, disciple of Kalyan, records Narayar/s disappointment when refused the mantra, and asserts that this was the reason for his leaving home at the age of twelve years.¹ Mr. V. L. Bhave follows this interpretation in his account, but most of the other writers narrate the marriage-ceremony as the occasion for his running away. It may be that both reasons figured in his desire to leave home; yet, since the wedding story is given in some of the earliest sources, including the Diary and Giridhar, I see no reason for dismissing it as unauthentic. Another boyhood incident, narrated by Hanumant, is that in which Narayan was taken to visit Eknath; which visit, however, is most improbable, since Eknath is said to have died the same year that Ramdas was born.²

THE WEDDING

As Narayan grew older, his interest in religious matters increased to such an extent that he began to show an aversion to the idea of marriage; and it was only after his mother pleaded with him that he consented to go through the marriage ceremony. His bride-to-be was the daughter of Bhanjipant Bodalapurkar, who lived two miles away in the village of Asahgaon, and the wedding occurred there in the house of the Desmukh family. This house, which is no longer standing, was about sixty feet square and had a well of water within its enclosure. Near the wall on the south side was a *liitga* image, and it was from this part of the house that Narayari left, when he ran away so suddenly. The mother, feeling sure that the boy was reconciled to the idea, had completed all the arrangements; the guests were all present, and the music was going on. The cloth was held between the bride and the groom while the Brahmans sang hymns. The ceremony went on and all was well until the word * Savadhan!' (be attentive) was uttered, when Narayan evidently became terrified; for he broke away from the group and ran away, and was not seen again by his

¹ V.V, Vol. I, sec. 47. ² O.R.L.I., p. 250.

another or brother until many years afterward. It is said that he wore only two garments, an upper and a lower; although this seems unusual, because as a rule the bride and groom are elaborately dressed at a Hindu wedding. What happened during the next few days is uncertain, one account saying that he was given food and clothing by a Brahman whom he met, and another record asserting that he lived for three days in a banyan tree. At any rate, the boy of twelve successfully made the long journey to Panchvati, where there was a group of famous temples, situated on the banks of the Godavari river, near Nasik, and the journey is said to have taken eleven days. It is quite possible that he fell in with a group of pilgrims or wandering *sadhns* and joined company with them until they reached Panchvati, where he remained.

THE YEARS AT PANCHVATI

This is a period about which we know little or nothing, because there are no records to throw light upon it. At this holy centre there is a famous temple of Rama, situated in an immense courtyard, with a Maruti temple at the entrance, and a raised platform encircling it, to be used as a resthouse by tired travellers. Within the temple proper are the idols of Lakshman, Rama and Sita—Rama wearing a gold crown, the other two idols wearing silver crowns, and all the idols clothed in silken garments. In the outside courtyard, there are two Ganapati idols, a small Maruti idol and a linga. It is probable that Narayan spent some time at this temple before he went to a place called Takerli, on the banks of the Godavari, two miles away. Near the river is a hill, and upon this hill there is a two-storied math to-day, where the disciple Uddhav lived. Tradition says that Narayaⁿ lived for twelve years in this beautiful environment, deep in the study of the scriptures, performing penances, meditating and preparing for his life-work. Undoubtedly, he made frequent trips to the Rama temple at Panchvati; but it was the quiet, peaceful solitude of Taker}! which was more suited to his taste and needs.

SOURCE OF THE MOVEMENT

It is interesting to conjecture just how and under what circumstances the young student became a devotee of Rama; because his father was a worshipper of the sun, and the boy broke completely from the family tradition. Who planned his studies, and who gave him his *mantra*? How was it that he came to stress so emphatically the *advaita* path, on the one hand, and the worship of Sri Rama, on the other? Although the tradition says that Sri Rama appeared to him personally, there must have been other influences shaping his thought and preparing him to receive the *mantra* which became a characteristic of the Ramdasi movement. In giving such a decided emphasis to the Vedanta philosophy, and in making Sri Rama the object of worship, Ramdas was different from Tukaram and certain other contemporary poets of Maharashtra, most of whom were devotees of Vithoba, the Vaishnavite god at Pandharpur. While these other religious poets doubtless accepted the *advaita* teaching, it seems that they did not make it a major part of their message.

The blending of the Vedanta philosophy with the worship of Rama was not new at the time of Ramdas. There had been other Ramaites who also followed the *advaita* path. Since Sankaracharya had succeeded in drawing a number of sects into allegiance to himself and to the monastery at Srihgeri in Mysore, it is quite possible that Rama worshippers were among this number. Valmiki's *Ramdyana*, with its three stages of development—beginning as an heroic poem, then showing the origin of a Ramaite sect, and finally making Rama the supreme god—had practically nothing to say of the Vedanta philosophy. If certain worshippers of Rama did accept the *advaita* path, they would naturally feel the need of a sacred writing or an *Upaniskad* to magnify their deity. At an uncertain date, two such *Upanishads* appeared, namely, the *Rdma-purvatpanlya Upaniskad* and the *Rama-uttara-tapaniya Upaniskad*.¹ These were probably written before the seventh century A.D. It is noteworthy that Sankarananda, a

¹ *O.R.L.I.*, pp. 189-90.

famous Sringeri *sannyasi* of the fourteenth century, wrote the commentaries on the Rama *Upanishads*, thus showing that at least one group of Ramaites had close connection with Sringeri. Furthermore, a well-known work of unknown date, called the *Adhyatma Rdmdyana* was prepared, giving the Rama story from the standpoint of the advaita philosophy, and in it a number of incidents were altered in accordance with the ideas of the time.¹ The question naturally arises, therefore, whether Ramdas had access to any of the above works. If so, it is easy to explain how his message came to be what it was.

There are certain facts which are definitely known or can be safely inferred. Ramdas knew Sanskrit and used Sanskrit words in his poetry. There are references in his writings to the *Dnydne\$vari* and he was, no doubt, familiar with the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, Valmiki's *Ramayana*, and possibly the *Bhagavata Purana*, together with Eknath's commentary on the Eleventh Skandha. During the years of preparation, Narayan was a frequent worshipper in the great Rama temple at Panchvati. In *Svdnubhav Dinkar*, Dinkar Svami narrates the episode in which Sri Rama revealed himself to Ramdas. From the beginning of the Ramdasi movement till the present day, Ramdasis have used the popular method (*Shodasa Upachara*) in the worship of Rama. This method is different from that practised by the *Smdrta* disciples of Sankara, The Svams *Rdmdyana* is a Marathi work based upon the *Sundarkdnd* and the *Yuddhakdnd* of Valmiki. Ramdas mentions Valmiki but there seems to be no evidence, either internal or external, that Ramdas drew upon the *Adhyatma Rdmdyana*. The Valmiki version of the *Rdmdyana* is believed by Ramdasis to-day, which relates the captivity of the real Sita in Ceylon. Nevertheless, it is also true that the *Adhyatma Rdmdyana* is familiar to Ramdasis at present, and is used to a certain extent for devotional purposes. While the Vedanta doctrines as taught by Ramdas resemble those enunciated by the great Sankara, there does not seem to be any evidence

¹ *O.R.L.L.*, pp. 249-50.

for assuming that R&mdasis have ever had any special connection with the Sringeri math. Furthermore, there is no evidence as yet that Ramdasis have ever had any close contacts with the Ramanandis. There are, it is true, certain similarities between the two movements, but there are no references or traditions, thus far ascertained, which would lead to the assumption that the Ramdasis have been greatly influenced by the Ramanandis.

In the light of the above facts, what conclusions can be drawn? The Svami's study of the *Dnyanetvari* must have made him familiar with the main doctrines of the Vedanta. His study of Valmiki's *Ramdyana* and his frequent visits to the Rama temple at Paichvati must have stimulated his interest in the worship of Rama. Thus far we can proceed with assurance. He also felt the influence of Eknath, Namdev, Tukaram and the other bhakti poets of his time. His years of wandering about India doubtless gave him a certain familiarity with religious traditions outside Maharashtra. His observation of the political needs of the Deccan and his growing interest in political affairs explain his later emphasis upon such practical matters. In view of all the evidence, it seems quite clear that the Ramdasi movement, as such, began with the Svami. It was clearly a personal movement, both disciples and maths being organized around the Svami's personality. Whether the blending of the advaita teaching with the worship of Rama was original with him, or whether he derived the synthesis from another sect or sacred writing, is a question that seems to remain unsolved. He *may* have had contacts with other Ramaite sects, and he *may* have been familiar with the *Adhyatma Ramdyana*. Such contacts were entirely possible during his years of wandering; and if so, they would explain the source of much that he taught. In view of the absence of references, however, we have little ground for presuming too much. If we rest on the evidence, it would seem that Ramdas did not draw heavily upon other Ramaite influences outside Maharashtra. Further evidence may come to hand at some future date; and if so, it will help to clear up the problem regarding the source of the movement.

While the above digression emphasizes our uncertainty about the Taker! years of preparation, we do *know* that there Ramdas studied the scriptures; learnt of the conditions of Maharashtra; saw the distressing incidents of Moslem rule; acquired a knowledge of human nature; and, finally, decided to become a devotee of Rama. He determined to become a wandering pilgrim himself, going about India, begging his food, and seeing the actual conditions prevailing throughout the land. It is said that the god Rama appeared to him in a vision, directing him to go out into the world, in order to establish a new school of devotion.¹ Thus, after twelve years of preparation and study, after being duly initiated and receiving a mantra, fired with a longing to see India at first-hand and visit her shrines, eager to serve his Motherland, and dedicated to the worship of Rama, Narayan set out upon his travels.

THE TWELVE YEARS OF PILGRIMAGE

The only source of information we have concerning the years of pilgrimage is the poetry of the Svami and his disciples, where there are occasional references to the places he visited or the scenes that he saw. Hanumant does mention that he visited the following places: Benares, Gokul, Mathura, Dvaraka, Srinagar, Badrinarayan, Kedar-esvar, the Himalaya mountains, Jagannath, the Southern Coast, Ramesvar, Lanka (Ceylon), Gokarnamahableswar, Kishkindha, Karvir, Parasuramkshetra, Mahabjeswar, Trimbakesvar, Jambgaon, Takerli and Paithan. The Diary adds Bibhisan to this list and says that Uddhav has written in detail about the years of pilgrimage, evidently referring to the fact that different disciples made a record of different phases of the Svami's life, after his death, according to an agreement made among themselves.

A small poem of fourteen verses, written by Ramdas, was found in the Takerli math, and in this poem he gives some of his observations in connection with his travels and the beginning of his movement. The poem goes on to

¹ *Svanubhava-Dinkar*, ch. xvi, sec. 4, Dhulia publication.

say that 'the people are oppressed by the Muhammadans, with the result that many are starving. Life and property are in danger and forced conversions are taking place. Human corpses are left on the ground uncared for, while those who are living have insufficient clothing.' Because of this situation, the Svami's heart was filled with pity; and having made up his mind to establish a new religious movement (*sampradaya*), he prepared the following instructions: 'Thoughtfulness and contemplation will enable one to secure salvation; and to this end associations should be formed. As a swimmer saves a drowning man, so should the disciple eschew laziness and give wisdom to the foolish ones. Avoiding intimacy with those who are proud, they should give shelter to all willing listeners, particularly intelligent children of relatives, who should be taught that by falling at the feet of Sri Rama all their misery and sufferings will disappear. All those who accept this doctrine should be taught the mantra, and when they are sent to me I will give them the necessary instructions/

ESTABLISHING A NEW MOVEMENT

About the year 1644, Ramdas felt the call to return to Maharashtra, the land of his youth, where he had been born and brought up. He did not take up his residence near his birthplace, nor at Takerli, where he had spent his years of preparation. He chose rather the Satara area, a beautiful part of the Deccan, stretching along the Western Ghats, with its river valleys and fertile fields. Here the rivers flow swiftly during the rainy season, the rugged mountains lift their peaks above the lowering mists of the valleys and the golden sunsets gladden the heart. To a man like Ramdas, who loved Nature and spent hours in solitude communing with the hills, it was a land appealing and attractive. Furthermore, he felt at home among the people, for they were his own people and he knew their temporal and spiritual needs. Here he decided to stay, therefore, and while his roving spirit kept him constantly on the move, so that no one knew exactly where to find

him at a given moment, yet he carried on his work from a chosen centre and made a particular spot his official residence.

Nestling among the hills, by the side of a small stream, is the village of ChaphaJ, which became his headquarters; and it was in this village that he built the temples of Rama and Maruti in 1648. Hanumant says that the images of Rama and Parvati were found by Ramdas in the Krishna river, the former being installed at ChaphaJ, while the latter was set up at ParaJI (Sajjangad). Since the latter place was not given to Ramdas till many years afterward, this tradition does not impress us as being historical. A letter written by Divakar states that in 1654 Ramdas went to Sivthar, where he planned to spend ten years in writing poetry.¹ Hence it is probable that the years 1644 to 1654 were spent in laying the foundation for his movement and beginning the organization. That the Svami had a genius for organization is evident from the fact that there are still over forty maths that are connected with his movement, and have successfully withstood the ravages of time. It was the Svami's ability to link his teachings with a definite organization which made him distinctive and different from other poet-saints, such as Tukaram or Eknath.²

The accounts of his life are so vague that it is impossible to follow his movements during these years. It is probable that his ideas took shape gradually as he wandered about from village to village, giving kirtans and interpreting the Hindu scriptures. Wherever he went, people were attracted by his magnetic personality, disciples flocking to him from all sides. There were certain places which he loved to visit, such as the village of Sahapur, where he established a Maruti temple.⁸ To the left of this temple there is a cave where he often used to sit. Near by, on the Chandragiri mountain, there was another favourite cave, which has been described in detail by Bhimasvami Sahapurkar. He often went to Masur, where he established a Maruti temple,

¹ See above, pp 19 ff.

¹ Edwards, pp. 179, 180. *O R. L. I.*, p. 300.

* *Kavita*, see Introduction.

and, according to Hanumant, he established Maruti temples in seven other places, namely, Umbraj, Sirola, Padali, Pargaon, Mangaon, Hinganvadi and Bahe. Half a mile from Chapha}, upon the side of a hill, is a cave called Ramghal, where the Svami frequently sat. There is a small hole in the ceiling of the cave through which one can enter a small chamber above, where four people can sit crowded together; and the lower chamber is divided into two sections by a wall, one part being used for washing purposes. From this cave there is a wonderful view, the mountain ranges stretching off into the distance, with the fertile river valleys winding in and out. While the Svami loved all this beautiful scenery and spent many hours in solitude, he did not content himself with a passive life, and it was not long before he was surrounded by a loyal group of disciples, who came to him for instructions and delighted to do his bidding, the Chaphal buildings being a testimony to their devotion.

HIS RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

The records narrate many incidents which emphasize the friendly, sympathetic spirit of Ramdas as he moved in and out among the people. A goodly number of disciples joined his movement from a sense of gratitude and love, or because the Svami had befriended them during an emergency. As he wandered through the villages, it was his practice to deal out medicine to those who were ill. When he met ridicule or scorn, or came into contact with evil practices, he sought to win the people by kindness rather than by rebuking them; as, for example, when he remonstrated with a group who were flippantly dramatizing the god Rama and showing their disrespect. During the years of his wanderings, he had never forgotten his mother and brother; and when a Paithan Brahman told him that his mother longed for a visit, he immediately set out for his old home. After reaching his native village and arriving in front of his house, he uttered the words, 'Jai, jai, Raghuvir Samarth!' (Victory to Rama, the all-powerful one!) As Hanumant tells the story; when his mother

asked, 'Are you Narayap, my son?' he replied, 'Yes, mother, I am Narayan, your son.' After remaining with his mother and brother for several days, he received her permission to return to his chosen work, which had claimed him all these years. The intimate relationship which Ramdas had with his own disciples is clearly shown by the letter which he wrote to Raghunath Bhat Gosavl in 1674, while suffering with malaria at Chaphal. He says, 'Let your affection for me grow stronger every day. I have written all this because you mean so much to me. You are as dear to me as Divakarbhat, and since it will not be possible for me to express my gratitude properly when we meet, I have written you this long letter. Whatever is mine is yours, and you are mine; for we both belong to God.'

Not being content with the teaching of words, the Svami made it his practice to reinforce his advice by his own actions, when seeking to influence others. Giridhar says that at one time he was sitting on the bank of the Krishna when it was in full flood, and a cry of help came from a man who was drowning. A spectator looked at Ramdas and despised him for being indifferent to the man's need, but quickly changed his opinion when he saw the Svami leap into the river and rescue the drowning man. Coming forward humbly, he confessed his shameful thoughts and asked the holy man's forgiveness. On another occasion he saw a group of people who were lazy, and he rebuked their shiftlessness by taking a broom and sweeping the temple courtyard. Once he attended a marriage ceremony at which there were dancing women; and instead of rebuking his host, he sat with downcast eyes throughout the whole performance. After a ceremony of idol-worship, he once offered food to a group of orthodox Brahmans, which they refused to accept, suggesting that they be given a larger present. This so displeased the Svami that he invited a group of low-caste people to visit him; and he gave food to them, after they had bathed in the Mandevi river, much to the discomfiture of the humiliated Brahmans, who repented of their selfish pride and gladly accepted whatever else was offered to them.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

The various accounts are not clear as to when and how each disciple joined his movement. Hanumant says that he met Anantbhat and Divakarbhat while on a four months' visit to Mahabjeswar, where he established a Maruti image and put Anantbhat in charge of it. He lived for a time near Mahuli on the Jaranda mountain, taking his daily bath at the confluence of the Krishna and Vena rivers, and here he made it a practice of playing with the children in the sand. During this visit he met Jairam Svami and Ranganath Svami for the first time. At Sahapur, when he arrived at the house of a Brahman, he found the women weeping bitterly because, they said, the Muhammadan officials had arrested Bajipant, the head of the family, owing to a dispute over revenue, and had taken him to Bijapur. Ramdas told them not to weep but to utter the words, 'Ram, Ram,' and Bajipant would be released. On the eleventh day, so the story goes, Bajipant returned home; and, in gratitude for this event, he, with his wife, Satibal, and his father-in-law, Ambajipant, all became disciples. Saying that she would take no food until she found Ramdas in order to thank him personally, Satibal went in search of him, and at last found him on the Chandragiri mountain, where she fell prostrate before him. He was greatly pleased with her devotion and put her in charge of the Maruti temple which he had established at Sahapur. Hanumant says that it was a *mamlatdar* (government official) who gave Ramdas the Chaphal property for his math, after becoming a disciple. It was at Chaphal that Akkabai, a child widow and the daughter of Rudrajipant Deshpande, became a disciple. At Miraj, Ramdas met another child widow named Venabai, who was the daughter of a certain Deshpande and who became one of his most loyal disciples.

At Karvir, a Brahman^ named Parajipant, his sister, and her two sons, named Ambaji and Dattoba, all became disciples. Ambaji was skilful in handwriting, and therefore Ramdas often asked him to write down poems as he composed them. Once while staying at Masur, Ramdas desired to cut off a branch of, a mango tree which stood

in front of the temple. Ambaji immediately climbed the tree, but while in the act of cutting it, fell down into a well. People thought that he had been drowned, until Ramdas called out, * Ambaji, are you well ?' He replied, * I am all right,' and came out. This fanciful story is told to explain why his later name was Kalyan, which means 'well' or 'safe' but while there doubtless was some incident such as this to account for this new name, it is probable that the later tradition underwent a good deal of embellishment. Hanumant says that among the many disciples, there were seventy-two who became important *mahants* (in charge of monasteries); and of the seventy-two, at least twenty were related to Ramdas by close personal ties.¹

ESTABLISHING TEMPLES AND MATHS

Mention has already been made of the places where Ramdas established Maruti temples, which, according to Hanumant, were established between the years 1645 and 1650. In a number of places he established temples of Rama, Lakshman and Sita, notably at Chaphal, Sajjangatf and Takerli, in the latter place the idols being established in the math itself. Wherever he went, Ramdas probably followed a customary procedure. As he went about, he gave kirtans and aroused interest among the people, those most interested ultimately becoming disciples. The leading disciple organized the group and established a math,

¹ *Biography*, by Hanumant Svami, p. 89.

Note.—The twenty intimate disciples of Ramdas were Uddhav, Kalyan, Rangoba, Akkabai, Venubai, Satlbai, Sahapurkar, Trimbak, Devdas, Mahadev, Musalram, Mavmi Gosavi, Bholaram, Anandbhat, Bhikajl, Apa, Dattatraya, Rokadaram, Hanumant, Divakarbhat and Bajipant Sahapurkar. This is the list given by Hanumant. The title Gosavi is generally put after each name, or quite often, Svami.

Additional disciples were: Ranganath, Jairam, Dinkar, Maharudra of Varhad, Balakaram, Sridharof Ramtek, Bhairavof Gokarna, Janardan of _ Surat, Sivram of Telangaon, Sadagiva of Raichur, Raghunath, Anand Murti, Keshav, Vaman, Bhanji, Nursu, Niranjan, and a number of SivaiPs officials. Bhimajl of sahapur was also a disciple, and the records mention the names of at least eighteen female disciples.

perhaps at first in a temporary place; later, as the number grew, establishing a permanent centre. Very often a math and a temple were established side by side, the building of the one being closely followed by the building of the other, and the expense of the work being generally met by voluntary subscriptions. Sivaji, for example, contributed indirectly toward the building of the temple and math at Chaphal.

There is no way of knowing just how many maths were established by the Svami and his disciples, Mr. S. S. Dev estimating that 1,100 maths were established in all. Many were organized by Ramdas himself, but a great many others owe their origin to the zeal of his followers, both in Maharashtra and in other parts of India where Marathi was not spoken. Mr. Bhave also thinks that 1,100 is a conservative estimate; and whether that number be an exaggeration or not, it is clear that there must have been several hundred, since even to-day there are at least forty-two maths in active operation. About a dozen of them have been visited by the writer. They are each in charge of a mahant, or chief disciple, who is generally married. All the mahants look up to the chief mahant of the Chaphal and Sajjangad maths for guidance or instructions. He is the so-called leader of the Ramdasi movement to-day. As the number of maths increased, Ramdas felt it necessary to draw up a system of instruction for the guidance of the mahants, giving them a definite plan of action and method. They were authorized to initiate disciples and to give the Vedic mantra of thirteen syllables to those who had fulfilled the conditions of discipleship. Each mahant was expected to visit Ramdas at frequent intervals and make reports, thus enabling him to keep in close touch with them all. The maths were thus centres of influence, spreading the teaching of this newly organized sect over the countryside; sending out wandering disciples, who went from village to village as the spirit moved them; gathering crowds nightly to listen to a kirtan, or during the day to hear instruction; and, finally, offering a place where huge crowds might gather for special occasions, particularly in honour of the god Rama.

RAMDAS'S LITERARY ACTIVITIES

IN 1654, as has been already stated, Ramdas retired to Sivthar¹ for ten years, in order to write poetry, and put his teaching into permanent form; so, at least, it was stated in a letter. He had already spent about ten years in wandering about the Deccan, giving kirtans, enrolling disciples and organizing his movement, until now it doubtless included hundreds, perhaps thousands, of followers. While he had probably written many poems before this, he felt that the time had now come when he should concentrate upon the task of writing poetry and furnishing his movement with definite instruction, information and inspiration; therefore he began the writing of the *Dasbodh*. This is a poetical work of twenty chapters, written in the ovi metre, concerning a great variety of subjects, religious, philosophical and ethical; and in the judgment of Marathi literary critics, it is an important book in Marathi literature. The internal evidence shows that the first seven chapters were written as a unit,² the eighth chapter being added later, and additional chapters being written as need arose; while the whole work was doubtless finished several years before his death. We have no way of knowing just when these chapters were written, or how long he remained at Sivthar, although the contents of the chapters furnish a few clues that enable one to draw inferences.

The Svami was a prolific writer and a considerable part of his poetry is still unpublished, according to Mr. S. S. Dev. What may be called his literary gem is a group of 205 verses, giving practical advice to the mind, called *Manache Sloka*. He wrote many verses of devotion, chiefly addressed to Rama, called *Karundsh(ake)* and he also wrote a book of poetry, based on two sections of Valmiki's *Ramayand*) and this is called his *Rdmdyana*. Details of these works will be given in Chapter VIII. Other works include the *Juna Dasbodh*, abhangs, collections of 100 verses (satakas), collections of five verses (panchakas), *Sadripu Vivechan*, and a Sanskrit poem called the *Das-*

¹ Sivthar is in the mountains, not far from Bhor State and only a few miles from Raigad. ² See Bhate, pp. 26-40,

GUa. Mr. S. S. Dev estimates that there are a thousand pages of his poetry still unpublished, much of it written by the hand of Kalyan. A list of this unpublished poetry will be given in detail in a later chapter.¹ While his literary productivity lasted throughout his life, it responded to given situations, so that it doubtless varied much from year to year. His genius was called forth upon special occasions, or when the disciples needed instruction, or when he felt the inspiration of his own religious moods. Even political events and the practical needs of the people were instrumental in calling out his muse. But, in general, his poetry lacks beauty of form and expression. His greatness does not consist in the charm of his poetical imagery, other poets being superior to him in this regard. There are certain exceptions to this, however. In the *Manace sloka Karundshfake* and some of the abhangs, he proved his ability to write polished Marathi poetry with sweet-sounding phrases and beautiful imagery. The *Ddsbodh* became the scripture most revered by his followers. It is to-day a work that is revered by all Hindus of Western India. Some students believe that the present *Ddsbodh* is an enlargement of the *Juna Ddsbodh*, which is a shorter work of twenty-one chapters upon various themes.

Besides writing poetry, Ramdas carried on a more or less extensive correspondence with various disciples or officials ; this necessity arising from the fact that his movements were so uncertain that they were never sure of finding him in person. Hence important matters were often settled by correspondence; and a few of these letters have come down to us, revealing a good deal of his character and motives. Two such letters were found in the Domgaon math, one from Keshav Svami to Ramdas, and the other from Ramdas to Keshav Svami, these letters giving ample testimony to the great love which the disciple had for his *guru*.² After Ramdas became intimate with Sivaji, letters passed between them, and the Svami doubtless had occasion to write to other officials or to

¹ Ch. VIII; see also the Introduction to *Don Charitre*.

* F.P., Vol. II, sec. 92.

have such letters written by his disciples. The letter of Ramdas to Bhimasvami, found in the biography written by the latter, illustrates the intimate friendliness existing between the Svami and his disciples, and shows how he was constantly urging them to seek goodness. He wrote, 'By means of knowledge, birth and death cease to be, and we achieve heaven. The nine kinds of devotion lead to God. To listen and to think; first to know and then to act;—this is the kind of life that bears fruit. When reality becomes known, the rich man is on the same level with the poor man; and, therefore, let us not be satisfied with mere words, but seek their true meaning, in order that we may gain spiritual knowledge. My affection for you cannot be put into words; for we are deeply indebted to each other. Although separated from you by distance, yet I think of you constantly; and this thought is a great comfort to me. Our hearts go out to each other; for we are equally zealous *in* the worship of Rama.'

LIFE INCIDENTS

There are numerous traditional stories about the Svami recorded in the various biographies; and while many of them have probably received embellishment, yet not a few give the impression of being founded upon historical fact. Bhimasvami Sirgavkar tells of the pandit from Benares (Kasi) who was so skilful in discussion that he kept a knife tied to his sacred thread, assuring all opponents that he was ready to cut out his tongue if he were defeated. When he saw numerous people reading the *Ddsbodh* he felt a desire to enter into a discussion with the author. He was, therefore, conducted to Ramdas by Kalyan. Preceded by torches, he was received with great honour; but, proud and haughty, he failed to return the Svami's bow, demanding, instead, an immediate answer to his queries. Asking him why he was in darkness, the Svami called to a low-caste man who was in the vicinity, and the latter answered all his questions satisfactorily. Deeply chagrined, the pandit became a disciple of the Svami, and made a copy of the *Ddsbodh* before he returned to Benares. On the way home, he stopped at the house of a Brahman woman

named Bahinabai who heard him reading the *Ddsbodh** Vowing to fast till she met the Svami, she finally found him and became his disciple.

Ramdas once called at the house of an official named Nilopant, who had become a disciple, and asked for food. There was very little fuel in the house; but the wife, Nirubai, burned some valuable shawls in order to prepare soup, which the Svami gratefully ate, Nirubai receiving a mantra as a reward for this devotion. When the husband returned home, he asked for a boon; and, according to Bhimasvami, Ramdas gave them a cocoanut, prophesying that a son would be born to them. This proved to be true; and the boy was called Ramchandra, the Svami himself performing his thread ceremony twelve years later. Another incident concerns the disciple of a Gosavi who left home one day, but before going he told his wife to serve the holy man faithfully. During the husband's absence, the Gosavi made improper advances to her and she offered no resistance. The husband returned, but made no complaint when he found that his wife had been unfaithful to him. In commending this self-sacrifice of the disciple, Ramdas favoured him with a mantra; but the Gosavi, overcome with shame, repented and fled.

The Svami frequently tested the loyalty of his followers. One day when he was depressed by their pride, says Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, he took a sword in his hand, and, clad only in a loin cloth, he said that he would kill anyone who bowed before him during the morning devotions* No one dared to approach him; and he therefore withdrew into the forest, the report spreading about that he had gone mad. About a month later Kalyan arrived at Sajjanga and immediately went to his guru, putting red powder upon his forehead and betel leaves in his mouth. In spite of the Svami's threat, Kalyan bowed before him and then the saint, throwing away his sword, embraced the disciple, saying that he alone was a true follower. The Svami's ability to convince others of error is attested by numerous incidents, such as that which narrates the conversion of stety robbers, or the account of Vaman Pandit, who became a noted disciple. The utter devotion of the

disciples to him is also brought out in the many incidents told by the biographies, such as the story of the one who drank the contents of the cuspidor, and who therefore was given the name Bholaram, which means simpleton.

Hanumant tells a unique incident in connection with the death of the Svami's mother. Ramdas told his disciples that he wanted to sleep for fifteen days, and that therefore they should lock his room from the outside, opening his door on the sixteenth day. These instructions were carried out by the disciples; Ramdas, in the meantime, having gone to Jamb to visit his mother. To his dismay he found that she was seriously ill, in spite of the fact that Sreshth was taking the utmost care of her and giving her every attention. His going at that time was very opportune, and his mother was overjoyed to see him; but she lived for only a few days, and passed away on the third bright half of Jyeshtha, saka 1577 (A.D. 1655), uttering the words, *Jai, Jai, Rama!* (Victory to Rama!) On the sixteenth day, the disciples opened the door of the Svami's room, but found it empty. They learned that he was sitting in a neighbouring temple with his head shaven; and, when they inquired the reason, he informed them that his mother had died and he was in mourning for her.

Once Ramdas was walking through a field of ripe grain with a group of disciples, who asked his permission to pluck some of the ears. Going to a village, which was near, they sat in the shade of a mango tree and prepared a fire in order to parch the ears which they had plucked. Suddenly the *patel* (headman) of the village came running, and thinking Ramdas to be the leader of a gang, struck him upon the back with some stalks of grain. The disciples, in their turn, began to thrash the patel, until he was rescued and liberated by the Svami, who told them that they were in the wrong, inasmuch as the ears of grain belonged to the patel. Hanumant goes on to say that Sivaji visited Ramdas shortly afterward, saw the scars upon his back, and became greatly incensed when he heard the whole story from the disciples; but Ramdas would not allow him to punish the man. 'We are the guilty ones/ said he, 'if punishment is to be given,

because we stole the grain'; and he persuaded Sivaji to present the patel with a grant of land.

There are a number of incidents which show the strict discipline which the Svami maintained among his followers, especially among the mahants. He caned one mahant because he gave a mantra to another without adequate preparation; and another was caned for immorality. When he saw a group of disciples with three prostitutes, he forbade their performing kirtans for three years.¹ He was so shocked by a dramatic play which dramatized the god Rama that he stood up all through the performance. Giridhar says that when a Vedic Brahman destroyed some flower garlands, saying that they were *tnaya* (unreal), Ramdas rebuked him, telling him that since we worship *God* by the use of qualities, we must not regard the *world* as being devoid of qualities. The strictness of Ramdas was not heartless, however, and his discipline was based upon genuine affection, so that his disciples were willing to do anything for him. He once departed into the forest without taking his food; and, after waiting till sunset, Kalyan tied the food in a cloth and set out to find him. He found the Koina river in full flood, but, without hesitating, he swam across and continued the search. He finally found two men with torches and they brought him to the Svami, who was immensely pleased at this evidence of Kalyari's devotion. Venabai loved to cook for him; and PremaJ used to rub his feet when he returned, tired out from walking.

Mahipati narrates two unusual incidents, the first concerned with the desire of Ramdas to commit suicide by hanging himself. As he was about to commit the act, he had a vision of the god Maruti and he desisted. The other is the story of Gagabhat Pandlit, a Brahman of Benares, who was well versed in the four sastras, and who was so jealous of the Svamf's fame that he rebuked Sivaji for reading the *Ddsbodh*[^] saying that Marathi was not worth reading. Sivaji replied that the *Dasbodh* was written on the authority of the Sanskrit sastras. Some time later,

^x *Pratap*, ch. xviii, p. 107, v. 7,

Gagabhat heard a kirtan given by Ramdas for Sivaji and his ministers, and thereupon became a devoted disciple.

HIS RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The Svami lived during one of the great periods of Marathi literature, and included among his contemporaries such poets as Eknath, Muktesvar and Tukaram, Vaman Paii<lit being one of his own disciples. While he never met Eknath, since the latter died the same year that he was born, he was familiar with his works and greatly influenced by his teachings.¹ Both poets were monists, and both were bhaktas, although Eknath was more thoroughgoing in his bhakti than Ramdas, and did not lay so much stress upon pantheism. Ramdas and Tukaram were born in the same year and had slight contacts with each other, perhaps meeting once or twice; but Tukaram died in 1648, at the very beginning of the Svami's lifework. The Diary says that they met in 1648 at a dinner, and adds that Ramdas went to Pantfharpur the following year. Bhimasvami Sirgavkar says that Tukaram went to visit Ramdas and was so pleased with his kirtan that he stayed three days. There is every reason for believing that the two men had a profound respect for each other and that Ramdas was influenced by the deeply stirring abharts of Tukaram.

While the records agree that Ramdas went to Pan<Jharpur at least once, it is equally clear that he was not a devotee or *varkari* of Vithoba, the Pantjharpur god. Tukaram refers to Ramdas in a letter which he sent to Sivaji, in which he suggested that the Svami would be a suitable guru for him; but since the genuineness of this letter is questioned, we must lay no stress on it.² On one occasion Ramdas is said to have expressed his disapproval of the negative qualities in the teaching of contemporaneous poets; and, in making this criticism, he may have had Tukaram in mind, but this is not certain. It is true that the Svami took an active interest in affairs of state during his later years; and to this extent his teaching differed from Tukaram's; but there

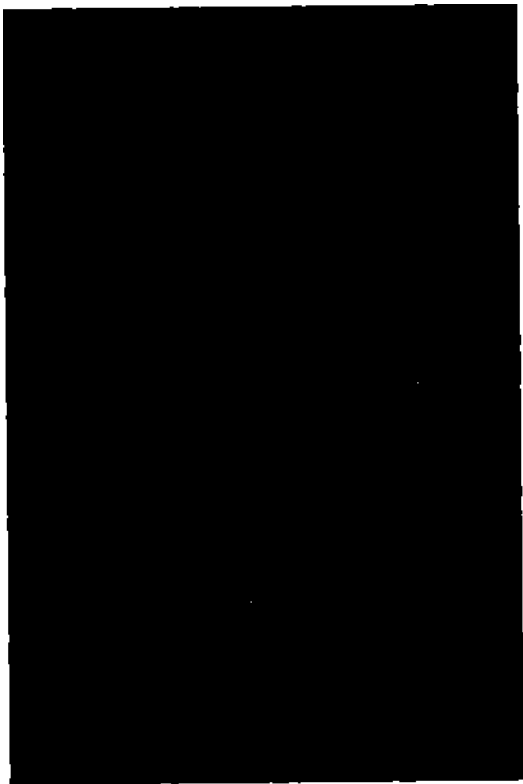
¹ Keluskar, see p. 515, note. *O.R.L.I.*, p. 250.

² Edwards, p. 18. Keluskar, p. 523.

is every reason to believe that the two poets had mutual respect for each other, and that, while Tukaram was alive, they had a great deal in common. The latter passed away in 1648, just as Ramdas was establishing his movement. The relationship between the two movements was friendly tolerance, with occasional contacts, yet without any direct connection. To be sure, there was no occasion for a conflict between the worshippers of Rama and those of Vithoba, an incarnation of Krishna; for these movements were separate in origin and appealed to different groups. The movement of Ramdas included many Brahmans and people from the more intellectual groups, while the Parjffharpur movement included more of the common people and, in this sense, was more inclusive. Although Ramdas made very few references to Vithoba or Pandharpur, his disciples occasionally went there to honour the god; and they still do so, if they happen to be in that vicinity.

There were a number of contemporaneous poets who owed their first impulse to the Svami, or at least who became his grateful disciples, among them being the following, Vaman Pandit (1636-96), Jayaram Svami (died about 1672), and Ranganath Svami (lived near Nasik about 1608).¹ Hanumant tells in detail of the meeting between Ramdas and Vaman Pandit, the great scholar who had studied Sanskrit at Benares for twelve years and had won great fame for his prowess in literary controversies. A ghost appeared to him in a vision and told him that his pride of learning would cause his ruin, unless he would submit to Tukaram of Dehu, who would show him the right path. Giving his wealth away as charity, he thereupon went to visit Tukaram, who was living at Ajandi, and he there bowed before him. Tukaram said that it was not fit for a Brahman to bow down to a Sudra, and that therefore he should go and submit to Ramdas. Vaman went to Ramdas, as Tukaram directed, and the Svami told him to perform penances for twelve years, returning at the end of that time for discipleship. This he did; and after Ramdas had favoured him with a mantra, as he had promised, he urged him to

¹ Keluskar, p. 515.



By the courtesy of Mr, S. S. Dev.

R AMD AS

From an old drawing, made during; his lifetime, by his disciple
Meru Svami. The original is preserved and worshipped
at the Sajjangad Math.

•write Marathi poetical works, so that the common people might be helped, Vaman complied with this request and wrote a number of works, one of which was a famous commentary on the *Gita*.

In *Sri Samarthpradp*, Giridhar tells of an imaginary feast given by Ramdas to the poets of Maharashtra, past and present, and each one was given food bearing the name of the author's chief work.¹ The poets sat in two rows, the ancient poets being in one row and the contemporary poets being in another. The list of poets included Ramananda, Muktesvar, Mukundaraj, Harinath, Dnyan-dev, Muktabai, Namdev, Rohidas, Tulsidas, Mirabai, Sridhar Svami, Chokhameja and Kabir, among the ninety guests. This list may have been the list of manuscripts familiar to Ramdas and read by him in secluded caves, or kept upon the shelves in the maths at ChaphaJ and Sajjanga<l. Since Giridhar, in his youth, knew the Svami, it is very probable that he also knew something of the Svami's library. This inference is also supported by the references in the Svami's poetry, showing that he had a knowledge of the works of many other writers, and it is probable that he drew freely upon all of them, still retaining in full measure, however, his originality of arrangement and his independence of judgment.

THE APPEARANCE AND HABITS OF RAMDAS

Although the various accounts of the Svami's life disagree as to dates and other historical facts, they succeed remarkably well in giving a vivid picture of the poet himself, even after we discount the customary miracles and exaggerations. While in a sense he was a typical Hindu sadhu, yet he possessed such an original personality that he baffles description and cannot be easily classified. Giridhar has given a detailed description of the Svami as he appeared in his later years, after he came to occupy a position of great influence. At the beginning of his work he doubtless lived and dressed very simply, being content with a loin-cloth and an outer robe. Giridhar describes

¹ *Dny&nodaya*, article by Dr. J. E. Abbott, June 2,1921.

him as wearing a turban of saffron colour, with a forehead mark of saffron and musk. A garland of flowers was around his neck; over his loin-cloth he occasionally wore a silken garment, and his robe reached to his feet. He wore sandals upon his feet, rings upon his fingers and carried a leaning staff in his hand. As Bhave says, this picture may be exaggerated and may refer to his appearance upon public occasions only. While wandering about begging for his food, it was his custom to carry the begging bowl or bag and the begging-stick (*kuberdi*).¹

In complexion he was dark, and upon his forehead there was a swelling which he had acquired when, as a small boy, he had jumped into a pool of water and struck his head. He walked with a quick, alert step. With his eyes upon the ground or his hands clasped behind his back, he often gave the impression of being indifferent to his surroundings; but this was simply his life-long habit of meditation and spiritual absorption. As time went on, he became more difficult of approach, his original shyness being intensified by the barriers of respect and authority built up around him by his devoted followers. The traditional pictures paint him with a black beard and flowing hair, and this is true of many Ramdasis today, especially those who are not householders.

All through his life, even during his old age, the Svami was constantly on the move, his restless spirit taking him from village to village, begging his food as he went and living a life of austere simplicity. Although frequently accompanied by a group of disciples, he kept a little apart from the rest, maintaining a natural reserve, which his followers respected. With children he was openly affectionate and toward elderly people he was always courteous. His customary reserve may have led some to believe that the Samartha (Ramdas) was lacking in affection; but this impression is refuted by his letters. Loving solitude, saddened by the sins of others, hedged in by the growing authority given to him by his followers, it was natural that

¹ The crutch or leaning staff of the beggar who has renounced the world and who practises austerities.

he maintained a dignified reserve. Underneath this reserve was a heart filled with affection, and his followers were bound to him by bonds that only death could break.

