

6. Expansion and influence of Ramakrishna Mission in Bihar

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The second quarter of the nineteenth century, the hypnotic spell of foreign civilization began to recede, slowly but steadily, before a rising wave of self-consciousness of the Hindus. Mighty movements of socio-religious reform sprang up, one after another, to resuscitate the ancient culture of India and lead her once more to evolve a glorious future. Though the Indian National Congress was inaugurated in 1885 with the object of bringing about political advancement of the country, it is since the beginning of this century that a strong and genuine feeling for the social, political, and economic well-being of India has seized the nation with a pre-eminent vigor. Social service institutions for the uplift of the masses are being established in different parts of the country not only by the Ramakrishna Mission, but also by various other national organizations; relief works for serving distressed humanity during occasional calamities are also being conducted by different groups of social workers besides the Ramakrishna Mission. Educational institutions co-coordinating the Vedic ideals with modern academic requirements have sprung up under the auspices of several organizations and under the inspiration and guidance of great patriots like Rabindranath Tagore and Madan Mohan Malviya. Indian patriotism, instead of developing on narrow and parochial lines, appears to become broad-based on a genuine feeling of universal brotherhood. The non-violent creed of Mahatma Gandhi, the universalism of Rabindranath Tagore, and the message of harmony of faiths and inter-racial concord of the followers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda characterize Indian patriotism by a positively humanistic and spiritual outlook. A practical demonstration of the truths behind all the various creeds

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incorporated in Hinduism, by the deep and extensive realizations of a majestic seer, was a desideratum that alone could stir up the Hindu masses to bring about a fresh and vigorous revival of their religion. Sri Ramakrishna came to fulfill such a need. In him the orthodox society found a pre-eminent seer who had the potency of bringing about the mighty awakening of the old religion of the Hindus with all that it stands for. As Mahatma Gandhi has put it, 'The story of Ramakrishna Pramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. . . . In this age of skepticism, Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light'. The radicals, too, found in the realizations of Sri Ramakrishna a wonderful solution of their intellectual doubts. This is why a truculent advocate of modern thought like Narendranath (Swami Vivekananda), who had drunk deep from the dangerous fountains of rational atheism and also from refined springs of Brahmo theism, could surrender himself completely to this extraordinary man of phenomenal spiritual insight.

The school of oriental arts is a product of the period; and it is interesting to observe that besides Abanindranath Tagore, the names of Mr. Havell and Sister Nivedita have also to be remembered in connection with the revival of this phase of the cultural life of India. India has discovered her old genius and tradition of the fine arts and taken a resolute stand to revive, develop, and expand them by assimilating the best and conformable elements from the western school. In the field of letters, India has already made a mark in this century through the precious idealistic contributions of Tagore to the literary treasure-house of the world. Besides, it may be noticed that all the languages within the land, with Bengali as the vanguard, have commenced a progressive career within this period, inaugurating in this way an era of literary renaissance all over the country. It is particularly within this period that the spirit of scientific research spread over India through the different universities, and some of the scientists of the country, like J. C. Bose and P. C. Ray, M. N. Saha and C. V. Raman, obtained distinctive honour from foreign institutes of science. It is worth noticing that, even in these academic fields, the researches of J. C. Bose on the sensation in plant life bear the characteristic hallmark of the ancient Hindu mind. He himself confessed before his western audience that he was demonstrating with modern instruments, and elucidating through modern scientific ideology, a truth about plant life that had been discovered ages ago by the Hindu seers. *P. C. Ray's History of Hindu Chemistry and B.*

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N. Seal's Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus show unmistakably how the self-consciousness of the Hindu mind is expressing itself, even in the realm of science, by recovering and holding before the world all that ancient India thought and achieved. In course of time, with the broadening of its scope of public work and consequent increase of its responsibilities, the *Ramkrishna Mission* had to split itself formally into two distinct bodies. For efficient management, as also for the unavoidable exigency of imparting a legal status to the service aspect of the organization, all philanthropic, educational, charitable, and missionary activities were placed under a corporate body and registered formally, in 1909, as "The Ramkrishna Mission" under Act XXI of 1860 of the Governor-General of India in Council. According to the rules, the Trustees of the Belur Math formed the Governing Body of the Ramkrishna Mission, which also had its headquarters at the Belur Math. Swami Brahmananda, who had continued to be the President of the Trustees of the Belur Math since 1901, became the first President of the formally registered Ramkrishna Mission. And the grave and onerous function of the first Secretary was carried on with great skill and precision by Swami Saradananda.

