

HALF-HOURS WITH FAMOUS MAHATMAS. No. 1

YOGI MAHATMA SRI AGAMYA PARAMAHAMSA GURU SWAMIJI is a certain Punjabi lala, who, on account of his tremendous voice and ferocious temper, has well earned for himself the name of The Tiger Mahatma.

My first acquaintance with His Holiness was in November 1906, when he paid his second visit to England. I had seen his name in the daily press, but before calling upon him, I had read up what I could about him in his book: "Sri Brahma Dhara," in the preface of which he is praised as follows:

"He seeks to do good, he accepts money from no one, and lives a very simple, pure life . . . I . . . was much impressed by his great breadth of mind, his sweet charity, and his loving kindness for every living thing. . . . These teachings . . . breathe love and kindness, and dwell upon the joys of pure clean living."

Forewarned is to be forearmed, and I had read the same type of "puff" on many a patent pill box!

On entering 70, Margaret Street I was shown upstairs and ushered into the den of Tiger Sri Agamya. Besides himself, there were three people in the room, two men and

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a woman, and as I entered one of the men, an American, was saying:

“O Mahatma! I haven't the faith, I can't get it!”

To which His Holiness roared out:

“You sheep are! . . . I no want sheep! . . . tigers I make . . . tigers tear up sheep, go away! . . . no good, get intellect . . . get English! . . . no more!”

The three then departed, and I was left alone with the Blessed One. Neither of us spoke for about ten minutes, then at length, after a go or two at his snuff-box, he gave a loud grunt, to which I replied in a solemn voice:

“O Mahatma, what is Truth?”

“No Truth! All illusion,” he answered, “I am the Master, you become my disciple; I show you all things; I lead you to the ultimate reality . . . the supreme stage of the Highest . . . the infinite Ultimatum . . . the unlimited omniscience of eternal Wisdom—All this I give you if you have faith in me.”

As faith is exceedingly cheap in this country, I offered him unlimited oceans of it; and at this he seemed very pleased, and laughed:

“Ha! ha! You make good tiger cub . . . you tear sheep up . . . all is illusion!” Then after a pause: “De vouman,” pointing to the door, “is no good!” And then, without further hesitation, he entered upon a veritable Don Juan description of his earthly adventures. This I thought strange of so sober-minded a saint, and so put to him several questions concerning the Vedanta philosophy, and its most noted exponents, to see what he really did know.

“Do you know Swami Vivekananda?” I asked.

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“Ha,” he replied, “he no good, he my disciple, I am the master!”

“And Swami Dayanand Sarasvati?” I continued. The same answer was vouched to me, although this latter teacher had died at the age of seventy, forty years ago. Thinking it about time to change the conversation, I said:

“O Thou Shower from the Highest! Tell thy grovelling disciple what then *is* a ‘lie’?”

“Ha!” he replied, “it is illusion, this truth that has been diverged from its real point . . . an illusive spring in the primo-genial fermentation of ‘fee-no-me-non,’ in this typocosmy apparent to the senses which you call ‘de Vurld’!!!”

With this, and promises of oceans of blissful reality from the highest eternality of ultimate ecstasy, he bade me sit in a chair and blow alternately through my nostrils; and, if I had faith, so he assured me, I should in six months’ time arrive at the supreme stage of the Highest in the infinite Ultimatum, and should burst as a chance illusively fermented bubble in the purest atmosphere of the highest reality.

The next occasion on which I saw the Mahatma was at a business meeting of his disciples held at 60, South Audley Street. His Holiness called them tiger-cubs, nevertheless seldom have I seen such a pen full of sheep. A man from Ilfracombe proposed this, and a man from Liverpool seconded that; at last a London plumber arose, and with great solemnity declared: “Gintlemen, hi taik hit ’is ’oliness his really ’oly, hin fact gintlemen hi taik hit ’e his Gawd; . . . hand so hi proposes the very least we can do for ’im his to subscribe yearly towards ’im foive shillins!” (“’ear, ’ear” from a comrade in the corner). However, the sheep wouldn’t have it, and the

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little man sat down to ruminare over lead piping, and solder at twopence a stick.

During the summer of '07 I had little time to waste at number 60, and had almost forgotten about the Mahatma, who, so I had been told, had left England for America, when I received a card announcing his return, and asking me to be present at a general meeting.

This I did, and as usual was more than bored. After business was over the Mahatma entered the room, all his sheep flocking round him to seek the turnips of his wisdom. On these occasions he would ask questions and select subjects upon which his disciples were supposed to write essays. One of these, I can still remember, was: "How to help the helpless hands"; another was: "What is dis-satisfaction, and what is true satisfaction?" And the answer was: "Love fixed on mortal things, without the knowledge of its source, increases vibration and creates dissatisfaction ('mortal things' is good!)."