Most of the time the Svami lived with a small inner circle of disciples who looked after his daily needs. He allowed them to do small favours for him, such as prepare his food, bring him *pan suparl* (betel leaves and areca nut for chewing), or rub his feet. He ate very simple food, being especially fond of fruit. It was his custom to sleep a few hours in the middle of the day, spending the early morning hours and the evening hours in devotions. During the afternoon there would be spiritual inquirers who came to ask various questions; and the day was usually ended by a kirtan, which often lasted till midnight, the Svami frequently spending the rest of the night in meditation or wandering about. Ramdas ate his chief meal of the day at noon, being content with a little milk or some fruit morning and night. Giridhar tells how Ramdas sometimes slept upon his cloak, and how, since he had no teeth, PremaJ used to prepare special food for him, after eating which he reclined upon a couch, while PremaJ rubbed his feet, a custom which continued eleven years, when PremaJ suddenly disappeared.¹ A number of stories tell how the Svami frequently acted like a madman, frightening all those in his vicinity; and while it is not clear just what was achieved by this, he doubtless had reasons for acting in this way. Perhaps it was his desire to be left alone and not be bothered by a constant stream of visitors. Bhava describes the great veneration with which Ramdas was treated during the last years at Sajjangatf, those approaching him prostrating themselves some distance away, and then, when summoned, standing before him with downcast face. When he went out for a walk, the disciples followed behind at a respectful distance and maintained a dignified silence. Giridhar says that the Svami was known by nine different names, namely: Ramdas, Samartha, Rami Ramdas (the name of his brother), Dvija, Narayan, Das, Udas, Devadas and Sevak.

¹ *Pratap*, ch. xv, p. 94, v. 45-46.

CHAPTER III

RAMDAS AND SIVAJI

SIVAJI, THE DISCIPLE

As Mr. Keluskar tells the story, Sivaji had heard of Ramdas and desired to meet him, making a journey to ChaphaJ for that purpose. On his arrival there, he was informed by an official, named Narsomalnath, that the Svami lived a wandering life, coming and going, and at the moment was at Bahiravgad. When Sivaji inquired from the disciples, Vithal Gosavi and Bhaiiji Gosavi, who had built the temple, he was informed that his gift of money had helped to build it. Much to his astonishment, the disciples narrated the forgotten incident of how he had once been pleased by a kirtan at the house of his family priest in Poona, given by a certain Giri Gosavi Nassikhar, and how he had presented the latter with a gift of three hundred pagodas (gold coins). The preacher refused it for himself, but recommended that it be given to Ramdas Svami, who was erecting a temple of Rama at ChaphaJ. Sivaji remembered the incident, and thereupon inspected the foundations, which he found to be imperilled by a brook, flowing from the north of the temple grounds. He ordered Narsomalnath to divert the course of the current and build a bridge over it at the expense of the State treasury; and then, having failed to find Ramdas, he returned to Pratapga^.

Shortly afterward he went down Jo Wai and Mahull for religious purposes; and, while at the latter place, a letter was given to him from Ramdas, written in ovi metre.¹ Overjoyed at receiving this epistle, he replied as follows :

¹ Keluskar. p. 525.

Great sage, I plead guilty. Your heart abounds with forgiveness and your benedictory epistle has filled me with joy. How can I describe it? You have sung my praises, but I am not at all worthy of them. For many days I have had an ardent desire to see you and even now I propose to come into your presence. May you be pleased to receive me and appease my enduring thirst.' This letter was sent to the Svami. The next day Sivaji proceeded with his retinue to Chaphal, where he was informed that Ramdas was at the temple of Hanuman at Singanvatfi, but the disciples urged him not to go to Ramdas until he had eaten of the special dishes which were being prepared in honour of the deity. He replied that as this was Thursday, a day specially appointed for the worship of the guru, he was determined to fast until he had seen the Svami. Leaving his retinue behind so as not to frighten the Saint, he went forward with two officers, guided by Divakar. The Saint was sitting beneath a fig tree in the temple garden and had just read Sivaji's letter, chuckling to himself as he read it. Sivaji advanced, presented a cocoanut, and, after prostrating himself humbly upon the ground, stood silent. Ramdas expressed his surprise at Sivaji's impatience and wondered why he had not desired to see him before. Sivaji answered that he had long desired to meet him, but had been unsuccessful until now and begged his forgiveness for this seeming indifference. He requested the Saint to initiate him into the circle of spiritual disciples, which the Svami graciously consented to do. The sacramental requisites being brought, Sivaji bathed and went through all the solemn rites of *puja* in honour of the preceptor of his choice, Divakar officiating as priest. The solemn rite completed, Sivaji bowed his head upon the feet of his newly-found master, receiving the mystic mantra, *Śri Rama, jay a Rama, jay a jay a Rama*, (Victory to Rama).¹ It was accompanied by an exhortation which, according to tradition, is found in the sixth section

¹ Mr. Dev says that, according to a *sanad* written upon a Portugese document, there is good evidence for believing that this really was Sivaji's mantra.

of the thirteenth chapter of the *Dasbodh* and is called the 'Laghu bodh * or brief instruction. Sivaji was so influenced by this advice that he expressed the desire to retire from the affairs of state and devote himself to the Svami; but Ramdas uttered a strong remonstrance: * Is it for this you have come hither, a suppliant? Your proper sphere is that of a Kshatriya, whose duty it is to defend the country and keep people from harm, as well as to serve the Gods and the Brahmans. Great exploits are yet expected from you; for the alien Muhammadan has overrun the earth. Your task is to free the land from them; for this is Rama's will. Remember the advice that Sri Krishna gave to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is the warrior's path that you must tread. Remember the valorous deeds of your ancestors and mould your conduct accordingly, without being turned aside into any other course.'

Sarkar tells the old, familiar story, how Sivaji failed to understand why Ramdas went out daily upon his begging tour, inasmuch as he had a generous income furnished by his royal disciple.¹ The next day he placed at the Svami's feet a deed, making a gift of all his kingdom to the Saint. Ramdas, in accepting the gift, appointed Sivaji as his vicar and bade him rule the realm, not as an autocratic owner but as a servant, responsible for all his acts to a higher authority. Thereupon the king made the orange-brown robe of the Ramdasi sadhu his national standard (*bhagva jhanda*) in order to signify the livery of his ascetic master. The tradition adds that at this time Ramdas gave certain instructions to the king, part of which may be translated thus: 'Do not confide in people without using discrimination, but rather lean upon yourself and acquire strength to achieve that which is necessary. Seek out the way of permanent happiness and do not be tired by physical ailments. You should investigate everything for yourself, maintaining firmness, and seeking to know who are enemies and who are friends. Let your efforts be constant and your happiness unceasing. Since it is essen-

¹ Sarkar, p. 422.

tifcl tor a leader to have courage, learn how to accomplish what you desire to do, taking advantage of every opportunity and never being content with idleness. He who shrinks from daily tasks and ceases mental activity becomes dull of intellect; but by being careful, you will become powerful/ It is also stated that the greeting between Marafhas, * Ram, Ram!' was adopted by Sivaji at the Svami's request

THEIR GREAT FRIENDSHIP

During the later years of SivajTs life, he often consulted Ramdas about spiritual matters and affairs of state, and as time passed, their friendship ripened. The wandering habits of Ramdas were a trial to Sivaji, because he could not always find him when he wished. Therefore, after capturing the Parali fort in 1673, he persuaded Ramdas to go there and live, the latter being installed upon the top of the fort with great pomp. Ramdas declined to live in the house which stood there, because of its dilapidated condition; and arrangements were made to build a new one. Jijoji Katkar was made *havalddr*; and, on behalf of Sivaji, he issued instructions that all the inhabitants, both civilian and military, were to be subject to the Svams orders. The income of a neighbouring village was set apart for the support of the spiritual colony living upon the fort, which came to be called Sajjangatf j¹ and the accounts were put in the hands of an official named Kondopant.² Because of the large number of holy men who came there to pay their respects, the expenses of the settlement rapidly increased and additional annual grants were given by the Government. There are a number of letters which have come down to us bearing upon this point, the following letter being typical:

' Dated saka_1594, ninth of bright half
of Sravana (A.D. 1672)

' From Sri Sivaji Raja to Dattajipant Vakenis.'⁸

¹ The Sage's fort. * Keluskar, p. 531

The letter intimates that Sri Samartha is staying at ChaphaJ, where there is a temple of Rama, in whose honour a great fair is held and many festivities take place. Soldiers sometimes go there and, by quarrelling, cause trouble, showing disrespect to the deity. Hence a warning should be issued and measures taken to prevent such occurrences. Government officials should pay a visit there yearly, in order to maintain order and protect the people. The health of Ramdas and the other Brahmans there should be inquired after.

Another letter, dated 1677, from Dattaji Trima } to Vekaji Rudra, Subedar, narrates how Sivaji once went to ChaphaJ during the nine days of the Ramanavami ceremonies.¹ When Ramdas suggested to the king that the cost of these festivals should be met by the State, Sivaji agreed and made the necessary arrangements, appointing a clerk to help Ramdas in these matters. Thus it is clear that these religious ceremonies had special government sanction, and were paid for out of the government treasury, although there were doubtless many additional voluntary gifts. These arrangements continued after Sivaji's death, additional favours being granted by Sambhaji, Rajaram and others.

There is a letter from Kalyan to Divakar which shows the close bonds of friendship existing between Sivaji and his spiritual preceptor.² While the Svami was at Sivthar, Sivaji was ill. Hearing of this, Ramdas ordered Kalyan to go to see him, taking a gift to him as a token of his friendship. Kalyan appeared before Sivaji and saluted him, whereupon the latter said, 'You have brought a gift from Ramdas, and therefore now I am recovered/ repeating this three times. Upon this occasion he had a private talk with the king without the Svami's permission, and when the latter came to know of it, he rebuked his disciple, because he had entrusted this particular matter to Divakar, Ramdas felt free to make requests of Sivaji as occasion offered, and in addition to the financial requests and those concerning state ceremonials, it is said that in the month

¹ *Faire*, Letter 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter 50.



By courtesy of Mr, Marathe

Photographer, Satara.

SIVAJI, RAMDAS, AND KALYAN
Wooden figures, used in Ramdasi processions.

of Sravaija, he asked that a crore of clay images be consecrated each year in honour of Siva, and that a dinner be given to the Brahmans during that month.

The friendship between Ramdas and Sivaji was so intimate that the Svami felt a paternal interest in Sambhaji, Sivaji's son, and other members of the royal family. Later on, when Sambhaji had assumed the throne, upon the death of Sivaji, he immediately plunged into acts of cruelty, causing the aged Svami much sadness of heart. He came one day to visit Ramdas and to ask for his benediction. Ramdas would not see him, sending him instead a letter of advice, part of which may be translated as follows: 'You should always be alert and never give way to sorrow. Quietly making up your mind about what must be done, you should proceed to do it in a calm spirit, avoiding all acts of cruelty. With a heart full of sympathy, and forgiving their previous faults, you should give due employment to your ministers, thus making them happy. Do not place obstacles in their way, since quarrels give an advantage to the enemy. Carry your undertakings through to a finish, wisely and bravely. Fear in the beginning leads to the ruin of the cause; hence have wisdom in your undertakings. Success can only be achieved when the people are contented and satisfied. With a united people you should be able to drive out the enemy, thus earning everlasting fame. In this way the Maharashtra kingdom should spread in all directions. Remember King Sivaji and think less of your own life. Keep in mind his appearance and his perseverance, his exploits, his way of speaking, his manner of walking, and his capacity of making friends. Do not forget how, turning his back upon selfish happiness, he was ever active in the effort to establish the Maratha kingdom. I hope that you may do even more than this, thus successfully fulfilling the purpose of your life.*

THE DATE OF MEETING BETWEEN RAMDAS AND SIVAJI

1. The Argument for an Early Date

There is keen controversy to-day about the date of the meeting between Sivaji and Ramdas, one opinion being

that they met in 1649 or thereabouts, the other that they did not meet until 1672. The early date is that accepted by the traditional accounts of the Svami's life. It is only in recent years that a number of scholars have raised the question about its authenticity and have rejected it as unhistorical. Both positions are fortified by weighty arguments based upon documents, and it is a difficult task to decide between them. The difference of opinion is not concerning the last eight years of the Svami's life, when everyone admits that Ramdas and Sivaji were close friends, but concerns the earlier years and the Svami's contribution to Sivaji's achievement in establishing a Maratha kingdom. To fix the first date of meeting is to decide the controversial question of just how much influence the Svami had on Sivaji's political activities. Therefore, to put the matter before our readers, we shall state the arguments for both positions in some detail, and then draw general conclusions.

1. The Diary of the rough notes of Antaji, copied by Gopāl, a few days after the death of Ramdas, says that Sivaji Maharaj was made a disciple by Ramdas in the year 1649 in the Singaijvadi garden, and that a chapter has been written about this in *Siva Chhatrapati*? This information has the authority of Divakar Gosavi, who asked Antaji to record the facts. This document originally belonged to the Sahapurkars, but later came into the hands of the Upadhyes of Chaphal, and finally into the care of the late Mr. Rajwade. If, as he maintains, it is a genuine document, it is important evidence. This is the date given in the bakhar by Hanumant Svami, and there is reason to believe that Hanumant was familiar with the Diary. Using Hanumant's bakhar as authority, the English historians, Grant Duff and Kincaid, have also accepted this date in their histories of the Maratha people.² Mr. S. S. Dev, the late Mr. V. K. Rajwade and Prof. D. V. Potdar of the New College, Poona, are among the eminent scholars who to-day accept this date (or, at least, a date before 1660) as the correct one.

* V.V., Vol. I, sec. 21. 2 H.M.P., p. 183.

2. There is a letter written to Sivaji aram in the abhang metre, in which the latter advises Sivaji to make Ramdas his *guru*.¹ Tukaram died in 1648; so if this letter is genuine, it means that the date given in the Diary was entirely possible. The letter was the result of a visit that Sivaji was supposed to have made to Tukaram, and the latter's answer, declining to make his home with him. In discussing the matter, Mr. Edwards notes that the genuineness of these verses has been accepted by Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Mr. N. V. Tilak and Prof. H. G. Rawlinson.² As regards the visit, Mr. Edwards feels that the weight of evidence supports its historicity, but admits that the reference to Ramdas may be more uncertain.

3. Among the papers of Pratap Singh Maharaj, Mr. Rajwade discovered two or three papers concerning Ramdas, one being a poem in ovi metre, written by Bhimasvamī Sahapurkar, a contemporary of the Svami, and describing the poet's death.⁸ This poem is a copy of the original and contains fifty verses. It gives the date 1649 as the time of meeting, and agrees in general with the facts as stated in Hanumant and some of the other traditional accounts, such as those written by Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, Mahipati and Giridhar, these last three being written somewhat later and possibly using the poem as a source. All of these accounts give the distinct impression that Ramdas was the spiritual guide of Sivaji during a large portion of the latter's public life, and that they frequently conferred about matters of state. Hence it is a tradition that must have had great weight behind it.

4. There is a diary written by the disciple Divakar, and found among the papers of the Chaphal math.⁴ It was written in Balbodh about 1678 and is now owned by Bapurao Upadhye.⁵ It describes how Ramdas and Sivaji used to have secret discussions in an apartment at the southern side of the palace at Raigatf, to which others were not admitted, and Divakar sat upon a wooden stool near by,

¹ Spiritual adviser or preceptor.

² Edwards, p. 125. V.S.M.X.S., p. 94.

* V.V., Vol. I, sec. 25.

⁴ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 42.

⁸ The ordinary Marathi script used in printing.

during one such interview, discussing with the other disciples present the question of * inatn grants.' Mr. Dev says that this is the first historical proof of the discussions between Sivaji and the Svami; his inference being that they must have been political, since they were secret.

5. At Rajapur, in the Sanskrit library managed by Mr. R. H. Patankar, a letter has been found which, in the opinion of some, was written by Kalyan.¹ It was published a few years ago in a book called *The End of the Adit Shahl of Bijdpur*. This poem has fourteen short lines, and by taking the first letters of each line, the message becomes, 'The Sirdar from Bijapur has started.*' The inference is that Kalyan sent this message to Sivaji from Miraj, informing him of the coming of Afzul Khan; and it is in line with the claims of the more enthusiastic Ramdasīs, that the early disciples were secret spies, actively working on Sivaji's behalf.

6. In *Samarlhafiratap*, the biography by Giridhar, there is a verse which says that Ramdas caused *the Muhammadan whose first letter is "A" to be killed.² Mr. D. K. Panshikar has pointed out that this verse may refer to Afzul Khan, and Mr. Dev agrees with this exegesis. Another verse in *Samarthapratdp* says that Sivaji asked the Svami's permission to build the temple, but that the latter declined his offer, saying that it would be done by his disciples.³ These references have a certain weight, inasmuch as Giridhar knew the Svami personally. Although the earliest secular records of Sivaji's kingdom make no reference to Ramdas, the *Sivdigvijaya bakhar*, written a little later, says that in 1666 Ramdas advised Sivaji to go to the Delhi court. With these evidences in mind, such scholars as Mr. Dev and Prof. Potdar vigorously defend this date of 1649, or one in that early period, returning argument for argument. The latter points out that Ramdas spent ten years at Sivthar, writing the first chapters of the *Ddsbodh*) and that this village is only a few miles from Raigatf, where Sivaji often stayed. Hence the two men

¹ *VV.*, Vol. II, sec. 91. * *Pratdp*, ch. xviii, v. 36.
⁹ *Pratdp*, ch. xix, v. 16.

must have known about each other at this time, as both were famous and well-known throughout the countryside*

7. In support of this same view, there is a letter from the disciple, Dattaji Trimal, to Divakar, relating how Sivaji was staying at Birvadi before setting out to invade the Carnatic.¹ At that time a public meeting took place between the two at the Sivthar math, after Ramdas had paid a sudden visit to the king the night before. They discussed religious and political matters, and Ramdas asked for the income from twenty-one villages to help defray the expenses of the Chaphal temple and math. The interesting point about this request is that these villages were not under Sivaji's control at that time.

8. Prof. Potdar raises other points in support of an early date. Ramdas had established maths in various places, putting shrewd, intelligent men in charge of them. Sivaji lived an active life, going up and down the country, and must have come into contact with some of these men, and thus come to know of the movement during his early years. On the other hand, Ramdas was cautious, and probably knew a good deal about Sivaji before initiating him, because initiation was an act of supreme favour.

9. There is a letter written by Sivaji to Ramdas in 1678, of which there are three copies extant, one found at Sajjangatf, and two others in the Satara district. This letter may be translated as follows:

' To SRI RAGHUPATI SRI MARUTI,

⁴ Sri Svami, the best guru! I, Sivaji, the dust of your feet, bow before you with a request. Most revered one, you have blessed me by favouring me with initiation. You instructed me to establish a kingdom and a religion, to worship Brahmans and deities, to protect the people and relieve them of their sorrows. I was advised to seek after the highest, and was told that Sri Rama would give me success in all that I wished to undertake. Hence, in all that I undertook, the destruction of the wicked Muhammadans, the amassing of great wealth, and the building of difficult forts, I have achieved success, thanks to your blessing. When I

¹ *Patre*, Letter 26.

offered my whole kingdom to you, saying that I desired to serve you, I was told that my best service would be to fulfil the regular kingly duties. My next request was that Rama's temple might be established near by, so that we might have frequent visits together and in order that the RamdasI sect might spread in all directions. You, most revered one, thereupon came to reside in mountain caves near me, and established the temple of Rama at Chaphal, with the result that the Sampradaya (sect) and the disciples have been successfully spreading their influence. My next request was that certain pieces of land should be given toward the worship of Sri Rama and help to meet the expenses of the festivities, the feeding of Brahmans and guests, the construction of buildings at Chaphal, and also toward the expenses of worship and festivities at places where additional idols have been established. You informed me that I should not worry upon that score, but should give whatever seemed suitable, and should work for the spread of the sect, the kingdom and the race. These were my instructions. As a result, the Sampradaya and the idols of Rama have been established in different localities, and instructions concerning the land grants have been duly sent. Near Rama's temple at Chaphal, of 121 villages, each was to give eleven *big has* of land toward this expense/ etc.

Then follow detailed instructions about land grants.

In commenting upon this letter, Mr. Dev notes eleven points that are brought out.¹

(a) Ramdas favoured Sivaji with a mantra and encouraged him in his work of establishing a kingdom, spreading the new religion, serving God and Brahmans, and removing distress.

(b) Sivaji's success was helped by the blessing of Ramdas.

(c) Sivaji offered his kingdom to Ramdas.

(d) Ramdas told the king to live up to his religious duties.

(e) Sivaji desired a centre from which the movement might spread.

¹ *Don Chari tre*, see Introduction.

(f) Ramdas founded a temple of Rama at ChaphaJ as Sivaji wished.

(g) Sivaji asked what he might do toward the support of Ramdasi activities.

(k) Ramdas told Sivaji that he need not worry about this matter.

(l) The sect spread rapidly and Sivaji contributed toward its support.

(l) Ramdas granted Sivaji permission to contribute as he desired.

(k) Upon the tenth of Asvina, bright half, saka 1600 (1678), Sivaji gave a large gift to Ramdas, which was listed in the letter.

This letter bears the stamp of Sivaji, and gives every evidence of being genuine; and, therefore, as Mr. Dev points out, it is important testimony of the influence which Ramdas exerted over Sivaji during the major part of his career.

//. *The Argument for a Later Date.*

1. Mr. G. K. Chandorkar published in the Marathi weekly, *Kesari*¹ on June 26, 1906, a group of letters which were in the possession of the descendants of Divakar Gosavi, the disciple of Ramdas, and the one who was present when Sivaji and Ramdas first met, according to the familiar story. One letter, from Keshav to Divakar, says: 'I understand what you write, namely, that the Raja Sivaji Bhonsle is coming to visit the Samartha.¹ It is his first visit. . . . I understand what you write about there being nobody to make arrangements. Engage the people of the Va<ii (Singa^vadi) to make arrangements.' (Date, April 4, 1672.) Another letter from Sivaji to Jijoji Katkar, the chief official at Sajjangatf, says, 'Sri Ramdas Gosavi, residing at Sivthar, will come for a few days to the fort, and you shall permit him to arrive there, to stay as long as he pleases and to leave when he pleases.' (Dated 1676.)

2. A letter has been found written by Bhaskar to

¹ Keluskar, p. 536.

Divakar (both disciples), which may be translated as follows: 'We went to beg for alms at the residence of the Raja Sivaji and he asked us, " Who and whence are you ? " Upon which we replied that we were the disciples of Sri Samartha Ramdas, and lived at ChaphaJ. He asked where Ramdas lived and where he originally came from. We told him that he was originally a resident of Jamb on the banks of the Gaiiga (Godavari) and that at present he had established a hermitage at Chaphal, together with a temple of Rama; and having instituted solemn worship and celebrations there, had bidden us all go forth for alms for the performance of the solemn rites; wherefore we were thus rambling about. On our saying this, the Raja wrote a letter to Dattaji Vakenis to grant an annual sum of 200 pagodas for the celebration of the temple solemnities. The money will reach there in time. Thus be this known.' (February 13, 1659.)¹

3. The tradition is that Sivaji had a desire to meet Ramdas for some time, before he was successful in his attempt, and this is borne out by the letter which Ramdas sent to Sivaji and which may be translated as follows: 'O mountain of resolution!² O helper of many, of unchanged resolve, rich and master of your passions! O thou who pourest benefits on others; whose qualities are incomparable! Lord of men, horses and elephants! Lord of forts, earth and ocean! Leader and king, who art always strong! King, triumphant and famous, powerful and generous, meritorious, virtuous and wise! Possessed ever of conduct and judgment, generosity and faith, knowledge and character; bold and generous, grave and daring, swift to execute; thou who by thy vigilance didst spurn kings! The holy places were broken and the abodes of Brahmans were polluted. All earth was shaken and religion had fled. Naraya\$ resolved to protect the gods, the faith, the cows, the Brahmans, and inspired thee to do so. Near thee are many wise pa\$<iits, great poets, men skilled in sacrifice, and learned in the

¹ Keluskar, p. 537.

² Meru is the fabled mountain at the centre of the earth.

Vedas, men quick and shrewd and fitted to lead assemblies. None of this earth protects the faith as thou dost, and because of thee, some of it has lingered in Maharashtra. A few have sheltered themselves with thee, and still some holy acts are done; therefore, honour to thy glory. It has spread all over the earth. Some evil men thou hast killed; some have fled in terror, and some thou hast pardoned, King Siva, the fortunate. I have lived in thy country, but thou didst never ask for me. Thou didst forget me; why, I do not know. Thy councillors are all wise, and faith incarnate. What can I say to thee? It behoves thee to keep alive thy fame as the establisher of religion. Many are the affairs of state in which thou art busied. If I have written unreasonably, may I be pardoned.¹

The above three documents constitute a basis upon which a group of scholars have built up a weighty argument against the early date of 1649, for the meeting between the two. These scholars maintain that the first meeting between them took place in 1672, as brought out in one of the above letters. There is still another letter published by Mr. Chandorkar, written by Divakar to his son Bhairav Bhat, in which the writer states that Raja Sri Sivaji Bhonsle was admitted to spiritual discipleship at the hermitage at Singanvadi, in the year called Paridhavi, which coincides with A. D. 1672. Prof. Bhate has examined the above letters and believes them to be authentic, discussing the matter in detail in his monograph on Ramdas.² He accepts the date 1672 for the time of meeting, and is supported in this conclusion by such other scholars as Prof. J. N. Sarkar,³ Mr. Keluskar, Mr. Sardesai,* author of *Mardfhi Riyasat*, and others. The chief arguments raised by these scholars in support of the late date may be summarized as follows:

(a) The earliest history of Sivaji's reign, the *Sabhasad* bakhar, does not mention Rajndas; yet it was written only fourteen years after the king's death. The *Chitragupta*

¹ *H.M.P.*, p. 183. ² Bhate, p. 108-11. ³ Sarkar, p. 421.

* *Navayuga*, Sept., 1918; see review of Mr. Bhate's book on Ramdas.

bakhar refers to him only twice, stating in one place that Ramdas gave advice to Sivaji after the latter's coronation in 1674. In the *Sivadigvijaya* bakhar there is a reference to Ramdas, saying that the king sought the Svami's comfort because of his domestic troubles.¹ It is not until the *Chitnis* bakhar, written 183 years after Sivaji's birth, that Ramdas comes to occupy an important place in the secular history of the period. This bakhar states that Sivaji visited the Svami before starting for Delhi, and also relates how the king expressed the desire to live with Ramdas because of his disappointment over his son Sambhaji's conduct.² The argument here is that these later bakhars must have taken the date 1649 from the traditional biographies of Ramdas, and that the silence of the earlier bakhars is very significant.

(6) The Satara and Parali forts were not captured from Bijapur by Sivaji until 1673, therefore Ramdas could not have gone there till then.⁸

(c) In his letter to Sivaji, Ramdas called him, 'Lord of water.' Since Sivaji did not build a navy or conquer the coast territory (Konkan) till 1663, this term did not have historical meaning until that date.

(d) In Tukaram's message, he used the words *Chhairapati* and *A\$tapradhan* referring to his sovereignty and to his eight ministers. Since Sivaji had not assumed such rank during Tukaram's life, this reference must be an interpolation. In his *Life and Teaching of Tukaram* page 124, Mr. Edwards gives the arguments for and against this criticism; but he personally does not accept the above conclusion.

(e) All the documents known to us concerning land grants refer to grants made after 1674, and none refer to grants made before that date. This, of course, is an argument from silence.⁷

(f) There are records which conclusively indicate that Ramdas went to live at Sajjangatf in 1676, as the above letter has shown.

(g) While admitting that the teachings of the poet-saints

* Sen, p. 247.

^a Sen, p. 238.

^a H.M.P., p. 241.

as a group were helpful to Sivaji in establishing his kingdom, the teaching of Ramdas was not distinctive or different from the others.¹

(h) In support of the above statement, these scholars point out that the first seven chapters of the *Dasbodh* say practically nothing about political activities or duties to the state. Hence Ramdas did not stress this phase until influenced by Sivaji's achievements. In other words, it was Sivaji who influenced Ramdas, rather than *vice versa*.

(z) These scholars maintain that the tradition which says that Sivaji consulted Ramdas after killing Afzul Khan is entirely spurious.

(;) They admit that the gift of 200 pagodas for the Chapal religious ceremonies was historical; but since there is no further mention of it, it could not have been an annual affair.

(k) They also consider that Hanumant's references to Pratapgaṅ, Mahuli, Wai, and other places are unhistorical, because these came into Sivaji's possession after 1662.

(/) At the beginning of the fourth section of the sixth chapter of the *Dasbodh* is the following verse: '4760 years of Kali have passed.' Translated into our calendar, this date becomes A.D. 1659, and therefore must have been the date when this particular section of the *Dasbodh* was written. But since the traditional account says that the sixth section of the thirteenth chapter was the advice given to Sivaji at the time of initiation, it may readily be seen what a discrepancy there is. If the sixth chapter was written in 1659, the thirteenth chapter could not have been written in 1649.

(m) Sivaji lived a very strenuous life between 1650 and 1670, conquering territory, making the journey to Delhi, and organizing his government; and even if Ramdas had desired to be upon friendly terms, it would have been physically impossible for Sivaji to have given time for such a friendship.

(n) In the August number of *Vividhdnyanvistar*, 1924, there is reference to a book published by Mr. S. M. Divakar

¹ Bhate, p. 15.

concerning: the capture of the Panhaja fort. The preface of this book states that Sivaji met Ramdas at Poladpur while on the way from Raigad to Panhala. The verse in question (Chapter iv, verse 18) says, 'He fell at the Gosavs feet.' But of course, this may have referred to another Gosavl.

///. Conclusions

It is remarkable that these two points of view, so diametrically opposed to each other, should both be based upon the testimony of contemporary witnesses, consisting of original letters. There are two questions involved:—the reliability of the documents, and the trustworthiness of the witnesses. Supporting the date of 1649 is the Diary of Antaji and also the poem of Bhimasvami, both of whom were the Svami's contemporaries. It is interesting that the various letters and documents referred to are accepted as genuine by both sides of the argument; therefore, for the present, we may assume that the chief letters referred to are genuine and not spurious. It is possible that manuscript experts will later declare this or that document a forgery; but as far as we know to-day, they are original letters or genuine copies. Then to what extent can we depend upon the historical accuracy of their testimony? Here we are faced with a greater degree of uncertainty. The Diary of Antaji, for example, contains legendary material, such as the visit to Eknath or the account of Uddhav's kirtan. While the poem of Bhimasvami is restrained in its statements, the biography by the same author (Bhimasvami Sahapurkar) relates a number of imaginary incidents, such as the dinner at which Sri Rama was present. Hence it is clear that, while these authors were contemporaries of the Svami and doubtless had honest motives, they lacked historical judgment and were unable to distinguish between the historical and the legendary. Without attempting to misrepresent facts, they wrote what they believed, facts and fancy being interwoven together.

The reference of Tukaram to Ramdas is a disputed point and, therefore, we need not enlarge upon it. Diva-

kar's account of the meeting between Sivaji and Ramdas at Raigatf has the appearance of being genuine, but does not settle the problem of the date. Nor is the 'code message' of Kalya\$ decisive evidence, because we lack certainty about the authorship. The references by Giridhar are ambiguous and may have two interpretations. Sivaji's letter to the Svami definitely establishes the fact that the king was a devoted disciple, and generously supported the Ramdasi movement; but again, as evidence for the date, it is not conclusive. It follows the usual custom of using extravagant language and the references are more or less general. Hence, while it is possible to dismiss many of these documents supporting the early date as unreliable, we must admit that we have here a strong tradition, not easily shaken. Those writers who knew Ramdas and had lived with him testify to the fact that the Svami was Sivaji's guru through a large part of the king's public life. They had every reason to know, and did not hesitate about this general statement. Their testimony has been followed by later political writers, by the authors of recent lives of Ramdas, by English historians, and by many modern Marathi scholars.

Exponents of the late date base their conclusions chiefly upon three documents, namely, the letter telling of the first visit, the letter telling of Sivaji's inquiry about Ramdas, and the Svami's letter to the king, stating that the latter had ignored him. In the absence of contradictory evidence, we may assume that these also are genuine documents, although Mr. Dev points out that the handwriting of Keshav's letter concerning the 'first visit' is different from three other bits of Keshav's writing now in Mr. Dev's possession.¹ The word 'first' in Keshav's letter is, however, by no means conclusive. It may be used in an official or political sense, and the king may have visited Singanvadi a number of times. In the same way, the term *Lord of water' may refer to a navy, or it may be poetic exaggeration, referring to the king's ascendancy over the whole territory, including lakes and rivers. The fact

¹ *Don Charitre*, see Introduction.

that the *Sabhsad* bakhar makes no mention of the Svami is also weighty evidence; but it is not conclusive, and the argument from silence can be pressed too far, (In spite of the large salt deposits of the Punjab, the *Rig Veda* does not mention salt; yet it would be unwarrantable to assume that therefore the early Aryans were unfamiliar with the use or the value of salt.) Bhaskar's letter, of the three, is the most convincing evidence against the early date, although even this letter does not preclude the possibility of friendship between Sivaji and the Svami before the conversation took place. Sivaji *may* have feigned ignorance, but this is very unlikely; and the letter stands as impressive evidence against 1649 as the date of meeting.

Then what conclusions can we draw? It is a case of seeking the assured historical events and then drawing logical inferences. We know that Sivaji captured the Satara and Parali forts in 1673, and hence he could not have installed Ramdas at Sajjangad before that date; thus contradicting the testimony of the Diary that he did so in 1650. There is every reason for believing that the sixth chapter of the *Dasbodh* was written in 1659, because of the Hindu date written therein; and since all of the *Dasbodh* up to this section had been mainly concerned with spiritual topics, it is safe to assume that Ramdas had not been actively interested in political events before 1659, at least to the point of writing about them. The silence of the earlier records concerning the Svami gives way, in the later works, to a wealth of traditions; and this is a suspicious process, particularly when reinforced by the silence of the first part of the *Dasbodh* concerning politics. The letter of Bhaskar clearly indicates that Sivaji knew little or nothing of the Svami before 1659.

From the foregoing argument, the writer has reached the following conclusions:

First, the original meeting between Ramdas and Sivaji took place, in all probability, after 1659. The exact date, however, remains uncertain, in the writer's judgment; and it is quite possible that they met before 1672, granting, of course, that there was an important public meeting in that year, as the letter shows. As brought out in that

letter, Sivaji gave 200 gold coins to the Svami in 1659. During the years 1654-64, Ramdas had his headquarters at Sivthar, which was only a few miles from Raigatf, which Sivaji often visited. It is possible that the two may have met or have corresponded during these years of geographical proximity; and it is also reasonable to assume that the two knew a good deal about each other before the actual initiation took place. Yet, though the evidence for the 1672 date is weighty, the*¹ writer is not entirely convinced that the matter is definitely settled. If the testimony of the disciples is to be taken at its face value, the weight of the evidence is that they first met before 1672, and for the present there does not seem to be sufficient historical evidence to decide the matter one way or the other. The disciples themselves contradict each other, and the case for the later date rests so much upon the argument from silence, that it is not safe to reach final conclusions, pending further evidence.

Second, it is also clear, from an examination of all the documents, that the friendship between Sivaji and Ramdas was more in evidence during the later years. After his coronation the king's mind ran more in religious channels, and he came to value highly the shrewd wisdom of his chosen preceptor. The land grants and the government financial aid increased as the years passed. The increased leisure of the king, with the more settled life of the Svami, opened the way for the ripening of this friendship at Sajjangacl, and the letters which we possess to-day were written during these last years. The two had much in common, each admiring the other's qualities, and during the last year or two of the king's life, he counted a great deal upon the Svami's spiritual guidance.

Third, the influence of Ramdas over Sivaji was primarily spiritual, and only secondarily political. From the evidence at hand, it seems clear that Ramdas was not an important factor in Sivaji's political career; and, therefore, to make such a claim is not only unsupported by the historical evidence, but it is also unfair to Sivaji and the Svami. The Saint was supreme in the field of religion, and history must acknowledge his supremacy in that sphere

which he knew so well and filled so acceptably. To make him primarily a political teacher and secondly a religious teacher is to give the wrong emphasis, putting him in a category where he does not belong. It is true that, as time passed, his interest in affairs of state increased, doubtless stimulated by his admiration for Sivaji. The latter part of the *Dasbodh* contains much sound advice along political and social lines. Sivaji often sought the Svami's advice upon matters of state during his later years, and came to have a high regard for the Saint's wise, shrewd, intelligent observations. In this respect, the teaching of Ramdas *does* differ from that of Tukaram and the other bhaktas; yet, with all his emphasis upon the practical, Ramdas remained to the end of his life pre-eminently a spiritual teacher.

THE SVAMI'S CLOSING YEARS

In many ways the final years of Ramdas were a comfort and a joy. Surrounded by friends, his material wants supplied by a king who was a grateful disciple, with the knowledge that his spiritual movement had spread until it was a powerful factor in the religious life of Maharashtra, Ramdas had much to be thankful for. The Sajjangad arrangements were well organized, each disciple having a specified task, and all working together for the common welfare. The Pura^a service was entrusted to Vasudev Gosavi; Musalram's task was announcing and arranging for visitors ; Dattatraya Svami had the supervision of the granary; Akkabal had charge of the kitchen; and Anant Gosavi had the management of the kirtans. To Krishna was given the task of lamp-lighting, while Divakar was in charge of the idol worship. Many pilgrims visited the fort, Sivaji himself being a frequent guest, and during special occasions, such as the Ramanavami, as many as 5,000 people gathered upon the top of the hill.

In another sense, the final days of the aged Saint were sad, because of the departure, one by one, of those whom he loved. His devoted brother, Sreshth, who was a poet in his own right, died on the thirteenth of the dark half of

Phalgtina, saka 1599 (A.D. 1677), his wife, Parbati, dying two days later. In 1678 the two sons of Sreshth, Ratnji and Samjl, were brought from Jamb to visit the Svami, livifcg with him for a year and then returning home. Venabal, the faithful female disciple, and the only woman allowed to give kirtans, passed away upon the ninth of the dark half of Ashadha, Saka 1600 (A.D. 1678). The Diary tells how on the ninth of the bright half of Pausha, Saka 1601 (1679), Sivajl visited the Saint; and in the course of tie conversation Ramdas mentioned that his end was drawing near. Taking leave of the Svami, Sivajl journeyed to Raigad, where his death came very suddenly, due to exhaustion from a military venture. Taken sick with fever and pains, he grew rapidly worse, although everything was done for him. Realizing that his end was near, he summoned his ministers and gave them his final messages. After performing the last rites of religion, he passed away, April 5, 1680. His death was a great shock to Ramdas, who seemed to lose all interest in life. There is a letter, written in 1680 by Antaji GopaJ, containing certain instructions issued by the Svami and showing how deeply the latter grieved for the king.¹ It refers to the fact that Divakar had been sent to Raigad after Sivajfs death, returning later with Ragho Bhat, who requested the Svami to attend Sambhaji's coronation, and it describes the long lonely hours which Ramdas spent, mourning for the king. He also was pained by Sambhaji's excesses, as has been narrated previously.

The poem by Bhimasvami Sahapurkar gives the details of the death of Ramdas.² The latter had only lived in the new house at Sajjangad* built by Sivaji, for about ten months, when he announced that his end was drawing near. He stopped going out and spoke but little, one request being that idols should be installed on the north side of the math. Kalyas arrived there from his math at Pomgaon, and spent a few days with his guru, later returning to his adopted village. Ramdas lay upon a couch which Sivaji had presented to him, occasionally drinking milk but

otherwise eating nothing. It was the desire of his disciples that he should go to Chaphal, because the Paraji climate did not seem to agree with him; but he declined to do so, and the disciples acquiesced in his wishes, Akkabai and Uddhav being especially faithful in their ministrations. As he kept growing weaker, the disciples finally urged him to make arrangements about the management of the chief maths. Accordingly, he told them that the sons of his deceased brother should be brought from Jamb and the estate entrusted to their care, all the disciples being subject to their orders.¹ Thereupon Akkabai requested three disciples to go to Jamb, so as to comply with this request; but, according to Hanumant, no one went. When the Svami asked a week later why no one had come, they avoided giving him a direct answer. In spite of his growing feebleness, Ramdas had kept up his interest in the State, had sent Divakar to Sambhaji's coronation as his personal representative, and had sent a letter of remonstrance to the young king because of his vicious life, which, however, seemed to have little effect.

On the fifth of the dark half of Magha, four images which had been prepared by Raghunath Narayan Hanumant, at the request of Ramdas, were brought by Malhar Nimbdev. At midnight, the following night, the latter removed the wax from the eyes of the idols and the images were set up in the room where he slept. Four days later, the Svami arose early in the morning, put on his sandals, and sat with his face toward the north, after prostrating himself before the image and making his prayer. At the request of Jijoji Katkar, he drank a cup of sugar-water which Akkabai had prepared, the latter and Uddhav being the only disciples in the room. The last words of advice were that Akkabai and the others should read the *Dasbodh*, which was equivalent to talking with himself. While the two disciples were standing near him, Ramdas suddenly uttered the words 'Har, Hari' and the name * Rama' three times, looked toward the face of the image, and died. The disciples immediately went about their

¹ Hanumant, ch. xviii, p. 431, l. 7.

separate tasks, preparing for the funeral ceremonies. Ramchandrapant arrived with money which Sambhaji had sent for this purpose, and the Svami's body was burned, with *tulsi* sticks, according to the tradition; Uddhav Gosavi performing the funeral rites. A tomb was built where his body was burned, and his sandals were later placed upon it. A few days later, Sambhaji came to Sajjangad, and when he saw the small tomb, he ordered a temple to be built upon it at his own expense. The ashes of Ramdas were later dug up and taken to Benares.