The Trustees of the Belur Math, among other things, look after the spiritual training, growth and consolidation of the Ramkrishna Order of monks, and start, guide, and control branch monasteries as training grounds of the members of the Order at various suitable places; while the Ramkrishna Mission carries on different types of social service work, including temporary relief measures during floods, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, and other such occasional calamities, as well as regular and continuous charitable, missionary, and educational measures through permanent institutions in the shape of hospitals, dispensaries, maternity and child-welfare centres, preaching centres, orphanages, colleges, industrial schools, residential high schools and primary schools both for boys and girls, hostels for school and college students, as well as arrangements for part-time cultural training and peripatetic teaching for the masses.

Since ancient times, Bihar has been a significant centre for the Ram Krishna Mission and has a long history of remarkable actions for human improvement in numerous ways. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Ram Krishna Mission in the modern era. The spiritual and cultural development of the human race has been greatly enriched by their efforts. As a result, it has helped usher in a new era of cultural advancement while also proclaiming the genuine meaning of our ancient heritage over

the globe. It has spread the message of love, liberalism, and harmony over the world, and its scholar missionaries working in the organisation set up in different nations have provided enormously useful services to alleviate the brightening of dampness in many ways.

Ram Krishna Paramhans (1836-1886) and his great disciple Swami Vivekanda (1863-1902) and their Bihar Connection-Ram Krishna Paramhans (1836-1886) and his great disciple Swami Vivekanda (1863-1902) believed, in the synthesis of all faith and in the service of man as the true service of god. Sri Ram Krishna visited Bihar only once in the year 1868 when on his way to Varanasi he halted at Deoghar. Deeply moved by the poverty of the local people Sri Ramkrishna asked Mathur Babu who was bearing all expenses of the trip, to feed them before he proceeded to Varanasi. Mathur Babu obeyed his behest by distributing food and cloths to the people were in distress. Among the direct disciples of Sri Ramkrishna was a young Bihar boy named Rakhta Ram who later on was famous as Swami Adbhutananda. He was bon in a poor shepherded family in the rural area of the Saran District. After the death of the his parents when he was only five years of age he was brought to Calcutta by one of his relatives and his employed as an orderly under Ramchandra Dutta a devotee of Sri Ramkrishna. Rakhta Ram had for the first time a glimpre of Sri Ramkrishna when he went to Dakhineswar in January 1880.

In the company of his master Shree Ramkrishna at once observed “Ah he has got the marks of Saint I see.” Ramchandra Dutta sent his next month to Dakhineswar with some fruits and sweets. He was much influenced by the sanctity of this place that he did not return to his master. In June 1881, he was employed to do some works in the temple of Dakhineswar and thus had the opportunity to serve Shree Ramkrishna from whom he received paternal affections. After the demise of Shree Ramkrishna he discussed his spiritual message among hundreds of up country men employed in Calcutta, Swami Vivekananda had much regard for him. Swami Adbutananda popularly known as hatuMaharaj died in 1920. Influenced by the philosophy and teachings of Buddhism, Swami Vivekananda walked in April 1886, about eight miles from the Gaya Station, to reach Bodh-Gaya a sacred place where the Budha obtained enlightenment, with his two companions— Tarak and Kali, who afterward became Swami Shivananda and Abhedananda. They stayed at Bodh-Gaya for four days as guest of the Mahant. After sitting in medication at Bodh-Gaya for several hours Swami Vivekananda realised the significance of

the compassion of the Buddha.

