

“Suprabhat”

THE PAPER *Suprabhat*, a Bengali monthly edited by Kumari Kumudini Mitra, daughter of Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitra, enters this month on its third year. The first issue of the new year is before us. We notice a great advance in the interest and variety of the articles, the calibre of the writers and the quality of the writing. From the literary point of view the chief ornament of the number is the brief poem *Duhkhabhisar*, by Sj. Rabindranath Tagore. It is one of those poems in which the peculiar inimitable quality of our greatest lyric poet comes out with supreme force, beauty and sweetness. Rabindra Babu has a legion of imitators and many have been very successful in catching up his less valuable mannerisms of style and verse, as is the manner of imitators all the world over. But the poignant sweetness, passion and spiritual depth and mystery of a poem like this, the haunting cadences subtle with a subtlety which is not of technique but of the soul, and the honeyladen felicity of the expression, these are the essential Rabindranath and cannot be imitated, because they are things of the spirit and one must have the same sweetness and depth of soul before one can hope to catch any of these desirable qualities. We emphasise this inimitableness because the legion of imitators we mention are doing harm to the progress of our poetry as well as to the reputation of their model and we would suggest to them to study this poem and realise the folly of their persistent attempt. One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Rabindra Babu's genius is the happiness and originality with which he has absorbed the whole spirit of Vaishnav poetry and turned it into something essentially the same and yet new and modern. He has given the old sweet spirit of emotional and passionate religion an expression of more delicate and complex richness voiceful of subtler and more penetratingly spiritual shades of feeling than

the deep-hearted but simple early age of Bengal could know. The old Vaishnav *bhāva* — there is no English word for it, — was easily seizable, broad and strong. The *bhāva* of these poems is not translatable in any other language than that the poet has used, — a striking proof is the unsatisfactory attempt of the poet himself, recorded in another article in this issue, to explain in prose his own poem, *Sonar Tari*. But while the intellect tries in vain to find other intellectual symbols for the poet's meaning, the poetry seizes on the heart and convinces the imagination. These poems are of the essence of poetry and refuse to be rendered in any prose equivalent. Poetry is created not from the intellect or the outer imagination but comes from a deeper source within to which men have no means of access except when the divine part within seizes on the brain and makes it a passive instrument for utterance the full meaning of which the brain is unable at the moment to grasp. This is the divine mania and enthusiasm which the subtle spiritual discernment of Plato discovered to be the real meaning of what we call inspiration. And of this unattainable force the best lyrics of Rabindranath are full to overflowing.

The article *Shantiniketan Rabindranath* by Sj. Jitendranath Banerji is another feature of great interest. The writer has a good descriptive gift and the passages which describe the Shantiniketan are admirable; but the chief interest naturally centres in the conversation with the poet which is recorded with great fullness. The private talk of a rich and gifted nature with a power of conversational expression is always suggestive and we await with interest the future issue of this article. We hope Jitendra Babu will give us a fuller view of the remarkable educational experiment which this original mind is developing in the quiet shades of Bolpur. The brief hints given of the moral training and the method of education followed point to a system far in advance of the National Council of Education which is still tyrannised over by a tradition and method not only European but unprogressively European. A brief instalment of Sj. Aurobindo Ghose's *Karakahini* is also given which describes the identification parades of the Bomb Case, gives some glimpses

of the approver Noren Gossain and deals with the personal character of some of the jail officials. *Nanak Charit* by Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitra, the first instalment of which is given in this issue, commands interest both by its subject and the name of its writer. The two chapters given are full of interesting details of Nanak's birth and childhood and promise an attractive biography of one of the greatest names in religious history. An article of minor importance is the continuation of Sj. Jadunath Chakrabarti's *Ekannabarti Paribar o Strishiksha*, which is of considerable merit. The author has seized on two of the great advantages of the joint family system, its ideal of a wider brotherhood and unity and its ample training in morale and capacity. *Dainik Bal* and the poem *Bodhan* seem to us to be failures, but there is no other feature of this number which is without merit or interest.

We have left to the last Dr. P. C. Ray's long article on "The Bengali Brain and its Misuse". It is a long indictment of past and present Bengal, covering sixteen pages of the magazine. Dr. P. C. Ray is a name which is already a pride to the nation to which he belongs and his deep scientific knowledge, original research and creativeness are one of the most conspicuous instances of that strong, acute and capable Bengali intellect which he admits to be inferior to none. Any article from his pen must be of great interest and cannot be without value. But it is one of the unfortunate results of the denationalising influence of our past education that a mind like Dr. Ray's should be without intellectual sympathy for the old national culture whose inherited tendencies his own character, life and achievements illustrate in so distinguished a manner. If it had not been for the past which Dr. P. C. Ray condemns, such noble types as the last fifty years of Bengal teems with, would not have been possible. As to the necessity of far-reaching changes in the future we do not greatly differ with the writer. The immediate past has been a period of contraction and the reservation of strength, the future will be a period of expansion and the liberation and expenditure of strength. The structure of the new age must necessarily differ from that of the old. But the spirit of the article is narrow and

intolerant. It is couched in that general spirit of self-depreciation and indiscriminate fault-finding which was a characteristic of our people when national hope and energy were at their nadir. There are all the stock denunciations with which we were familiar before the recent resurgence. Such writings void of the note of hope, encouragement and energy, will not help a nation to rise but rather depress it and push it back into the past. Moreover, Dr. Ray makes the same mistake which European writers made when they condemned the Middle Ages wholesale because they were a period of contraction and not of expansion. That mistake has now been recognised in Europe and justice has been done to that which was praiseworthy as well as to that which was bad in the "Dark Ages". We in India are recovering from a similar error and if there are those who go to the opposite extreme and see nothing good outside the mediaeval Hindu culture and forms, the same thing happened in Europe and for the same reason, as a reaction from that very intolerance and sweeping denunciation which are the spirit of Dr. Ray's article. It cannot last any more than it lasted in Europe. Some of the strictures we hold to be too much at secondhand; especially in his criticisms of religion the writer seems to us to be wandering outside the province in which he can speak with authority. After all one must enter into the spirit of an age and civilisation before one can profitably criticise it, otherwise we miss the meaning of history and falsify its values. Nevertheless the article is ably written and should be studied as a complete expression of the Europeanised standpoint in looking at Indian problems. As to the present, Dr. Ray lays too much stress on the survivals of the end of the nineteenth century when the national consciousness touched bottom and ignores the youthful strength and energy which is preparing the twentieth.