CHAPTER IV

BIOGRAPHICAL LEGENDS

BIRTH STORIES

IN the Pomgaon math a poem has been found which possibly was written by Jagannath Maharaj, a disciple of Kalyan, and in which the birth story of Ramdas is narrated.¹ According to Mr. Dev, this story brings out nine chief points: (1) Suryajipant and Ranubai performed penance, so as to be blessed by the birth of a son. (2) In a dream the god Rama came to them and presented them with the idols of the members of his family, and two cocoanuts. (3) At Jambgaon they put up these images. (4) The name of the first son born to them was Rama (possibly Rami Ramdas comes from that). Other records state that the elder brother's name was Gangadhar. (5) Ramdas was born the same day that the god Rama was born. (6) Gangadhar or Sresht was favoured with a mantra by his father. (7) Narayan was displeased because he had received no mantra, and therefore went to Panchvati. (8) Narayan performed penance for twelve years, standing in a pool of water in the 'Ganges' (Godavari). (9) When the penance was over, Ramdas had a vision of Rama and then knew what his mission was to be.

The story is told differently by Mahipati, who says that Suryajipant worshipped the sun and spent twelve years in prostrating himself before the sun and muttering the name of the sun god. The sun was so pleased that he appeared before Suryajipant in person, saying, *I am pleased with you and will give you what you wish'; whereupon the worshipper asked for children. The sun gladly granted

this request, saying that two sons would be born to them, one to be an incarnation of himself, and the other to be an incarnation of Maruti and a world-saviour. When the younger son was born, there were twelve days of festivities, and the child's face shone with joy. At five months he sat up, and at two years he both walked and spoke. At five years of age he went to school for a year, after which he studied the *Veda* with the family priest. Once, when rebuked by his mother for his pranks, the lad said, 'My family is the whole universe!' One day he took a bucket of grain belonging to some farmers and carried it to his home. The farmers followed him and he returned it to them, multiplied many times. Both Mahipati and Giridhar assert that Narayaij as a boy showed the qualities of Maruti and even had a tail. He was so strong that he played with wrestlers, using round stones weighing two pounds each, and so intelligent that he learned how to keep accounts in eleven days.

THE VISION OF RAMA

In *Svdnubhava Dinkar*, written by the disciple Dinkar, there is a detailed description of the vision in which Rama appeared to Ramdas.¹ He is said to have appeared a number of times, but this particular appearance was when Ramdas was eleven years old. One day when the father had gone away to take his bath, and the lad was at home, a monkey came to him disguised as a servant, and brought him to a man and a woman dressed as Kshatriyas, sitting in a palanquin and surrounded by many attendants. After asking the boy where his father was, the man in the palanquin asked him to draw near, presenting him with a letter, upon which was the seal of Sri Rama. The boy became terrified and stood trembling, silent, gazing at the group. He alternately wept and cried for joy, marvelling at the group before him, for there he saw a beautiful form, with Sita sitting at the left and the brothers Lakshpaa\$ and Bharat behind, Hanuman standing in front. Putting his

¹ *Svanubhava Dinkar*, ch. xvi, sec. 4.

hand upon Narayaij's head, Sri Rama taught him the great words, *Tat tvatit asi*,¹ committing him to the care of Marutl. Rama also presented the lad with a cloth of red ochre colour, shining like lightning, which would prevent colds, and an arrow. After this vision, the place was plunged in darkness and the gods disappeared. In the meantime, when the father and brother returned home, they became terrified because of the report that Narayan had gone off with a monkey. Starting out to seek for him, they found him in a neighbouring forest, dazed and unable to speak. After they saw Sri Rama's seal upon the letter in Narayan's hand, their minds were at peace, because they realized that the god had appeared to the boy; and the lad himself observed a year of silence.

A FRIEND OF ANIMALS

There are a number of legends which describe the freedom with which Ramdas mingled among wild animals. He once went to a small village, a disciple going on ahead and warning the tigers to keep away because the Svami was coming. Whereupon the tigers obligingly left and, out of respect to the Svami, they have never returned to that place from that day to this. At another time he left strict instructions that under no consideration was he to be disturbed; but a group of people, disobeying this injunction, sought him out and found him sitting upon a lion. Again, when a tiger became too familiar with him, he caught it by the ears and rendered it helpless. Although the animals feared the Svami, they realized that he was their friend and were always glad to help him in time of need.

RAMDAS AND SIVAJI

In the household of Bapurao Upadhye, a song was heard which was composed by a woman named Gurubai.² It is reputed to be a very old song and tells how, when

* *Tat tvatk asi* is the great Advaita formula, meaning, *Thou art that.* 2 V.V., Vol. II, sec. 65.

Ramdas was sick, he asked, for some tiger's milk, but no one was willing to undertake the task of getting it. When Sivaji heard of it, he came to Chaphaj, and going out into the jungle, he found a female tiger. When he asked for some of her milk, she became very friendly, licked his hand and allowed him to milk her; after which he brought the milk to the Svami, who gratefully drank it,

A mischief-making Brahman once told the king that the Svami had wrong relations with women, and therefore Sivaji went to Sajjangacl to investigate the matter. The Brahman said that he saw two women with Ramdas by looking through a hole in the wall, but when Sivaji looked, instead of the two women, he saw two monkeys with the Svami. Becoming very angry, Sivaji prepared to punish the Brahman until dissuaded by the Saint, and this hole is still pointed out to curious visitors at Sajjangacl. At another time Venabai looked through a hole at Ramdas while he was eating and saw a monkey eating with him, and she heard the words, * Ram, Ram/ spoken. When the monkey realized that she was looking through the hole, it roared at her and she fainted.¹

Another story narrates how Sivaji was once hunting in the forest, but failed to find any game until, to his astonishment, he discovered that all the animals were with Ramdas.² He expressed the desire to stay and serve the Svami, provided the animals would not injure him. That evening, as Sivajfs clerk sat by the river bank, he saw leaves floating in the water with abhangs written upon them, and after obtaining some of them he took them to the king. Greatly taken with the sentiment upon the leaves, the latter sought for the author, believing that he would prove to be an ideal guru. Each day he returned to the same place and secured more of the leaves as they came floating down the river, until, finally, he saw Ramdas in the forest worshipping Maruti, after which Maruti disappeared. As Sivaji stood weeping, Ramdas instructed him to draw near; whereupon the king came forward

¹ Narrated by Bhimasvami fargavkar, p. 35, abhafig 73 (*Don Charitre*), * Mahipati, ch. iv, p. 36, v. 29,

and fell prostrate before the holy man. Much to Sivaji's dismay, Ramdas told him that his duty consisted in looking after the interests of his subjects, and that he should no longer neglect the kingdom or seek to become a religious devotee.

RAISING PEOPLE FROM THE DEAD

A number of such miracles are attributed to the Svami. Once when he came to a village he found that the patel¹ had died and his widow was preparing to perform *satu*². Restoring the man to life, the Svami passed on; but the widow, out of gratitude to him, decided to fast until she saw him again. Her desire was not fulfilled for about a month; after which both she and her husband became disciples.³ On another occasion when Sivaji was present, the Svami asked Bholaram to prepare and bring the pan supari.⁴ Unfortunately, Bholaram was the victim of a plot laid by some of the disciples, who were jealous of him and had concealed the mortar, in which Bholaram used to prepare the betel-nut leaves, because Ramdas had poor teeth and was not able to chew them properly. Finally, in desperation, Bholaram chewed it himself, after which he presented it to Ramdas who was highly pleased with it. When the Svami heard of the plot, he decided to give his disciple an object lesson and again called for the mortar. Unable to comply with the request, Bholaram took a knife in his right hand and cut off his head. From the neck came the words, 'Here is the pan supari and the mortar also.' When Sivaji took the head to the Svami, the latter took the preparation from the mouth of the dead, eating it with great enjoyment, and then, instructing Sivaji to put the head back on the body, the following words were heard,⁴ 'Turned aside a little, thus is God's desire!'—and Bholaram was himself again.

¹ The chief official in the village.

² Committing suicide by being burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre.

³ Narrated by Bhlmasvami Sirgavkar, p. 4, abhang 7S (*!on Ckaritre*).

* Hanumant, ch. x, p. 188.

RAMDAS AT PANDHARPUR

One day Ramdas was seated by the bank of the Krishna river when a group of Varkaris¹ passed by on their way to Par^dharpur. When they requested the Svami to accompany them, he declined, saying that Sri Rama was the only God whom he knew.² Vithoba felt grieved that Ramdas was unwilling to go to Paridharpur; and, therefore, disguised as a Brahman, he himself came to the bank of the Krisrma river, where he explained to the Svami that there was no real difference between Krisrma and Rama, both being the one true God. Hearing this, Ramdas volunteered to go along with the Brahman, journeying with him until they reached the sacred city, where the Svami bowed to the idol of Maruti, which inquired the reason for his visit there. The latter replied that Rama and Krisrma were the same and that he was there at the advice of Sri Rama, whereupon the Svami expressed the desire to see Vithoba in the form of Rama. When the image was seen to be changed in appearance, all those present were astonished, and learning that it was Ramdas who had changed the form of their Vithoba, they fell prostrate before him, beseeching him to restore their idol to them, which he graciously consented to do.

LIVING UNDER WATER

The Svami once spent the night in a temple of Siva near the Krishna river, where Rama appeared to him in a dream, telling him to rescue an ancient idol which lay in a neighbouring pool.³ The next day Ramdas plunged into the river and remained three days, coming out at midnight of the third day, and bringing the idol of Rama to Chaphal, where he established it. The people in the vicinity were disappointed to think that the idol had been taken to ChaphaJ, but were appeased when Ramdas presented them with a banner and a pole. Once a man went to the saint for spiritual instruction, and was told to read the

¹ Those who worship Vithoba, the idol at Pandharpur.

² Hantimant, ch. ix, pp. 155-56.

³ Bbimasvami Sirgavkar, p. 12, abhafig 24 (*Don Charitre*).

*Dds&odA.*¹ As the two walked through the woods together, they stopped near a well and the inquirer, after climbing a tree, accidentally fell into the well. When he reached the bottom of the well, he saw Ramdas sitting in his math, teaching a disciple. On being pulled out, he narrated this to Ramdas. Another story tells how Jairam and Ramdas together went to the bottom of a well and sat in meditation, the latter coming out three days later to go to Chaphal.² When asked where Jairam was, he remembered that he was still in the water. Consequently, he returned to the well and brought Jairam out by the help of a wooden cradle.

BODILY TRANSFORMATIONS

One day Ramdas and Jairam were walking in the jungle, when the former announced his determination to dig a hole for a residence.³ They proceeded to dig, after Jairam had brought the necessary tools, when suddenly a landslide of earth completely covered Ramdas, who disappeared from view. Unable to rescue his master, Jairam returned to Sahapur, weeping as he walked; but his sorrow turned into joy and astonishment when he found Ramdas in Sahapur. In one passage it is stated that Ramdas took the form of the wind,⁴ and in another reference it is stated that, when *in* the form of Maruti, he was seen by some Muhammadans who fainted from fear.⁵

RAISING ANIMALS FROM THE DEAD

Ramdas was able to restore animals to life, as, for example, when he brought back the horse of Raiiganath Svami. One day, while walking along with a sling in his hand, he hit a leaf which a disciple held up in front of him.⁶

¹ Mahipati, ch. xii, v. 57.

² Bhimasvaml Sirgavkar, p. 26, abhaug S3 (*Don Charitre*).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25, abhang 52 (*Don Charitre*).

* *Pratap*, ch. xix, p. 118, v. 22. • *Ibid.*, ch. xix, p. 123, v. 75.

* Mahipati, ch. vi, p. 67, vs. 181-83.

The disciple held up another leaf, behind which was a bird; and, when Ramdas hit the leaf, the bird was accidentally killed, causing a great *furore* among the Brahmans, who pointed the finger of accusation against the Svami. Wrapping the bird up in a piece of cloth, Ramdas brought it to the critical Brahmans and asked them to restore it to life. When they admitted their inability to do this, he poured a little water upon the bird from the Kfish\$ river, with the result that it came to life, settled on his shoulder and then flew away. Hanumant tells of a Brahman's cow at Mahuli which was so wild that it had to be kept tied to a post.¹ One day the man's wife took the cow to the river for water, but it broke away and ran into the forest. Although she ran after it as fast as she could, she was unable to catch it, the cow finally jumping over a cliff to the river bank below, where it was instantly killed. Ramdas, who sat near-by, heard the woman's weeping and told Kalyaii to go over and milk the cow. After reaching the cow, Kalyan told it to rise, and the cow immediately got up. When the milking was finished, the cow walked over to the Svami, who told the woman to take it home.

INTELLECTUAL MIRACLES

There are a number of legends telling of the wonderful mental feats by both Ramdas and his disciples. He is said to have written the entire *Dasbodh* in twenty-four hours, and also to have written the *Ramayaria* sections in one night.² Even Kalyan was able to make a complete copy of the *Dasbodh* in a single night. Hanumant tells of the Sanskrit scholar, Sadagiv Yevalkar, who came to Sivajfs court in the hope of acquiring prestige.³ When Ganga Pandit declined to cross swords with the visitor, the lot fell upon Ramdas, who happened to be at Chaphal. Therefore Sada&v and Ganga set out to find him. After their formal meeting, the Svami said that he was neither a scholar nor

¹ Hanumant, ch. xiv, pp. 338-40.

² BhimasvamI Sirgavkar, p. 59, abhang 119 (*Don Chartre*).

* Hanumant, ch. xiii, pp. 296-99.

a student of the *Purasa*, and so was unqualified to answer the questions. Sada^v insisted, however, whereupon Ramdas called to a passing wood-seller, who happened to be a Mahan¹. The latter answered, at the request of Ramdas, all the pandit's questions, much to the latter's shame and humiliation, the pandit finally prostrating himself before the Svami and asking for his pardon. Mahipati tells of a barber who became a Ramdasi,² and who became so learned that he was able even to teach Brahmans, being buried like a sannyasi³ when he died.

THE SVAMI'S INTIMACY WITH GODS

There are numerous references which tell of Ramdas fraternizing with both Maruti and Rama. Since Ramdas was supposed to be an incarnation of Maruti, it is not surprising that many incidents are told in which the two are together, such as the pilgrimage to the Himalaya mountains, when the god presented Ramdas with a helmet, cloak, red garments, amulet, sandals and *kuberdi* (sword-stick).⁴ During one of the Svami's visits to his mother, she requested him to show her Sri Rama. Ramdas asked Rama to grant his mother's request; and, as an answer to his prayer, Rama, accompanied by Sita, Lakshman and Maruti, appeared before his mother in bodily form.⁵ It is said that Ramdas dined with Rama and Sita upon several occasions, and also with Maruti alone.

MIRACULOUS POWER OF THE DISCIPLES

An interesting incident is told about Jairam Svami, who was first a devotee of Vithoba.⁶ The latter god appeared to him *in a dream*, telling him to go to Vadgaon, where he

¹ One of the outcaste groups.

* Mahipati, ch. xxi, p. 256, v. 152.

* A Hindu ascetic who has cast off all worldly possessions.

* Hanumant, ch. ii, p. 39.

* *Ibid*, ch. iv, p. 56.

⁶ Bhlmasvaml iSargavkar (*Don Charitre*), pp. 21, 23, abhangs 43.47.

would find Kjish^appa, who would become his guru. The latter told him that, since his second wife was of low caste, he was not qualified to be his guru; but that, nevertheless, he would give him a mantra. When Klish\$appa was dying, he sent Jairam to Ramdas. Unfortunately, Jairam had been excommunicated by the Brahmans, because his former guru had not been a Brahman ; and they held a dinner party to which he was not invited. During the dinner, Jairam began to think about Ramdas; and the power of his thought was such that all the sacred threads of the Brahmans disappeared while they sat at dinner. As a result of this they became greatly ashamed of their attitude toward Jairam; and, going to the Svami, they procured their sacred threads. Once when Ramdas was the guest of Ranganath Svami, he found his host clad in fine apparel, with a bow and arrow in his hands, because it was the anniversary of a certain holy man.¹ Pointing to a lark flying in the sky, Ramdas asked him to hit it, which he did, bringing it down with a single arrow. The Svami then rebuked him for killing the bird ; and immediately Ranganath ran his fingers over the dead bird, which came to life and flew away. The Svami took this occasion to remind Ranganath that he should dress and live as simply as possible, keeping in close touch with the people at all times.

CURING PHYSICAL AILMENTS

Hanumant tells the incident in which Ramdas visited his mother and found her practically blind; but, when he touched her eyes with his fingers, her sight was instantly restored. At another time, the Svami arose in the middle of the night, calling for pan supari, and was disappointed when the disciples were unable to find any. Since he was unwilling to eat the nut fragments without the leaves, Kalyan started out in the pitch dark to go to a neighbouring village, where he could procure some leaves; but he had gone only a short distance when he stepped upon a black snake, which turned and bit him. Kalyagi fell down,

¹ HanumaPt, ch. x, pp. 191-97 ; ch. xiv, p. 336.

calling out in a loud voice, 'Jai jai, Raghuvir Samartha f¹ Ramdas heard the cry from where he was sitting, and immediately ran out to where Kalyar; had fallen. Running his hand over Kalyar/s body from head to foot, he said, * Kalyan, arise f; and the latter got up. He would have started out again, had not the Svami told him that the leaves were no longer necessary.

One day the Svami started out for Ramesvar, accompanied by Bhikaji, Akkabai and Venabai; and they stopped at the village of Chikodi, where a Brahman named Tinnajipant Deshpande became a disciple.² After Staying with him for five days, they resumed their journey, but, before leaving, they presented him with the five images of Rama, Sita, Lakshma\$, Bharat and Satrughna. A few days later, as the evening shadows fell, the Brahman was bitten by a snake just as he stepped out of the house. Going back into the house, and picking up a lute, he began to sing the abhangs of Ramdas. While he was singing, suddenly at midnight, all the five images became black, and his pain disappeared. When he saw that the five images had absorbed the poison which was in his body, causing them to change in colour, he vowed that he would not rise until they had resumed their original colour. He sat there, singing the abhangs, until sunrise, when, to his great joy, he found that the idols had their normal colour.

BURNING A CITY

Once when Ramdas was on his way to Sajjanga<l with a group of disciples, he came to a forest where he told the disciples to go to a neighbouring town and beg alms; he, Uddhav and Kalyaij remaining behind in a mango grove.⁸ As soon as the disciples started to enter the town, they were stopped by a police officer at the gate, who took away their begging sticks and wallets, telling them to leave immediately. In vain was the protest of the inhabitants of

¹ Victory to Sri Rama, the all-powerful otie.

² Hanumant, ch. xi, p. 234. ² *Ibid.*, ch. x, pp. 201-3.

the town, who told the official that these men were Ramdas; the man was obdurate. In the meantime, it was discovered that a monkey, with a torch in hand, was going from house to house and setting fire to the whole city. Whereupon all the inhabitants of the city, including the police official himself, went to the Svami, and, falling prostrate before him, asked for his forgiveness. This he gladly gave; and when the throng of people got back to the city, they found that the fire had been extinguished, the same monkey (Maruti) now going about with a pot in hand, putting water upon it.

THE BRAHMANS AND THE COOKING POT

One day Ramdas went to Matapur to see the idol Dattatraya, and while there he asked some Brahmans why they were performing penances, their reply being that they desired to see the god Dattatraya in person.¹ After a few days, Dattatraya appeared disguised as a holy man, together with his wife (maya),² his three sons (the three properties),³ six goats (the six enemies, namely, passion, anger, greed, temptation, pride, jealousy), twenty-five chickens and a buffalo. When they entered the temple, the religious mendicant told his wife to prepare food, and she proceeded to make a fire, but when everything was ready, she asked what she was to put into the pot. At her husband's direction, she put in the chickens, then the goats, the three sons, the buffalo, and still it was not filled. The husband told her to cut up the Brahmans who were present, putting them into the pot; but they fled for their lives as soon as they heard it, Ramdas, Uddhav and Kalyari alone remaining. As the woman advanced with the knife, they told her to cut off their heads. In the twinkling of an eye, both woman and pot disappeared; in their place the god Dattatraya standing forth in all his glory. He said that the Brahmans were not true worshippers, but when the Svami besought him to have mercy upon them, he graciously yielded. After

³ Hanumant, ch. x, pp. 209-12.

² Illusion, as taught by the Vedanta Philosophy.

⁸ The three component parts which compose the universe.

the Brahmans returned he told them that since there was no difference between himself and Ramdas, they should worship the Svami at all times.

THE PERFECTION OF HIS CHARACTER

As in the case of many other Indian saints, the virtues of Ramdas were so great, according to the stories, that they even aroused the jealousy of the gods. One story by Mahipati is that the gods became actually afraid of him, and therefore decided to test him, sending a heavenly damsel, named Mohini, down to earth.¹ To assist her she took the god of spring and of love along with her, but the Svami, intent upon his devotions, paid no attention to her, continuing to think only of Sri Rama. Finally, when he had rebuked her for her evil desire, she became ashamed and left him, the gods meanwhile showering him with flowers in testimony of his saintliness.

A WONDER WORKER

Numerous incidents describe his miraculous power to cope with any given situation. During his boyhood, the patel at Jamb had complained that the Brahmans, spending all their time in worship, had neglected hospitality and there was no suitable guest house (*dharmcJdla*) for visitors to stay in.² Therefore Narayan took eight wrestlers to the forest that night, cut trees, built the walls, and by morning the house was ready to receive guests. Bhimasvami Sirgavkar describes how Ramdas once desired to give presents to a group of Brahmans on the bank of the Krishna river, and being without money he gave a small stone to each one. The faithful kept the stones until they reached home, where they found that each stone had turned into a golden coin. Hanumant tells an amusing story in which Ramdas saved a ship from sinking.⁸ Sivajl had gone to Chaphal

¹ Mahipati, ch. iii, p. 28, v. 46.

² *Pratap.* ch. ii, p. 10, vs. 31-32.

⁸ Hanumant, ch. xiii, p. 304,

^o present Ramdas with some costly garments. While they were talking together the king noticed that the Svams garments were wet, and to his astonishment, he discovered (hat they were wet with salt water. Asking him to note the date, Ramdas expressed his confidence that fifteen days feter everything would be made plain. After returning fifteen days hence, Sivaji found a merchant named Munje, from Rajapur, with the Svami. His story was that his ship, Uden with goods, was suddenly found to be sinking, and in desperation he prayed to Ramdas that his ship, with all its passengers, might be saved. His prayer was answered and therefore he had arrived to present the Svami with one-f purth of his goods as a thank-offering.

A short incident, narrated by Giridhar, says that a proud disciple once saluted the Svami disrespectfully, using only one finger; and as a result his body was covered with boils.¹ When another worshipper brought false cocoanuts to Ramdas, he was chagrined to find that they had been turned into cocks.² A number of times Ramdas is said to have fed multitudes without any preparation. When a certain man brought false sugar and betel-nut leaves to the Svami, to his astonishment, the genuine articles appeared. As a warrior, Ramdas proved his greatness by defeating an army of Muhammadans single-handed.⁸ Hanumant says that Ramdas and Sivaji used to meet every Thursday; and once, when the king was thirsty, the Svami pushed a stone aside with his kuberdi, and fresh water began to bubble up from the earth, Sivaji gratefully drinking his fill.⁴ In these and other ways, the Svami revealed his miraculous powers, which seemed capable, according to tradition, of dealing with almost any situation.

¹ *Pratap*, ch. xii, p. 75, v. 22.

² *Ibid.*, p. 75, v. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111, v. 36.

* *Hanumant*, ch. viii, pp. 131-32.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGY AND COSMOGONY OF RAMDAS

(A) THEOLOGY

Introduction

IT is difficult to present the teachings of Ramdas as a connected whole, because of the wide variety of topics which he discussed and the varied sources from which he drew his ideas. In constructing his religious and social philosophy of life, he showed a certain amount of originality, that made him distinctive among the saints of Maharashtra. As has been previously stated, some of his views were inconsistent with each other and cannot be harmonized. Ramdas is remembered by some as a bhakta like Ramananda, Tukaram or Chaitanya, but this phase of his teaching is not so well known as certain other phases. To a large number he is a Vedantist and a faithful follower of Sankara, the great commentator on the Vedanta *sUtras* of Badarayana. To a still larger number, possibly, Ramdas is the great example of a poet-politician, a saint who blended with his religious teachings a shrewd common-sense and interest in everyday affairs. In this and the succeeding chapter, an effort will be made to present the teachings of the great Svami in a general outline, and to analyse the more important features.

A Vedantist

In his Vedantic teaching Ramdas was a follower of the Advaita philosophy, being familiar with the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*. While he taught these doctrines with many minor variations, yet he did not depart from the emphasis laid down by Sankara concerning the great

principles of the Advaita path. In short, he accepted Sankara's interpretation of religious and philosophical truth, as it came to him through other writers, without attempting to change it to suit his own convenience or desire. Like other Vedantists, he felt that the real can only be reached by emptying one's self of the world.¹ According to this doctrine, God is pure Being, Intelligence and Bliss; but even these words fail to describe him (Brahman), because he is above description, a being that is both immanent and transcendent. Said Ramdas, *Parabrahma is everywhere, pervading all. Whether one be sitting or walking, he is in the presence of Parabrahma. All creation is wrapped up in him and he cannot be compared to any other thing. He is nameless, invisible, and beyond the imagination. He pervades all the worlds, including Vishnu's heaven, Siva's mountain, Indra's world, the fourteen worlds, the lower regions of the serpents and all other places. Although single, he invades the entire universe at one and the same time.' In various parts of the *Dasbodh* and in his miscellaneous poems, Ramdas enlarges upon this theme, and by many illustrations he seeks to teach his disciples that there is only one reality, namely, Brahman. In his Verses to the Mind, Ramdas tells of *Brahman, the form of which cannot be known by the mind, and which is without a second. All illustrations fail to supply a symbol, for in him there is neither attachment nor detachment, and he cannot be described by the *Vedas*, *Sastras* or *Puranas*. He is neither visible nor invisible, and is without a witness, even the Srutis being ignorant of the end of Brahman.² In the seventh chapter of the *Dasbodh*, section three, Ramdas says that there are fourteen forms of Brahman, namely, sound, the syllable Om, the sky, the elements of the universe, world energy, spiritual power, all that witnesses to spiritual power, the one with attributes, the one without attributes, that which can be uttered, that which can be communicated, bliss, that which is in harmony with Brahman, and that which cannot be uttered.

* Macnicol, p. 60.

⁸ *Mattache Sloka*, Nos. 192,193.

Along with the doctrine of the one infinite, unknowable, all-pervading God, goes the complementary doctrine of Maya, as developed by Safikara and taught by Ramdas. If Brahman is the only reality, then logically the visible world is not real, and as the Svami says, it is only fancy that causes us to believe in the reality of the visible world 'What is seen by the eye does not last eternally, and that which is involved in sudden changes disappears in the course of time. Later on all will go away and nothing remain; therefore, O mind, seek the everlasting and eternal truth. That which cannot be broken or shaken or removed is beyond the reach of consciousness. That Being which exists in one form cannot tolerate the thought of duality; therefore, O mind, seek the everlasting and eternal One.

The question now arises, If all the visible world is merely illusion, and Brahman alone is real, then how can one hope to be saved and attain unto reality? The answer is that God is found by the path of knowledge, and when one reaches the point where he can say, * I am Brahman,' then he passes beyond this world of illusion and is absorbed into Brahman. Only by knowledge can the truth be known that the human soul *is* the Supreme Soul, the material universe being but the product of the imagination. 'If seen in the world, this Brahman cannot be known by the physical eye, but only by the eye of knowledge; and while seeing, the very act of seeing goes away. O mind, seek for the eternal and abiding truth.*² In the Svami's opinion, it was no easy thing to reach this coveted goal. Said he: * It is egoism (*ahajfokara*) which produces divisions in that which is indivisible, and it is this very egoism which whispers " I am Brahman " when to say it is nothing but fancy. Only by discrimination, experience and the giving up of desire can Brahman be realized; and to have this experience one must be in harmony with the soul. By pondering our experiences over and over, we should first know ourselves, and then only can we obtain real knowledge⁸

* *Manache Sloka*, Nos. 146,147.

³ *Ibid.*, No. 149.

⁸ *Ddsdodh*, ch. ix, sec. 2.

To know that 'thou art that' (*toi ivaih asi*) means the release of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths, the liberation not merely from the world of illusion, but also from punishment and fate, the hopeless round of existences in which former sins are expiated. Like Brahman, one becomes separated from all action, both good and bad, and is above time and change. Realization of one's unity with Brahman arises from revealed knowledge. It is the achievement of the desire to be free from the burden of life and from the sorrows of this world. It was the doctrine of rebirth and *karma* which led to the emphasis upon salvation. Men began to realize the contrast between the world, on the one hand, with its pain and sorrow, transmigration and expiation of former sins, in a never-ending chain of unfortunate births; and, on the other hand, the Supreme Soul. Hence every Hindu's heart became filled with a passionate longing to be free. Ramdas taught, 'A wise man is not to be known by his bodily form, because he is Brahman himself and therefore is without birth or death. . . . Once in unity with Brahman, he cannot be man again. As a piece of burnt cloth cannot be unfolded, or as the different currents of a river cannot be separately distinguished, so the wise who know themselves to be one with Brahman become eternal and are free from birth and death/¹

A *Bhakta*

Some have an impression that Ramdas was not a bhakta, inasmuch as he did not belong to the Panflharpur movement and the Vedantic note in his teaching was so pronounced. This impression is erroneous, however, and a study of the Svami's poetry reveals that he was no less devoted to Rama than others were to Vitljoba. He is fully entitled to be classed as a Vaishnavite bhakta, although it must be freely admitted that his teachings were not so exclusively along the line of bhakti as either the Pan<i>iharpur or Chaitanya movements. While he neither broke through the caste system, nor taught personal salvation in the exclusive bhakti sense, yet the bhakti element

¹ *D&sbodh*, ch. ix, sec. 3.

in the RamdasI sect has always been very important. The Verses Imploring Mercy (*Karurpdshtake*) and the Verses to the Mind are the sections of the Svami's poetry which emphasize the bhakti strain most clearly. As Ramdas meditated on Rama, his mind became distressed, and in the consciousness of sin, he yielded his heart in repentance. 'O Rama, every day I have been consumed by repentance and my unsteady mind cannot be restrained. O thou who art merciful to the poor, remove from me this maya which produces illusion, and hasten to me; for without thee I become fatigued. I have spent all my life without worshipping thee, and have regarded friends and wealth with selfishness and envy. O Lord of the Raghus, grant me a mind like thine, so that in giving up all I may cling to thee in faith. Happiness cannot be obtained by satisfying the passions, and without thee, O Lord of the Raghus, everything is vain. Bless me, therefore, with thy goodness and remove all my sin, so that I may be filled with Brahman'¹

In these and other verses the bhakti doctrine is clearly expressed. Rama is the loving god who saves his humble, penitent worshipper from sin, worldly evils and the cycle of rebirths. Salvation is obtained by the genuineness of devotion and faith, rather than by knowledge or ascetic practices. Again and again, the Svami emphasizes his need of Rama and the hopelessness of life without him. * Throughout crores of births my heart has been burning; therefore, O Rama, overpower me with the flood of thy mercy and remove from me the obstruction of the Six Enemies, thus bringing me satisfaction in my distress. O Rama, except for thee, who will know of my piteous condition? O lion, hasten to me as I, exhausted, wait upon thee; for without thee, horrible desires lead me astray'²

The thought in these verses covers a wide range, from the pessimistic note of helplessness to the sense of gratitude for favours which have been granted by Rama. Although the positive, victorious theme is less noticeable than that of humble need, it is none the less present. * I have often

¹ *Karunashtake*, Dhulia ed., No. 147.

* *IM*, Dhulia ed., No. 147.

committed sins which thou hast forgiven, O Lord of the Raghus. How many virtues of thine am I to remember, and how shall we repay our obligation to thee? Thou dost profess to be Lord of the needy, and this profession of thine has proved to be true. Thou hast given several kinds of happiness and thou knowest what is in my inmost heart. Thy natural kindness has fulfilled all my desires; therefore, powerful one, how shall we repay our obligation to thee? Das says that as thou hast saved the devotees, so save me, that my end may be happy. O powerful one, how shall we repay our obligation to thee? ¹

In speaking of Rama as the cool shade, Ramdas emphasizes that salvation is to be found in him alone. 'In the world, wisdom cannot be seen; and Rama's form, although it is near, yet it cannot be recognized. The unsteady mind cannot be made steady, neither can pride be overcome. O Lord of the universe, fate can be averted only by thee.'² Again, he says that there are many gods but only one true God, who alone must be worshipped; thus approaching the theistic position. 'There are various kinds of gods whom men seek in this world, some metal, some stone, and some earthen, but how can we consider anything which is destructible to be God? Only the real God should have our respectful recognition. Many gods have been subject to birth and death, and numerous gods will be born in the future just as they have been in the past; but gods which can be destroyed are false, and the real God alone should receive our respectful recognition.'³ In this passage Ramdas seems to speak neither as an idolater nor as a Vedantist, but as a thoroughgoing theist, although even here there may be certain Vedantic conceptions clinging to his thought.

Salvation

A large portion of the Svami's poetry deals with this general theme; salvation by knowledge and salvation by

¹ *Karunashtake*, Dhulia ed., No. 3. ² *Ibid.*, Dhulia ed., No. 141.
³ *Ibid.*, Dhulia ed., No. 7.

faith having already been discussed. In certain sections, he also taught salvation by works (*Karma Marga*) with its four stages, for the attainment of salvation (*mokṣa* or *mukti*). These are *salokata*, or living in the neighbourhood of the Supreme Spirit (*Paramatman*); *samffiaia*, or nearness to God; *sarupatd*, or likeness to God, reflecting his glory; and, fourthly, *sayujyata*, or absorption in God. He taught that to win moksa one must be freed from the ' states of the soul/ namely, the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep-sleep state and the resignation state; until one has attained the state of being absorbed into Brahman. In one place he referred to the seeker as passing through the three steps, of hearing, of thinking, and of meditating deeply, before attaining release. One of the most frequent classifications he used for the spiritual pilgrim was a fourfold one, namely, *baddha*, or confined to this world; *mumukfu*, or desiring release; *sadhaka*, or achieving release; and *siddha*, or release achieved.

The baddha is like a blind man groping in the darkness, unable to distinguish between good and bad, the fit and the unfit, action or inaction, reality or illusion. Such a man is devoid of knowledge and has neither mental peace nor the sense of forgiveness. He may be talkative, passionate, proud, angry, contemptuous, cruel, greedy, or lazy; and intent upon worldly associations, he may give himself up to unworthy pursuits.¹ The mumuksu is the one who, upon hearing the Sastras, repents and begins to loathe his worldly enjoyments, desiring to be freed from it all. He admits his past sins, his selfishness, pride and hypocrisy, and is eager to seek the company of good persons who will be instrumental in securing his release. His mental attitude is one of deep humiliation, and he passes his time in soul-discipline and in the search for holy places.² The sadhaka is one who has cast off his bad habits or worldly ties, spending his time in the company of good persons and realizing the importance of self-wisdom. Such a one has risen above evil practices, egoism, doubts and fears. By his own efforts he realizes that the world is

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. v, sec. 7.

* *Ibid.*, ch. v, sec. 8.

false and that Brahman alone is real. His physical body loses all control over his spirit, and the karma of evil actions no longer holds sway. Neither dejected, idle, nor swayed by sense-desire, he lives a pure life, with his thoughts fixed upon those things which are good.¹ The siddha is the one who is at rest in God, with all doubts removed and all attachments severed. For such a one the body has no existence, as he lives in Brahman; he *is* Brahman.² In still another section, in the seventh chapter of the *Dasbodh* Ramdas speaks of there being three kinds of salvation: namely, freedom from this body; freedom from this life; and freedom for eternity.

From the foregoing it is evident that to Ramdas the path of the spiritual pilgrim was a long and arduous one, and salvation was no easy, quiet, passive process. It required severe renunciation and a determination to sever one's self from all worldly ties and complications which only served to keep one apart from God. It also entailed rigid mental concentration, so that the devotee might discriminate carefully between the good and the bad, the true and the false. Religious acts had their value, but they were considered to be but the external manifestation of the *spiritual Hie* of the seeker, and this was considered to be the important thing, according to the teaching of the Dnyana-marga (Salvation by Knowledge) as given by Ramdas. Death was a purely physical concept to Ramdas, and related primarily to the disintegration of the human body, without any permanent relationship to the soul, which immediately entered into another body or achieved final release by being absorbed into Brahman. This absorption was heaven itself, and no one could wish for any higher bliss or satisfaction. To fail to win this release and to continue to be bound by the endless chain of rebirths, was to suffer the punishment which every Hindu dreaded.

Devotion and Faith

In discussing the nine kinds of devotion, Ramdas generally used the language of the bhakta or of the lower know-

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. v, sec. 9. ² *Ibid.*, ch. v, sec. 10.

ledge,' rather than that of the pantheist and the 'higher knowledge/ He was reflecting the spirit of Vaishnavism and the *Gita*. It was the realm of prayer and penitence rather than that of renunciation and mental concentration. The nine kinds of devotion are: Hearing (*sravana*), kirtans or musical services, remembering God (*smaraipa*), serving the guru's feet (*padasevana*), worship (*archana*), salutation (*vandana*), service (*dasya*), friendship (*sakya*), and finally, offering of the self (*dtmanivedarpa*). The Svami discussed these various kinds of devotion in much detail. He believed that no one could hope to worship God without listening to the stories from the sacred scriptures, which revealed the riches of spiritual knowledge. Much of his preaching was done through the medium of the kirtan, which held a high place in his esteem, and which from time immemorial has been the natural method by which Hindu religious poets have sung the praises of God. Remembering and muttering God's name must have been of great importance to Ramdas, inasmuch as he refers to them continually, both in the *Ddsbodh* and in his miscellaneous poems. 'O mind, do not relinquish this name because of jealousy, but rather meditate upon it continually, with due respect; for it is the very essence among all things, and nothing can be compared with it.'¹ 'There are several names, but none can be compared with that of Rama, although this cannot be known by the man who is wretched or unfortunate. If Sankar, the Lord of Parvati, took this name as a remedy for poison, then what of men ?'²

Serving the feet was a mode of devotion directed primarily toward the teacher or *sadguru* who, Ramdas believed, was absolutely essential *in* the attainment of salvation. It was the *sadguru* or good teacher who pointed the way and revealed the means by which the pilgrim might hope to attain the coveted goal, be it the merging of the soul with Brahman or spiritual fellowship with Rama. The devotion of worship was directed mainly toward the *saguna* idol (the god with qualities as opposed to the abstract Brahman), and was regularly prescribed in the Sastras.

* *Manache Sloka*, No. 81. ² *Ibid.*, No. 82.

It also consisted of reverence for saintly persons **and** the worship of the family deity, whoever that happened to be. Salutation meant that the worshipper should prostrate himself before the idols and before the guru, and before all other persons who by their wisdom or saintliness merited such adoration. The worshipper should be ready at all times to render whatever services might be required, either in the temple or at home and during anniversaries, festivities and important religious functions. Friendship, the eighth devotion, is important, because it shows that Ramdas regarded Rama not simply as an all-powerful god or as saviour, but also as a friend who found satisfaction in the friendship of the devotee. Self-consecration, or the ninth devotion, was stressed by the Svami as a matter of supreme moment, and was applicable both to the bhakta and to the Vedantist.

In dealing with the teaching of Ramdas about God, it is difficult to draw the line between pantheism and idolatry on the one hand, and between idolatry and theism on the other. When swayed by his Vedantic conceptions, he criticized idolatry as unworthy and said that gods of metal or stone were perishable.¹ Yet as a bhakta of Rama, he established a number of shrines for Rama and Maruti in different places. Said he, 'The one who neglects to worship the idol (God with qualities) because he considers himself well versed in the knowledge of Brahman (God without qualities), will eventually be deprived of both.'² Yet it is hard to believe that the devotional verses of the Svami were directed toward the idol alone, without any higher conception. At times he must have approached the theistic position, and thought of Rama as a spiritual God rather than as a piece of stone. On the other hand, he accepted idolatry and made it one of the cardinal features of the Ramdasi sect. He taught that there were four classes of deities, namely, idols, incarnations (*avatars*), God in the human soul, and the Supreme Spirit (Brahman).⁸ Hence it is evident that the Svami believed in all of these four

* *ManOche Sloka** No. 176. 2 *Dasbodh*, ch. x, sec. 7.

³ *Ddsbodh*, ch. xi, sec. 2.

dasses; although his emphasis was not always the same. To him the idols were sacred images and divine in themselves. Yet he also thought of Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu and a personal spiritual God, the object of his devotional verses. As the *Gita* magnified the Lord Krishna, so, to Ramdas, Sri Rama was the lord of his life. Whether he consistently drew a distinction between Rama the idol and Rama the hero-god is an open question. Although he may have done so at times, yet, in the writer's opinion, he attributed miraculous qualities to the idol itself, taught his followers to pray to it, and therefore was a supporter of idolatry, as many references show. It was chiefly when he was carried away by his enthusiasm for salvation by knowledge that he stressed the uselessness of idol-worship. At most other times he accepted it as a useful aid in the daily religious routine.