In his book, "Sri Brahma Dhara," which contains some of the most astonishing balderdash ever put in print, may be found his philosophy. This is a stewed-up hash of Yoga, Vedanta, and outrageous verbosity. "Love," he writes, "is the force of the magician Maya, and is the cause of all disorder" (it seems to be so even in his exalted position). "This force of love—in the state of circumgyration in the extended world—is the cause of all mental movements towards the feeling of easiness or uneasiness: but the mind enjoys eternal beatitude with perfect calmness, when the force of love is concentrated over the unlimited extension of silence" ('silence' is really choice!).

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“Virtue,” he defines as: “the bent of mind towards self-command” (and evidently practises it). His morals are good; but his scientific conceptions really “take the cake!” “There are three kinds of animate creations in the world,” he writes: “They are the creations from (1) the womb; (2) Eggs; (3) Perspiration. . . .” Another gem: “how is it that some of the bodies are male and some are female?” Answer: “If the male seed preponderates, a male body is produced; and if female, a female. While, when both are equally proportioned, an eunuch is born” (!).

At one of his male meetings—there were also female ones; but mixed bathing in the ocean of infinite bliss was not allowed—he related to us his pet story, of how he had “flum-oxed” the chief engineer and the captain of the liner which had brought him back from America.

He informed them that coal and steam were absurd; what you want, he said, is to have two large holes made in the sides of your ship, then the air will blow into them and turn the wheels, and make the ship go. When the captain pointed out to him, that if a storm were to arise the water might possibly flow into the ship and sink it, he roared out, “No! no! . . . get English! . . . get intellect! see! see! de vind vill fill de ship and blow it out of de vater and take it across over de vaves!”—Since this now becomes public property there probably will be a slump in turbines!

It was towards the close of last October, when I received from a friend of mine—also a so-called disciple—a letter in which he wrote: “There was a devil of a row at 60 last night. M: pressed me to come to his weekly entertainments; so I

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came. He urged me to speak; so I spoke. He then revealed his divine self in an exceptionally able manner; I refrained from revealing mine. His divine self reminded one rather of a 'Navy's Saturday Night, by Battersea Burns.' He further urged me to go and see the Mahatma himself on the following Sunday; and this I did.

I arrived at 60, South Audley Street at seven o'clock. There were already about twenty sheepish-looking tigers present, and when the Mahatma entered the room, I sat down next to him; for, knowing, in case a scrimmage should occur, that a Hindoo cannot stomach a blow in the spleen, I thought it wisest to be within striking distance of him.

The Mahatma opened the evening's discussion by saying: "Humph . . . I am Agnostic, you are believers. I say 'I don't know,' you contradict me." And during the next hour and a half more Bunkum was talked in that room than I should say in Exeter Hall during the whole course of the last century. At last it ended, and though I had made various attempts to draw His Holiness into argument, I had as yet failed to unveil his divinity. He now started dictating his precious philosophy, and in such execrable English, that it was quite impossible to follow him, and I once or twice asked him to repeat what he had said, and as I did so I noticed that several of the faithful shivered and turned pale. At length came the word "expectation" or "separation," and as I could not catch which, I exclaimed "what?"

"You pig-faced man!" shouted His Holiness, "you dirty fellow, you come here to take away my disciples . . . vat you vant vith this: vat! vat! vat! vat! . . . You do no exercise, else you understand vat I say, dirty man!" And then turning to

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his three head bell-wethers who were sitting at a separate table he sneered:

“X——” (my friend present at the previous revelation of his divinity) “send this pig-one . . . eh?”

“I don’t know why . . .” I began.

“Grutch, butch!” he roared, “you speak to me, you cow-eater! . . . get intellect,” he yelled, “get English,” he bellowed, and up he sprang from the table.

As I did not wish to be murdered, for he had now become a dangerous maniac, I rose, keeping my eyes on him, and taking up my hat and stick, which I had purposely placed just behind me, I quietly passed round the large table at which his terror-stricken fold sat gaping, and moved towards the door.

The whole assembly seemed petrified with fear. At first the Blesséd One appeared not to realize what had happened, so taken aback was he by any one having the audacity to leave the room without his permission: then he recovered himself, and at the top of his tiger-roar poured out his curses in choicest Hindustani.

On reaching the door I opened it, and then facing him I exclaimed in a loud voice in his native tongue:

“*Chup raho! tum suar ke bachcha ho!*”

With gleaming eyes, and foaming lips, and arms flung wildly into the air,—there stood the Indian God, the 666th incarnation of Haram Zada, stung to the very marrow of his bones by this bitterest insult. Beside himself with fury he sprang up, murder written on every line of his face; tried to leap across the table—and fell in an epileptic fit. As he did so, I shut the door in his face.

Aum.

SAM HARDY.