

culture, and at the same time is certain to inaugurate a new era of encounter and assimilation. The book with its companion volume should find a special place on the shelves of every library both in India and abroad, as a valuable contribution to world literature and as a source book of Indian Christianity.

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N.K. Devaraja,

Hinduism and the Modern Age,

New Delhi: Islam and Modern Age Society,
1975, 149 pp; Rs. 35.00.

The first chapter "An Interpretative Survey Of The Growth Of The Hindu Religious Tradition" is a veritable panorama of Hinduism painted masterfully in broad strokes. In the second chapter quotations from a cross-section of western critics sets the background for appraising the present trends of Hindu reform movements. Unfortunately, the western critics and admirers of Hinduism who have drawn the attention of Indian exponents of reform have mostly represented western secular views, which do not go to the roots of Hinduism as a religion and philosophy. The author senses clearly the task of religious reform to consist in "reappraising itself in relation to other religions of the world and in coping with the demand for adequate evidence in respect of beliefs and dogmas of every kind that the unprecedented successes of modern science and the prestige of scientific methods of investigation, have tended to foster." (p. 65).

The third chapter "Science, Secularism and Religion" outlines critically the attempts made by many thinkers to find a unity among all religions. The author arrives at the conclusion, that humanism is the core of all religions and that it will lead, in effect, to their being divested of their "religious" outgrowths. "It seems to me that a view of religion free from pre-suppositions, that would be acceptable to the modern man with his more developed and demanding sense of evidence, would lead towards Humanism". (p. 77)

The author remarks approvingly, "religion today is expected to find or furnish sanctions for an interference of the state in the interest of the welfare of the people" (p. 81). In this chapter he outlines also the part played by Christianity in the growth of humanism. Unfortunately, here also the author relies too heavily on statements of authors

who are outside the main stream of Christian thought. Comparing Christianity and Hinduism, he draws the conclusion that religions are somewhat powerless against socio-cultural and economic factors which influence moral behaviour, although he concedes that the doctrines of Christianity as a whole have been a great force in favouring the rise of socialist thought.

The next chapter discusses the internal changes that took place in Hinduism in its encounter with the modern world and with Christianity, and how it brought about a renaissance of Hinduism. Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Mahatma Gandhi and Ramakrishna Paramahansa who represent this renaissance of Hinduism helped Hindus to reflect on their own religion in confrontation with the other religions and with modern scientific trends of thought. On the one hand it helped to purify it of unhealthy accretions, like casteism, child marriage, sati etc., and on the other, to bring it up to compare well with Christian ideas, so that Hinduism could become immune to being challenged by Christian apologetics. With that the author comes to the conclusion that Hinduism is likely to survive as religious philosophy owing to its elastic character which will satisfy the intellectuals who would find their humanistic or philosophic ideas as essentially Hindu, even if they are substantially modified by the ideas taken from modern secularism and from other religions, while they will equally well accommodate those whose "religious" bent is satisfied by the personalistic and ritualistic elements of Hinduism, which are given a more acceptable rationalisation.

But since, with the advent of secular and scientific education, the caste structure which supports religious ritualism weakened, the author is inclined to welcome the evolution of Hinduism into a secular-oriented society with a metaphysical flair. Although the author states clearly, in several places, that religious values refer to the ultimate ground and ultimate goals of our existence and are higher than secular values, still he tends to draw the picture of the ideal modern Indian, as one in whom Hindu religious values as such play no vital role any more. In this respect he tends to identify Indian with Hindu, so that an evolution of the Indian society is considered to be an evolution of Hinduism. That would amount to admitting that Hinduism as a religion may not stand the impact of the modern age, which is characterised by a purely this-worldly outlook on life. Hence one wonders whether the author is fully aware of the implications of his findings. With these reservations, the book is a valuable contribution towards an understanding of today's Hinduism.

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