(B) COSMOGONY

The Primary Substances

Like his theology, the Svami's cosmogony is not always consistent, and it is sometimes difficult to know what his exact teaching is in regard to the origin and the construction of the universe. In the main, like the *Gita*, he accepted the Samkhya theories concerning the universe, together with certain ideas from the Vedanta, and developed them with illustrations of his own, taking certain liberties with the original Sāiikhya theories. He mentions the two eternal existences, namely, original nature (*prakṛti*), and spirit (*puruṣa*), but he speaks of them as the product of *mulamdyd*, which is the creation of Brahman, and is like the ether that permeates the universe. Said he, 'As the air is to the sky, so is mujamaya to Brahman; and in it are the five elements and the three qualities. The seed of the banyan tree contains the tree within it, though it cannot be found within it if the seed be broken. What is hidden is sure to come to light, however, and this is true of mujamaya, from which comes the expansion of the universe, and in which are two elements. In the immovable sky we can sense the movement of the wind which iṣ

nature (prakriti) and within the wind is the life energy or soul (purusha) which is like God himself. From this wind are produced the three qualities : goodness (*saitw*), energy (*rajas*), and darkness (*tamas*).¹¹

The Order of Creation

This order is explained by the Svami as follows: Brahman, mujamaya, the three qualities, the five elements, the four creations, the four tongues, and the eighty-four lakhs (8,400,000) of living creatures.² This is how the process develops, 'From Brahman is born the mujamaya, existing in the form of wind and consisting of the five elements and the three properties. Space creates wind, wind creates fire, fire creates water, water creates earth, and the latter produces mankind and the various living creatures. In this earth are various kinds of stones, which are the symbols of numerous deities; and these deities exist in the form of life-energy, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible. The wind that we feel is of one nature, and the latent life-energy within is of another nature. From the wind, light is produced, both hot and cold; and this leads to fire, lightning, and the sun; the latter creating water, nectar, the moon and the stars. The earth has two constituent parts, the first containing stones and earthen material, the second containing gold and jewels.³

The above statement seems rather childish to the student of modern science, but it represents the actual views of orthodox Hindu religious teachers of the Svami's period; and there are sections of the Hindu community which still accept the classifications and numbers as taught by the Svami. In describing the process of creation, in another section, he speaks of mulamaya as consciousness, existing as life-energy, which, when it becomes manifested in the three qualities, is called *gunamdyā*. 'As the latent life-energy manifests itself in the three qualities, sound is first produced, after which come innumerable forms, the first sound

¹ *Ddsodk*, ch. x, sec. 9.

* *Ibid.*, ch. xx, sec. 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. x, sec. 3.

⁴¹ Om " being a property of space. From sound, the Vedas and Sastras have come into existence; from space, the wind; from wind, the light; from light, the water; and from the water, the earth. Each of the five elements is composed of parts of the other four elements, and this is also true of the three qualities. Although the elements seem to be separate, they are one, as a matter of fact. The three qualities dominate all actions to a greater or less degree. Just as a mixture of any two colours gives a third colour, so thousands of different things are produced by the three qualities with the help of the five elements/¹

In discussing the origin of the universe Ramdas states that the gods cannot be the creators, because they themselves are composed of the five elements. Brahman is changeless, and therefore cannot have been an active participant in the process. If, then, there is no active creator, the universe must be born of the imagination and possesses no reality within itself.² In another section the Svami describes creation as being revealed in three processes, namely, from mulamayaS to gunamaya; from the three qualities to the earth; and from the earth to the various creations and the four tongues.⁸ Still another classification is fourfold: Brahman; the fourteen names of maya; the five elements; and the four creations.⁴ He discusses in great detail the composition of the various steps, describing mujamaya occasionally as the fourth quality or phase of the universe, grouped with the other three qualities, and the root of prakriti, which in turn produces the eight kinds of nature. Gupamaya is a mixture of the three qualities, and all living creatures are a mixture of the three subtle qualities with the five grosser elements, made up in varying proportions. The four tongues or seats of speech are: the navel, the heart, the neck and the mouth.⁵ Still another classification of speech is: the deeply secret, the mental, that which reaches the lips, and that which is spoken.⁶

¹ *D&sbodh*, ch. ix, sec. 6.

⁸ *Ibid**, ch. xiii, sec. 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. xx, sec. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. xx, sec. 5.

• *Ibid.*, ch. xx, sec. 2.

• *Ibid.*, ch. xi, sec. 1.

Living Creatures

Concerning mankind and animals, Ramdas is not always consistent, either in the description of the process or in the numbers; but this is not surprising when we remember the long period of years during which he wrote poetry and the complexity of the subject matter. From the large number of verses concerned with the story of creation it is clear that the subject held a fascination for him. The number of living beings, most commonly given by him, is 8,400,000, of whom 400,000 are human beings. They are described as being created from water and as being favoured by the atmospheric and climatic conditions upon the earth. Says the Svami, * If there had been no fire, wind or sun, the water upon the earth would have been cold and all living creatures would have been frozen to death. . . . When the earth is dry from the heat of the sun, God sends rain upon it to cool it off and the winter season results. When all animals become distressed because of the cold and the trees become withered, the summer season ensues. Living beings exist in an orderly arrangement of time, which is divided into morning, noon and evening.¹ This is the day for ordinary mortals, but the day of Brahman is composed of the four ages, namely, the Kritayuga of 1,728,000 years; the Tretayuga of 1,296,000 years; the Dvaparayuga of 864,000 years; and the Kaliyuga of 432,000 years.²

There are a number of classifications of living beings, one of the most common being that of insects, birds, mankind, and trees.⁸ Mankind, he says in one verse, is created from eggs. In describing the various types of animals and their value in the general scheme of creation, he says, * Worms are more slender than particles of dust, with a short life and a very meagre knowledge. Although possessing the fivefold mind (heart, conscience, mind, intellect and egoism), their knowledge and other qualities are proportionate to their*bodies. In all these animals, from the smallest insects to the largest elephant, there is the

¹ *V&sbodh*, ch. xvi, sec. 10. ² *Ibid.*, ch. vi, sec. 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. xi, sec. 1.

same internal soul (all-pervading spirit). . . . Wherever water exists there are living animals, as provided for in the laws of nature, some being born from mere imagination, some from penance and some otherwise, because God's ways are unfathomable/ *

In the seventeenth chapter of the *Dasbodh*, section nine, Ramdas classifies bodies as being of four varieties: the gross, the subtle, the causal, and the blissful; corresponding to wakefulness, dreaming, sound sleep, and absorption in Brahman; and these four bodies have different qualities and different kinds of enjoyment. He analyses the different parts of the human body with great detail, speaking of five kinds of breath, the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, the fivefold mind, and the five senses corresponding to the organs of perception, making twenty-five faculties in all. Each of these groups of faculties or properties he relates to one of the five original elements. As there are twenty-five elements in the gross material body, so also are there twenty-five elements in the subtle spiritual body. For example, the properties of space in the subtle body are: passion, anger, grief, temptation, and fear; of wind, the five properties are: movement, turning, expansion, resistance and contraction; of light, the five properties are: hunger, thirst, laziness, sleep and sexual intercourse; etc. The *causal body' is that of ignorance and the *bliss body' is that of knowledge, the spiritual seeker passing from the gross to the subtle, and to final emancipation when the very self is offered (atmaniveda\$) and pure Brahman alone remains.²

Ramdas compares the human body to a tree of worldly existence, which has slowly matured until it bears fruits that seem sweet to those who taste them and think that they have thus obtained happiness.⁸ In this and other references the Svami shows his disapproval of too much emphasis upon the physical body; yet it is also true that he had a high regard for the dignity of the human body and felt that it was part and parcel of the divine order of

* *Dasbodh*, ch. xv, sec. 8. ² *Ibid.*, ch. xvii, sec. 8.
³ *Idid.*, ch. xx, sec. 8.

things. He says, for example, that it would be impossible to worship God except through the medium of the human body, and he often refers with sharp words of warning to those who misuse or abuse the human body. Hence he takes issue with the more extreme forms of ascetic practices carried on by numerous Hindu devotees, who seek to attain salvation by their physical sufferings, and he did not encourage such practice among his own followers.

In the latter part of the *Dasbodh* he develops his doctrine of the internal soul (*chanchaf*). In some details this doctrine resembles the Sathkhya doctrine of the purusha, and it also reminds one a little of Kabir's 'subtle entity' from which come individual souls.¹ He says that the chanchaf is one, but has different forms, and is the support of birds, animals and men. This would seem to be a recognition of one classification for both animals and men, and a suggestion that human souls may be reborn in the bodies of birds or other animals. This chanchaf even causes trees to grow and without it the trees would become dead wood. In some references the Svami seems to identify the chanchaf with Brahman, and yet again he distinguishes between the two. The chanchaf, he says, causes movement in all bodies, and has spatial limitations, not being everywhere at once like the all-pervading Brahman.² In another reference he says that the chanchaf is composed of the five elements and is like a king, sitting on a throne, surrounded by his armies, both armies and king being composed of flesh and bone. Similarly, both the universe and the chanchaf are in the form of the five elements, consciousness being the chief difference between the two, the chanchaf } witnessing to the universe and giving authority to it.³ This recalls the Samkhya idea of the self-conscious soul, enmeshed in the body, shedding the light of its self-consciousness upon the inner organs.⁴ From his descriptions it almost seems as though chanchaf is a spiritual world-force that animates all living beings ; the throbbing of Brahman in the visible

¹ *Hindu Ethics*, by Prof. John McKenzie, p. 173.

³ *Dasbodh*, ch. xv, sec. 5. ³ *Dasbodh*, ch. xv, sec. 3.

⁴ *The Crown of Hinduism*, by Dr. J. N. Farquhar, p. 238.

world, antedating even the three properties and the five elements. He sometimes identifies chanchaj with the sky, which he terms the chief element among the five. More subtle than the wind, it pervades all, and though it can* not be found, yet nothing can move without it. From mujamaya to the most minute bodies, everything moves by means of it, and beyond it there is the changeless Brahman.¹ When he says, as he does in a number of passages, that to know that the chaiichal pervades all is to become one with Brahman, it again seems as though he identified the one with the other. In still another passage he asserts that chaiichal and Sri Rama are one and the same.² In fact, all deeds and transactions, all demons and men, good and bad thoughts, politics and desires, are carried on by means of chanchaj, which is in all and through all and gives movement to all. Although Ramdas identifies animals and men in certain allusions, nevertheless he finds certain distinctions between them and asserts that mankind alone can know about heaven and earth, being the protector of lower forms of living beings.³

The Destruction of the Universe

Concerning the end of creation the Svami had very definite ide[^]s. He taught that for twelve years there would be no rain and the whole earth would be split and cracked by the heat of the sun, from which flames of fire would pour forth. For a hundred years, so the prophecy goes, the earth will burn, until the serpent which holds the earth upon its head will be touched by the flames and will vomit poison. Thereupon the lower regions will be consumed to ashes and the earth will succumb to the fury of the five elements, the eleven destructive deities and the twelve suns, with the result that the earth will fall to pieces and disappear, the moon and the stars also going to destruction. This will be followed by a period of rain, when the universe will be filled with water and covered with darkness. A mass of hot iron will then

¹ *D&sbodh*, ch. xvi, sec. 7. ^a *Ibid.*, ch. xvi, sec. 8.
⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. xx, sec. 5.

arise and cause the earth to dry up, after which fire and destructive winds will again break forth, but will finally melt away in the wide expanse of sky. The five elements will disappear and mulamaya will cease its throbbing, the immovable, eternal Brahman alone remaining.¹

In another chapter, he says there are five kinds of destruction, namely, sleep, death, the rest-period of the three gods, the destruction of the three gods, and the annihilation of old ideas. Sleep periodically overpowers the activities of wakefulness. At death, the life-breath leaves the body, due to the activity of a disease or for some other cause. When Brahma, one of the trinity, sleeps, all mortal activities are suspended for a period of years until he awakes, and then the whole of creation again begins to stir. At the end of Brahmadeva's life, the world is reduced to ashes by the heat of the sun, and all other worlds are also burned up. Then follows the deluge, when everything is submerged in water, after which the universe again bursts into flames, until the flames are swallowed up by a mighty wind. The wind in turn dies away into space, and creation, which is the revelation of God, once more merges with God. As long as the human body survives, one should use spiritual discrimination, thus ultimately destroying the personality and sinking the self into reality.²

The Pur ante Influence

There is still one further influence that must be mentioned, which helped to shape the Svamfs cosmogony, namely, the Purarjic influence; and a trace of this may be seen in one or two passages already referred to. In spite of the sharp cleavage between the mathematical Samkhya theories and the mythological Purarjic conceptions, Ramdas did not hesitate to teach the latter ideas at one time or another, although it must be recognized that they did not figure largely in his thought. In one place, stating that water comes from light and the earth from water, he goes on to say that the earth is held up by a serpent. On the earth

¹ *D&sbodkt* ch. xiii, sec. 4.

² *Itrid.*, ch. x, sec. 5.

are seven oceans, in the midst of which is the golden mountain, and this in turn supports the earth. The mountain is eight miles broad and of a great height, with a guardian for each of the eight directions. Around the earth are other mountains, among which are the Himalaya mountains where the Paśavas became fatigued, and only Dharmaraj and Sri Krishna reached the top. Along the way there are large serpents and *aframās* for ascetics. On Mt. Meru there are three summits where Brahma, Vishnu and Siva dwell; the summit of Brahma being of stone, that of Vishnu of emerald, and that of Siva of marble. There also are to be found the thirty-three crores of gods, the fourteen worlds, and the golden mountain. In that place also are heavenly trees, cows, and lakes of nectar where one may avoid death. All the earth is joyful with singing; there is neither old age nor death in that place, because this is the abode of the gods.¹ Yet even here, while teaching the primitive stories of the early Aryans, he ends the section by saying that three salvations are transitory, and that at the final salvation even the gods will be destroyed, immovable, eternal Brahman alone remaining.

¹ *Ddsdodk*, ch. iv, sec. 10.

CHAPTER VI

HIS ETHICS AND GENERAL TEACHINGS

(A) ETHICS

Introduction

THE most remarkable feature of the Svami's ethical teaching is its wide scope. He not only subscribed to the ethical doctrines and standards which were inherent in the Vaishnavite movement and the worship of Rama, but he also taught the precepts of the orthodox Dnyana-marga. It is not always possible to know where he laid the greatest emphasis, as he sometimes stressed spiritual qualities, and at other times he was mainly concerned with more practical matters. On the whole, his ethical teachings reached a lofty height; and while he may not have been as logical as Ramananda, or as original as Kabir, or as consistent as Tukaram, yet he resembled each of them in certain particulars. The Svami set such a high ethical standard for his followers that it became a more select group than some of the more popular movements like that of Pa\$#harpur. In this sense the sect was somewhat exclusive, and rewarded those who became the most worthy and trusted followers. The discipline within the sect began with the mental life, touching the hidden springs within; concerned itself with the spoken word and the relationships between individuals; and finally laid down rules of conduct that affected practically all the normal activities of daily life.

Purity

Both by precept and example, Ramdas insisted on pure living, both in thought and deed, as his writings amply illustrate. In speaking of the idea] of celibacy, he says,
* He who, amongst many, looks only to the one God;

such a man always behaves as he teaches. He who always worships the idol without allowing his mind to wander is indeed a blessed servant of the great God.¹ Purity in thought and life can be maintained by the householder as well as by the celibate, and is therefore primarily a matter of the mind rather than of social relationships. In one verse he says, * If you think before speaking or before acting, others, who may be unfortunate, will be comforted. Never engage in conversation without first making suitable inquiries, and thus behave both temperately and correctly among all men/² If the mind were kept pure and unsullied, the Svami was confident that moral behaviour would be above reproach. When dealing with moral lapses, he was a strict disciplinarian and did not hesitate to prescribe severe punishment if he felt it was necessary. The way to keep the mind and the conduct pure was to centre one's entire thought upon God and to associate with worthy people. It was to the idle and the indifferent that sinful thoughts came.

Unselfishness

This was a quality of mind and heart which Ramdas frequently extolled. He often thought of it as lack of desire, and spoke reproachfully of those who allowed the desire for fame, money or other worldly goods to distract their minds or stultify their spiritual longings. Here we have a theological as well as an ethical implication, since absence from desire was a necessary attitude of mind in order to be united with Brahman. * O mind, turning away from fame, and ignoring the body, it is best that you should waste away like sandalwood paste.⁸ * O mind, do not desire the money of others nor cling to selfish interests, for such desires are sinful.⁴ The Svami was not content with this passive virtue, however, and frequently praised the more positive traits of self-sacrifice and benevolence so much so that Mr. S. S. Dev speaks of the latter as the tenth principle of the Ramdasi sect. In speaking of the mahant, Ramdas says that he should react kindly toward both good and

¹ *Manache sloka*, No. 49.

• *Md.*, No. 132.

* *Ibid.*, No. 8.

* */did.*, No. 9,

bad conduct, without any spirit of retaliation, and should willingly endure indignities at the hands of others, losing no opportunity of being helpful to the people around him. Just as Ramdas praised those who gave themselves willingly in the service of others, so he censured those who were greedy, covetous, or self-centred, cutting them with biting sarcasm or lashing them with stinging rebukes; for he did not mince his words. Sinfulness, in his opinion, brought its own punishment; and he inferred that goodness brought its own reward. The most meritorious deed of all was the full, complete self-surrender to God, and this leads the way to ultimate salvation.

Truthfulness

If personal honour is a basis of our Christian Anglo-Saxon civilization, it was no less stressed by this austere Hindu saint of the seventeenth century. * O mind, cleave to the truth because it is eternal, and eschew that which is false because it passes away. Speak the truth only, with the tongue, and give up that which is unreal/¹ He taught his disciples to blend kindness with their truthful speaking, saying, * It is clear that kind words spoken by us bring happiness, and therefore we should have the same regard for others that we have for ourselves. If we discover each day that we are distressed by harsh words, why then should we adopt that tone toward others ? . . . That tongue is evil which makes others unhappy, and sooner or later it will cause us harm. We reap as we sow; as we speak, so are we answered; therefore why should we speak harsh words ? ² Insisting that words should be consistent with deeds, he speaks thus of a good man: * Words without acts are useless. We should act benevolently toward others, and serve them so that their needs may be supplied, rendering all possible assistance to those who are in trouble and winning them by our gracious words. Sympathizing with the sorrows of others, rejoicing in the happiness of others, forgiving the faults of others, and loving them as we love

¹ *Mandche sloka*, No. 19.

² *Ddsbodh*[^] ch. xii, sec. 10.

ourselves, thus should we Seek to serve them in every possible way/¹

Sympathy and Patience

Forbearance was one of the qualities he commended, and in speaking against angry passions he says, 'O mind, dwell always in the company of good people, devoid of all semblance of anger; and by giving up fellowship with wicked persons, thou shalt become entitled to salvation.'² He frequently referred to *rajas* (passion), one of the three primary qualities, implying that it was what linked a man with unworthy, worldly ties, such as clothes, ornaments or property. Sympathetic understanding of the sufferings of others and a patient willingness to accept the vicissitudes of life, no matter how harsh or unpleasant, were typical of the Svaml's teaching.

Forgiveness and Humility

Mr. Dev calls forgiveness the ninth principle of the Ramdasi sect, recalling the passage where Ramdas says, 'A mahant should always forgive faults, whether great or small.'³ His insistence upon humility is evidenced both by his positive teaching and by his contempt for the opposite qualities, such as pride and conceit. * Because of egoism we become sad, and the words that we speak are vain. By our happiness others are made happy, and therefore you should seek to discover whether you are guilty of egoism.'⁴ 'He who is free from pride, envy or self-interest, and who is uninfluenced by worldly concerns, and who always speaks sweet and humble words, such a servant receives God's blessing in this world.'⁵

Happiness

In approving happiness Ramdas touched a chord that seems distinctly modern, and awakens a response among practical people of our own day. He thought of it, in

¹ *Ddsdodh*, ch. xii, sec. 10.

² *Manache Sloka*, No. 107.

³ *Ddsdodk*, ch. xi, sec. 5, v. 5.

⁴ *ManOche sloka*, No. 161.

^B *ManOche sloka*, No. 51.

the negative sense, as freedom from the sense of self. 'O mind, do not dwell upon sorrow, but rather avoid grief and anxiety. By the practice of thoughtful meditation, we should give up egoism and thus enjoy freedom/¹ In a personal letter to the author, Mr. Dev writes that the two statements by Ramdas which reveal his inmost motives are, first, 'That all should be happy'; and, second, 'One must treat others as he would treat himself/ Such sayings as these have caught the imagination of the Maratha people, and kindled their devotion, with the result that Ramdas has become one of their most revered saints. A study of his verses leads one to the view that he believed in happiness, not simply as a means for the attainment of salvation, but also as an end in itself. Speaking of the sad man, he says, 'Through sadness we obtain neither earthly nor heavenly happiness; nay, rather are we burdened by our anxieties until our business is ruined and we become absent-minded. By sadness we are chained to the cycle of rebirths and find that we can attain nothing, neither worship nor knowledge. Success being unobtainable, the sad man sits with his mind in a whirl; though attentive, he does not comprehend; though listening, he does not hear; though possessed of knowledge, he cannot distinguish between right and wrong/² In another passage Ramdas says, 'Instructions given to a sad man are like a jewel entrusted to a monkey or a great treasure given to a devil/⁸ In some of these passages the idea of sadness (*dutchitpaip*) has the thought of sullenness rather than that of deep grief, the sad man being one who is dejected, discouraged or hopeless. Ramdas revealed his shrewd common sense when he asserted that happiness was often a by-product, and the logical result of good habits or faithful actions. 'As work becomes successful, man is made happier day by day, his entire mental life being stimulated. When the favourable moment comes in the life of a man who has suffered sorrow, God mercifully grants him happiness/⁴

¹ *Man&che Sloka*, No. 12.

² *Dasdodh*, ch. viii, sec. 6.

⁸ *Dasbodh*, ch. viii, sec. 6.

* *Ibid.*, ch. xviii, sec. 10.

Faithfulness to Duties

In building up his movement, Ramdas laid out a plan of life and action for all his followers, insisting upon rigorous obedience and the faithful performance of all duties. In commenting upon laziness, he says, 'When a man is indolent he has no peace, being incapable of thought and neglectful of both studies and duties. Unable either to study or to teach, and weakened in his desire to attain supreme knowledge, he fails to perform his daily rites and practices. Idleness begets idleness, so that a man loses both his mental powers and his courage, with the result that he is unable properly to pursue his daily task.'¹ It sometimes seems as though Ramdas inveighed against laziness more often than he did against wickedness; but this was doubtless due to the widespread laziness, both mental and spiritual, which had become so pronounced during the three centuries of Moslem rule, that he felt it must be uprooted at all costs, in order to bring about a Hindu religious revival.

Summary

A study of the Svami's ethical teachings gives us a clue to the social and religious conditions of his time; because whatever he had to say was pertinent to the situation. In discussing the value of time, he condemned garrulousness and silly gossip as a sheer waste of time that should be spent in doing something profitable. Malicious gossip he frowned upon, because it caused an endless amount of trouble and sorrow and showed an evil mind. It was his frequent custom to encourage his disciples by holding up before them an ideal. Likewise, he sometimes painted the picture of an evil disciple and held it up as a warning to those who might be tempted to forget their vows. In describing the characteristics of a good man, he says, 'Such a man is possessed of good qualities and commends himself to all. Proficient in both reading and writing, he is able to interpret successfully the spiritual meaning of scripture passages. Eschewing a factional spirit, he

¹ *Ddsbodh*, ch. viii, sec. 6.

chooses to mingle with those who are good, and they are stimulated by his fellowship, finding in him a worthy associate. Such people, possessed of the best qualities, gain universal approval and are friendly with one and all. Humble in asking questions, possessed of deep spiritual knowledge, free from hypocrisy, temperate in habit, and with a loving heart, such a man is indeed pleasing to all men.¹

In describing an evil or luckless man, the Svami says, * Poverty is caused by sin, which in turn increases poverty. An evil man prefers laziness to strenuous exertion, being always fond of sinful deeds, and is heartily disliked by everybody because of his tendency for idle speaking in moments of drowsiness. He knows nothing concerning reading, writing, business transactions, or accounts, and is utterly devoid of shrewdness. Whatever he possesses he either loses, drops, throws away or breaks. His memory is forgetful, his habits bad, and he avoids the company of good people, preferring to associate with rogues, clowns, thieves and vicious companions. Ever alert to quarrel, he does not hesitate to play the part of a highwayman. Devoid of prudence, and with a dislike for both justice and morality, he is a man of implacable greed.² Such pictures as these, when once seen, can never be forgotten. In summing up, we would again state that while Ramdas may not be distinctive in any particular ethical emphasis, his ability to combine in his own life, and to teach others, such opposite traits as patience and zeal, forgiveness and strict discipline, humility and forcefulness, self-sacrifice and faithfulness in social and political duties, with the resulting emphasis upon personal development, makes him noteworthy among the Hindu religious teachers of Western India.

(B) His GENERAL TEACHINGS

Intelligence

It is not surprising that Ramdas laid such emphasis upon mental development, when we consider his twelve

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. xix, sec. 8.

* *Ibid.*, ch. six, sec. 3.

years at TakerJI followed by the years of travel, during which he familiarized himself with the Hindu sacred scriptures. This thorough preparation enabled him to deal with all classes of men and women, both ignorant and intelligent, and it gave him a high appreciation of those advantages which are the fruits of intellectual efforts. In all of the Ramdasi maths, learning was held at a premium, and young disciples were expected to pursue their studies faithfully, both for their own improvement and in order to teach others. The Svami had little respect for those who failed to improve themselves because of laziness or indifference, although he naturally recognized that many people had scant opportunity for intellectual development. His respect for the learned man is well illustrated in the following passage: * A learned man is respected throughout the world, and only those who are learned can become great. He who is possessed of both worldly and heavenly knowledge is truly great; whereas the ignorant man is utterly worthless, being capricious, forgetful and easily deceived. Because of his ignorance, he frequently finds himself in miserable circumstances and easily succumbs to his enemies.¹

Ramdas had much to say about both reading and writing, and each disciple was expected to read the *Dasbodh* daily. Some of the disciples, among whom was Kalya\$, acted as scribes for the Svami, taking down his dictation or copying his rough notes. Those who have seen the writing of Kalyaii will testify to its beauty and symmetry. In one passage Ramdas says: 'By working hard we should perfect our handwriting so that learned men may be pleased. The letters should be round or straight, clear-cut and easily discernible, with the lines running neatly, like rows of pearls. Every letter should be straight, with accurate spacing and a correct downward stroke. All curves or oblique lines should be distinct, and all the letters upon a given page should be similarly written. Each line should be separated from that above or below, the curves and strokes standing alone, and without having the long letters touch the line

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. ix, sec. 4.

below.¹ From the foregoing it is clear that the Ramdasi sect held learning in high regard, and the various maths exerted a definite intellectual influence, both among their inmates and their visitors.

Life in This World

Both as a Vedantist and as a bhakta, Ramdas held a pessimistic view about life in this world, and referred to it as a burden from which all sensible men should seek to escape. In the third chapter of the *Ddsbodh* he has left us a classic story of a man's life from birth to death, and, needless to say, it is a tale of unmitigated tragedy. Beginning with the description of the pain of childbirth, he skims over the early years of the lad's life and then enlarges on the unpleasant experiences the boy has in school, particularly the beatings he receives from the school teachers. After leaving school the boy marries at an early age, but shortly afterward he goes away and forgets all about his parents. The young wife dies, leaving the boy-husband sorrow-stricken, but he finally manages to forget his grief and marries again, this time linking his life to a woman who is unfaithful. Having accumulated household effects and equipment, he comes home one day to find that his goods have been stolen by a thief. Crushed in spirit by this adversity, he himself takes to committing misdemeanours, for which he is ultimately punished by a court of law. For many years he has been childless, but now children are born to him, and great is his joy, until he finds the expense intolerable. He goes into debt in order to have his children married, making it necessary for him to leave home again and seek to earn money in order to repay his debts. Alas! after returning a few years later, he finds that his wife and children have died of famine, and his journey has been useless. He marries a third time, but this wife proves to be a shrew, and after constant quarrels they decide to live apart, a quarrel over the estate being settled by the arbitration of his neighbours. The story ends when

¹ *DQsbodhy* ch. xix, sec. 1.

an army invades the country and marches off with his wife, the husband later learning that she is dead.

In spite of this pessimistic viewpoint and of his references to the unpleasant features of human life, such as the three-fold misery (mental pain due to ourselves, accidental pain due to others, and pain due to supernatural causes), it is evident, from a study of his poetry, that he held some views of a more optimistic nature concerning life in general. With this thought in mind, Mr. Dev expresses the opinion that Ramdas used the terms *sajhsdra* and *prapanch* with different connotations; the former term denoting legitimate economic activities, and the latter implying unworthy attachments, such as love of pleasure or greed. Prof. Bhate takes issue with Mr. Dev, maintaining that the two words are used interchangeably; and it evidently is a question that only the grammarians can decide. Whether this be so or not, Ramdas clearly repudiated the more extreme types of ascetic renunciation. Except for his use of the mystic syllable 'Om/ and his emphasis upon meditation and mental discipline, he had little in common with ascetic practices.¹ As he grew older, his sympathies leaned in the other direction and he came to have an increased appreciation for family, social, and political responsibilities. The fact that many married men and householders became his disciples is an indication that he did not scorn legitimate activities in connection with daily life.

Ramdas laid out a daily programme in detail for his followers, and expected them to observe it faithfully. Unmarried disciples were to journey from place to place, begging their food as they went, getting acquainted with the spiritual needs of the people, and imparting spiritual knowledge to all who were ready to listen. Married disciples, with their household responsibilities, necessarily lived in a more circumscribed area and were generally busied with occupations which yielded them an income. In speaking of the round of daily duties, the Svami says, Although hard work causes fatigue, happiness is the

¹ *O.R.L.J.*, p. 132.

ultimate result Laziness is the path to sadness, making a man unfit for manly effort, but when it is overcome, prosperity is attained in this world and happiness in the next. A man should arise in the morning, read a portion of Scripture and meditate on God. He should cleanse his mouth and take his morning bath. Whatever his daily task may be, he should perform it with care and diligence.¹ The Ramdasi programme will be discussed in Chapter IX, which deals with the Early Movement, in which we shall see that the Svami issued detailed instructions covering practically all of the daily activities of his disciples. In spite of his own vows of celibacy and of his pessimistic theology, he had a high regard for family life, as the following passage amply shows: 'Family life is the best possible life for any man. Such a man should faithfully carry out the six duties of learning, teaching, worshipping, conducting worship, giving alms, and receiving gifts, and he should practise all these rites according to the sacred precepts. He should be kind in speech, temperate in habit and unceasing in his devotion. Such a man spends himself freely in penance, observes vows faithfully, is ever diligent and makes God the central fact of his life.'²

Religious Activities

Ramdas gave definite instructions concerning the various religious rites and practices, such as meditation, begging, kirtan-singing, etc. He felt that begging was advisable, because it enabled Ramdas to see the people in their homes and observe their spiritual needs. The disciples accepted only what was sufficient for their one meal, after procuring which they returned to their headquarters and gave thanks to the idol. Ramdas himself led such an active, austere life that laziness could not have been his motive in making the begging of alms one of the central activities of his movement. Rightly or wrongly, he felt that it was the best method for getting a close contact with the people; and for centuries it has been a common practice among Indian religious devotees.

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. xi, sec. 3.

* *Ibid.*, ch. xiv, sec. 7.

Like his predecessors, Ramdas used the musical service (kirtan or bhajan) in giving religious instruction to the people. He taught that the kirtan-singer should be an attractive individual, intelligent, devoted, and dressed in clean garments. His singing should be devotional, bringing peace and quiet to minds disturbed by quarrelling. The singer should be expert in composing metrical verses which would attract the attention of all listeners. Sincere kirtan-singers do not attempt to amuse their hearers, but confine their efforts to teaching the difference between reality and unreality. Concerning kirtan subjects Ramdas says, 'Each successive kirtan should have a new subject, the singer prostrating himself before the idol and proclaiming God's name by the clapping of hands. The fame of one idol should not be sung in front of another idol, and if there be no idol present, then Vedanta truths may be expounded. Repentance and renunciation should be taught to faithful worshippers, all trivial subjects, such as the beauty of women, being carefully excluded. The kirtan should be so sung that the minds of all the people in the audience should be absorbed in the contemplation of God.'¹

Politics

In his later years Ramdas had a good deal to say about social and political matters, his friendship with Sivaji having brought him into close relationship with public affairs. He was interested in the national movement of Sivaji, for both racial and religious reasons; taking great satisfaction in the fact that Sivaji's conquests were instrumental in spreading and reviving the Hindu faith. Indeed, it is probable that Ramdas urged the Maratha chieftain to enlarge his conquests because of their religious results. The first seven chapters of the *Dasbodh* are practically silent concerning politics, but in later chapters he mentions the subject a number of times. In the eighteenth chapter, section six, he refers to the wickedness of the Muhammadans, and says that whatever success has been

* *Dasbodh*, ch xiv, sec, 5,

achieved has been the gift of God. He urges his followers to perform courageous and righteous acts, to be loyal to Brahmans and gods, to be faithful in religious observances, and to seek earthly as well as heavenly happiness. Tradition says that this section was written after the death of Afzul Khan; but the evidence for this is by no means conclusive. In another section the Svami gives a list of daily duties.¹ First, a RamdasI should know about God and be able to teach spiritual truth; second, he should be wise in all matters pertaining to the state; third, he should be prudent in dealing with various other subjects; and, fourth, he should be industrious. In elaborating these thoughts he says that while one should engage in political activities, it should be done quietly, without giving offence to anyone, and all such activities should be performed in a humble, sympathetic and conciliatory spirit

Sometimes the Svamfs language seems ambiguous, but it was doubtless understood by his followers. 'One should not live permanently in one place, because this leads to familiarity and familiarity breeds contempt. A great deal of work is ruined by laziness, with the result that one loses the desire to develop associations. The thief should be made the treasurer, and if he commits a mistake he should be brought to see the error of his ways. Let a wicked man be placed before the wicked, or a garrulous man before the garrulous; but let him not become entangled in suspicions. A thorn should be removed by another thorn, without any occasion for quarrelling. The good man is he who works hard and keeps faith with others; hence let all work be properly completed. Since a great deal of work is ruined by lack of secrecy, political activities should be under the management of shrewd leaders who should take the work in hand and delegate various tasks to others. If we fear wicked people and therefore allow the secrecy governing political activities to be removed, the result will be unfortunate. We should know who the wicked people are, but should approach them

¹ *D&sbodh*, ch. 3d, sec. 5.

in a conciliatory spirit, refraining: from giving them publicity, so that quarrelling may be minimized. Political activities should be carried out secretly and carefully, and associations, whenever possible, should be organized upon a basis of equality/¹ The above passages reveal the fact that Ramdas entered heart and soul into the task of reviving Hindu religious interest in Maharashtra. He commended the work of Sivaji in this regard, and evidently approved of the secret political activities which helped to free Maharashtra from the Moslem yoke.

The Mahant and the Disciple

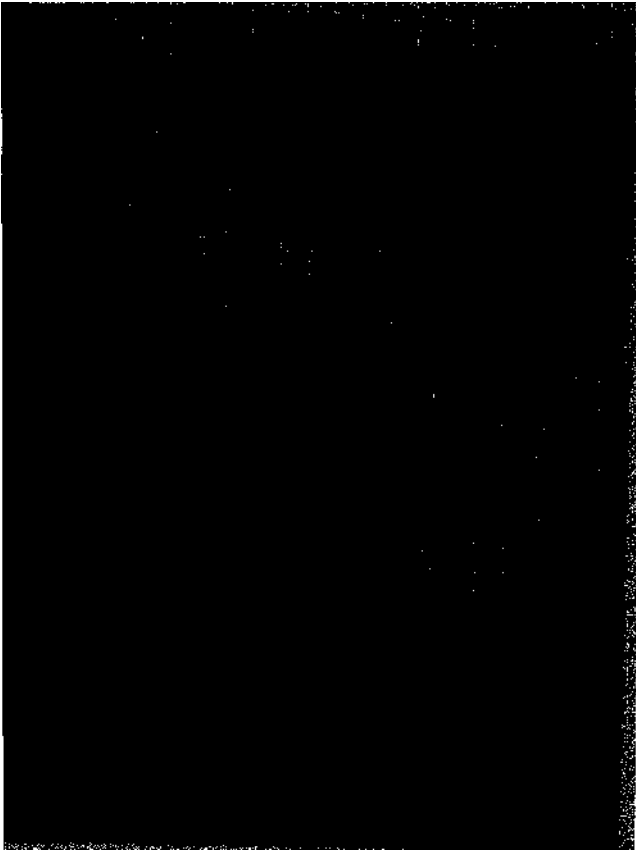
Ramdas accepted the idea of the supreme importance of the guru (teacher) in the scheme of salvation, as emphasized in the educational sections of the Code of Manu.² According to this doctrine, it is almost impossible for anyone to achieve salvation without the guidance of a guru, who is to be venerated above all other men. Since he is the one who points the way, he must be a man of exemplary character, revealing in his own life all those qualities which need to be inculcated in the disciples. Said Ramdas : * There are gurus for all men, teaching the duties prescribed by caste or creed, but such men are not necessarily the best gurus (sadgurus). Parents are gurus; so also are the Brahmans, who teach the sacred Vedic mantras, but neither are they sadgurus. He who removes our ignorance by teaching us pure knowledge, explaining how we should restrain our senses, is the true sadguru. The chief qualities of such a man are that he should have great self-possession, power of concentration, and be able to teach the way of salvation. He must be free from passions, indifferent to worldly attractions and faithful in all religious duties. Above all, he must be able, when occasion demands, to celebrate a kirtan and to explain Vedantic truth, or teach other aspects of spiritual knowledge/³

In describing the relationship between a guru and his

¹ *Ddsbodh*, ch. xix, sec. 9.

³ *Hindu Ethics*, by Prof. John McKenzie, p. 49.

³ *Dasbodh*, ch. v, sec. 2.



By courtesy of Mr. Marathe

Photographer, Satdru.

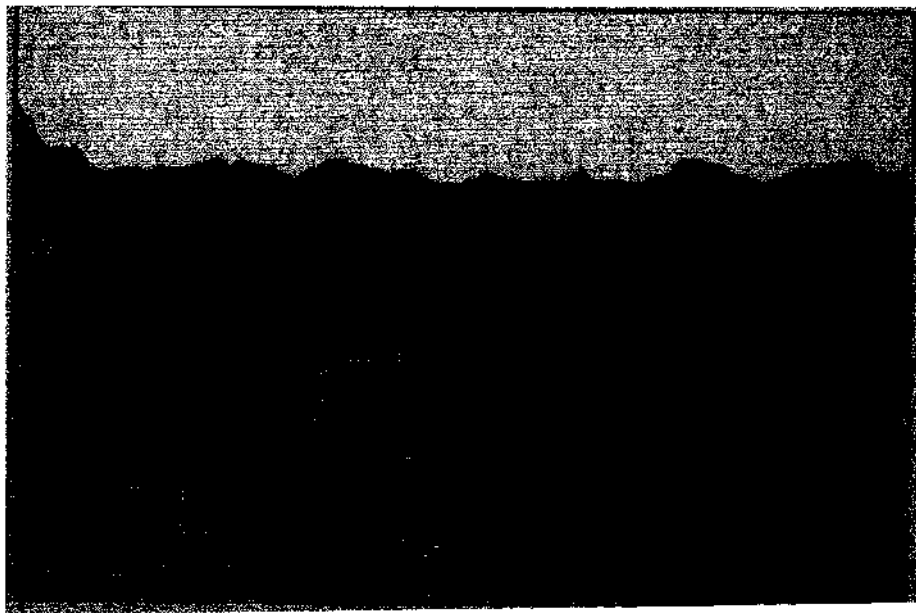
THE ENTRANCE TO PARALI FORT (SAJJANGAD), WHERE RAMDAS
RESIDED FOR SOME TIME AND DIED

Note the inscriptions ' sVi Kain Saniartha ' (' Sri Ram the Mighty ')
over and around the ffate.



From a photo by the Author.

INTERIOR OF RĀMDĀSĪ TEMPLE AT CHĀPHAL.



From a Nāsik photo-shop.

THE BATHING GHATS ON THE RIVER NARBUDDA AT NĀSIK

disciple, Ramdas says: 'The disciple is useless without a guru, no matter how virtuous he may otherwise be, and a guru is of little use unless he has a disciple. If the guru should be an excellent man, but his disciple a man of unworthy character, then the relationship will not be fruitful. When, however, both guru and disciple have excellent qualities, then, by their united efforts, the quest for salvation leads to success.'¹ Disciples varied greatly in their qualities, some being much more virtuous than others. Ramdas described a good disciple thus: 'The chief characteristic of a good disciple is that he must have complete faith in the teaching of his guru and obey him in all respects. He must be noble-minded, patient, steadfast in the search for salvation, kind-hearted, free from envy or jealousy, pure *in* thought, discriminating, intelligent, affectionate, and noble in deportment.'² It is probable that many of his disciples failed to reach the high standard here set forth; nevertheless, from the very first, the Ramdasi movement has produced men and women of sterling character.

An evil disciple was characterized thus: * He is an evil disciple who is indolent, of a complaining disposition, or conceited because of his learning. Although trusting others for a time, he later becomes suspicious. In his heart are evil desires, anger, pride, jealousy, greed, ignorance, passion, conceit, and contempt for others. Such a disciple is dilatory, ungrateful, sinful, suspicious, incredulous, faithless, unbelieving, irritable, cruel, merciless, lazy, thoughtless, impatient and unscrupulous.'³

Miscellaneous

Ramdas accepted the institution of caste, believing that it was a useful method of community arrangement, and an element of stability in Hindu society. He considered the Brahmans to be the spiritual leaders of the community, entitled to a position of special privilege, and taught that the Brahmans should receive the homage of all the other

¹ *Dasbodh*, ch. v, sec. 3. ² *Ibid.*, ch. v, sec. 3.
Ibid., ch. v, sec. 3.

members of the social group. Although most of his disciples, perhaps, were Brahmans, a number did not belong to that group; and he was not in any sense a slave to the caste system, being willing to break it when need arose. In a number of instances he rebuked orthodox Brahmans for their caste prejudices. Another interesting characteristic was his high respect for women, two of whom were members of the intimate group of disciples who were admitted to his confidence and whom he trusted implicitly. Even to-day a large number of women attend his anniversary ceremonies. Ramdas made many allusions to poetry, and in the fourteenth chapter of the *Dasbodh* he described the characteristics of Marathi poetry. Quite a few of his disciples were poets in their own right, and the art of writing poetry was one of the chief subjects taught in the various Ramdasi maths.