Vivekananda, accompanied by his brother Parivrajaka disciple Akhandananda, visited Bhagalpur and Baidyanath Dham in 1990. At Bhagalpur they were at first guest of Kumar Nitynanda Sinha who was highly impressed with them. Next day his private tutor Manmath Nath Chaudhri extended his hostility to them. In June 1906 Shree Chaudhri wrote to a disciple of Swami Vivekananda with Swami Akhananda come unexpectedly to my house thinking them to be ordinary Sadhu, I did not pay much attention to them. We were sitting together after our mid-day meal, and presuring them to be uneducated I did not inter into negotiation with them but began to read an English translation of a work in Buddhism. After a while Swami asked me what I was reading. I told him the title of the book and asked "Do you know English"? He replied, "Yes a little". Other I conversed with him on Buddhism, but immediately I found out that he was a thousand times more learned than I. "Then to test his knowledge of Sanskrit, I brought out all the Upanishad that I had with me and questioned him on many abstruse passages in them. By his illuminating replies I found that his mastery of the scriptures was amazing. And the way in which he recited the Upanishad was charming thus being firmly convinced of his wonderful knowledge equally in English, Sanskrit and in Yoda. I was greatly drawn toward him. I became so devoted to him that I strongly urged him to live always at Bhagalpur. "Once I noticed him humming a true by himself. So I asked him if he could ring. He replied very little "being pressed by us he sang, and I was equally surprised that in music also he had wonderful accomplishment. Following high with the Swami's consent some musicians were irritated, thinking that the music would end by nine or ten at the latest. I did not arranged meals for the guests. Swamiji sang without ceasing till two or three O'clock in the morning. All without exception were so charmed that none moved from him seat or thought or going home. Kailash Babu, who was accompanying the Swamiji in his song, was finally forced to give as his finger had become stiff and numb. Such super human power I have never seen in any body nor do I expect so to see it again.

"Another day I proposed that I would in produce him to all the rich men of Bhagalpur and that I myself would take him to them in my carriage. But he declined and said "It is not the Sannyasin's Dharma to visit the rich." His fiery renunciation made a deep impression on me. Swamiji fully knew I would not willingly or easily let him depart from Bhagalpur.

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So one day when I was away he seized this opportunity of leaving when I come back. I made a strenuous search for him, but could discuss no clue of him anywhere. "It was my desire to bring once more to Bhagalpur after his return from America, but they could not come as he had very little opportunity to do so."

Before leaving Bhagalpur, Swamiji had a long and learned discussion with the local Saint Scholars. Swamiji come to Vaidyanath Dham where he met Rajnarayan, born a famous intellectual figure in the history of reascent Bengal and maternal grandfather of Sri Aurbindo. Vivekananda came to Vaidyanath Dham again on the 19th of December 1898 and stayed here till the end of January 1899. Here at Vaidyanath Dham, Swamiji "emulated the example of his master in serving man as the veritable manifestation of God.

In the expiring period of his life journey, once on the thirty Ninth birth day again in January 1902 Vivekananda came to Bodh-Gaya on his way to Varanasi of it to pay his last homage to the enlightened once. From Bodh-Gaya Swamiji made excursions to some places of historical and cultural importance which profoundly impressed him. In a letter dated the 9th Feb. Swamiji writes "Many are the new facts I have gathered in Body-Gaya and from Buddhist literature. A total revolution has occurred in my mind about the relation of Buddhism and neoHinduism.