CHAPTER VII

THE PLACE OF RAMDAS IN HISTORY

HIS RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE

IN the religious sphere, Ramdas is chiefly noted to-day for his share in establishing what has been called a national religion (Maharashtra Dharma). The Ramdasi movement as such was a spiritual revival, even though it did not catch the popular imagination to the extent that the Pa\$clharpur movement did; and it possessed certain reactionary influences in favour of Brahmanism. In this sense it was not simply a reform movement, but a partial reassertion of the best in orthodox Hinduism. In recent numbers of the magazine, *Ramdas and Ramdasi*, published at Dhulia, there have been a series of articles, entitled * Maharashtra Dharma,* in which the author has tried to show that the national movement of Sivaji had religious implications, political and religious motives going hand in hand, and that in this task Sivaji was aided by Ramdas, as well as by a number of other poets.¹ The author divides the people of that time into two groups, the Maharashtra Samaj and the Non-Maharashtra Samaj, maintaining that the former group was that which loyally supported Sivaji in his effort to drive out the invader. Mr. Rajwatfe takes somewhat the same position in an article entitled, 'The Object, Form and Origin of the Sampradaya/ in which he describes in detail the motives with which Ramdas established his movement.² He says that the Svaml's chief purpose was to liberate the Maratha people from their spiritual indifference. He asserts that Ramdas deliberately worked among the Hindus

¹ *Ramdas and Ramdasi* (Magazine), Nos.85,86,87.etc., 1925-26.
² V.V., Vol. 1, sec. 44.

of higher castes because he felt that the regeneration of Hinduism was in their hands, as they had accepted the authority of the Hindu scriptures and the institution of caste. As a believer in the Vedanta philosophy, Ramdas threw his influence in favour of the orthodox beliefs, and emphasized the traditional views about salvation. Besides the above writers, there are a number of other Brahman authors to-day who emphasize the fact that the RamdasI sect was a defence of the old path, rather than a reform movement. In doing this, they are tempted to ignore the bhakti element *in* his movement, and the emphasis which he gave to spiritual living as opposed to external observances. Again and again he asserted that the chief purpose of religion was to maintain a quality of living. He criticized the Brahmans because they had been false to their religious traditions. A number of learned men, proud of their knowledge, became his disciples only after passing through humiliating experiences. It is true that he did not break with orthodox Hinduism; but in this he was following in the footsteps of men like Dnyanesvar and Namdev. It is also true that he was not such a thoroughgoing bhakta as Tukaram, but also emphasized Vedantic monism.

From the bhakti standpoint, Ramdas helped to popularize the worship of Rama in Maharashtra, in much the same way that Tulsi Das did it in northern India. No one can read his poems addressed to Rama without feeling that he had caught the bhakti spirit and that his whole life was wrapped up in adoration of this particular god. Just as Tukaram sang the praises of Vithoba, so Ramdas spent hours each day in the worship of Sri Rama; in addition to which, he established a number of shrines and temples. After deciding to give his life to Rama and making his vows, he took the name Ram-das, or servant of Rama. Undoubtedly it was the bhakti element in his movement which gave life and warmth to it, which it never could have had as a mere organization or as an exponent of the Vedanta. But after all is said and done, it must be frankly admitted that the Svami made no organized attempt to harmonize bhakti with his monistic philosophy. In recognizing this frankly, we need to remember his

background, training and contemporaries, together with the many precedents which he had to follow. If any distinction can be drawn, it would seem that in his early years his Vedantic views loomed larger, but that as his life-work developed, the bhakti element became more pronounced on the one hand, and his interest in worldly affairs more positive on the other. Being a man of practical turn of mind and shrewd common sense, he responded to the influences about him, seeking to give them a more adequate spiritual tone. To sum up, it is clear that he was a great spiritual influence in his day, giving counsel to the ruling classes, spiritual encouragement to Brahmans, and guidance to Vedantists and devotees of Rama, many of whom became his followers.

His SOCIAL INFLUENCE

On the whole Ramdas supported the existing social order, although he felt free to criticize it, where criticism was due. Himself a celibate, with many unmarried followers, he did not condemn those in the married state; and as a result a large number of Ramdasīs have been, and still are, married. He made no attempt to uproot the caste system, but he did not hesitate to enroll non-Brahmans among his followers. His disciple Jairam had been previously excommunicated by Brahmans because his (Jairam's) former guru had a low-caste wife. There is no evidence to show that Ramdas was partial to his Brahman disciples as opposed to his Kshatriya or Maratha disciples. There were two noteworthy aspects in regard to his influence: first, he helped to purify social relationships; and, secondly, he developed a sense of social solidarity. He looked upon caste as a social opportunity rather than as a mere mechanical contrivance for creating social distinctions. Each caste had a work to perform and a responsibility toward the whole community. In the spiritual fellowship of his movement, members of the higher castes acquired a common conviction and purpose, proud of their Hindu loyalty, and conscious of their social heritage in contrast to the Moslems about them. In this task of Hindu social regeneration,

therefore, he had a definite share, although it cannot be said that he was in any sense a social reformer. His influence was toward stability rather than toward change.

His POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Indirectly, as Mr. Justice Ranade has pointed out, all the Maratha poet-saints had a share in the upbuilding of the Maratha nation. The bhakti movement was democratic, caste distinctions being levelled and all worshippers having direct access to God. The ground was thus prepared for the new Maratha nation, in which all loyal Hindus had a share, including even the despised outcaste. In fostering the worship of Rama, the Svami had a considerable share in this work of preparation. In addition to this, he wielded a wide influence through his friendship with Sivaji and other officials, as was pointed out in Chapter III. Great as this was, however, it was generally subordinated to the spiritual emphasis; and the present effort on the part of certain writers to magnify his political contribution is not supported by the evidence. It was the *religion* of Maharashtra that weighed most heavily upon him, and he looked upon Sivaji's conquests as a golden opportunity to extend the influence of the Hindu faith, particularly those aspects of it which he was actively propagating. In the later years, both Sivaji and his son, Sambhaji, came to the Svami whenever they were oppressed by the burdens of state, finding his sane, wholesome advice a great comfort in their perplexity. It is also probable that many of Sivaji's official edicts and public acts were more in harmony with religious requirements, because of the Svami's influence, than they otherwise might have been.

As A POET

Much of his poetry was written in the *ovi* metre, but it must be confessed that Ramdas seems to have been indifferent to poetical form in his own writings. In the sense of polish, style, imagery and finish, he is not perhaps in the front rank of Marathi poets, his fame resting upon the

substance of his verses rather than upon the rhythm or beauty of expression. He did not write a great deal in the abhang metre, as Tukaram did, and to that extent may have been handicapped, because this particular metre is easily memorized and readily becomes popular. Yet he could, when occasion arose, produce poetry of a high lyrical quality, like the Verses to the Mind. During his lifetime he used a number of metres, other than the ovi, showing that he was master of the art of writing poetry, even though he leaned toward the more prosaic ovi metre, and these other metres included *bhujangapraydta*, long and short abhangs, *pramanika*, *anuskuak*, *malini* and *chamara*. In using this variety of metres, Ramdas doubtless accepted the principle of adapting the metre to fit the theme, and his extensive use of the ovi metre was probably because he felt that it was peculiarly suited to didactic poetry. The two hundred and five Verses to the Mind are generally considered to be his poetical gem, and are memorized by countless Hindus, although many of the *Karunashtake* are also beautiful in their wealth of imagery. The Svami had a wide vocabulary, using many Sanskrit words, which had doubtless become familiar through his study of the Hindu scriptures. He left one poem in Sanskrit, but the rest were in Marathi, and his poetry is not so difficult but that a reader of fair intelligence can understand it. He used familiar illustrations and there is a human element in his poetry which, in the bhakti verses, becomes highly emotional. In short, while he was capable of rising to great heights, and has left us a number of poetical gems, his chief contribution is his teaching of Vedantic truth through the medium of the vernacular, his making the worship of Rama popular, and his emphasis upon high ethical standards.

AS A TEACHER AND THINKER

In the opinion of Prof. D. V. Potdar, of Poona, Ramdas was one of the greatest thinkers that Maharashtra has produced, standing head and shoulders over any of his disciples; a fact which seems to be borne out by the gradual disintegration of the Ramdasi sect. A study

of his verses shows that his mind was alert, keen and comprehensive. With a thorough grasp of Vedantic doctrines, he evidently was familiar with many of the Hindu sacred scriptures, including the *Gita*, *Dnyaneivari* and *Upanishads*. Added to his years of study were the years of travel and observation, in which he came to have a thorough knowledge of human nature and of the general situation in the country. By means of this splendid background, he was able to give to his movement an intellectual quality that was almost unique. Courses of study became one of the primary activities in each math, including reading, writing, singing, poetry, and a thorough study of the Hindu scriptures, especially the *Dasbodh*. This developed a group of disciples who became notable poets and teachers in their own right. It is also one of the reasons why the Brahmans have always been active in the movement, regarding it somewhat as a movement of their own, although this hardly seems justified. Ramdas showed his great mental capacity not only by his ability to master abstruse Hindu philosophy, but also by his capacity to reduce this philosophy to simple terms and teach it, through the medium of Marathi, to men and women of average intelligence.

As A SAINT

The Svami could never have achieved the results which he did, in organizing such an elaborate movement, unless he had been possessed of remarkable qualities which lifted his personality far above the ordinary. As the organizer and inspiration of a sect which has been influential in Maharashtra from that day to this, his work speaks for itself. He had the qualities of successful leadership, although it was a leadership on the Indian pattern rather than the type which is familiar in the West. He could be kindly or strict, lenient or unbending, as occasion required. Even after his movement had assumed large proportions, it still depended almost entirely upon his personal judgment. It was a one-man movement, in the sense that his thousands of followers looked to him personally rather than to any system or

routine. With his quiet dignity, self-control and meditative air, he was a familiar figure to all his disciples, who had high respect for his unflinching zeal. His rapidity of travel and dislike for crowds or the settled ways of living were entirely compatible with his nature. Although a recluse by preference, his affectionate disposition made it natural for him to mingle with others at frequent intervals, and disciples flocked to his side. There must have been something magnetic about him which attracted others to him, resulting first in discipleship and later in a relationship of personal affection. In no other way can we explain the seeming ease with which he enrolled followers in his movement, or the rapidity with which it spread over Maharashtra. His letters testify to the love which he had for his disciples, and show that they were bound to him by ties of personal affection. Occasionally we catch a glimpse of his sense of humour or his delight in sharing in children's pranks. Giridhar tells how Ramdas once asked Jairam, who was very fat, to approach him by a narrow path which proved to be impossible, and the inference is that the Svami chuckled when he issued the instructions.¹ The traditional accounts narrate a number of instances when the finger of scandal was pointed at him; but these efforts were never successful, as his character was above reproach. No one can make a study of the life of Ramdas without coming to feel that here indeed was a man of genuine, saintly character who *lived his message 'day by day.

CRITICISMS

It is the unpleasant task of the historian, who interprets the events he records, to express adverse criticism when such seems to be required, just as it is the historian's privilege to give praise wherever it is due. In the writer's judgment, there are several particulars in which the character of Ramdas failed to rise to the greatest heights. Together with many of his predecessors, he taught both Vedanta doctrines and the worship of Rama, and in attempting to hold both

¹ *Pratap*, ch. xviii, p. 130, v. 47.

positions his teaching lacked consistency, as has been already stated. He does not seem to have been a creative thinker, in the main; revealing neither the independent *theological* thinking of Ramanuja nor the radical *social* views of Kabir. Again, as an organizer, he failed to give his movement the solidity necessary in order that it should continue unimpaired under mediocre leadership; though of course this may have been an impossible task. The fact that it was so much a *personal* movement proved eventually to be a weakness, resulting in gradual dissolution. Another defect may have been that his sect lacked an aggressive programme, which might have saved it from disintegration in spite of its deficient organization. It has had a tendency to become self-centred, lacking the enthusiasm or democratic phases of the Pantfharpur movement. In a sense, the Brahman influence has been an exclusive one, with the result that the movement has not been fully representative of all the higher castes. But while recognizing these limitations, we needs must acknowledge his greatness as a poet, student, organizer and saint. It is as a religious teacher and the preceptor of Sivaji, however, that his name will best be known to succeeding generations in Maharashtra.

CHAPTER VIII

LITERATURE OF THE MOVEMENT

THE PUBLISHED POETRY OF RAMDAS

THE outstanding poetical writing of Ramdas is the *Dasbodh*, sometimes called the *Granthraj' or the 'Granth Salleh/ a work of twenty chapters of ten sections each, with a total of 7,752 verses. There is considerable repetition in it, some phrases being repeated word for word; and the spelling in the Dhulia edition is inconsistent, showing that the copying was done by a number of different disciples.¹ The first seven chapters were probably written between the years A. D. 1554 and 1564, additional chapters being written as need arose. It is written in ovi metre, as has been already stated, and the poem is in the form of a dialogue between a pupil and his preceptor. It contains a good deal of ethical instruction, references to social and political duties, sound advice for mahants and disciples, and general spiritual teachings. The word *rajakaran*² appears only twenty-two times in the whole book, there being but one reference in the first eight chapters; hence it is clearly not a book devoted primarily to political interests, as some enthusiastic Ramdasis would have us believe. The fifth section of the eleventh chapter is one of the few sections which is particularly concerned with duties to the state.

Up to the present date, at least seven old manuscripts of the *Dasbodh* have been discovered.⁸ (1) One copy, completed by Jairam Svami in A. D. 1693, is in Dhulia. (2) There is a copy which was written by Keshav Svami, of the Umbraj

¹ Altekar, Introduction, p. 20.

^a *Rajakaran* means *duties to the state» or 'statecraft.'

⁸ P.J., Vdl. '1, sec. 49.

math, in 1698. (3) Another manuscript was discovered in the Umbraj math, which was written in A.D. 1702. (4) A copy found at Pomgaon, the property of Dattatraya Buva, was written by Mudgal Svami in A.D. 1698. (5) A manuscript, written in A.D. 1694 by order of Dinkar Svami, of the Tisgaon math, has been found at Katfegaon in the Ahmednagar district. (6) There is a copy which was written in A.D. 1714 by a certain Govind of Kalyan's math, and is now in the possession of the Dhulia Sabha. (7) A copy has very recently been discovered, which was written in 1684, three years after the Svami's death, and is now being published. When one realizes how great is the reverence of all Ramdasīs for the *Dasbodh*, it will readily be seen that the discovery and publication of these old manuscripts is a matter of the first importance to the followers of the great Saint. The first edition of the *Dasbodh* was brought out by Mr. S. S. Dev in A.D. 1905, at Dhulia, and since that time there have been a number of other editions, making a total sale to date of about 9,000 copies.¹ The ovi metre, in which it is written, has four lines, as a rule; the first three lines of about eight syllables each, and the last line somewhat shorter. Although the first three lines generally end in syllables that rhyme, this form of poetic diction is not well adapted for singing.

The *Sri Sloka Manache* is a collection of two hundred and five verses which give advice to the mind.² These verses are particularly musical, and the disciples repeat them as they journey from place to place or while begging alms. One disciple repeats a verse and the other disciples repeat it in unison after him. The *bhujangaprayata* metre, in which it is written, has four lines of twelve syllables each, all the lines being in rhyme, and there are four equal groups of syllables in each line, the emphasis generally being upon the middle syllable in each group. The verses are very popular, being memorized by many educated Hindus, and they cover a wide variety of topics, such as

¹ Altekar, see Introduction, pp. 17-18.

* See Introduction to *Manache Sloka*, Ramdasī Series, published at Dhulia.

devotion to Rama, attaining self-control, renunciation, kindness, doing one's duty, conquering sin, keeping company with good persons, meditating upon Brahman, following the teachings of the guru, and obtaining release.

The verses asking for God's mercy, called *Karunashfake* (collections of eight), belong to another well-known group of the Svaml's poetry. Mr. Dev says that no one knows where the name came from, since the poems were not discovered until 1818, not being mentioned by Giridhar, Mahipati, Uddhav Suta or Hanumant.¹ These verses, which contain confessions of sin and expressions of the desire for repentance, are used by Ramdasis in connection with the evening worship. Like the Verses to the Mind, they are written in the *bhujangaprayata* metre, and the Dhulia publication was taken from the manuscript copied by Kalyan, written in his beautiful handwriting. Mr. Dev has another manuscript in his possession, which differs somewhat in the text, and it may have been written by Vasudev Pandit, of the Kanheri math. Among the topics discussed in these verses are the qualities of Rama and Krishna, ascetics, pride, daily worship, salvation, the Ramdasi sect, and worldliness.

Ramdas put into Marathi verse (*bhujangaprayata* metre) two chapters called the 'Sundarkand' and the 'Yuddhakantf,' which, with a third chapter entitled 'Kiskindhakand,' are known as Ramdas's *Ratnayana*. Mr. Dev submits the following reasons in the endeavour to show that the third chapter was not from the Svaml's pen:—² (1) No copy is to be found in any of the chief maths, such as Jamb, Chaphal, Sajjangad, etc. (2) In the 119th abhang of his *Life of Ramdas*, Bhimasvami Sirgavkar says, 'Ramdas, desiring to write the story of Rama, composed 100 verses, called the Sundarkand, and 1,300 verses, called the Yuddhakand, thus completing 1,400 verses, by the repetition of which all sins disappear.' (3) The book of miscellaneous poems in Kalyan's handwriting contains only the two chapters. In view of the above reasons, Mr. Dev concludes that Ramdas

¹ Introduction to *Karunftshtake*, p. 1.

³ Introduction to *Ramdasanchi Kaviti*, Ramdasi Series, published at Dhulia.

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¹ Altekar, see Introduction, pp. 17-18.

^a See Introduction to *Mandche Sloka*, Ramdasi Series, published at Dhulia.

devotion to Rama, attaining self-control, renunciation, kindness, doing one's duty, conquering sin, keeping company with good persons, meditating upon Brahman, following the teachings of the guru, and obtaining release.

The verses asking for God's mercy, called *Karundshfake* (collections of eight), belong to another well-known group of the Svami's poetry. Mr. Dev says that no one knows where the name came from, since the poems were not discovered until 1818, not being mentioned by Giridhar, Mahipati, Uddhav Suta or Hanumant¹. These verses, which contain confessions of sin and expressions of the desire for repentance, are used by Ramdasis in connection with the evening worship. Like the Verses to the Mind, they are written in the *bhujangaprayata* metre, and the Dhulia publication was taken from the manuscript copied by Kalyan, written in his beautiful handwriting. Mr. Dev has another manuscript in his possession, which differs somewhat in the text, and it may have been written by Vasudev Pandit, of the Kanheri math. Among the topics discussed in these verses are the qualities of Rama and Krishna, ascetics, pride, daily worship, salvation, the Ramdasi sect, and worldliness.

Ramdas put into Marathi verse (*bhujangaprayata* metre) two chapters called the 'Sundarkand' and the *Yuddhakan[^], which, with a third chapter entitled *Kiskindhakan[^], are known as Ramdas's *Ramdyana*. Mr. Dev submits the following reasons in the endeavour to show that the third chapter was not from the Svami's pen:—² (1) No copy is to be found in any of the chief maths, such as Jamb, Chaphal, Sajjanga[^], etc. (2) In the 119th abhang of his *Life of Ramdas*, Bhimasvami Sirgavkar says, *Ramdas, desiring to write the story of Rama, composed 100 verses, called the Sundarkan<1, and 1,300 verses, called the Yuddhakan<1, thus completing 1,400 verses, by the repetition of which all sins disappear.' (3) The book of miscellaneous poems in Kalyan's handwriting contains only the two chapters. In view of the above reasons, Mr. Dev concludes that Ramdas

¹ Introduction to *Karunashiake*, p. 1.

² Introduction to *RcImdasanchl Kavita*, Ramdasi Series, published at Dhulia.

purposely wrote two chapters only, and passed over five of the chapters in the Sanskrit work, because he wished to impress upon the disciples that phase of Rama's life in which he came upon earth to liberate the gods who were harassed by the demon king, Rava#a. Ramdas has also written upon this theme in his poem called the *Lagku Ramayana*. While the Svami's *Rdmdayia* is chiefly concerned with biographical material, there are numerous digressions, in which such topics are discussed as duties to the state, social reform, and devotion to Rama.

Ramdas wrote a group of abhangs, called ^c satakas/ concerning such subjects as renunciation, knowledge and advice.¹ Another group, called 'panchkas/ dealt with such matters as devotion, foolishness, pride, laziness, repentance, thoughtfulness, beauty, intoxication, renunciation, truthfulness, vanity and friendliness.² The *Juna Dasbodh* is a poem of twenty-one chapters in ovi metre, supposed to have been written before the *Dasbodh*, and possibly to have been the basis for the latter work. It is concerned with Vedantic teaching in part, but more with the practical religious duties of everyday life, such as renunciation, effort, good discipleship, teaching and mental peace. Ramdas wrote a poem entitled, *Sadripu Vivechan*, or 'the description of the six enemies,' and this is in the anushtubh metre which has four lines of eight syllables each ; these enemies being passion, pride, hypocrisy, anger, jealousy and worldliness.

The Svami composed thirteen hymns, also in the anushtubh metre, in praise of Maruti; and they are called *Bhimarupi Stotre** They tell of Marutfs mother, of his anger, of his service to Rama, of his small form but quick pace, and of his dreadful power. Another poem in the ovi metre, called *Aurvayavyatirek*, discusses the creation and the destruction of the world according to the ancient classical formulae of assertion and negation. There is a poem called the *Nityanaimittika Vidhtsangraha Sopana*, which deals with the various religious rites which

¹ Collections of one hundred verses each.

² Collections of five verses each.

are to be performed daily or occasionally. There is also the group called *Bhupali*, or prayers to be sung in the morning, which are thoughts in contemplation of the *Saguna* God and the *Nirguna* God.¹ There are a number of poems devoted to the worship with the lamps (*arati*), and also a group dedicated to Brahman, the ultimate and only Reality. There are poems to be sung on specified days, and others to be repeated while circling the temple. In connection with the Ramanavami Festival, there are special poems to be used for that occasion only, from the opening of the doors and offerings to the idols, to the car procession the evening of the eleventh day. There are religious verses to be sung in connection with the nine kinds of devotion, the care of a child, the carrying of a torch, and the wandering of ascetics. The only Sanskrit poem known to be written by the Svami is called the *Das-Gztd*, and it is not of great importance.

The last group of the published poetry of Ramdas includes a large number of miscellaneous poems, which cover a wide variety of topics, some having autobiographical value. There is the song of the ChaphaJ Festival, a poem concerning royal duties, one describing the duties of a Kshatriya and a servant, a letter to his mother and two letters to his elder brother, two poems about building activities, and one about gardens. There is an abhang concerning Vithoba, and another in praise of Maruti, the latter in the *malini* metre. Other letters which have come down to us include those to Uddhav Gosavl, one to his nephew, and one to Sambhaji after he became king. Verses of advice to Sivaji and slokas concerning the Rama mantra are important. One short poem, addressed to Sri Rama, entitled *Lameness/ has been singled out by Mr. Dev for special study.² Another poem was found among the waste papers in the Apchand math of Sivram Svami, Kalyaj's disciple, in which Ramdas compares himself to a washerman whose business it is to wash the minds of those who have not learned renunciation.³ There are

¹ The idol having qualities and Brahman the unknowable.

³ V.V.; Vol.II,sec.70. ⁸ K.K, Vol. II, sec. 80.

also about twenty-five other poems in this miscellaneous group concerning various topics, which bear witness to the remarkable breadth of interest which Ramdas had.

THE UNPUBLISHED POETRY OF RAMDAS

Mr. S. S. Dev estimates that there are about one thousand pages of the Svami's known poetical works still unpublished, a large part of it written by Kalyan Svami.¹ There are nine poems, of one hundred verses each, concerning a variety of topics, such as the nine kinds of devotion, the four *muktis*, the five destructions, reality, Brahman, the sadguru, worldly life, initiative, children's play, and Sri Rama. Another group is a collection of miscellaneous abhangs which are chiefly concerned with spiritual experience and the path to God. There is a group of verses, called *Pahchikarana Yoga*, which tell of the resemblance between the human body and the universe, describing the nature of *Nirguna* and of *Atmanivedan*? There is a poem, called the *Chaturtka Yogaman*? which describes the nature of the internal soul within the human body, eulogizing the eternal Brahman and the value of knowledge coupled with experience. In the group of verses called *Manapahchaka*, Ramdas describes the kingdom of Sri Rama, telling of the joy found in the service of Rama, and says that by serving our fellowmen heaven can be easily attained. The poem called *Pahchaman* refers to the *Dasbodh* and tells of the relationship between the teacher and the disciple. There is a group of poems in the anushtubh metre, concerning varied subjects, which have genuine value for the student of religion. There are hundreds of poems about God's mercy, which have a peculiarly appealing quality and quickly win their way to the heart of the worshipper. This completes the outline of the known works by the Svami; and it is undoubtedly a stupendous output, when one considers the active life

¹ See Introduction to *Don Charitre*, p. 21, RamdasI Series, published at Dhulia.

² (a) The state of being without qualities. (6) The offering of the self to God.

which he led. It is possible that other poems by the Svami may still be found, hidden away in an obscure math or carefully concealed in a family strong-box; and it is also possible that some of the poems attributed to Ramdas were produced by disciples; but this is not likely to any large extent. Many of the unpublished poems are with Mr. Dev at Dhulia, who is publishing them little by little, as opportunity offers.

THE POETRY OF THE DISCIPLES

There were a number of Ramdasīs who later became famous in their own right, and in a sense, therefore, their poetry cannot strictly be classified as Ramdasī poetry. This list would include Vaman Pandit and Ranganath Svami.¹ Furthermore, a number of the original disciples undoubtedly wrote works that have never been found. Antaji's diary says that Uddhav wrote in detail about the Svamis' twelve years of pilgrimage; Bajipant wrote about the choosing of the early disciples; Venabai wrote about the eleven Marutis established by Ramdas; a chapter in *Siva Chatrapati* told of Sivaji becoming a disciple; Bajipant told of the six weeks' visit of Sivaji to Sajjangat; Trimbak Gosavi described the deaths of Sreshth and his wife, Parbati; and Divakar wrote about the conversations which Ramdas had with others during his later years.² It may be that this was a literary plan arranged by the disciples, which remained unfulfilled; or it may be that most of these records were actually written, some to be eventually discovered, and others to be lost.

In his introduction to *Don Charitre*, Mr. Dev gives a list of twenty-three disciples and mentions their literary productions, many of which are referred to in Chapter II. Of the first eight, Mr. Dev says that Bhimaji Sahapurkar was the only one to leave a biography, and this work, therefore, has great value as an original source; but, unfortunately, it is rather brief and fragmentary. A work

¹ Keluskar, p. 515. 2 VV., Vol. I, sec. 21.

not mentioned in Chapter II was a biography of Ramdas written in 1708 by a certain Kulkarni, of Sahapur, which has not yet been published. There is an unpublished biography by Gangadhar Maharaj, written in 1718, and a brief biography of about forty pages written in 1723 by an unknown writer, which also is unpublished. Meru Svami wrote a biography; and in 1798 a work was written by Lakṣman Buva, entitled *sri Sadgurustavaraj*. There was a biography written in 1876 by Gangadhar Buva, and one in 1882 by G. N. Khanvalkar; all of the above-mentioned works being in manuscript form only.

There are a large number of letters written by the original disciples, which have been found here and there, many of which have now been published.¹ In addition to these letters, there are numerous land-grants and other Government documents which give information about the Ramdasi sect, and which therefore have value for the student. There are a number of songs which are of Ramdasi origin and which concern the life or the teachings of the great Svami. Mr. Rajwade describes one such song, which is sung by the women and girls at Paraj! during the worship of Rama.² For many years Mr. Dev has made a systematic search of Ramdasi maths, temples, homes of descendants, and libraries; with the result that at Dhulia there are now hundreds of these manuscripts filed away. As he finds time, Mr. Dev is studying them and publishing the results of his research; and it is not too much to say that the Ramdasi movement is unique in the thoroughness with which its literature has been investigated.

Sreshth, the Svami's brother, was a poet of considerable ability and spent most of his life at Jamb, where Ramdas was born. He wrote two works, called *Bhakti Rahasya* and *Sugamopaya*, in addition to which he composed many miscellaneous poems, all of which have been published at Dhulia. Another important poetical work is the *JSvanubhava Diiikar*, which was written by Dinkar Svami, of the Tisgaon math, near Ahmednagar, who was a dis-

¹ *SrisamPradayaci Kagadpatre*, Parts I and II.

* P. f., Vol. H, sec. 72.

dple of Ramdas, It tells how the guru should be worshipped and his favour obtained; covering such topics as meditation, renunciation, good deeds, devotion, knowledge, Brahman, yoga, worldly life, giving kirtans, and maya. Dinkar also wrote a poem called *Bhagvat*, and it is said that he was greatly influenced by the poetry of Sreshth, having more contact with him, perhaps, than with his more famous brother.¹

In the opinion of Mr. S. K. AJtekar, one poem, generally attributed to Ramdas, was really written, by a certain Hansaraj Svami; his reason being that at the end of each chapter it is stated that this is the substance of Ramdas Svami, the title * Sri Ramdas' being attached to the beginning, which is a title never assumed by the Svami himself.² Uddhav combined poetical ability with his other qualities and inspired poetical activity among his own group of disciples. At his Takerji math forty-three bundles of manuscripts were found, among them a few poems by Ramdas himself.³ One of Uddhav's poems was found in the Indore Bodhan math, and tells of the disciple Sivram, who spent a few days with Ramdas and then was sent to the Talangaon province to liberate the people,⁴ an episode to which Giridhar also refers.⁵ Sivram wrote about twenty poems, concerning such subjects as bad company, death, the sadguru, worship of Rama, the sports of Krishna, dancing and singing. From a study of his poetry it seems that Sivram had an incurable physical malady.

In the Takerji! math poems were found which were written by three disciples of Ramdas, named Devadas, Niraijan and Musalram. The math of Devadas was at Da^egaon, near Ahmednagar, and his poems are considered to be almost as good as those of Ramdas. In the Takerji math there was also found a short biography of the Svami, written by Moro Bhagvat Sabnis, of Sajjangaoni, in 1789. Another disciple of Ramdas, Annappa, of the Nilange math in the Balaghat Province, wrote a poem of fourteen

¹ See Introduction to *Svduhubhava Dinkar*, Ramdasi Series, of Dhulia, p. 11. ² Atekar, p. 32. ³ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 38. ⁴ * K.K., Vol. II, sec. 83. * ⁵ *Pratap*, ch. x, sec. 69.

verses, called the *Padukakhyan*, describing details of his own life.¹ He wrote a poem in which he included a few of the poems by Ramdas, and he wrote also a copy of the *Dasbodh*, in which his handwriting resembles that of Kalyan. Another inmate of the same math, named Jaivant, wrote poetry in Marathi, Hindustani and Kanarese, and may have been a disciple of Annappa. A poem called *Santamalika* was written by Jairam Suta, who was a disciple of the Svami; and a work called *Sitasvayaifovar* was written by the female disciple Venabai. Giridhar, the author of the *Samarthapratdpy* was one of the most prolific writers in the Ramdasi movement, and is said to have produced forty different works, only two of which have been published, the rest being at Dhulia in manuscript form.² Near the village of Bhalki there is a math which was established by Nursoba, who was a disciple of Atmaram Maharaj, the author of the Svami's biography entitled *Dasa Viframdhama** Nursoba wrote a large number of abhangs, a hundred and fifty-six of which are available.⁸ This list of Ramdasi poetry is very incomplete, and is being added to yearly by the patient scholarship of Mr. S. S. Dev, who is editing the various manuscripts, and who will, we hope, eventually write a substantial essay upon this subject.

WHO WROTE THE 'DASBODH'?

In the January and February numbers of the Marathi magazine, *Vividhnyanvistar*, in the year 1921, Mr. BhayyaSastri* Jamkhedkar wrote two articles, in which he asserted that Ramdas was not the author of the *Dasbodh*, but that the latter work had been written by one of the disciples ; and he gave a number of reasons for supporting this position. His articles were answered by Mr. G. S. Altekar, of Karad, in the *Chitramftyajag&t*, in the year 1921, and by his father, Mr. S. K. Altekar, in a lecture delivered in Ahmednagar in 1924. The following points are raised and answered one by one: (1) It is customary for a poet to mention the name of his deity, parents and himself in his written work, and since Ramdas neglected to do this, he could not have written the *D&sbodh*. Answer: There are several verses that do mention Das or Ramdas, such as 8-9-60 ; 11-7-22; 12-4-20 ;

¹ K.F., Vol. II, sec. 76.

* *Dnyanodaya*, Jan. 2, 1921, * Notes on Marathi Saints,¹ by Dr. J. E. Abbott, 3 VV., Vol. II, sec. 78.

16-1-21; and other verses which mention the deity, such as 16-1-21. (2) Why is the poem called *Ddsbodh* instead of Ramdasbodh, and why are the words 'Das says' so rarely found? Answer: These words do occur in some verses, and are not used oftener because the ovi metre is not well adapted for them. Ramdas calls himself the servant of Rama and prefers to be known by that title. (3) Ramdas was not a poet and had not studied the Sastras, or he would not have repeated himself so often, the *Ddsbodh* repeating much that was given in miscellaneous poems. Answer: Ramdas calls himself a poet in a number of verses, and in the *Ddsbodh* discusses many themes not touched upon in the miscellaneous poems, such as statecraft, renunciation, release and theories of creation. Ramdas himself referred to the Granthraj in a chapter called *Anandbhuvan*, and it is entirely possible that many miscellaneous poems were written after the *Ddsbodh*. (4) Why is the worship of Rama neglected in the *Ddsbodh*? Answer: Although there are many verses which teach the worship of Rama, yet it is pre-eminently a work of spiritual knowledge, and therefore it does not stress the worship of Rama. (5) The short biography by Dinkar does not mention that Ramdas wrote the *Ddsbodh*. Answer: The work by Dinkar does not pretend to be a complete biography, and other biographies of value do mention the Svami's authorship. (6) Why has no copy of the *Ddsbodh* been found which was written during the life of Ramdas? Answer: Very few other manuscripts of the Svami's lifetime have been found; but this is not surprising when we consider the wars and upheavals which have taken place, resulting in the loss of many Government documents as well. (7) Mr. Dev asserts in his preface that Ramdas made many corrections in the original copy of the *Ddsbodh*, but there is no proof for this. Answer: There is an old manuscript in the Pomgaon math in which corrections have been made, probably in the handwriting of Kalyan; and another copy at Nilange, in Annappa's handwriting, shows that corrections were made. (8) The *Ddsbodh* fails to observe the usual custom of asking God's blessing at the beginning of a work. Answer: There are three ways to invoke benedictions, one of which is to describe the contents, and the *Ddsbodh* has followed this last method, both Kalidasa and Valmiki also using this same form. (9) Verse 5-3-40 says that he who thinks God greater than the sadguru is a wretch, and Ramdas could not have written so disrespectfully of Sri Rama. Answer: This is poetic exaggeration, and many other poets have described the sadguru in the same way. (10) In Chapter vii, section 10, it is written, * All the words are completed and the work is finished;» hence the *Ddsbodh* is not in its original form. Answer: The scholars are agreed that sections of the *Ddsbodh* were written upon different occasions, the first seven chapters having been written as a unit. (11) In verse 3-10-74, the writer calls himself all-knowing, and Ramdas would not have been such a braggart. Answer: The book is in the form of a dialogue between a guru and his disciple, and therefore such an assertion does not seem out of place. (12) In describing the characteristics of a mahant, the *Ddsbodh* sets forth an ideal that cannot be fulfilled and was not realized even by

such a saint as Tukaram. Answer: This is an assertion that must be proven, because unquestionably many mahants did approximate the ideal set forth. (13) Why should the *Ddsbodh* refer to the art of writing? Answer: It covers a wide field of subjects and the art of writing has its place among these topics. (14) Verse 20-10-30 says that the *Dasodh* is full of the merciful words of Sri Rama, and this must refer to⁴ the words of the Svami's mercy,* meaning that the passage must have been written by some one other than the Svami. (The thought here is a little confusing.) Answer: The word Samartba was frequently used in reference to Sri Rama as well as to Ramdas.

This written debate speaks for itself and needs little comment, such a discussion being no new thing in literary criticism. In our opinion, the weakness of the Sastri's position is that it rests so much upon the argument from silence, and seems to be rather laboured, as if the writer had determined upon a certain viewpoint, and then sought to marshal as many facts as possible in support of his thesis. Some of his criticism is decidedly forced, and a few of the statements seem to lack adequate foundation. Mr. Altekar has given an adequate reply to the Sastri, who has failed to make his case convincing. The fact that a *Ddsdodh* manuscript has now been found bearing the date of 1684 is an effective answer to point (6) of the above written debate.

CHAPTER IX

THE EARLY MOVEMENT

THE SITUATION WHEN RAMDAS DIED

FROM the records available it is not possible to construct a connected and chronological history of the Ramdasi sect from the Svami's death to the present time. Most of the manuscripts are concerned with the events occurring in particular maths, or with biographical details about the mahants in charge of the maths. As a general rule, each math has a record of the successive mahants who guided its destinies, particularly the larger maths. On the whole, there are few documents which enable us to draw a picture of the entire movement during the past two hundred and fifty years. We know a good deal of certain individuals, such as Kalyan, for example ; but we are only able to draw inferences when it comes to discussing matters of general policy. Mr. Dev suggests that the movement may be divided into three periods: First, the period when Ramdas was alive, 1648-81; second, the period ending with the fall of the Maratha kingdom, 1681-1817; third, the period extending to the present time.¹ These periods might also be designated as the period of extensive influence, the period of restricted influence, and the period of little influence. These divisions are more or less arbitrary, and are simply used for convenience, since there are no sharp dividing lines. It is the story of a movement that achieved tremendous prestige under the dominating influence of a great personality; and then, when he was removed from the scene, of its slow disintegration, until our own day, in which it plays a minor part.

¹ V.V., Vol. H, sec. 64.

Beginning as a *personal* movement, it has remained so to this day, Ramdas being treated with great veneration during his life and being practically worshipped by many since his death. After his passing, all his personal effects were carefully collected and treasured as priceless relics, the places where he lived becoming shrines. Mr. Rajwade, in one of his essays, makes a list of fifty-eight places and objects around Chaphal with which Ramdas was connected at one time or another, and which therefore are treated with additional veneration, this list including trees, stones, idols, fields and shrines.¹

Although we recognize that this movement remained personal in so many ways, yet we must acknowledge that it had become a definite sect many years before the founder died, governed by rules and regulations, and including thousands of loyal disciples. If the Svami's death marked the end of the first period, then the beginning of the second period found the sect in the full flush of its youth and power. In a sense it had become a State Religion, in which royalty had a share along with the Brahmans and Marathas, and the decrees of the leader went forth backed by royal prerogatives. We do not know how many maths were established; but it is safe to say that there were several hundred in all, reaching from Benares and other places in the north to Tanjore in the south. Each math became a centre of religious influence in the community, and was presided over by a mahant, the chief disciples presiding over the more important maths. Numerous disciples wandered from one math to another, staying a day or more in each one, giving kirtans and talking with inquirers. Before the Svami died, it was the custom of the mahants to visit him frequently, and he used to examine them, inquiring about their work, and sometimes testing their ability or devotion. Because of his attention to details, the movement had become welded together by common ideals and practices, a common mantra, sect-mark, and system of discipline. Passionately loyal to its founder, and proud of its unique relationship with the Government, if it had had

¹ KK., Vert. II, sec. 66.

adequate leadership it might have gone on to many years of even greater prestige and influence. But this was not to be.

THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

When Ramdas died, he was surrounded by a small coterie of disciples, chief among whom were Uddhav and Divakar; and after the last rites were performed a quarrel soon broke out between these two as to which one should direct the policies at Sajjangatf. There were other disagreements among some of the disciples, but this particular dispute occupied the centre of the stage, the quarrel becoming so acute that Kalyan tried to arbitrate and conciliate the two.¹ Although he failed in his attempt, his disciples at Pomgaon continued their efforts at conciliation after he died. Uddhav maintained that shortly before the end, Ramdas requested him to take charge of the math. Divakar, on the other hand, had been practically in charge during the last years of the Svami's life; and in the opinion of Kalyan, Bhaskar, VithaJ, Ganesa and others, he was the proper one to remain in charge.² Mr. Dev thinks that both men were right in their contention. During his lifetime, Ramdas had told Divakar to manage the affairs of the math, and when he was dying he had expressed the same wish to Uddhav. As a result of this quarrel and of his rejection by the disciples, Uddhav left Sajjangad and in 1685 he retired to Takerji, where Ramdas had spent twelve years in study and penance. Here the disappointed disciple practised penance for fourteen years by dieting. Some time after the departure of Uddhav, the disciples became convinced that it was the desire of Ramdas that Gangadhar Svami, the grandson of Sreshth, should be brought from Jamb to Chaphal and installed therein as the chief mahant. All the mahants agreed to this, and therefore the plan was carried out.

DISCIPLES AND MATHS

As has been stated, the history of the early movement is really the story of the various disciples and their maths ;

¹ F. P., Vol. II, sec. 93. ² *Patre*, Letters 49-54.

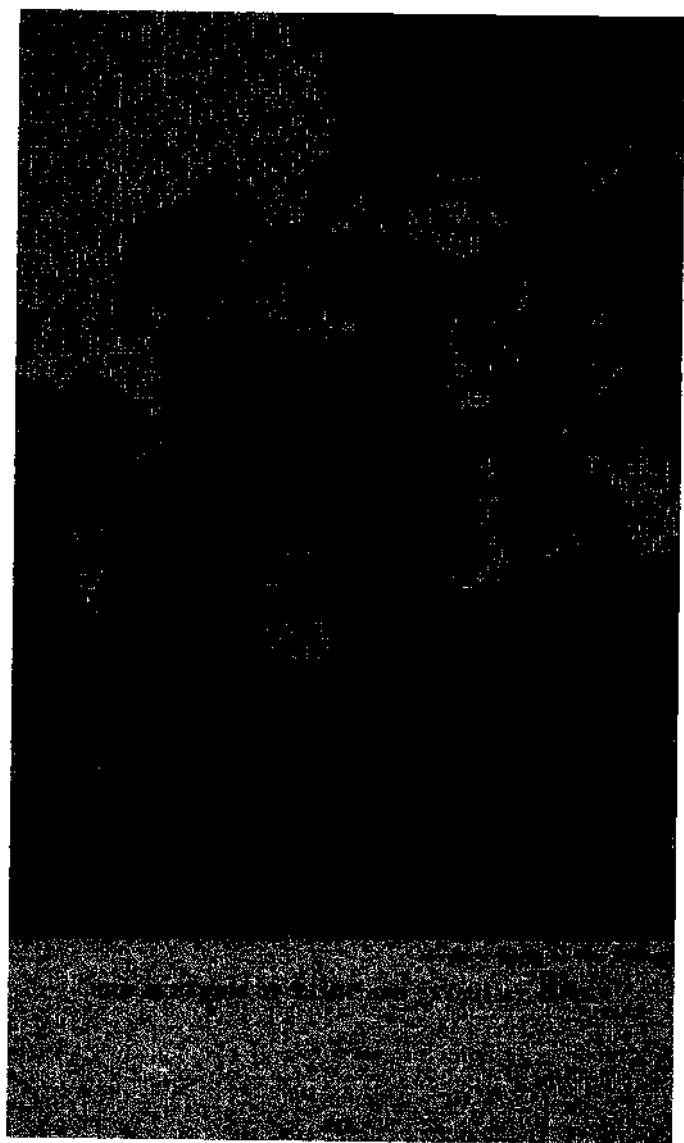
for *they were* the movement. The intimate disciples of the Svami, while far below him in general ability, were nevertheless able to carry on the movement with a good deal of momentum, and among this group four were particularly close to him. First should be mentioned his brother, Sreshth, who lived at Jamb and cared for his widowed mother until her death. Apart from his literary activities, we know very little about the elder brother, but there is every indication that he was a loyal son, and a devoted follower of his younger brother. His two sons were Ramji and Syamji, whose *samadhs* can be seen today by the side of the dried-up pool just outside the village of Jamb.¹ In describing Sreshth's death, Hanumant says that he went to the house of one of his disciples for a wedding ceremony.² While returning to Jamb, he alighted from his conveyance at the village of Dahiphalbudrukh, and told his son, Ramji, that he was about to die.³ He requested them to begin to sing bhajans, and in the midst of the singing, Sreshth passed away, at noonday on the fourteenth of the dark half of Phalguna, saka 1599 (A.D. 1677). After performing the funeral ceremony the son summoned his mother and brother, who immediately came to the village. When the mother arrived, she expressed the wish to die as a *sait*, and did so, uttering the words 'Ram Ram' as she died. Ramdas, who was at ChaphaJ, sent for Ramji and Syamji, aged sixteen and ten respectively, and they were brought to Chaphal by Uddhav, where they remained for a year, after which they returned to Jamb.

The outstanding disciple of Ramdas was Kalyan, the mahant of the Pomgaon math, and there are more references to him than to any other disciple. All accounts agree upon his intense devotion to the Svami and assert that Ramdas trusted him as he did no other. His father, Krishnajlpant, was an ascetic at Kolhapur, who married Rakhamabai, the

¹ *Samadhis* are tombstones, erected over the burial-places or burning-places of sannyasls.

² Hanumant, p. 389.

³ Ramji was also also called Ramchandra Buva.



sister of a subedar¹, and three children were **born of this union**, two boys and a girl. When the father failed to return from a pilgrimage, the family went to live with a maternal uncle.² Ramdas met them during one of his visits to Kolhapur, and being impressed by the beautiful handwriting of the boy Ambaji, he requested that the boy be given to him. Both he and his brother, Dattatraya, went along with the Svami, and Amba, later known as Kalyan, became a man of large physique, many stories being told of his fearlessness and physical prowess. Although Ramdas tested him in many difficult situations, he never failed, and was therefore often held up as an example before the others. Kalyan remained with Ramdas from 1645 until 1678, during which time he copied a great many of the Svami's poems, and also aided in the supervision of the other disciples and maths. In 1678 he went to Paranda and established a math at a village called pomgaon, six miles distant. In the year 1714, according to Mr. Dev, the ashes of Ramdas were dug up and taken to Benares by Keshav Svami, who stopped at Pomgaon on the way; and since Kalyan had died, the ashes of both men were taken to Benares at the same time. It was singularly fitting that the ashes of the most loyal disciple should have gone with the ashes of his master to their last resting-place.

Kalyan proved his loyalty to the Svami not only by acts of self-sacrifice, but also by establishing at Pomgaon a math which became a great influence in the movement, and where he surrounded himself by a group of men who were inspired by similar ideals. During his thirty-six years of residence there, disciples came to the math from far and near, seeking his counsel. Kalyan did not compose a great many poems himself, but encouraged his followers to do so, and one disciple named Samaraj Kalyan wrote poems in praise of Sri Rama and Kalyan.⁸ Another disciple was Sivram, of the Apachanda math near Gulbarga, who is said to have made several copies of the *Dasbodh*—one being in

* A subedar was a local Government official.

^a V.V., Vol. I, sec. 6. ⁸ K.F., Vol. I, sec. 52.

large letters written two years before his death.¹ Although he wrote some poetry of his own, his chief claim to fame is that he was one of the succession to which Atmaram belonged, who wrote the massive biographical study of Ramdas called *Dasa Viirdmdkdma* in which there are about 16,000 verses. This succession included Ramdas, Kalyan, Siva, Ramchandra, Atmaram. Another disciple named Sama had a literary gift, and four of his poems have been found, two in praise of the sadguru and two in praise of Kalyan.² One of his disciples was Annaji Bhalkikar, who was mahant of the Bhatambare math, located in Hyderabad State.³ He was unmarried and died of cholera while returning from a pilgrimage to Pan^harpur. Mr. Dev says that possibly Annaji and Anand Murti were one and the same. The extent of Kalyan's influence may be gleaned from the fact that forty-three mahants are listed as his followers, trained and initiated by him.⁴ His brother, Dattatraya, whose dates were 1638-1714, is said to have been a sweet singer, and was therefore often given that part of the devotions in which the praises of the gods are sung.⁵ He became the mahant of the math at Sirgaon near Chaphal, and, unlike his brother, he was married. A copy of the *Dasbodh* which he wrote has been found at Gwalior, where his great-great-grandson, Aba Maharaj, established a math about 1853, which is still in operation. It is this copy of the *Dasbodh* which has been edited and published by Mr. Pangarkar.

The third disciple in this first group was Uddhav Gosavi. As the story goes, a woman named Annapurnabai came to Takerji, where Ramdas, nineteen years of age, was engaged in devotions, and there bowed before him.⁶ Ramdas gave her a blessing, saying that she would become the mother of eight sons, one of whom proved to be Uddhav, who became a devoted disciple. He was frequently entrusted with

¹ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 57. ² V.V., Vol. II, sec. 71.

³ V.V., Vol. II, sec. 61. ⁴ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 50.

⁵ Preface to the *D&sbodh* edited by Mr. Pangarkar.

• K.K., Vol. I, sec. 38.

important tasks which required tact and diplomacy. Hanumant says that after Ramdas had established a math at Indore and installed there the images of Maruti and Sri Rama, he placed Uddhav in charge of the math, at the request of the people in the vicinity.¹ Mr. Rajwatfe has made a copy of the manuscripts in this math, but none of them are important, one manuscript containing advice to the disciple, probably being written by Uddhav himself. One of the papers describes the looting of Indore by Janoji Bhosle, May 30, 1762, at which time Govind Buva was managing the affairs of the math.² Uddhav was present when the Svami died, and it was at that time that the Svami asked him to manage the affairs at Sajjangatf, which later caused the dissension between him and Divakar. The last years of Uddhav were sad, being spent between the Takerll and Indore maths, part of the time at one and part of the time at the other. From the many manuscripts found in the Takerll math, it is evident that many of Uddhav's disciples were engaged in literary activities.

The fourth disciple of this first intimate group was Divakar, who seems to have been the business man of the early group. A resident of MahabJeSvar, he became a disciple during one of the Svami's visits there, and from that time on offered his services to Ramdas. By his intelligence and loyalty he quickly made a place for himself, and during the later years of Ramdas' life he managed the business affairs of the Sampradaya, assisted by Bhaiiji Gosavi and Akkabai.³ Ramdas must have been pleased with his management of things, as he gave him to understand that he would continue in this position permanently. Mr. Dev says that Ramdas made Divakar's father-in-law, Raghunathbhat, the family priest; and when the latter retired to Benares, he gave the priestly office with its income to Bhairavbhat, the son of Divakar. The descendants of the Divakar family are still enjoying this income. Divakar successfully looked after the interests of the Ramdasi sect during the reigns of Sambhajl and Rajaram, and

¹ Hanumant, p. 216.

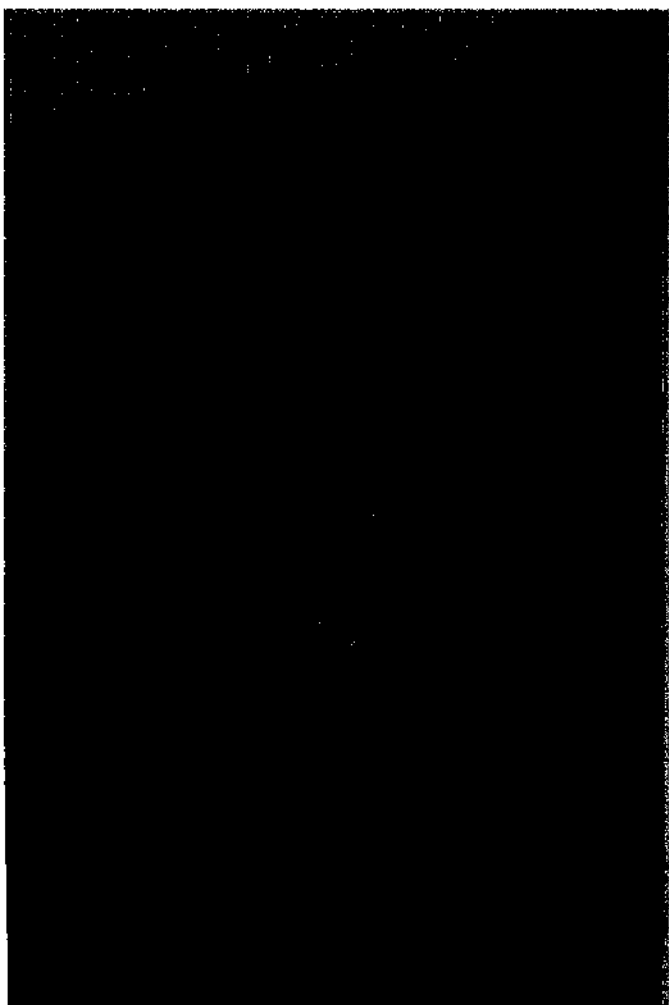
^a V.V., Vol. I, sec. 33.

⁸ The sect was frequently called the *Sampradaya*.

died at a ripe old age. A letter which he wrote to the Ramdas! people shews his affectionate regard for them: 'I have grown old and therefore must communicate my thoughts in writing. While engaged in my daily duties I may have spoken harsh words, but if so, it was for the sake of the work. You should not neglect religion/

There were two female disciples who rank among the leaders because of their devotion and services. Venabai was a child-widow, the daughter of a certain Deshpande at Miraj; and meeting Ramdas during one of his visits, she became his disciple. Many incidents are told of her devotion, one of her chief delights being to prepare his food. Once or twice the finger of suspicion was pointed at her, but her conduct was so exemplary that it disarmed all suspicions. She continued to live at Miraj, but made frequent trips to visit Ramdas and share in the anniversary ceremonies,¹ she being the only female disciple allowed to perform a kirtan. She was also a poetess of considerable talent and wrote about 1,500 verses, her best-known work being called *SiiasvayarH-var*. One of her chief claims to fame is that Giridhar (born about 1653), author of the *Samarthafiratap* was a product of her math. He was a disciple of Bahyabai, who was a disciple of Venabai. When the latter knew that her end was near, she journeyed to Sajjangad, so that she might spend her last days with her beloved teacher. According to the story by Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, Venabai asked that musical instruments be given to her, after she had been at Sajjangad about fifteen days, and she commenced to sing a bhajan. During the singing she uttered the words 'Ram Ram/ and died her body being burned with tulsi and sandalwood sticks. Akkabai, another child-widow, was the daughter of Rudrajipant Deshpande of ChaphaL She became a disciple during the early days and, although not as famous as Venabai, served her guru faithfully as long as he lived. She was of great assistance in the management of his domestic establishment, and looked after the interests of his immediate disciples, especially in the matter of hospitality. Ramdas had

¹ On the anniversary of Rama's birthday.



By the courtesy of Mr. S. S. Dev.

VRUDDHEŚVAR TEMPLE

Where Dīnkar practised penance.

implicit faith in her, and one of his last sayings was that she should read the *Dasbodh* faithfully. Among all the disciples, she and Uddhav only were present in the room when Ramdas died.

A third group of disciples were those who were very loyal to the Svami, but who were not as intimate with him as those mentioned above. Dinkar, Jairam and Keshav were a few who might be considered within this group. Dinkar was probably born about 1628 at Bhihgar, near Ahmednagar, and is chiefly known because of his poetic work called *Svanubhava Dinkar*, which has been published in the Ramdasi series at Dhulia.¹ The book deals with a multitude of topics, the chief of which is the worship of the sadguru. He wrote a number of other poems, the manuscripts of which are now with Mr. Dev. As a boy he was fond of reading religious books, until his mind gradually turned toward religious subjects. He had two brothers, named Syamraj and Trimbak, and a sister, named Saibai. He had two wives, Soveri and Ganga; a son, Ramchandra; and a daughter, Dvaka. Like Buddha, his family cares weighed upon him, and when about twenty-five years of age he left his home and withdrew to Vruddhesvar, a mountain temple of Siva, about thirty miles away. Here, in this beautiful spot, amidst the trees and by the side of a stream, he began to perform penances. After a few months, so the tradition goes, he saw Ramdas in a vision, and shortly after, the Svami himself arrived there, and Dinkar became his disciple. The Svami gave him an image of Sri Rama, which Dinkar later installed in the math which he established at Tisgaon, a few miles away. From that time on Dinkar had very little contact with his family, living as an ascetic, and being influenced both by Ramdas and by Sreshth. He had a number of disciples, some of whom were married, and his two brothers were in this latter group. He probably died about 1695.

According to the story by Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, Jairam, when a boy of nine, came with his widowed

¹ Preface to *Svanubhava Diftkar*, p. 3, in the Ramdasi Series, published at Dhulia.

mother to Pan^harpur, where he became a devotee of Vithoba after her death. Vithoba appeared to him in a vision and told him to go to Vadgaon, where he would find a guru named Krishnappa. Since his second wife was of low caste, Krishnappa felt himself to be disqualified from being Jairam's guru, but he gave him a mantra, and when he lay dying he sent Jairam to Ramdas. Since Jairam was unmarried, he was able to accompany Ramdas on many of his wandering tours, and he finally became the mahant of the Pandharpur math. Keshav Svami was a saintly man who lived at Bhaganagar, and hearing of Ramdas expressed the desire to meet him.¹ He sent the Svami a letter, and, at his request, Ramdas came and stayed several days in his home. Later on, Keshav went to Chaphal and remained with Ramdas for four months. He is chiefly known through his correspondence with Ramdas, and must have written him frequently. Two of these letters, one written by Keshav and one by Ramdas, were found in the Pomgaon math, and in these letters Keshav referred to Ramdas as the best of gurus. There was another Keshav, who was the mahant at Kodoli and later at Umbraj, but he does not seem to have had any contact with this disciple, since the Umbraj Keshav was a disciple of Kalyan. According to Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, Ranganath Svami was a man of wealth who lived sumptuously, but who became impressed by the miracles of the Svami and gave up his bow and arrow in favour of the rosary, later becoming the mahant of the Pali math. When Sambhaji was captured by the Muhamadans at Sangamesvar, Ranganath was with him. During the Muhammadan invasion, Ranganath, Trimbak, Akkabai and Bhanji removed the idols from Chaphal to Vagpur, where they were kept until peace was restored. Ranganath is said to have died about 1729, leaving two sons and a well-known female disciple named Chimabai.²

Some of the disciples, as has been stated, were famed for their learning, as, for example, Vaman Pandit, Bhimasvami,

¹ Hanumant, p. 323. ² *Faire*, see Preface, p. 35.

Antaji and Musalram Gosavi. Hanumant says that Vaman Pandit was first a disciple of Tukaram, and the latter, who was a Sudra, suggested that Vaman should go to Ramdas. The latter told him to perform pndances for twelve years and then return, which he did; and after returning, he was given a mantra by the Svami. He was chiefly famous as a great Sanskrit scholar. Bhimasvami was a native of Sahapur and became the mahant of the Tanjore math. Hanumant says that Bhimasvami arrived at Sajjaiigatf for a visit three days after the Svami's death ; and, overcome by grief, he wrote a biography, the manuscript of which was found in the ChaphaJ math and which, says Mr. Dev, brings out twenty-five points not emphasized by Hanumant. It is the first biographical account of Ramdas written by an actual disciple. Antaji wrote some rough notes four days after the Svami died, which were copied soon afterwards; but these notes were more fragmentary than the work by Bhimasvami. Apart from this reference to his residence at Sajjangad and his literary effort, we know very little about him. Musalram was another disciple who wrote poetry, and seven of his abhangs were found in the Taker} I math. Near Amba£, in Hyderabad State, is the village of Gavarai where there is a temple of Sri Rama, and it is here that he doubtless had his math.¹ Other disciples who settled in the territory that is now Hyderabad State were Trimbak Raj and Annappa. The math of Trimbak was at Bhalgaon on the bank of the Sukana river.² Some scholars believe that this Trimbak was the Bholaram mentioned in the biographies, but Mr. Dev doubts this, because both men are referred to in the list of disciples given by Giridhar. Trimbak and his disciples wrote poetry, two of the latter, Harihar and Vitha, writing poems about Trimbak. Annappa's math was at Nilange, in the province of Balaghat, among the papers found in his math being a fragment of fourteen verses telling of his life.³ It is said that he became a disciple when eighteen years of age, and lived for a time with Ramdas, later going

* V.V., Vol. H., sec. 69. ² K.K., Vol. I, sec. 15 .
⁸ K.K., Vol. II, sec. 76.

off on begging tours of his own. He had a number of disciples, and the poems which have been found show that his handwriting was strikingly similar to that of Kalya\$.

Some of the disciples have been referred to in a special capacity. For example, in connection with the Sajjangad establishment, Anant arranged for the kirtans, and Krishna had charge of the lamps. Bhaskar, Bhaiiji and Ra^aji were particularly mentioned in connection with their peace-making activities during the quarrel between Uddhav and Divakar. There were numerous Government officials who became disciples, and it is impossible to estimate the exact number. Some continued in their official duties, while others resigned and gave their whole time to their religious duties. The records seem to show that Sivaji kept a representative at Sajjangad who assisted in the supervision of the buildings, aided in the annual festivals and reported regularly to the king. This arrangement was in force from 1677 until 1710, when Gahgadhar was brought from Jamb.¹ At Sivaji's orders, Dattaji Trimal had fixed the definite amount to be used at the festivals. It is probable that all these officials who were in such close touch with the movement were disciples.

There are a number of references to Vasudev Pandit, who became the mahant of the Kanheri math.² His original name was Sadasiv Sastri, and he went to Ramdas in order to defeat him in argument. After his humiliation at the hands of an ignorant woodseller, who answered all his questions, he became a humble follower of the Svami. It is said that years later he attempted to change the Ramdasi mantra, but was unsuccessful in the effort. At Karahje there were two Ramdasi maths, Bajakaram being mahant of one and Pralhatf of the other, but very little is known about either man.³ There was a Bajakaram, who was mahant of the Narayangaon math, who spent thirteen years at Takerli after his thread ceremony.⁴ The record says that he was a scholarly man, won many disciples and

¹ *Patre*, Letter 13. ² V. V., Vol. I, sec. 39.

³ V.V., Vol. II, sec. 85 ; V.V., Vol. I, sec. 14.

⁴ f. r., Vol. I, sec. 48.

established several other maths which owed allegiance to the Narayangaon math. In addition to the Sivram mentioned, there were at least two others. Another very saintly man who became a disciple was Mauni Gosavi.¹

The math of Devdas was at Da[^]egaon, near Ahmednagar, and although there are many references to his poetry, very few of his poems have been found. Devdas was also called Devrai, and it is said that he was of assistance in overthrowing the Muhammadan power. Two copies of the *Dasbodh* were found in that math, one written in 1777 and the other in 1786. There were at least four other maths which owed allegiance to this math. Devdas died at Benares, whither he had gone with his disciple, Krishnaji, but his samadhi is at Da[^]egaon. Tinnajipant was the disciple to whom Ramdas gave five idols and who, when bitten by a serpent, was miraculously saved. At Sirval there were two maths under Narayarji Buva and Baji Gosavi, the latter being a non-Brahman and possibly a disciple of Vasudev Gosavi.² Gopal Gosavi is said to have been the mahant at Vatfgaon, the village made famous by two of the Svami's miracles as narrated by Bhimasvami Sirgavkar. There were twenty or more female disciples, in addition to Venabai and Akkabai, some of the best known being Ambikabai, Satibai, Bahinabai, Nababai, Manabai, Apabai, Sakhabai and Gangabai.³

ORGANIZATION

The Ramdasi movement was not merely a power in Maharashtra; it extended also into North and South India,

¹ V.V., Vol. II, sec. 83. ² V.V., Vol. I, sec. 5.

³ Lists of disciples may be found in Bhave, pp. 208, 209; Altekar (see Appendix); *Pratap*, section 10. Additional disciples, located in various parts of India, were Maharudra, SadaSiv, Hanuman, Dayal, Venlmadhav, Ramkrishna, Harikrishna, Visvambhar, Bhagvant, Brahmadas, Hari, Ramchandra, Anant, Jayakrishna, Haridas, Sri Sailya-Sikhar, Sri Rangapattangankar, Nilopant, Nursopant, Ambarakhane, Ganegant, Narayanpant, Ramkrishnapant, Devagirikar, Balkrishnapant Sahapurkar[^] Govind, Sambhu Svaml, Kodandaram, Trimbak, Balai, Anant Buva, Chakrapant, Ganes Vithal, Narasimha, Niranjan, Kapil, Jaivant, Raghav, Mahadev, K5\$iraj, ViSvanath, Tukoba, Naraaseti, Udas, Jivan, Damodar, Anand, Marutidas, Balbhim, Mudgal, and many others.

and the movement was built around the disciple rather than around the math, the chief link in the chain of organization being the mahant. First as a seeker and inquirer, then as an initiated follower, finally as a mahant in his own right and the leader of a group, he was the one responsible for the progress of the cause. Ramdas had set a high ideal for mahants; and not all the disciples, therefore, possessed the qualities which enabled them to achieve that high position of leadership. The mahant who spent his time at the maths of ChaphaJ and Sajjangatf was looked upon as the spiritual successor of Ramdas, these two maths and temples being under one management. Very few disciples remained at Sajjangatf during the rainy season. Strictly speaking, the movement had a very loose organization. Any disciple could, if he so desired, settle down in a given spot, surround himself with a group of followers and establish a math. Many disciples preferred to live an active wandering life, after the example of Ramdas himself, and spent their time going from math to math or from shrine to shrine. Whenever possible, they planned to return to Sajjangatf for the annual festivals or anniversary ceremonies. Hence there was little difference between mahants and many of the wandering disciples, in so far as spiritual attainments were concerned. Undoubtedly many of these wandering disciples considered themselves to be mahants, and were accompanied upon their wanderings by a group of disciples or followers who frequently were mere boys. All the disciples and mahants looked up to the chief mahant at Sajjangaci as their spiritual leader, and if anyone failed to perform his religious duties properly, the chief mahant reproved him, just as Ramdas had done during his life. After the Svami's death, his anniversary ceremony gradually took the place of the Ramanavami ceremony as the most important yearly gathering, although the latter continued to be held, and it was during these gatherings that most of the disciples and mahants met each other. Every mahant in Maharashtra was expected to visit Sajjangaci at least once in three years, and those outside Maharashtra were expected to go there at least once in every eleven years. Another link was the constant travel-

ling of groups of disciples from one math to another. A third link was their common mantra, sect-marks and ritual.

Each mahant was evidently free to choose his own disciples, and to decide when they were ready for the mantra and vows. Ramdas had sometimes favoured a person at short notice, but also had kept numerous others waiting a long time. It was the usual practice for the inquirer to come and live with the mahant and remain under his instruction. When he attained sufficient spiritual understanding, he was given the mantra and made a full disciple, a process that often took several years. Married men were made disciples, when they were ready for the step, and occasionally women were enrolled. Although the life of the unmarried disciple (*sannyasi*) was doubtless thought to be the higher form of discipleship, the married state (*grihastha*) was not frowned upon; and ever since Gangadhar Svami, Sreshth's grandson, went to Sajjanga-i, the chief mahant has been a married man. Naturally the vows of the *sannyasi* were much more rigorous than those of the *grihastha*, and his daily devotional programme was more intense. Discipleship for such a person was a serious step, because it meant not merely the adoption of the Vedic mantra, caste-mark, dress,¹ long hair, beard and other matters generally connected with the outward appearance; it also meant a severe spiritual discipline, in which the body and mind were brought into subjection by the spirit, and in which the fruits of character became daily more apparent.

The math itself was an interesting phase of the movement. It was not a *monastery' in the European sense, in which a fixed group lived together on a permanent basis; neither was it an *aSrama* or retreat, where a group of disciples withdrew from the world. Rather was it a centre of influence by means of which the teachings of Ramdas spread throughout the community. The math was generally a house of some kind, and, as a rule, the idol of Maruti was installed therein, and sometimes that of Sri

¹ The Ramdas dress was usually a loin cloth with an outer yellow-brown robe or an animal's skin.

Rama. Some maths were exceedingly simple, consisting of a few rooms only, for entertaining guests. Other maths were elaborate establishments with imposing buildings, servants' quarters, estates for yielding revenue, and much equipment. It was usually the residence for the mahant and for a number of others who lived with him as his own disciples, or for those who visited there for a short time. The family was more or less flexible, the inmates coming and going as they pleased. Unlike the wandering disciples who begged alms for a living, many of the maths were wholly or partially supported by the income from land which had been given by the Government or by wealthy patrons. Although the maths were primarily centres for religious instruction and worship, they wielded an indirect political influence because of their intimate relationship with Government officials.¹ The worship of Sri Rama and the Vedanta teachings were the central themes taught in the math, other subjects taught being writing, singing, religious dancing, physical exercises and good conduct. The maths were an element of stability, giving a substance and a duration to the movement which it never could have had if all the disciples had been of the wandering type. Ramdas evidently recognized this when he first began to teach, and therefore he himself established his first math at Chaphal, where all spiritual seekers found a welcome awaiting them, although discipleship was only given to those who proved their worth. Ramdas had always been eager to receive intelligent boys into his maths;—a policy which has been true of the sect ever since. Men were rarely made disciples after they had reached an age of twenty-five years, a fact which meant that the future mahants had the finest kind of training through years of discipline and study.

THE RITUAL

During his life Ramdas used a definite plan of worship, which was taught to the disciples and made a part of the

¹ Bhava ; see the chapter on Ramdas, p. 208.

regular discipline. Although the details have varied, these rules have been observed by his followers ever since, and bear certain resemblances to the daily programme of Brahmans in general. In Atmaram's *Dasa Viiramdhma* there is a section called 'Ramdaspanthkramasar/' which gives these details of ritual and daily worship. In this daily ritual, the worship of Sri Rama and the study of the *Ddsbodh* were the two chief items of importance; and as a result, the *Ddsbodh* has always been the chief scripture of the Ramdasi sect. Numerous disciples may have read the *Adhydtma Ramayana* in Sanskrit and other Hindu Sastras according to their individual tastes, but the poetry of Ramdas was their chief study, each disciple being expected to read eleven 'Verses to the Mind' and two sections of the *Ddsbodh* every day. Each disciple or prospective disciple was expected to be loyal to his particular teacher, who should be worshipped in four ways. First, he should worship the guru directly, or, if not present in the flesh, he should worship his sandals and samadhi. Second, he should visit the shrines and other places made sacred by his guru. Third, he should worship by meditation, thinking of his guru at all times and recounting his merits. Fourth, he should worship through spiritual adoration, yielding his heart completely and offering his entire self at the guru's feet.

The daily routine was somewhat as follows:

1. A Ramdasi should arise about 4 a.m.
2. He should bring into his mind the thought, 'Tat tvaiiii asi' (Thou art that) and meditate upon its meaning.
3. He should remember the mantra by which he hopes to attain salvation.
4. He should call to mind the deity or idol to be worshipped.
5. He should sing auspicious bhajans or hymns.
6. He should think of Sri Rama in all his characteristics, including dress and ornaments.
7. He should then worship by waving the sacred lamps.
8. He should bathe and perform the usual devotional exercises.
9. In solitude he should sing the praises of the deity,

performing mental worship and muttering the mantra, after which he should repeat the names of the god, counting the tulsi beads. There should be 108 beads in the necklace, and he should count them at least thirteen times, and, if possible, 130 times.

10. The idol should then be worshipped by certain prescribed rules.

11. The guru should be respectfully greeted.

12. The disciple should bow to the sun.

13. The disciple should repeat certain hymns and sip holy water, repeating the words 'Tat tvath asi*' three times.

14. Then food should be presented to the idol, after which it should be eaten.

15. The disciple should then go about his day's work, keeping Sri Rama in mind at all times.

16. In the early evening Maruti should be worshipped with the use of hymns, *pradakskindsy*¹ salutations and praise, Bhimarupl *stotras* being repeated in front of the Maruti idol.

17. Then food should be eaten.

18. With his mind fixed upon the highest object, the disciple should celebrate the Paichapadi, which consisted of five things:

(a) He should repeat the formula ⁱ Sri Rama Samartha, Jaya Jaya Rama.'

(b) He should sing a bhajan.

(c) He should meditate upon Sri Rama as he sat upon his throne, and should repeat the *Karunashfake* while so doing.

(d) He should study the poetry of the Ramdasi sect.

(e) He should wave the lamps.

19. He should then retire for the night.

There was a poem found in the Tanjore math, possibly written by Hari Svami, which gave a list of twelve Ramdasi characteristics:²

1. Celibacy was the average rule, but not invariably.

2. The clothing was of an orange-brown colour.

¹ Going around the idol, keeping the right side towards it.
^a V.V., Vol. I, sec. 10.

3. Renunciation and thoughtfulness were essential.
4. The desire for liberating uneducated men was present.
5. Reading the *Dasbodh* was most necessary.
6. The disciple meditated upon the distinction between the real and the unreal.
7. There was a daily custom of preaching to devotees, especially by means of the kirtan,
8. Restraint of the senses was necessary.
9. The disciple's mind was at peace.
10. There was regularity in devotional observances.
11. There was love for Sri Rama in the disciple's heart.
12. Each disciple was expected to possess a wallet.

Four letters found in the Yekhehal math also throw light upon this second period of the movement; the first being a letter of instruction, and the last three being personal letters.¹ In the first letter, Atmaram urges his disciples to worship Sri Rama; always to take what was offered by the people and be content; to think good thoughts without feelings of animosity toward anyone, and to rely upon the help of Maruti. The other letters were concerned with a number of matters, especially emphasizing the importance of faith and industry.

THE CONTACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT

There are a number of reliable evidences to prove that Sivaji was a genuine disciple of the Svami. In addition to the letters and the traditional accounts, there is a Portuguese document, written probably before 1750, which tells of Sivaji *s mantra.² His father, Sahaji, had evidently taken the title of 'Kshatriya' when in the service of the Emperor of Bijapur, and according to this account Sivaji received the mantra, 'Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama.' In this same paper five things are mentioned as important for every Ramdasi:

1. He should observe the Ramanavami every year.
2. He should observe the Dasanavami every year.
3. He should observe the guru's anniversary.

¹ V.V., Vol. II, sec. 64. ² V.V., Vol. I, sec. 34.

4. He should observe the Puruscharan.

5. He should not fail to repeat the mantra.

In addition to Sivaji, some of his ministers were disciples, including Pralhatf, Ramchandra, Amatya and others.

Another paper found in the possession of the Maharaja's family at Satara tells of the Ramdasi devotional programme in the Chhatrapati family.¹ There are nineteen items in the list, and they include the muttering of God's name 1,300 times in the morning, worshipping the guru, worshipping Sri Rama and Maruti, protecting cows, Brahmans and saintly persons, and establishing Maruti temples in new territory. Letter 19, in the Ramdasi series, *Srisampradayaci Kagadpatre* tells of the Government official who lived at Sajjangad and of his assistance in the management of the affairs there.² There are other letters which show that Sambhaji and Rajaram both continued to take an interest in the affairs of the movement, and to contribute liberally to its support; one letter describing a grant by King Sambhaji to help feed the guests at Sajjangad.³ After the quarrel between Uddhav and Divakar had been settled by the withdrawal of Uddhav, Sambhaji sent instructions to his officials at Sajjanga³ to carry out the wishes of Divakar.⁴ In a number of letters, King Rajaram gave instructions to various officials to help to maintain the worship in a proper way, to repair the buildings at Sajjangad yearly, to aid in the anniversary ceremonies and to look after the Chaphal math.⁵ His friendliness toward the movement may be noted from the following letter: * It is hereby noted that the son of Rami Ramdas Gosavi or the nephew of Ramdas, known by the name of Gangaji Gosavi, residing at Jamb, is a saintly person and devoted to God» He spends all his time in the various ceremonies of divine worship. He has a large family, and his income is inadequate; therefore His Highness the Chhatrapati has presented the village of Jamb to him, to be

¹ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 29.

^a V.V. * Vol. II, sec. 84.

^e *Patre*, Letters 69-74.

⁸ *Patre*, Letter 34.

* *Patre*, Letters 44-48,

enjoyed as an hereditary property, and the document thereof has been issued to the chief authority of that district. When the royal army is on tour, strict instructions should be issued that under no considerations should the above-mentioned Gosavi be caused inconvenience.¹

From the foregoing facts it can readily be seen that the Ramdasi movement was singularly favoured by the Maratha Government officials, from the king down, and was practically a 'State Religion' during the reigns of Sivaji, Sambhaji and Rajaram. This close contact probably existed all through the days of the Maratha Confederacy, while the Hindus were in power; but it gradually grew less as the sect itself declined in influence.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE

It is strange that this movement, with its hundreds of maths and its thousands of followers, should have declined until it became a mere shell of its former glory. Since the fall of the Maratha kingdom in 1817 it has had very little significance. At the outset everything seemed to be in its favour, since it was aided by a centralized Government and supported by the orthodox religious authorities of the time. Although there was a quarrel about leadership, it was not torn by any other serious factions or dissensions. Nevertheless, it failed to grow after the death of the founder, and soon entered upon a steady decline. Among other causes, there were at least two good reasons for this. First, since the death of Ramdas, the movement has produced no outstanding leader. Kalyan was easily the greatest leader among the original group of disciples, but even his influence seemed to be limited to his own group of maths. Since the sect began on a personal basis, this lack of adequate leadership was a severe blow. No one of the disciples was able to fill the Svami's place, and the Ramdasis as a whole, therefore, gave their devotion to the memory of the dead founder, because there was no living leader capable of holding the whole movement together.

¹ *Patre*, Letter 2.

Secondly, there was nothing in the organization itself which was capable of stemming the process of disintegration. It lacked cohesiveness, and had maintained itself by the sheer power of the Svami's personality. Love for him and for his teaching was the motive that dominated the disciples; but when he died, it became a collection of separate maths, and finally the movement fell to pieces of its own weight. As time passed, local traditions grew up in the various maths. The difficulty of travel made it hard for the mahants to see each other, and the spiritual prestige of the chief mahant became correspondingly less. With the devotional discipline upon a voluntary basis, it was a simple matter for maths to lose interest or cease to exist. Political conditions were turbulent, and the depredations of war made the work of the maths difficult. If the movement had had a strong, closely-knit organization, it might have had a different history. If it had had a great moral purpose breathing through it, it might have been a stronger force. But with a devotional programme that tended to be self-centred, an organization that was extremely flexible, and a leadership that was mediocre, it simply could not hold its own. During its third period it became a small sect, of little significance in the religious life of Western India. In spite of this obvious fact, however, the sect has continued to exert, right up to the present, a notable *indirect* influence, through the poetry of Ramdas, which has always had a strong hold upon the Brahmans and the intelligentsia.

CHAPTER X

THE MOVEMENT TO-DAY

SAJJANGAP

THIS hill fortress is to-day the chief centre of the Ramdas movement and is located about eight miles from Satara, being 3,020 feet above sea-level. The chief approach to the hill is the road leading through the village of Parali, although there is another path that joins this road, part of the way up. As one approaches the top of the hill, he enters an archway that has a Persian inscription, and ascending some stone steps he reaches a second archway, beyond which he finds himself at the top. From this vantage-point there is a wonderful view of the surrounding country. At the left within the fort there is a tomb, and at the right there is a tank with stone steps. The circumference of the fort is about 5,500 feet.¹ Further, at the left, is a temple, and near by is a spot where Ramdas used to sit, which is pointed out to the visitor. Going further, one finds a group of houses, in the midst of which is a temple of Maruti, and on the right there is a larger water-tank with stone steps on three sides. Going still further, one enters an open courtyard facing Rama's temple, in front of which is an idol of Ganapati with its back to the temple. Within the temple there is an audience-hall built of wood, with a marble floor, arches around the sides, and a dome crowning the top. The temple is about forty feet by seventy-five feet, and in the audience-hall there are two rows of columns, with seven columns in each row, also circular glass lamps hanging from the roof.

The inner sanctuary contains five idols, namely, Rama, Sita, Lakshmaij, Maruti and Ramdas. At the left of the

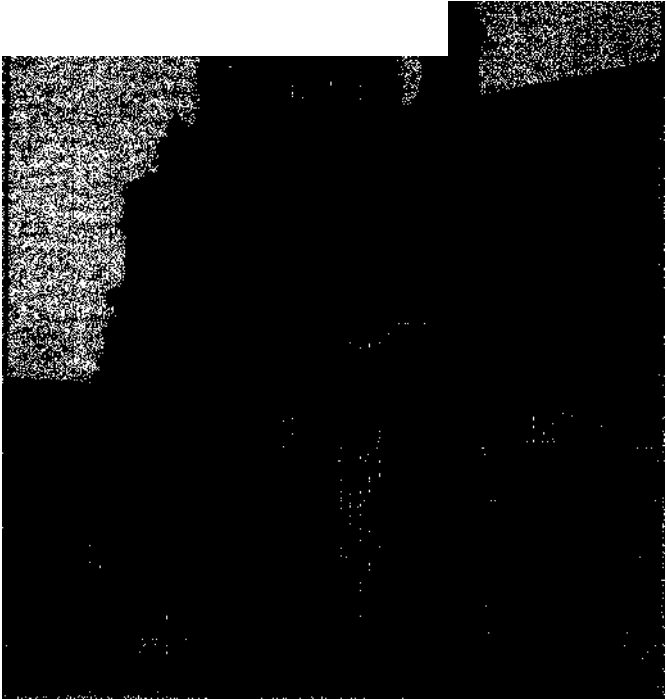
¹ Bhate, pp. 14-17.

sanctuary there is a dark stairway leading to a room below, which contains the tomb of Ramdas. This consists of a plain stone which has a crack in the upper middle part, and the legend is that this happened when the Svami appeared to Kalyaji after his death. Within the room are the idols which were brought to Ramdas from Tanjore just before he died. In a brass box are the sandals of Ramdas, which the disciples worship, touching them with their heads; and near by is the Svami's begging-stick.

Close by the temple is the math where Ramdas ended his days, one room containing a brass bed; but according to tradition, the Svami slept on a raised platform built of bricks. On the wall of this sleeping-room is a picture of Ramdas; and according to the story this picture was drawn by a disciple while the Svami was living. This room also contains the drinking-goblet and sword-stick belonging to the Svami, the length of the latter leading to the conclusion that he was a tall man. In this building are the two large brass water-jars in which Kalyan used to bring the water from the river at the foot of the hill; and if this story is true, as seems likely, he must have been a man of tremendous physique. At the south-east corner, near the rampart, which is still in good repair, there is a small Maruti temple facing toward the rampart; and there is a difficult path down the hill from this side. Facing north from the grave of Ramdas there is the grave of Venabai, over which is a bed enclosing the tulsi plant, and further toward the east is the grave of Akkabai, which is in a house.

THE ANNIVERSARY OF RAMDAS

Every year, from the first of the dark half of Magh until the ninth, the anniversary of the Svami's death is held at Sajjangad. To-day this is the greatest event in the Ramdasi year, and at that time five thousand people or more gather together to pay their homage to the great Svami, many coming from maths far and near, others from the surrounding villages or towns. Itinerant disciples in planning their travels endeavour to reach Sajjangatf at this particular time. Special arrangements are made to care for the large num-



By courtesy of Mr. Marathe

Photographer, Satdra.

THE TEMPLE OF RAMA AT SAJJANGAD

ber of guests, the most zealous followers **staying through** the nine days, others coming for a shorter period, which may be only for a day. The festival increases in importance as the days pass, and reaches its climax upon the ninth day, a kirtan being given on the tenth day, describing the incarnations. It was the privilege of the writer to visit Sajjanga(3 during two of these festivals and to spend twenty-four hours there during each visit.

The daily programme during the festival resembles **that** of the unmarried disciples throughout the year, with the addition of a number of special features in connection with the anniversary. About two hours before sunrise the disciples awake and engage in prayer, singing quietly certain devotional hymns (*dkupaff*). They next worship an idol by waving the lamps around it (*kakadarati*), but in the absence of actual lamps, this worship may be performed mentally; after which they sit quietly in meditation, first worshipping an idol, and later Brahman, the ultimate Reality. For the morning bath (*sndna*) the more zealous go to the river at the foot of the hill, others being content to bathe at the tanks or in their own homes by pouring water upon themselves from a copper vessel. During the morning prayer (*sandhyd*), the worshipper generally faces toward the east, sits upon purified ground and worships God with the use of holy water, ashes, breathings and the repetition of mantras, a description of which is given in detail by Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson.¹ The disciples then go to the temple of Rama, where they repeat mantras and the names of the god, by the help of the rosary beads, or by counting the knuckles and joints of the fingers, a process called the *jap*; after which the disciple may read the *Ddsbodh* or listen to a bhajan. During the morning the people form a procession and take the idol of Maruti around Rama's temple, then to the Maruti temple near by, and back again. Following this, many of the disciples worship Sri Rama by *pradakshina* (walking thirteen times around his temple, keeping one's right side next **to** the building), although this particular devotional exercise

¹ Stevenson, pp. 213-22.

goes on at all hours of the day and night. As a matter of fact, there does not seem to be a hard and fast rule for most of the devotional procedure, and each disciple appears to be free to worship as he thinks best. Generally, during the morning hours one or two of the qualified disciples give a scripture reading, explaining the spiritual meaning of the passages one by one, the *Adhyatma Ramayana* being occasionally used for this purpose.¹ As he reads, the disciple sits cross-legged before the sacred text, swaying back and forth, first reading a verse in the Sanskrit and then explaining its meaning in Marathi, with the use of appropriate illustrations, so that even the most ignorant listeners will be able to grasp the spiritual truth contained therein. After the noonday sandhya and the offering of food to the gods (*nzvedyaji*) the disciples sit down to their one big meal of the day.

During the last days of the ceremonies, several thousand disciples and visitors share in this meal, which is served in the open courtyard before Rama's temple, the Brahmans eating in one group and the other castes eating in their groups. The people sit in rows, the men separate from the women, and the food is placed before them upon leaves fastened together. Several sittings may be necessary before all are fed, and the customary food is rice and curry. After this meal there is a lull in the day's proceedings for about two hours, which is broken later on by the giving of a kirtan or a scripture reading. In the early evening the devotional programme again occupies the time of all, beginning with the sandhya and followed by the singing of the *Karunashiake*, which are sung by the whole group in unison. Then follows the *Savaya*, in which the disciples repeat verses that tell of the greatness of Rama and of the exploits of Ramdas. About 7.30 p.m. a procession forms and carries the idol of Maruti in a palanquin around Rama's temple, then to the temple of Maruti near by, and back again. The writer was assured that in this palanquin was a brass idol of Ramdas, and upon the last day a gold idol of Ramdas was carried in the palanquin and later placed upon the tomb, where it

¹ *O.R.L.I.*, p. 250.

received the homage of the people as they passed by in a never-ending stream. As this procession to Maruti's temple moves slowly along, the disciples sing, * Rama, O Rama/ and then shout 'Ramdas ki jai' (Victory to Ramdas). In the later evening the main programme is the kirtan, which takes place in the audience-hall of Rama's temple, a different disciple taking charge each night. The hall is packed with people, who willingly sit until midnight or later, as they listen to the singing. During one of the writer's visits, the singer was a man overflowing with humour, who very frequently moved the crowd to laughter. The subject of the kirtan is generally some phase of the worship of Sri Rama and Maruti or the teachings of Ramdas Svaml. After the kirtan is finished the people retire for a few hours' sleep, although all through the night many are stirring and performing various acts of devotion.

According to the testimony of the disciples, every year five palanquins visit this festival, coming from Kanheri, Miraj, Taker},!, Wai and one other place. They carry either the idol of Maruti or of Ramdas, and after meeting at Satara they journey together to the hill, where they arrive on the seventh day and remain three days. During the festival days the disciples visit the room containing the tomb of Ramdas, especially the last day, when the wooden sandals are worshipped. Each disciple in turn faces the doorway, bows to the tombstone or the sandals or the Svami's idol, as the case may be (*namaskara*), sips the holy water, and then passes on. Occasionally there are extra ceremonies during these busy days, which have no particular significance but add to the general interest. During one of the writer's visits, two horses and an elephant were brought to the temple courtyard during the early evening. The elephant was anointed upon the forehead with paste, applied by Bapu Saheb Maharaj, the chief mahant and a direct descendant of Sreshth. The disciples then came up in turn and touched the foot of Bapu Saheb with their foreheads, in order to show their respect.

All through the festival Bapu Saheb is the chief personage and receives the homage of the assembled disciples. In

the early evening he personally goes into Rama's temple in order to light the lamps, which he swings around the idol several times. Following this, the procession forms for the carrying of the Maruti idol to the temple close by, and in this procession Bapu Saheb receives royal honour. He is for many the personification of their revered Svami, the teacher and guide of their destinies. During these days upon the hill they hope to receive a spiritual blessing; and, therefore, for the earnest ones among them, these are days of soul-searching and spiritual discipline. But there are doubtless many present who have come because of a casual interest or have been impelled by curiosity, who do not feel particularly sad and enjoy whatever is going on. There are groups of students who have come over from Satara to spend the day, and a sprinkling of those who have come simply for enjoyment. In the opinion of the writer, the ceremonies as carried on at present do not do justice to the message and spirit of Ramdas. To the chosen few it may be an uplifting experience; but to a larger number it seems to be either a part of the routine of life, or else an occasion for personal enjoyment, similar to many other religious festivals or fairs held in various parts of India. Although the spiritual quality of the ceremonies is not impressive to-day, during the early days of the movement, when hundreds of maths sent representatives, it must have been an inspiring occasion. In spite of the decrease in its spiritual significance, this yearly gathering still has unique value, because it is the one time when all Ramdasīs make an effort to be together; and it is said that even outcastes are allowed upon the hill at this time, but are forbidden to enter the temple or share in the ceremonies.

During the rest of the year Sajjangad is a much smaller colony, and during the rainy season it is practically deserted, since Bapu Saheb and his household stay at Chapha} at that time. Nevertheless, there are occasional visitors to Sajjangatf throughout the year. Every Thursday about two hundred visit the hill and worship in Rama's temple, because Thursday is supposed to be the day of the guru, others going up on Saturday, as that is considered to be the birthday of Maruti. The eleventh day of each fort-

night is the Ekadasi fast-day, and some visit the fort upon that day, desirous of spending this fast-day upon the spot made sacred by the residence and death of the Svami, as well as by the tombs of Venabai and Akkabai.

THE MATHS

According to the statements by disciples, there are over forty Ramdasi maths in active operation to-day. They are principally located in Maharashtra, where the Svami lived and worked, although there are a few in other parts of India.¹ These maths vary greatly in size and influence, some carrying on a definite programme, others simply living in the memory of the past. Each math is a building of one sort or another, and practically all of them are under the management of married mahants, who are supported by a regular income. These maths are used to-day as rest-houses for Ramdasis and other religious men who happen to be passing through and desire to stay for a day or two as guests of the math. If the guest be a well-known disciple, large numbers of people come to interview him while he remains there, either seeking spiritual instruction or desirous of showing him respect. It is the general practice for a yearly festival to be held in each math, to which all the neighbouring people are invited, sometimes as many as three hundred gathering for the ceremonies. For several days there are bhajans and other services in commemoration of Ramdas, and during the celebration there is a big dinner for all the invited guests. In addition to the higher Hindu castes, Muhammadans occasionally attend the ceremonies; and outcastes also come, but remain outside the temple and eat separately. Those who attend are not necessarily disciples of Ramdas, but come because they

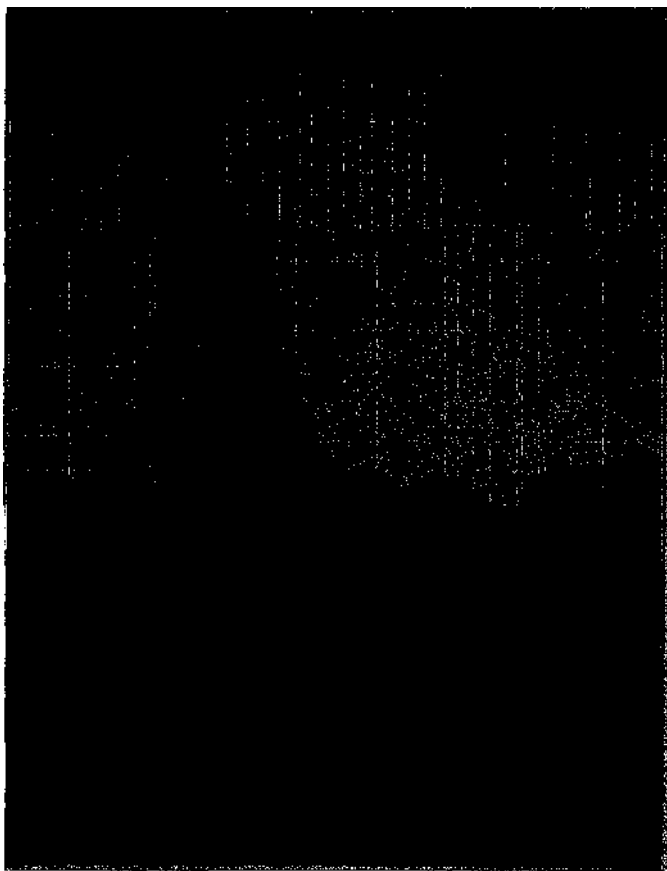
¹ The active maths today include those at Sajjangad, Chaphal, Jamb, Pomgaon, Miraj, Tanjore, Kanare, Dadegaon, Tisgaon, Sirval, Takerll, Junnar, Narayangaon, Kanheri, Indore Bodhan, Beed, Karad, Umbraj, Battislral, Wai, Pargaon, Mundpal, Baroda, Sirgaon, Gwalior, Ayodhya, Sahapur, Manpadale, Sasvad, Karanje, Illichpur, Yekhehal, Apchand, Manyarguddi, Nilange, Latur, Parall, Bhalgaon, Majalgaon, Waijapur, Nizamabad, Jukku, Bhatambare and Nurgaon,

are interested, or else out of curiosity, although many are undoubtedly active disciples.

CHAPHA[^], which was the first math established by Ramdas, is still in a good state of preservation, standing high up from the river's bank and overlooking the surrounding fields, which stretch away, beyond the village, to the adjacent hills. It is a scene that reminds the Ramdasi pilgrim of many historical incidents. It was near here, at Singanvatfi, that Sivaji received his initiation; and a few miles away is the math at Sahapur, where Ramdas spent many hours. In the immediate vicinity is the cave at RamghaJ; also the spring of Kubertfitirtha, where Ramdas is supposed to have brought water to the surface by striking the ground with his stick. When Ramdas built the ChaphaJ math, he took two idols from the pool at Angapur and established the Rama idol in the temple which was built near the math. In front of this temple there is a Das Maruti,¹ and in the rear there is a Bhim Maruti. The interior of the audience-hall is finished in heavy woodwork with square pillars on each side, and at the end of the hall there is a raised platform with a door leading into the inner shrine, where the idol is kept. At the left of the temple, as one faces the idol, is a long row of buildings containing the living-quarters of the chief mahant and the members of his establishment. The income of the math seems to be sufficient for its needs, and dates back to Sivaji, who presented the Svami with a number of fields in order that the worship there might be maintained.

The math at JAMB is difficult of approach, being off the beaten track; but is important because it is the Svami's birthplace. The writer went by rail to Patur, beyond Jalna, and from there cycled about fourteen miles over village roads to Jamb. As one enters the village from the south he passes by a Maruti temple built of black stone, about twelve feet square, and built upon a raised platform of stone pavement, a three-foot idol of Maruti being within the temple. According to tradition,

* The idol in the servant's attitude, with outstretched hands and palms together.



From a photo by the Author.

THE TEMPLE OF RAMA AT JAMB

Where Ramdas was born.

this idol was there at the time of Ramdas, and behind it was a *pipal* tree, where Ramdas slept one night, and where he received a vision of Sri Rama. The tree is no longer there. In the centre of the village is the temple of Rama, with the math at the left, the entrance to the math being at the north-east corner. The temple has rooms and outhouses on both sides, but those on the left side, as one faces the idols, are in a dilapidated condition. In the inner shrine, Rama is in the middle, Lakshma[^] on the left, and Sita on the right; which is not the usual arrangement, but no one seems to know just why this is so. There is also an image of Das Maruti. The above-mentioned idols are from one to two feet high, with clothes and ornaments engraved upon them. The temple is old, having been established before the time of Ramdas, with a present income of about 5,000 rupees.

The village itself seems to have a devotional atmosphere, especially at the time of the Ramanavami celebration, which is the great event of the year.¹ Every day, two sections of the *Dasbodh* are read publicly, and drums are beaten for the morning and evening devotions. South of the village square may be seen the foundation of the house in which Ramdas was born, and a temple is to be built upon this foundation in the near future. A little distance from the village is the sandy bed of the dried-up pool into which Ramdas jumped when he struck his head; and nearby are the samadhis of the two sons of Sreshth and the wife of Maharudra Svami; a Maruti idol having been set up on each samadhi, in place of the linga which is frequently seen upon the samadhis of Indian holy men.² In the village of Asangaon, two miles distant, there is no trace of the house where Ramdas went for the wedding ceremony, the only relic remaining being an earthen pot about eighteen inches wide in the middle. Every year, on the tenth day of Ramanavami, ghee is distributed from this pot, which is kept in the math at Jamb for that purpose.³

¹ *The Hindu Religious Year*, Miss M. M. Underhill, p. 79.

* *The Ramdas Magazine*, No. 86. Article by Mr. D. V. Kale.

* See Introduction to *Kavita*, p. 16. Ghee is clarified butter.

In Kalyag's POMGAON math, fourteen miles from Kurduva[§]I, there are a number of interesting relics, which include an original copy of the *Dasbodh*, written by Kalyan, corrected by Ramdas, and now published by the Dhulia Sabha. There is also a copy by Keshav Svami, Kalyan's disciple, who became the mahant at Umbraj; and in this math are the idols of Rama, Sita and Maruti which Ramdas gave to Kalyan. Among other articles is a piece of the red blanket worn by Kalyag, his worn-out betel-nut wallet, and a pair of sandals that are supposed to have belonged to Ramdas. Kalyan's tomb was built in 1773, fifty-nine years after he died, and is located in a beautiful spot. Upon the tomb Sanskrit verses have been inscribed and may be translated as follows : * 'O Ramdas, goodness, happiness and joy should be shared by all. Happiness results from the destruction of the enemy and the elimination of distress.' 'The idol of the guru is the giver of meditation; the foot of the guru is the object of worship; the word of the guru is the object of the mantra; the mercy of the guru is the object of absolution/ * Whatever you eat, sacrifice, give or do; whatever penances you perform, O Arjuna, do it in my name/ 'Wherever Krishna and Arjuna are, there prosperity and success are sure to be/ * Residence in Benares, the water of the Ganges, the god Sankara — these all liberate/ The Pomgaon math enjoys a good income to-day, and is greatly revered by disciples, there being a number of other tombs here in addition to that of Kalyan.

The TAKER[^]I math is in a *historical* spot, because of the years that Ramdas spent there as a boy and young man. Moreover, it is a *beautiful* spot, the math being located upon a hill near the Nandini river, which joins the Godavari, and is only three miles distant from Nasik. When the present writer went there he found the math to be a substantial two-storey building in a fair state of repair. Under the leadership of Uddhav, this math achieved great influence during the early period, sending out mahants to other maths, some of whom became famous, notably

* See Introduction to *Kavita*, p. 27.

Devdas and Musalram. In the math are the idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshman, which were placed there by Uddhav Svami. The compound is surrounded by a wall, and in an open place at the rear of the math is the spot where Uddhav used to sit and behind which are the small idols of Ganapati, Maruti and the linga. The visitor is shown the place on the river bank where Ramdas used to sit during his hours of meditation, and a little distance from the river, in a small grove upon a hill, is the samadhi of Uddhav.

At JNASIK is the large temple of Sri Rama where Ramdas frequently went for his devotions while at Takerli; and although it is not strictly a temple of the Ramdasi sect, the Ramdasis go there often, and regard it as a holy place. It is a large courtyard, surrounded on all sides by galleries, with a temple of Maruti near the entrance and the temple of Rama in the centre. Within the shrine is the idol of Rama, with Lakshman on his right and Sita on his left. Rama wears a gold crown, the other crowns being silver, and the idols are dressed in silk garments. In addition to these two temples, there are several smaller shrines, two of Ganapati, one of Dattatraya's feet and one containing Maruti and the linga.

SIVTHAR.—From Bhor State there is a road which leads down into the Kohkan, winding through the mountains, and in this mountainous district, about ten miles from Raiga<l, is the valley of Sivthar. It is most difficult to reach, because of the ascents and descents, and yet it was a spot which Ramdas loved, and it was in a cave here, located near a waterfall, that he is said to have written the first part of the *Dasbodh*. This cave is about seventy-five feet broad and a hundred and twenty-five feet long, and tradition says that there were ten or twelve rooms in it when Ramdas occupied it.¹ The Svami's fondness for rugged scenery is evidenced by his reference to this place as his most beautiful math, a bit of heaven brought to earth.² Giridhar says that Ramdas established there an image of Ganapati which was ten feet high, and frequently arranged festivities for the people thereabouts.

¹ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 2.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. H, sec. 86.

The TISGAON math, established by Dinkar about 1653, was undergoing repairs during the writer's visit, and appeared to be a fair-sized building, located in the centre of the town. The old mahant in charge says that he is the seventh in the succession since Dinkar, and that he has a son who will succeed him after he is gone. Within the shrine are four idols, Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Maruti, all made of white marble and each a little under two feet high. Rama stands with a bow in his left hand, a necklace around his neck, a crown upon his head, a silk cloth (*pitambar*) over his legs and his right hand extended forward holding a stick. He wears a moustache and has a black vertical line upon his forehead. Close by is a small copper idol, about three inches high, of Rama and Sita sitting together, and this was given to Dinkar by Ramdas. We perused a few old manuscripts which were kept in the math, but did not appear to be of any particular value. The UMBRAJ math of Keshav Svami has three buildings around an open courtyard, with the math in the centre. At one end of the math, in a small enclosed room, is a four-foot image of Maruti. The math is of mud walls and has a wooden roof, the usual tulsī plant growing near the door, a bell hanging suspended from the ceiling and a few verses written on the walls. The old mahant in charge knows a little Sanskrit and appears to be a very worthy man. During the yearly festival, which is held in April and lasts three days, about a hundred people gather at the math for the various ceremonies. Different castes are allowed to come, including women, but they eat separately. Only the Brahmans are allowed to enter the inner shrine where the idol is kept, and the outcastes are not allowed to enter any part of the temple.

About twelve miles from Kolhapur is the village of MENPADALE, and according to a manuscript found there, Jairam Svami was the first mahant of that math, which is still in operation, the name of the present mahant being Rambuva.¹ The PARGAON math is twenty miles from Kolhapur, and tradition says that the Maruti temple here

¹ *Patre*, Letter 399.

was established by Ramdas himself, Saiikar Gosavi being the first mahant, and a member of the Maratha caste. This Maratha succession is still in control of the math, and each mahant in turn receives his mantra from the chief mahant at Chaphal. At the present time the math enjoys a considerable income, the name of the mahant being Jagat Jivan Buva.

The SIRGAON math near Chaphai is famous because it was the math of Kalyan's brother, Dattatraya, who went to live there with the other members of the family after they had become disciples, Bhimasvami Sirgavkar, who wrote a biography of the Svami in 1797, was a great-grandson of Dattatraya, and other descendants of the latter may be found in Sirgaon to-day. The maths at Gwalior and Baroda were established by disciples of this math. Inside the Sirgaon math is a small image of Maruti which was placed in Kalyan's home by Ramdas, and there are also two old pictures of the Svami, one large and one small. The samadhi of Dattatraya is near here and the math enjoys a good income, donations coming from various places like Baroda and Kolhapur. The KANHERI math near Wai was established by Sadasiv Sastri, who became a disciple after his humiliation at the hands of the low-caste woodseller. Here we find the samadhi of Sadasiv, who later took the name of Vasudev Pandit, with a number of verses inscribed upon it. The samadhis of four other well-known disciples are near by, and there is a large Maruti temple in the vicinity. This math has been influential in the past, having established a number of other maths, but at present it is not in a flourishing condition, because of an inadequate income.

There are two maths at SIRVAJ., which is a small town on the Poona-Wai road, one established by Narayan Buva and the other by Baji Gosavi. Near the samadhi of Narayan there is a temple of Rama, and when the writer visited this place, the temple and math seemed to be well cared for. Baji Gosavi, a disciple of Vasudev Pandit, was a Maratha by caste, and his descendants still live in Sirval.¹ About fifteen miles from Poona, on the Nasik road, near the

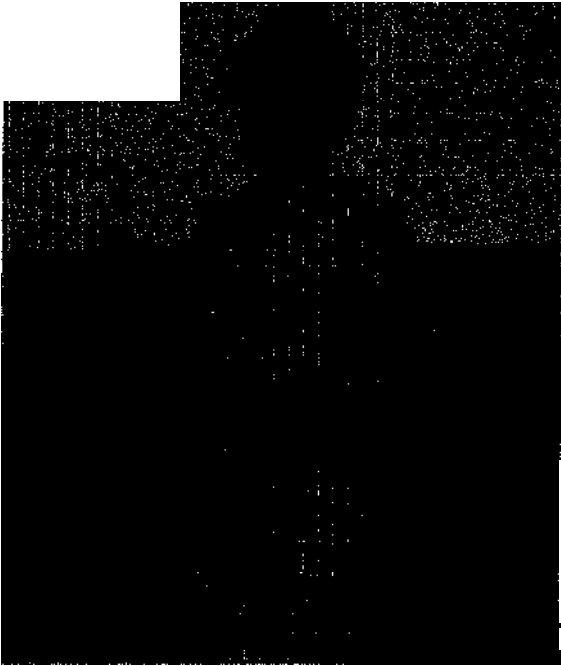
Sivaneri fort, where Sivaji was born, is the village of NARAYAISGAON, where there is a math which was established by Balakaram and which is located on the Mina river. It was during his lifetime that Rama's temple was built, and it is said that his disciples established at least three other maths. He received his mantra from the fakerli mahant, with whom he lived thirteen years, and from that day to this, each new mahant of this math has received his mantra at Takerji, Ramchandra Buva being the present mahant. Balakaram is said to have *taken samadhi/sitting in quiet contemplation until his spirit left his body.

In Hyderabad State, on the bank of the Sukana river, is the town of BHALGAON, where there is a math established by Trimbak Raj, located in an open space and surrounded by high walls. A few poems were found in this math, written by Trimbak and his disciples, and two miles away upon a mountain side is the samadhi of Trimbak with his name inscribed upon it. The math seems to be in a fairly prosperous condition, having an income of 3,000 rupees yearly, obtained from two villages fifteen miles distant.¹ The math at KARANJE, a prosperous town in Berar, was established by a disciple named Balakaram, who was very learned and who roamed about the country, teaching and composing poems, a few of which were found in the math. The INDORE math of Uddhav has a beautiful location, and according to the tradition it was established by Ramdas at the request of the local Brahmans for whom he had caused the rain to fall at a time of famine. The first math was three miles from Indore, but was moved in 1718 to its present location when a temple was built. A number of manuscripts have been found in this math, including poems by Ramdas, Uddhav and a number of other disciples.²

THE DISCIPLES

Ramdasis to-day may be roughly divided into several groups, according to the thoroughness with which they

¹ V.V., Vol. I, sec. 15. ² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, sec. 32.



From a photo by the Author.

A TYPICAL RAMDASI



By courtesy of Mr. Marathe,

Photographer, Sa tare

**A RAMDAvSI DISCIPLE, WITH THE BODY OF HIS GURU
SHORTLY AFTER DEATH**

follow the teaching of the Svami; and although there are certain elements in common among several of the groups, yet there are also decided differences. The average RamdasI may be distinguished by his clothes, sect marks and mantra; yet even these are not always in evidence. The clothes should be of a red-ochre colour (*bhagva*), and upon his body should be sandal-paste marks, impressed upon the sides of the face, the arms and the chest, spelling out the mantra. The tradition is that Ramdas once met the god Dattatraya while wandering in the Himalaya mountains, and he gave Ramdas garments of the red-ochre colour, a colour that has been distinctive of the sect ever since. The usual marks upon the forehead are three vertical red lines, shaped like the letter 'U,' with white powder sometimes sprinkled upon the line in the middle and upon the cheeks, but these marks are not supposed to have any particular religious significance. The mantra is not secret, having been openly given in the *Dasbodh*, but it cannot be efficacious unless one is initiated into the cult by a spiritual guide; and all the four castes are entitled to repeat it, namely, * Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama/ thus containing thirteen syllables.

The first group of Ramdasīs includes about a hundred sannyasis, or *viraktas*, who have taken strict vows and who live the same type of life that Ramdas lived. Those in this group begin their religious life as students or followers of older disciples, wandering about in groups that vary from two or three to a dozen or more, although one not infrequently sees RamdasI pilgrims travelling alone. They have a picturesque appearance, with their flowing robe or animal's skin, their long hair, beard, and small bundle over their shoulder containing their earthly possessions. As they wander from place to place, they follow a flexible itinerary, sometimes making their plans from day to day or occasionally having a set programme for several weeks in advance. Since they are unmarried and without any household responsibilities, they are free to go where they please, and they know no home save that of the RamdasI fellowship. They beg their food as they go, and when railway travel is essential for long trips they find some kind friend to

supply the money. The writer found these men to be of high character and friendly spirit, a credit to their sect and founder. One of the best-known of these disciples is Samarthadas, who travels about with a number of young lads who have been given to him by their parents, and who will eventually take up this life after they have fulfilled all the conditions for full discipleship. Another well-known disciple is Keshav Buva, who comes originally from Poona, and says that he personally has visited about seventy-five maths. Other disciples are Narayan Buva, Trimbak Buva and Vinayak Buva. The last-named visited Ahmednagar in February, 1925, with about twenty-five followers, on their way to Sajjangat for the yearly festival commemorating the death of Ramdas. In the party were a number of boys from eight years up who presented an interesting appearance, garbed in blankets and with unkempt hair, going through their devotional programme in the busy temple of Dattatraya. On another occasion the writer met a Ramdasi who was on an extended tour, which included Poona, Thana, Bombay, Baroda, Ajmer, Allahabad and Benares.

A second group is composed of married disciples (grihasthas); most of the mahants belong to this class, which is perhaps a larger group than the first. Naturally their vows are less stringent than those of the other group, Owing to the family responsibilities with which they are occupied. Although the ideal of celibacy and poverty is not their chief objective, they are genuine disciples none the less, and they bind themselves loyally to follow Ramdas and perform their devotional exercises faithfully, in so far as they can. They have the same mantra and caste-marks, but do not always allow their hair and beards to grow long, this being a matter of personal preference. They are expected to observe the three prayer-periods, to worship Rama, to study the *Dasiodk*, and observe the general rules laid down by the Svami. Since they are frequently connected with established maths, they do not beg their food as the wandering disciples do, but enjoy an assured income, which may come from the rental of lands or from donations received from various sources. Some of these mahants are educated men, who speak English,

and are familiar with the poetry of the movement; but as a group they are, perhaps, not as well qualified to teach Ramdasi doctrines as the first group, who spend all their time in devotion, study and teaching. A few are comparatively uneducated, and are mahants in name only. A mahantship is essentially a life-position, the usual practice being for this position to remain in one family and be passed on from father to son; although this does not seem to be an invariable rule. When a mahant has no son or is unmarried, he is at liberty to choose a suitable successor and duly initiate him. As with the first group, most of those in this group are Brahmans, although there are a number of Marathas who still preserve the ancient traditions.

There is a third group, which is much smaller, and is *not* strictly a part of the sect, but which is wielding a tremendous influence to-day through their study of Ramdasi literature. Within this group there are a dozen or more of learned men and teachers, who are making an intensive study of the Ramdasi sect and publishing the results of their research from time to time. A few of them may be liberal Hindus who have ceased to follow the orthodox path of their religion, but who are imbued with the desire to evaluate the significance of the life and teachings of Ramdas. In this group of scholars are such men as Mr. S. S. Dev of Dhulia, Prof. D. V. Potdar of Poona, the late Mr. V. K. Rajwade, Prof. G. C. Bhate, (Principal of Willingdon College), Mr. K. A. Keluskar, Mr. L. R. Pangarkar, Mr. S. K. Altekar of Karad, and others. These are the men who have made a critical study of the movement and who are qualified to pass judgment upon the vexatious questions arising from this study. They do not all agree as to the exact contribution which the Svami has made to Marathi literature and life, but they are on common ground in their appreciation of his poetic genius and saintly character. It is unfortunate that practically all of their work is being published in the Marathi language, so that English readers are unable to follow the results of the research that is going on, particularly at Dhulia and Poona.

There is a fourth group, which is composed of those whom we may call the *nominal followers* of the Svami,

who call themselves Ramdasis, but know little of the rigorous requirements necessary for full discipleship. Most of those in this group are descended from former Ramdasis, and now live in the memory of the past, without any vital contact with the movement as it is carried on to-day. No one knows how many are included in this class, but there doubtless are several thousands, a considerable proportion of them being professional beggars, others being ordinary orthodox Hindus, generally Brahmans, who differ in no material way from others of their class. Ramdasis of this type observe the anniversary of Ramdas, perhaps, and maintain a contact with the movement in a semi-occasional way, but most of the time they are ordinary Hindus as they meet the demands of everyday life. The writer met a man in Ahmednagar who belongs to this group, and who may be considered as typical, named Yesvant Bava. He claims that his grandfather was a Ramdasi. Dressed in a *dhotar*, shirt and red coat, he has three vertical lines upon his forehead, two white and one black, and a white spot on each cheek, but he cannot explain why his marks are of that particular kind. He carries a begging-stick, which is a foot and a half long, an inch and a half thick and with a handle of two parrot heads, which he says was made in Ayodhya. When he rises in the morning, he cleans his teeth, bathes, marks his forehead and prays, worshipping a small brass idol of Rama, after which he performs certain Vedic rites, presents water to his forefathers and repeats mantras. After reading a section of the *Dasbodh* and meditating, he offers his salutation to God and repeats the *jap*. When his morning devotions have been completed, usually about 8 a.m., he goes out to beg, his special days for begging being Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It is usually the Brahmans who feed him, and occasionally invite him to share their meal with them. During the afternoon he reads or visits temples, and in the evening he begins his customary prayers, worshipping the idol, repeating verses, reading a section of the *Dasbodh*, eating his evening meal and, whenever possible, attending a kirtan. He personally is married, but his uncle, who also calls himself a Ramdasi, is

unmarried. He has made one pilgrimage to Ayodhya, and occasionally goes to Sajjangad for the anniversary ceremonies ; or, if unable to go, he worships the deities at home. He is, therefore, a Ramdasi in the sense that he visits Sajjangatf, begs for a living in the name of Ramdas and observes some of the daily ritual. On the other hand, he is ignorant, knows little of the Svami or his teachings, goes through his devotional programme as a matter of routine, and although a beggar by profession, he gives nothing in return, such as spiritual teaching or inspiration. He is one of a large group who are nominal followers, observing some of the routine and keeping a slight contact with the Ramdasi movement, but who largely miss the real spirit of the original movement.

There is a fifth group, whom we may call 'Casual Ramdasis/' and the writer has met a number of such. They occasionally visit Sajjangad and worship Sri Rama in the name of Ramdas, frequently wearing the dress of Ramdasis, and possibly in possession of a mantra. They also visit Pantharpur, calling themselves varkaris of Vithoba; and journey to Benares, where they worship in the temples. In short, they follow a number of different paths, and try to be loyal to them all, not confining themselves to any particular path or ritual. In seeking to be a little of everything, they frequently end by not being much of anything; but, begging their way, they go from shrine to shrine or from one festival to another, professing allegiance to each one in turn. While some may be insincere in their free eclecticism, others are undoubtedly earnest seekers after truth, and believe in accepting whatever they believe to be true, no matter where they happen to find it. At the annual gatherings at Sajjanga<J one may find representatives from all of the above-mentioned groups. The writer met one young man who is a friend of the movement but who cannot be classified because he is not an enrolled disciple. He is a university graduate who has studied in Europe, travelled around the world and has been a student of other religions. Fortunate in the possession of independent means, he is a genuine seeker after truth, and during the past few years he has gone about

with some of the wandering disciples, living their life and faithfully fulfilling the conditions of discipleship. He has not, however, taken the vows or asked for the mantra, because he feels that he is unfitted for such an extreme step, since he is, as yet, unprepared to enter a type of life that makes demands exceeding those of military discipline. If he should enter it, he must do so without any reservations whatsoever. This young man, typical of a small but growing group, is a witness to a recrudescence of interest in the Ramdasi movement, due, in large measure, to the present interest in political matters, and to the fact that Ramdas was unique among the poet-saints because of his interest in practical affairs.

THE DISCIPLINE

There is a book which has been recently published that describes in detail the Ramdasi ritual, and therefore serves as a guide for all the members of the sect.¹ It is somewhat more detailed than the section of the *Dasa-Viiramdkama*, which describes the Ramdasi ceremonies and discusses a number of additional points; but, in the main, the ceremonies as practised to-day are very similar to what they were when Ramdas died. This book begins by describing the early morning devotions, in which the earth, sun, guru and family deity are all worshipped, after which the devotee looks at a cow. The hands, feet and mouth are washed, after which a bath is taken. Several preparatory rites should be attended to, including the reading of the Svami's poetry, the preparing of the lamps for worship, the cleaning of the idol's shrine and the preparation of the incense and eatables to be distributed. While making ready thus, the devotee should continually mutter God's name and repeat ten verses from the *Manache Sloka*. Then, prostrating his body before the deity, he says, 'Jaya Jaya Raghuvir Samartha' (Victory to Rama, the all-powerful one). The worshipper is expected to sing hymns of praise, accompanied, when possible, by a musical

¹ *Ramdasi Sampradayik Upasana Paddhatu*

instrument; and the book mentions eleven subjects for praise, including Rama, Maruti, Ramdas, Siva, Krishna and the cow. The hymn of praise to Rama may be paraphrased as follows: 'Victory, O thou who art the chief of all the gods, the giver of all happiness, the pervader of all objects both animate and inanimate, victory to thee! Arise, O ocean of mercy, the support of the universe, and remove this darkness from us, that we may see thee. Brahmadev and other gods are waiting at the door; monkeys are clapping their hands with joy, and Maruti has reverently prostrated himself before thee. Vasishtha has come; Narada and Tambu are singing; Pralhacl and other devotees of Vishnu desire to see thee. Thy mother has come with sugar and cream in her hand; Tulsidas also is present with paste, and Kabir and Kamal have brought clothes. Ramdas and Kalyari are present, and Krishna has come bringing the holy water of the Ganges; therefore victory to thee!'

The verse of Ramdas to be recited during the lamp-waving ceremony may be paraphrased as follows: 'Wave the burning wick around Ramdas, our guru. Victory to thee, O Ramdas, for whom I have lighted the lamp of my five kinds of breath. To remove darkness, the wicks have been cleaned, and by the light of knowledge, the attainment of the supreme spirit has become possible. Wave the wick, the brightness of which appears so beautiful. O Ramdas, living at Sajjangatf, be victorious! The lamp of my life having been lighted, the sight of thee is auspicious and is the crown of all good; therefore wave the wick.¹

Suggestions are to be found in the book for bhajans and also for the hymn to be sung at the time of mouth-washing. After the completion of the bath and sandhya ceremonies, and after holy water has been presented to the family deity and the souls of the departed ancestors, the devotee should offer a salutation to twelve different idols, making a mark upon his body after each salutation. This worship should be carried out according to the Svami's instructions, and the idol should be presented with milk, curds, clarified butter, honey and sugar, rice, fragrant flowers, incense, betel-nut leaves, money, ornaments or clothes; various verses being sung during this worship. After the repeti-

tion of mantras, hymns of praise are offered to Maruti and Ga[^]apati, and then the worshipper walks around the temple. When worshipping at Sajjangacl, the devotee is advised to enter the Svaml's bedroom, where he should sing hymns of praise. Detailed instructions are given for the jap and for the begging of alms, at which time the disciple should repeat a verse of the *Manache Sloka* in front of each door and should carry the begging-stick, wallet and clappers. After returning from the begging trip, the wallet should be placed on a wooden stool and the disciple should prostrate himself before the idol, offering food to Sri Rama and to Ramdas. In offering the food, verses should be recited, one of which is as follows: 'O my guru, take food. Sri Rama, the protector of the three worlds, having eaten, has asked thee to do likewise. Maruti and others have eaten and are now bowing before the feet of Sri Rama. The body of this, thy distressed disciple, is waving about thee like a lamp.' After giving thanks, the RamdasI should then partake of his own meal; and when this is finished, he is ready for the other duties of the day.

The afternoon should be spent in study, teaching, or in preparation for the evening kirtan, which is a part of the daily programme. As the sunset hour approaches, the disciple should awaken the idol by the ringing of the bell and offer food to it, after which he should read the *Dasbodh* and perform the evening sandhya. Singing hymns in praise of Maruti, and walking around his temple, the worshipper should then prostrate himself ten times for the ten incarnations and once for Maruti. The reciting of the *Karwiashtake* is an important part of the evening worship, and these verses are sung in unison by all the disciples who may be in the group; while at the end of the evening kirtan, a story from the life of Ramdas is always appropriate.

From the foregoing paragraphs it is clear that while the procedure to-day is substantially the same as it was in the early days of the movement, there has been a development in the intricacy of its detail, which is perfectly natural under the circumstances, many religious movements developing **elaborate details of external worship after they have lost**

their earlier enthusiasm. It is probable that many of these Ramdasi details fail to be carried out daily, owing to unfavourable circumstances; but in so far as they are feasible, they are doubtless faithfully performed. The usual greeting by which one Ramdasi greets another is, * Jay a Jay a Raghuvir Samat'thaf The above description of the ritual shows that this sect has been influenced by other sects and religious beliefs, other idols being frequently seen in or near the Ramdasi temples; and it is quite customary for Ramdasis to visit the temples of other gods than Rama when opportunity offers. The group which visited Ahmednagar stayed at Dattatraya's temple because of its size and convenient location, although there were temples of both Rama and Maruti in the vicinity. Just as there is a definite plan of worship and study in the math, so is there a regular programme of study for the boys or younger disciples who travel about in the wandering groups. They study Marathi, Sanskrit, arithmetic, poetry, singing and the regular Ramdasi doctrines, being taught by the older disciples during the noon hours while the party is resting. Occasionally boys take up this life who have passed through high school and are familiar with English and other high school subjects. The writer has met a number of such, and was impressed by their general intelligence. The practice of the older disciples is to eat only one meal a day, but the younger members of the order take food two, and sometimes three, times a day, although the food in the morning or night is much lighter than that served at noonday, consisting of fruit, milk, nuts or bread. The noonday meal consists of whatever is given to them by the people in the village or town where they are staying, this generally being curry with bread or rice. The earthly possessions of each disciple are carried in a bundle wrapped up in a cloth, and these may include a copy of the Svami's poetry, a brass plate and drinking goblet, a spare garment or two, a blanket or rug, an idol or two (generally Rama and Maruti), a begging-stick and wallet. As a rule the older men wear a robe or shawl, but the younger disciples quite frequently wear the customary loin cloth, dhotar, shirt and sandals.

It was the privilege of the writer once to join a group of these disciples, and to journey with them for thirty-six hours, there being three disciples and four students in the group. We left Ahmednagar in the early morning and walked about six miles to a village near the Chand Bibi Hill, where we spent the noon hours, and continued our journey in the late afternoon for another six or seven miles, until we reached a large village at dusk, where we spent the night. We made ourselves comfortable in the resthouse (dharma-saja), which was located in the centre of the village, not far from the small stream which furnished the town with water. After the disciples had returned from the river, where they had performed their evening prayers, we spread out our blankets and prepared for the night's rest; the village folk, meanwhile, coming and going and asking questions, much surprised that a 'saheb' should be a member of the party. Since it was one of the customary fast-days, the only food eaten that evening was a dish of peanuts, which the tired disciples seemed to relish, and following which they sang eight *Karunashfakes* with great reverence. About nine o'clock the room became packed with people who had come to hear the bhajan and who crowded into the small space until there was not an extra foot of space to spare. The bhajan was exceedingly well done, so much so, in fact, that in spite of himself the writer was lulled to sleep and only awoke early the next morning, when the disciples were leaving to bathe in the river. After returning from the river they sat in quiet meditation and worshipped the idol of Rama, sipping the holy water and repeating the mantra.

At sunrise we started out at a brisk walk, because the air was sharp, and conversed as we wound up and down the rugged hills which dominate that section of the Deccan. As we journeyed along we repeated verses of the *Manache Sloka*, one disciple reading a verse and the other disciples repeating it in unison after him, thus committing the verses to memory. About ten o'clock we reached the large village of Karanje, where we immediately went to the Maruti temple and made ourselves comfortable for the noon period. Three of the younger men, after praying to

the idol of Maruti, went out into the town to beg for their noonday meal, going from house to house and being given a little grain at each place. About an hour later they returned, one after another, and offered a prayer to the idol, expressing their gratitude. Whenever the younger men left the group or returned to it, they showed their reverence for the older disciples by prostrating themselves before them. During the two hours which were necessary for the preparation of the meal, the older disciples conversed with a few of the village people concerning spiritual matters. After the food was finally ready and had been offered to Rama, the disciples all sat down and ate a meal of bread and curry, giving a generous portion to the writer, who sat a little apart from the rest. All through this interesting experience, the writer was deeply touched by the unfailing courtesy and kindness with which he was treated.

THE SITUATION AT PRESENT

In the opinion of most competent observers, the Ramdasi sect is to-day only a shadow of its former self, with many of the formalities still practised but the strength of the movement gone. At the height of its influence there must have been several hundred maths, whereas to-day there are less than fifty, and many of these are more or less inactive. From a movement that enrolled thousands of active followers, it has dwindled to a few hundred active, disciples, numerous others being disciples in name only. In the early days there were disciples among the Government officials, religious leaders, soldiers, farmers and tradesmen; but to-day very few influential men profess allegiance to the sect. Far different is the situation in the Pa\$<Jharpur movement, which Tukaram helped to popularize and which still retains a hold upon the hearts of the people of Maharashtra. The power of the Ramdasi cult has passed; but it still enjoys a certain amount of economic prosperity, due to the property which is owned by a number of the maths.

Although the organization is only the shell of what it used to be, it would be inaccurate to say that the Svami's

personal influence has died out, or that his teachings have been forgotten; and he is particularly revered by the intellectual groups and the Brahmans of Maharashtra, who quote him much as the Deccan villagers quote the abhās of Tukaram. The *Dasbodh* has a big sale to-day, and numerous other poems of the Svami are read with great delight, especially the devotional poems and the Verses to the Mind.

There is at the present time a small group of men who are trying to revive the Ramdasi movement. Urged on by the desire of self-government for India, these men point with pride toward the Svami's share in the reconstruction of Maharashtra under Sivaji, and evidently believe that a reawakening of interest in Ramdas will have beneficial effects in the present social and political evolution of India. Unfortunately, the present agitation has taken on a factional spirit, causing the Brahmans to magnify Ramdas, and the non-Brahmans to urge the claims of Sivaji, a discussion that can bear little fruit and is capable of doing a great deal of harm. Whether the attempt to revive the Ramdasi cult will succeed is an open conjecture, but, in the writer's judgment, the obstacles against it are too great to be overcome. It has reached a stage where revival is well-nigh impossible, and it lacks an aggressive programme, so that it is not likely to catch the imagination of modern India, in which far-reaching social and political changes are taking place. As a practical and spiritual teacher, however, the Svami's claim to fame is secure; and even though the movement, as such, dies out entirely, his poetry will continue to be read by the people of Maharashtra. With Dnyanesvar, Eknath, Namdev and Tukaram, Ramdas stands as one of the great religious teachers of Western India, with a widespread influence and a loyal following.

CHAPTER XI

RAMDAS AND JESUS

INTRODUCTION

IN the last chapter it was stated that at the present time there is a definite effort to revive the Ramdasi movement. The question is very opportune, therefore, as to just what the message of Ramdas for modern India is; inasmuch as all students of Ramdas must recognize that the India of to-day is decidedly different from the India of Ramdas. In the first place, cultural India has felt the impact of other religious systems and philosophies, and comparative religion has become a world-wide study. Students in Indian universities have been gaining a first-hand knowledge of modern science, in all its varied ramifications; with the result that they have necessarily had to readjust their outlook in religious matters. Whether it be for better or for worse, India has felt the influence of Western thought and life, and thousands of her sons and daughters are imbibing the spirit of the West by residence abroad. In numerous ways, therefore, these outside influences are shaping the present and future development of India, a fact which must be taken into account by those who seek to discover the message of the outside world for India and that of India for the outside world.

Again, it is clear to most observers that Indian religious thinkers are taking an increased interest in the personality of Jesus; and hence the question of the place of Ramdas in modern India must be answered after due allowances have been made for this new development. Mahatma Gandhi, by his life and his writings, has centred the thought of India upon Jesus. He has made no secret of his reverence for Him, and has even been willing to make

suggestions as to how the Christian missionaries may more effectively carry on their work. When criticized by some Hindus for teaching the New Testament in the Gujarat National College, he replied, 'The charge of being a Christian in secret is not new. It is both a libel and a compliment; a libel because there are men who can believe me to be capable of being secretly anything, that is, for fear of being that openly. There is nothing in the world that would keep me from professing Christianity, or any other faith, the moment I felt the truth of and the need for it. Where there is fear there is no religion. The charge is a compliment in that it is a reluctant acknowledgement of my capacity for appreciating the beauties of Christianity. Let me own this. If I could call myself, say, a Christian, or a Mussulman, with my own interpretation of the Bible, or of the Koran, I should not hesitate to call myself either. For then Hindu, Christian and Mussulman would be synonymous terms. I do believe that in the other world there are neither Hindus, nor Christians, nor Mussulmans. There, all are judged not according to their labels or professions, but according to their actions, irrespective of their professions. During our earthly existence, there will always be labels. I, therefore, prefer the label of my forefathers, so long as it does not cramp my growth and does not debar me from assimilating all that is good everywhere else/¹

It is neither feasible nor desirable in this chapter to compare Hinduism and Christianity as distinct religious systems, in view of their vastness and complexity. The difficulty lies not merely in the fact that Christianity is sometimes identified with Western civilization, but also that there are sharp distinctions between branches of the Christian Church, both in doctrine and polity. Similarly, Hinduism is a *group* of religious systems, rather than any one system, and it would be difficult indeed to present the various Hindu sects and philosophies as a harmonious whole. Nevertheless, there are a number of scholars to-day who are willing to attempt general comparisons

¹ *The Missionary Herald*, Jan., 1927.

and to draw certain conclusions from them. There is, for example, a renewed emphasis upon the importance and value of Sanskrit culture as opposed to other culture. At the fiftieth anniversary of the Sanskrit College in Mysore, the Maharaja, referring to the Hindu renaissance, and the unique contribution of Hindu thought for mankind, said, 'It is not from the standpoint of objective knowledge that we should adjudge the value of Sanskrit learning. For the Knower that stands behind the Knowledge has also to be known and it is this *Atma-Vidya*, the knowledge of the Self, to which the study of Sanskrit opens the way in a sense which is true of no other literature to the same degree.* Some Hindu apologists are not so optimistic, and feel that the Hindu renaissance is not progressing satisfactorily. Even so notable a scholar as Prof. Radhakrishnan asserts that modern Hindus are very unworthy descendants of the great *rishis* who gave the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* to the world.² An extreme view of the matter has been taken by a number of orthodox Hindus, who openly attack Mr. Gandhi for his so-called aspersions upon the caste system, and assert that the Hindu religion must be saved, meaning, of course, orthodox Hindu practices and beliefs. Shortly after the Belgaum Congress, there was a public meeting in Bombay to protest against Mr. Gandhi's heresies, such as the removal of untouchability; and at that meeting various steps were discussed which might help to check the influence of Mr. Gandhi's programme. It is clear that the modern emphasis on the importance and value of Hindu culture sometimes carries with it a defence of the established order, and a deep-rooted opposition to religious and social change.

But while a comparison between Hinduism and Christianity is apt to lead one into lengthy discussion, it is entirely feasible to consider the teaching of Ramdas and of Jesus, and to discover wherein they agree or disagree. This is in line with the announced purpose of the 'Religious Life of India Series/ with which this volume is connected. It is

* *The Indian Social Reformer*, Oct. 30, 1926, p. 131.

^a *Ibid.*, Nov. 20, 1926, p. 182.

also a question that has genuine interest for all Indian students of religion. Hindus as well as Christians recognize to-day the distinction between Jesus Himself and Christianity as an applied system of thought and life under varying conditions. In an article in *The Indian Social Reformer* Mr. S. S. Singha speaks of the disillusionment which comes to many Hindu students who travel in Christian lands, and see for themselves the forms and features of applied Christianity—or, shall we say, the lack of applied Christianity?—for Western nations have certain policies and social practices which are out of harmony with the teaching of Jesus.¹ Besides acknowledging this distinction, Hindus to-day are also coming to recognize their kinship with their Indian Christian brethren, on the ground that they use the same mother-tongue, belong to the same country, and seek to develop the same Indian culture. Such an attitude is found even in that most Nationalist and most Hindu of Marathi weeklies, the *Kesari* of Poona.² If, then, the teaching of Jesus is to be distinguished from numerous instances of applied Christianity, and if a Hindu can be a follower of Jesus without being denationalized, then assuredly the question of Christ's message for India to-day is a pertinent one, and any effort to resuscitate the Ramdasi cult must take this new development into account. Indeed, for some years past, Hindu thinkers *have* been facing the problem of the place of Jesus in the religious life of India. In 1903 Dr. P. R. Bhandarkar wrote an English essay, entitled *Two Masters: Jesus and Tukdrdm*, in which he mentioned many coincidences of teaching, and he closed with these words, 'If this essay of mine leads one Hindu to read the Gospels with reverence, and one Christian to read Tukaram with the same reverence, I shall consider myself to be amply compensated.'³ Similarly, the late Sir Naraya\$ Chandavarkar stated in *The Times of India* that the best minds of India were trying to diffuse among the masses the best that is in the Indian religions, and to

* *The Indian Social Reformer*, Jan. 30, 1926, p. 331.

² *Dnyanodaya*, Dec. 16, 1926, p. 479. • Edwards, pp. 240-41.

show that the best is not different from, but is the same as, Christ's teaching.¹ Dr. Stanley Jones, in his book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, gives ample testimony to this growing appreciation of Jesus among thinking Indians of all groups, particularly in student centres; some even going beyond Mr. Gandhi in the wholeheartedness of their tribute to the Christian cause. When the latter, about two years ago, criticized Christian missions and missionaries for certain failings, he was answered by a Brahma Samajist, Prof. U. N. Ball, in *The Indian Messenger* of Calcutta. Among other things, Prof. Ball said, 'India owes a great deal to Christianity for her present position, and so far as we can judge, she can ill afford to dispense with the Christian service. . . . With only Jesus as their guide, they have gone into the remote interior, spread education among the illiterate, served the poor and the lowly, picked up the helpless and stood valiantly by those who were altogether neglected by their own people. This is no mean service to India . . . and our countrymen will do well to imitate them. Jesus was a humble servant of humanity and His followers have formed themselves into a grand organization for social service/² The desire to relate Jesus to Hinduism seems to have reached its culmination in the startling attempt of Mr. M. S. Ramasvami Aiyer to prove that Christ was a Tamil Hindu; a conclusion which, while certain to be speedily refuted by qualified historical students, nevertheless 'furnishes an interesting index to a great deal of the modern Hindu thinking about Jesus.*

This chapter, therefore, will be a brief attempt to evaluate the message of Ramdas for modern India, with the teaching of Jesus as a background. Can Ramdas catch the imagination of India to-day, and will his message answer the deepest needs of Hindu hearts? Will those who are searching for truth be able to rally round the Svamf's personality and find in his teachings those eternal principles which lead mankind to a new and better day? Or has

¹ Edwards, P, 239. 2 *Dnyanodaya*, Jan. 14, 1926, p. 12.

• *The Indian Social Reformer*, Dec, 25, 1926.

Jesus something to offer which Ramdas knew not of, and which is vitally needed in our day of disillusionment and perplexity? For this purpose it will be necessary to recapitulate some of the statements found in Chapters V and VI.

(A) THEOLOGICAL

1. *God*

As we peruse the pages of the *Dasbodh* to discover the teachings of Ramdas about God, we are impressed first of all by the portrait he draws of the impersonal spirit, who can only be described by such words as Being, Intelligence and Bliss, and even these are inadequate; a 'Being' who, while immanent, is also transcendent; a Being who is nameless, invisible and beyond imagination. He is Brahman, the one and ultimate reality, the form of whom cannot be known or described, and who is without a witness. On the other hand, he has different manifestations, fourteen of which have been mentioned by the Svami in one section of the *Dasbodh*. This testimony is substantially the same as given by Sankara many centuries earlier, and is the famous doctrine which is the basis of the Vedanta philosophy.

Secondly, between these allusions to Brahman, Ramdas frequently alludes to Sri Rama, his hero-god, whom he worships with all the ardour of his nature. He describes Rama as loving, kind, generous, powerful and merciful; attributes to him all power in his dealings with mortal beings, and looks to him for daily guidance. Rama is personal and knowable; one who helps in time of distress and who is ever eager to minister to the needs of his devotees; and while he recognizes that there are other gods, Ramdas asserts that Rama is the one true God, who alone should be worshipped. Thirdly, Ramdas, both in his teaching and his practice, was a worshipper of idols, as the following quotation demonstrates: 'The one who neglects to worship the idol, because he considers himself well-versed in the knowledge of Brahman, will eventually be deprived of both.'¹ It may be argued that the Svami looked upon

¹ *Dasbodk*, ch. x, sec. 7.

idols purely as symbols, and it is indeed difficult to know just what was in his mind when he bowed in devotion before an idol; but when he stated that there were four classes of deities, the first class being idols, it seems clear that at times the Svami regarded the image itself as sacred, and not merely as an aid toward mental concentration.¹

Jesus begins His teaching concerning God by appealing to the Old Testament, which He had studied carefully in His youth and which was the basis of His own teaching. Here we find the teaching that God is Spirit, the supreme personality, both immanent and transcendent, the Creator of the universe, omniscient and omnipotent, morally perfect and the author of the moral law, yet having intimate relationships with every human being, revealing Himself to men, answering prayer, comforting the poor and the oppressed, and asking for the love and worship of all human beings.² Jesus does not stop, however, with Old Testament teaching, but carries His revelation of God to an even higher place, teaching that God is the loving Father of each human child and interested in the most minute details of daily life. 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?'^{JJ} Jesus portrays the Father whose tender love is limitless, who is ever ready to take upon Himself all our sorrows and trials, who reveals Himself through the beauty of nature as well as through the noble aspects of individual and social life. Jesus lived in a universe in which persons were living, and which was the revelation of a personal God, the loving Father of all creation.

As we study the verses of Ramdas which reveal his love for Sri Rama, we note certain similarities between his teaching and that of Jesus. Both worshipped a personal, spiritual God and looked to Him daily for guidance. Both believed that this personal God desires to be worshipped

* *Dasbodh*, ch. xi, sec. 2.

² *The Crown of Hinduism*, J. N. Farquhar, pp. 408-18.

* *Matthew vii*: 11.

through loving devotion rather than through external ceremonies and sacrifices. Both were confident that this personal God cares for and protects His worshippers, helping them in time of need, in order that they may overcome the temptations of daily life. Just as Jesus was conscious of God's presence, so did Ramdas pray for this mystical experience. It is thus as a bhakta that Ramdas comes closest to Jesus in his thought about God. Unfortunately, he did not confine himself to this bhakti teaching, but also taught the doctrine that God is impersonal. There are learned apologists who assert that a religious teacher can believe in both a personal and in an impersonal God without inconsistency, on the ground that one is concerned with religious faith and the other with philosophy. The writer is unable to accept this conclusion, and believes that the doctrine of a personal God contradicts that of an impersonal God. The whole problem of personality is involved here; and while it is a subject which is being actively investigated in psychological circles, the fact remains that personality, as we know it, has definite characteristics, and to say that God can be both personal and impersonal at the same time leads to grave confusion of thought.

The mental confusion which is produced by the inconsistency of the Svami's teaching about God is deepened by his acceptance and use of idols. He established both Maruti and Rama idols in a number of shrines, gave small idols to various disciples, and worshipped them in his devotions, defending such action in a number of poetic references. Even though idols may have been of lesser importance in his own mind, his use of them means that he was an upholder of idolatry, a system more and more discountenanced by Hindu religious reformers, such as the members of the Prarthana Samaj; though generally defended by Hindus, on the ground that it is a help toward mental concentration, the idols, according to that view, being simply *symbols* of the Divine Spirit. In other words, Hindu reform movements have advanced far beyond the teaching of Ramdas concerning idols, and they can no more accept such teaching than they can approve of the

Svami's inconsistency. As contrasted with the teaching of Jesus about God, we cannot but regard that of Ramdas as blurred, and it is indeed difficult to know just what thoughts on this subject were dominant in his mind.

Furthermore, in addition to the problem of inconsistency, there is a distinction in the *content* of the two respective teachings. The spiritual experience of Ramdas, as reflected in his verses about Sri Rama, lacks the depth and richness of that of Jesus in His sureness of God. No doubt, the Svami was handicapped by the fact that he worshipped a god whose origin was obscured by mythology, and who, in the view of many, was originally a man and later deified; whereas Jesus told mankind of the one true God who had revealed Himself to Hebrew seers and of whom He (Jesus) could speak out of His own profound spiritual experience. The *ethical* character of God as taught by Jesus was different from the teaching of Ramdas in several important particulars; and this will be discussed in detail later. It almost seems as though there was an element of lightness or of chance in the Svami's thought of Rama, which, while not nearly so pronounced as in the thought of Chaitanya concerning Krishna,¹ is nevertheless decidedly different from the teaching of Jesus about God. Jesus thought of God as loving mankind to such an extent that He was willing to make any sacrifice, no matter how great, in order that men might know of this love. Jesus indeed thought of God as having an intimate fatherly relationship with each of His human children, a relationship so tender that anyone, no matter how humble, could respond to it and dwell within it. And it may well be asked whether, having come to know God as taught by Jesus, the all-knowing Father, Creator and Redeemer, Hindus can rest content with the teaching of the Svami, who tells us of Sri Rama, the impersonal Brahman and the idol within the shrine.

2. *Redemption*

Just as in his teaching about God, so also concerning salvation, Ramdas taught a number of distinct doctrines.

¹ *The Chaitanya Movement*, M. T. Kennedy, p. 226.

The most prominent method of salvation, perhaps, according to the Svami, was that of knowledge; this method being especially emphasized by the Vedanta school. It accepted *transmigration* and *karna*, holding the view that the world was something to escape from, an intolerable succession of births and deaths that held one in its grip, each existence atoning for the mistakes of former existences, the process continuing indefinitely until release could be effected and salvation achieved. When the seeker after salvation realizes that the world is illusion, and that he himself is Brahman—'Tat tvam asi' (Thou art that)—then the chain of rebirths is broken, and his identity becomes merged with Brahman. As brought out in Chapter V, Ramdas discussed various steps in connection with this search for the ultimate reality. Secondly, he also taught salvation by works, not according to the extreme ascetic practices of the yoga school, which he did not hesitate to frown upon, but according to the teachings of the *Gttā*; such as unselfish acts, the repetition of the mantra, and other ceremonies which he regarded as important. Thirdly, he taught that salvation could be achieved by devotion to Rama, a doctrine of the bhakti school of Vaishnavism, and in this connection he stressed the nine kinds of devotion which would help to draw the soul nearer to God. The worship of the idol was a prominent part of this bhakti doctrine, as also reverence for the guru. There was a distinction, however, between the salvation which was won by devotion to Rama and that achieved by knowledge; for the latter meant absorption into Brahman as a drop of water becomes merged with the ocean, while the former was a communion between the human soul and God, which eventuated in a spiritual fellowship in heaven, the soul dwelling with God in a state of bliss forever. The scattered references in the Svami's poetry to the *Puranas* are so incidental that we have no reason to believe they bulked largely in his thought.

For Jesus, salvation consisted in the reconciliation between God, the loving Father, and His human children. Christ stated that He came to tell men of God's love and of God's supreme desire that all men should abide in that

love. By His own wondrous deeds, Jesus made God real to His disciples and taught them to love the Father and to realize that God watches over everyone with a Father's care. In the words of Dr. Cave, 'Fatherhood, as Christ conceived it, is a moral relationship, and God's gratuitous and forgiving love requires as its complement our childlike trust and receptivity.'¹ By leaving off evil desires and learning to love God, men become His sons and begin to reflect His character. All cherished sins must be ruthlessly abandoned in order to win the pearl which is above every price. This gift is not earned by men, but is the free gift of His grace, those who accept it rejoicing in His forgiveness and finding themselves redeemed, not alone from sin, but also from the strain and stress of the world. All who seek this fellowship with the Father are naturally deeply repentant for every unworthy act of the past, and are desirous of growing in beauty of character. It is therefore a spiritual relationship, which begins here and now, the future becoming present and the present being projected into the future. Jesus definitely taught that all who love God while living in this world would belong to Him in the next, heaven being the sphere of the eternal where all who love God abide with Him forever. Hence Jesus could tell the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God was already in their midst. His teaching emphasized the sanctity of the individual personality and its eternal qualities. He thought of the world as a sphere of service and opportunity, not as something inherently evil, from which one should seek to escape. It is true that Jesus sometimes spoke of the world as evil, in contrast with God's kingdom, but in using these words He was referring to the *sins* of the world rather than to physical life as such. To sum up, Jesus taught that salvation by God's grace is a spiritual process by which the human soul comes into living and loving fellowship with God, growing daily by His help into beauty of character, a relationship that endures forever, a salvation from sin and for service.

It is the Svami's doctrine of salvation by devotion which

¹ *Redemption: Hindu and Christian*, Sydney Cave, p. 146,

furnishes the closest parallel to the teaching of Jesus and we find certain points of similarity. If Ramdas had confined his message concerning redemption to this one method, the application of his message to modern conditions would have been less difficult; although even here, his teachings stress certain external observances in a way that cannot find acceptance with Hindu reform leaders to-day. It is not quite clear how prominent in the Svami's mind was the element of redemption in the character of Sri Rama; and although he may not have agreed with Tulsi Das, who stated that Sri Rama himself had redeemed only one woman, it is evident that Ramdas did not *stress* redemption as Jesus did.¹

In his other doctrines concerning salvation, Ramdas shows many divergencies from the teaching of Jesus. His attitude toward life itself tended to be pessimistic, so that his thought about salvation was negative rather than positive, emphasizing the idea of escape *from* the world rather than salvation *for* a fuller and richer life. Even if some of the intelligentsia do hold the Vedanta doctrine only as an academic belief, and expect to be with God after death, it is assuredly true that large numbers of people still accept the Vedanta system literally. The belief in *karma* and *transmigration* was an iron chain that prevented Ramdas from rising to a lofty conception of salvation in which the positive thought prevailed and spiritual processes were predominant. Just as the basis of his doctrines was pessimistic and negative, so also many of the steps in these systems were chiefly mechanical.² The mere repetition of a mantra is without any special spiritual significance and entirely incapable of uniting a human soul with God.

While it may be conceded that the teachings of Ramdas about redemption are still acceptable to large numbers of Hindus who follow the orthodox path, it is none the less true that many Hindus have progressed far beyond the Svami's teaching. They demand a union with God which

¹ *The Crown of Hinduism*, J. N. Farquhar, p. 442.

² *Redemption: Hindu and Christian*, Sydney Cave, p. 225. *Indian Theism*, N. Macnicol, p. 223.

stresses duty and service, ' Who is there/ says Rabindranath Tagore,' that thinks the union between God and man is to be found in some secluded enjoyment of his own imaginings away from the sky-towering temple of the greatness of humanity, which the whole of mankind in sunshine and in storm is toiling to erect through the ages ? . . . He who thinks to reach God by running away from the world, when and where does he expect to meet Him ? . . . We must be brave enough to be able to say that we are reaching Him here *in* this very spot, now at this very moment.' Not only do progressive Hindu leaders to-day demand a positive attitude toward life in general, they also require consistency in the doctrine of redemption; and here again Ramdas surely fails to meet their advanced requirements. The increasing interest in the personality of Jesus on the part of these Hindu religious thinkers is weighty evidence that more and more His message of God's redeeming love is gripping the hearts of India's people.

3. *Sin*

No one can read the verses of the Svami without feeling that he set a very high moral standard for himself and his followers. The question here is not that of his *ethical* standard, which will be discussed in the next section, but concerns his attitude toward sin as a phase of the spiritual life and its relationship to God. As a bhakta Ramdas often referred to his sinfulness, and asked for the help of Sri Rama. He was conscious of his own spiritual needs and of his longing for Rama's forgiveness, just as Tukaram prayed for forgiveness from Vithoba. In this sense, he doubtless thought of sin in its spiritual aspects, such as selfish and unworthy motives in the heart, leading one to do things displeasing to God. Unfortunately, the Svami gave an additional interpretation of sin when he referred to it as a part of the *karma* process, in which each evil act required subsequent expiation, a continuous cycle that went on indefinitely. This conception removed sin further away from God, making it part of a system that was both legalistic and pessimistic. It is a conception which goes

along with the doctrine of Brahman, the Supreme Being who is above description, and who therefore cannot be described by the adjective 'righteous/ Since Ramdas did not centre his thought of righteousness in the Supreme Being, it is not surprising that so much of his thought concerning sin was of an external character, the elimination of which was achieved by ceremonial means, such as bathing, the repetition of the mantra and various forms of penance.

For Jesus, God the loving Father was a righteous God, all-holy and all-pure. Jesus believed that God's consuming desire was that all men should be good, noble and true; and in order to achieve that worthy end, God allowed each of His human children to be a free agent, able to choose between right and wrong. Sad to relate, some people, because of weakness or other causes, make wrong choices instead of right ones and fall into evil practices. Sinful thoughts and deeds discolour such lives and act as a barrier between them and God; since there can be no loving sympathetic communion between the God of righteousness and those who seek evil or who are indifferent to the good. Only by turning penitently away from that evil can the spiritual communion be resumed. Jesus thought of sin as that condition of the human heart which made joyous fellowship with God impossible. To Him, the world was a moral world and redemption from sin was a moral process. It will thus be seen that His teaching resembled the Svami's bhakti doctrine in a number of ways.

We must not fail to note, however, certain fundamental differences. Jesus revealed to mankind the awful character of sin, His sensitive soul shrinking from every contact with it; and when, after three years of ministry, He became engulfed in the evil passions stirred up by His persecutors, He did not hesitate to make the supreme sacrifice, in order that all men might know of God's loving forgiveness. In none of his ideas concerning sin did Ramdas reveal such an abhorrence of it as Jesus did. In his Vedanta doctrine he made sin a part of a mechanical system, impersonal and surcharged with pessimism, redemption being release from the cycle of rebirths rather than from personal sin itself.

When contrasted with the radiant hope given by Jesus to all those held in the grip of unworthy desires, and the promise of God's triumphant spiritual power for everyone who seeks His help, the teaching of the Svami must seem vague indeed, and unable to satisfy the spiritual yearning of Indian hearts to-day. They are turning to Him who said, * Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."¹

4. *Incarnation*

The Svami's attitude toward incarnation may be gleaned from his statement that there are four kinds of deities, namely, idols, incarnations, God in the human soul, and the supreme spirit.² The typical Hindu word for incarnation is *avatara*, which means a descent. There is every reason to believe that Ramdas held the orthodox Hindu viewpoint of his day concerning incarnations, which was that in times of special need God descends to the earth in some form or disguise in order to accomplish a special task. Ramdas himself was a follower of Sri Rama, who was an *avatara* of Vishnu ; but he also accepted the validity of other incarnations both great and small. He has stated in more than one reference that there have been both partial and full incarnations, and it is probable that he accepted the traditional views of Vaishnavism, namely, that Vishnu has descended nine times and is due to make one more descent. These successive incarnations did not imply that Vishnu actually appeared upon the earth, but rather that he *seemed* to become man, just as an actor pretends to be someone else. It was more like the playing of a dramatic role than the personification of the god himself.³ There is every indication that Ramdas regarded himself as an ordinary human being; but his biographers have put forth more ambitious claims, and by his orthodox followers he has generally been regarded as an incarnation of Maruti,

¹ Matthew vii: 7,8. ² *Dasbodh*, ch. xi, sec. 2.

³ *The Crown of Hinduism*, J. N. Farquhar, p. 431.

Ramdas himself was conscious of his own spiritual needs, and prayed earnestly to Rama for help in meeting the temptations of daily life. 'O thou who art the storehouse of all goodness, I have sinned night and day against thee. O thou who art beyond description by the serpent and the *Vedas*, and yet dost dwell upon the earth, come and reveal thyself to Ramdas !'^x

One day Jesus said to His disciples, 'Who do men say that I am ?' They said, 'Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets/ He saith unto them, 'But who say ye that I am ?' And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!² This passage gives a helpful clue to the teaching of Jesus about incarnation. Jesus was conscious of His unique relationship to God. He felt that God had called Him to make a special revelation to mankind which would be for all time; and accordingly He announced to his disciples that He was the long-looked-for Messiah. To verify this claim Christ presented to the world a life of singular moral beauty and a self-consciousness which was entirely devoid of any sense of sin. Nay, more; He claimed authority upon earth to forgive sins in the name of the Father, and as He went about preaching and healing, He forgave the sins of the penitent. During the past 1,900 years, in spite of scholarly efforts to refute the claims of Jesus, the Christian Church has found His divine mission valid and has accepted Him as the one, true, final revelation of God, echoing the words of Peter on that eventful day in Palestine, 'Thou art the Christ !'

Therefore, it will readily be seen that aside from the basic principle, the teaching of Ramdas concerning incarnation has little in common with that of Jesus. Jesus asserted that He Himself was the unique revelation of God in human life; whereas Ramdas accepted a number of avatars, including animals as well as men. The life of Jesus has been thoroughly verified by historical investigation, whereas many of the avatars accepted by Ramdas had their origin in mythology or else were historical

¹ *Karun&shtake*, Dhulia Edition, No. 147. * Matthew, xvi: 13-18

persons who were deified by later generations. The self-consciousness of Jesus has been analysed by critical scholars who have been satisfied that although His spiritual experience was unique, it was none the less genuine; whereas Ramdas openly confessed his weakness and asked God's forgiveness. With Ramdas, 'incarnation' was more or less incidental; whereas it became the foundation stone of the new Christian religion; for the assurance of the disciples concerning the fact that Jesus had conquered death was what sent them forth as courageous messengers of the new faith. Their Master had not suffered ignominious defeat upon the Cross. After He had willingly made the last supreme sacrifice, death had failed to hold Him, and His Spirit became a present and victorious reality for all His followers. Why was it that the early disciples found it possible to believe in the teaching of Jesus? Was it not because their experience of His spiritual presence was set against the background of His incomparable earthly life, a life of such spiritual beauty and sinlessness that it could only be explained on the basis of its divinity? Hence they came to feel that it was entirely fitting for Jesus to assume for Himself the central place in God's scheme of redemption. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'¹ 'I came/ said Jesus, 'that they may have life and may have it abundantly.'² A leader like Mr. Gandhi has helped to focus the thought of India upon the character of Jesus by his own Christlike qualities, and many other Indian seekers to-day are gazing at the sweet and loving countenance of the Christ of the Indian Road, who beckons them on to the abundant life.

(B) ETHICAL

Few Hindu religious movements have set a higher ethical standard than that of the Ramdasis, and all those who have come into personal contact with earnest followers

¹ John iii:16. 2 John x: 10.

of the Svami testify to their high moral character. This thought we sought to bring out in Chapter vi, where various references were quoted illustrating the Svami's insistence on purity, unselfishness, truthfulness, sympathy, patience, humility, the forgiving spirit, faithfulness to duties and the spirit of happiness. Ramdas himself set the example to his followers and, according to his biographers, he possessed a noble character.

The keynote of Christ's ethical teaching is found in the Sermon on the Mount (St Matthew, Chapters v to vn), and here we discover a truly remarkable series of ethical requirements. Like Ramdas, Jesus spoke of purity, unselfishness, truthfulness, sympathy, patience, humility, the forgiving spirit and other motives in the heart. Like Ramdas, Jesus was referring to traits which He personified in His own life. The most notable feature of Christ's ethical teaching from the Christian standpoint, perhaps, is the decided advance it represents over the current Jewish ethical standards of His day. He lifted ethics out of the ceremonial sphere and made them a matter of the spirit within. * Ye have heard that it was said, " Thou shalt not commit adultery "; but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.¹ Jesus was not satisfied with commendable conduct, or even the spoken word, but insisted that the innermost motive must be right. Nay, more; He gave a deeper meaning to many of the familiar terms. Self-sacrifice became reflected in His own life of utter selflessness. The forgiving spirit receives its benediction from His words upon the Cross, * Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.²

What are the chief distinctions between the ethical teaching of Ramdas and that of Jesus ? After paying a warm tribute to the lofty ethics of the Svami, it is nevertheless clear to the student that the teaching of Jesus reaches a depth that Ramdas knew not of. It is not merely that many of the Svami's precepts are tinged with intellectualism, but also that they lack the *content* of meaning which

¹ Matthew v: 27-28. 2 Luke xxiii: 34.

Jesus gives to them,¹ Although the Svami's prosperous circumstances at the end of his life were doubtless the result of the adulation with which he was surrounded and not something he had personally coveted, yet he never reached the depths of self-abnegation that Jesus did when He gave up His life upon the Cross. Another point of contrast is that Jesus confined Himself to great spiritual principles, saying little about unimportant details. The Svami, on the other hand, gave his attention to both vital principles and trivial details, mixing them up to such a degree that one wonders whether he adequately discriminated between them. Lastly, there is the fundamental distinction regarding source and dynamic. To Ramdas, noble character was a prize to be won by dint of hard and continuous moral effort, in which the assistance of Sri Rama was a factor, but which was also dependent upon the spiritual teacher (guru) and upon other factors. Jesus, however, centred His ethical teaching in the moral character of God, who was therefore the source of all ethical inspiration, and the objective of those who sought to grow *in* the beauty of character. Just as God was the source, so also did He furnish the dynamic by which earnest believers might hope to achieve character growth. Paul expresses this thought when he says, 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me *; and, in saying this, Paul is testifying to the secret of his own spiritual growth.'² As Mr. Edwards says, 'India's cardinal religious defect is clearly her lack of a moral dynamic/ a lack which is all but fatal, because it leaves bewildered humanity to climb the spiritual ascent of life alone and unaided,—a task that is well-nigh hopeless.'⁸ Jesus offers all His followers the inexhaustible spiritual resources of His Heavenly Father, which made spiritual victory certain to His immediate disciples, and assures spiritual victory for all those who love Him to-day.

¹ *Indian Theism*, N. Macnicol, p. 249. 2 Galatians i i : 20.
 3 Edwards, p. 259.

(C) GENERAL

1. *The Social Structure*

As has been stated in a previous chapter, Ramdas, like most of the other Hindu religious teachers of his time, was not a social reformer. He accepted the Hindu social system as he found it. He was not a slave to it, however, and when occasion seemed justified, he did not hesitate to break the ordinary caste rules, and to associate with those of other castes, a number of whom became members of his movement. In common with other orthodox teachers, he put the Brahman caste at the head, because he sincerely felt that the spiritual leadership of the Hindu community was of paramount importance. He gave women a more honourable share in his movement than would have been allowed in a strictly orthodox group ; but there is no indication that he held radical religious views in regard to them. While the Svami was friendly with low castes, he did not make a definite place for them in his movement; and the low-caste element has never held the place of honour among Ramdasīs that it has at Panharpur. It is not surprising that Ramdas accepted these various grades in the Hindu social structure, when one realizes that his outlook on life was chiefly built on the doctrines of *transmigration* and *karma*; and under these circumstances it was perhaps natural that low-castes should be of lesser importance in his eyes. In other words, his social idealism was linked up with his scheme of redemption; and since human personality was such a transitory factor, according to the doctrine of Saiikara, those individuals nearest to salvation were of more spiritual significance than those further away.

Jesus built His social structure upon the basis of the eternal worth of every human being in the sight of God. Regardless of colour, race, wealth, culture or any other distinction, Jesus taught that all men were equal in His Father's estimation and were of infinite value both in this world and the next. When this truth finally dawned upon the intelligence of the early disciples, they formed a Christian brotherhood of the most democratic type, even holding their property in common and pooling their resour-

ces, each one disclaiming individual ownership. As in the case of the Svami, so also with Jesus, there were women who ministered to His physical needs; but with this distinction, that Jesus regarded them as of equal spiritual value with the men. For Jesus, all human beings were equally precious in the Father's sight—both rich and poor, young and old, male and female, Jew and Gentile. Jesus went so far as to say that one human soul was worth more in the divine plan than the whole physical universe. 'For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life'? *

Here we have a chasm that cannot be bridged except by a leap. Between the doctrine of the extinction of personality as taught by the Svami, and the teaching of Jesus on the eternal qualities of the human soul, there is so wide a gap that one is baffled indeed to find a harmonious contact. The so-called 'problem of untouchability' may have arisen because of the advisability of certain groups performing particular tasks in the community, and because of the consequent belief that the path of salvation was closed to those who performed the menial services. Whatever the cause may have been, a large part of the Hindu community became gradually excommunicated from the community temples and wells, with the result that Hindu religious leaders to-day are facing a most vexatious social problem. Its importance may be gauged by the fact that when Mahatma Gandhi recently emerged from his years of silence, one of his first utterances was, 'My conviction is confirmed that without the removal of untouchability, the spread of *khaddar*, and Hindu-Muslim unity, *swaraj* is impossible.'² So-called Christian nations are still far from fulfilling the spirit of the teaching of Jesus in their social organization; witness the presence of race-prejudice and of invidious social distinctions. These conditions are due, however, to the *failure* of such communities to rise to the heights of Christ's principles of brotherly love and the supreme value of every human soul. In removing the curse of untouchability and other crying social evils which

¹ Matthew xvi: 26.

² *Dnyanodaya*, Jan. 6, 1927, p. 2

are paralyzing India's political evolution and social progress, the leaders of India's social and political life are spontaneously turning to Him who said, 'For one is your teacher and all ye are brethren. . . . Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.'

2. *Life in This World*

As has been frequently stated, the Vedanta teaching was a dominant note in the Svami's message, and according to this doctrine the world is not real but only *appears* to be so. It is the scene of that depressing process of retribution known as *transmigration* and *karma*. Hence Ramdas felt that the world was essentially evil as well as illusory; and in his classic story of a man's life, found in the third chapter of the *Ddsbodh*, he clearly shows the successive tragedies which make life something to be shunned rather than as something to be enjoyed. Even as a bhakta, the Svami dwelt on his spiritual unworthiness, and his yearning to escape. Under the influence of Sivaji's successes, he came to feel that there were certain social and practical duties which everyone ought to perform, and to this extent during his later years he regarded the world with tolerant eyes. He developed a doctrine of happiness which was somewhat unique. As regards his cosmogony, which is described in Chapter v, it need only be stated here that it was built around the Samkhya theories, with certain additions, and that it was very explicit, giving even the numbers involved in various steps of creation.

One of the criticisms directed against Jesus was that He was too friendly in his social relationships, the Pharisees being particularly incensed because He ate with doubtful social characters. Jesus taught that man needs to adjust himself to the world, rather than to separate himself from it. One of His most frequent sayings was, 'Be of good cheer'. His parable of the Good Samaritan was a call to genuine neighbourliness. He accepted the reality of the material universe, but made it subordinate, in His

¹ Matthew xxiii: 8,12

scheme of values, to the spiritual life of man. Because Nature was a revelation of God's goodness, it was beautiful in itself; changeable, yet possessing permanence. While a normal life brought its successive sorrows, the element of happiness should outweigh that of sadness; and this teaching of Jesus is definitely confirmed by the joyousness of the early Christians as they met together and sang hymns. Although they felt what is called the 'apocalyptic urge' which transported their thoughts to the future, they did not shun the normal experiences of life and rejoiced in every friendly contact or opportunity for service.

In this attitude toward daily life, therefore, the teaching of Jesus is notably different from that of Ramdas. To Jesus, the world was real and not illusory; it was an opportunity for happy service, and not a series of misfortunes. In stressing this distinction, the writer is unable to agree with Prof. Radhakrishnan, who speaks of the ephemeral quality of the material world as a substantiation of the maya doctrine. While modern science readily admits that matter is constantly changing, it also asserts that it is indestructible, and that while energy may be transformed, it continues to express itself in one way or another.¹ Jesus generally contented Himself with enunciating abiding principles, rather than the specific application of those principles to local situations. He had little to say about the method of creation, but as a growing boy He had studied assiduously the Old Testament scriptures, and had later announced Himself as the One who came to fulfil the aspirations of the scriptures. We can confidently conclude, therefore, that Jesus believed the universe had been created by His Father, as the ancient Jewish scriptures had set forth. There is nothing in His teaching which makes it inconsistent for Christians to-day to accept the valid facts of modern science. The Svami's cosmogony, on the other hand, is archaic and hopelessly out-of-date for those who view the universe through the intelligent interpretation of modern knowledge. It was a cosmogony belonging to the realm of mythology rather than that of

¹ *The Indian Social Reformer*, Nov. 20, 1926, p. 181

rational observation. Those who love the beautiful nature-poems of Rabindranath Tagore, or who take pride in the rapid development of India's economic resources, will assuredly find little satisfaction in the view of the world that was vouchsafed to this Hindu saint,

3. *Conclusion*

What, then, should be said in conclusion? The writer earnestly hopes that no one will misunderstand his attitude after reading the present chapter. He has been greatly inspired by his study of this Indian saint of the seventeenth century, who performed such a unique spiritual task in his day of need and did it so acceptably, India may well feel proud of her saints and poets, who have revealed to their fellow-countrymen the primacy of the spiritual life. But, from the very nature of the case, the message of the Svami was limited by his geographical outlook and his contemporary cultural background. A great deal that he taught has ceased to have spiritual value for India's people. The message of Jesus, on the other hand, derives part of its uniqueness from its timelessness and universality, for it is as applicable to the twentieth century as it was to the first, to the West as well as to the East. Knowledge has advanced, the universe has expanded, and mankind has developed; but it is just as true to-day as it was 1,900 years ago that Jesus teaches us how to live; to live the abundant life, which He lived Himself and which He helps us to live. And, in conclusion, the writer would express the hope that students of Ramdas, after reading the present chapter, may feel impelled to consult the four Gospels at their leisure, and there verify this brief and inadequate interpretation of the message of Jesus.

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