Establishment of Ramkrishna Mission in Bihar

Chronologically the first centre to be started in Bihar was at Jamshedpur in 1920. It received affiliation from the Ramkrishna Mission in 1927. Its chief activity is educational and prayers and kirtans are arranged regularly in the prayer hall. It manages five high schools, four Middle schools three upper schools, primary and two lower primary schools. In these institutions emphasis is laid on the cultivation of moral virtue regard for the higher values of life, development of a catholic out look and growth of the spirit of self help with a since of dignity of labour. The second centre is Bihar was established at Jamtara in the SanthalParaganas in 1921. It has to it credit various humanitarian works including medical relief to the suffering person. The centre at Deoghar was started in 1922. The Ramkrishna Mission Vidyapith at Deoghar developed as on ideal residential institution and it tamed many selfless workers for general welfare of the people. The Ramkrishna Mission centre and Patna came into existence in June 1922. It was located come years in a rented house on the GovindMitra

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Road. I had the good feature of coming into contact with it then in change of it and the Ashram then brought out a paper called “The Morning Star” in one issue of which it contributed an auricle. It subsequently became a monthly from 1930. The nucleus of the student’s houses was formed here in 1927. Twelve college students, being two of them Shree Jatindra Nath Mukherjee who is a prominent lawyer of Purulia and Dr. Rajeshwar Jha who became a Reader of English in the Banaras Hindu University. The Ashrama sought to impart sound training to the boarder in the student’s Home moral intellectual and physical so that they might prove to be worthy citizens of this great land devoted to the service of the community of man Swami Abhedanandaji came to Patna in connection with the Vivekananda Anniversary in 1923,²⁶ and his learned speeches and discourses produced much enthusiasm among the people. Several devotes were initiated by him. The Ramkrishna Mission has continued to celebrate the Anniversaries of Sri Ramkrishna and Swami Vivekananda by organizing meeting addressed by celebrated person, sports, musical, sources, feeding of the Daridra Narayans and by taking out processions on the streets in the afternoon with banners and festoon illustrating the fundamental unity of all faith.^bSwami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramkrishna a member of the board of trustees of the Ramkrishna Math and second president of the order came from Banaras and visited the Ramkrishna Mission on the 15th Feb. 1928. His spiritual discourses proved to be a source of profound inspiration for many in Bihar for want of accommodation in the Ashrama the president was loaded in the house of the Palits and he stayed here for three days. Many received mediation from him.

In 1929 the Ramkrishna Mission at Patna published a book entitled “Vivekananda, the National Builder, in which the various religions, social and cultural problems of India have been reviewed in the light of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Some night schools were started in and outside Patna during this year and Kali Puja were celebrated for the first time in the Ashrama. Swami Akhandananda the third president and Swami Vijananda, the fourth president of the order occasionally visited Patna. The later had old connection with Patna. His original name was HariPrasanna Chatterjee in his student days and his passed the B.A. examinations from the Patna College in 1887. Before he was elevated as president of the mission he came to Patna in Oct. 1935 and these who came into contact with him were highly inspired by him talks. He initiated many citizens of Patna as his disciples. The Katihar centre of the Ram Krishna Mission was organized in



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1926 and formally affiliated in 1931. The Ranchi centre was started at the foot of the Merabadi Hill in 1930. The Patna centre was shifted to its new and permanent site on Dec. 8, 1930, after the Ashrama had purchased a mango orchard measuring seven bighas of Lands for Rs. 14,000 from its owner. Abdul Gauur, major party of his amount was denoted by the widow of late Bhuvanewar Dutt of the Moradupur cottage on the Govind Mitra Road. The next two years were marked by some beneficent activities of the Ashram such as the opening of a Homeopathic charitable dispensary in memory of Late Bhuvanewar Dutt, an upper primary school in memory of Swami Abdhutanandaji and a public library with a free reading room on a modest sale in memory of Swami Turiyanandaji. For paucity of funds publications of the Ashram's organ the meaning star ceased after its issue of December 1932. But on important cultural contribution of the Ashram was publication in 1933 of a book entitled India in the making. The learned work forcefully pleaded for the religions of man by exposing the defects of sectarians and demonstration faiths and advocated a social order free forms narrowness festered by caste or class interests. Notably, the Ramkrishn Mission at Patna has continued to be a great source of inspiration to many in Bihar. Through its various religious and cultural activities I can say on the basis of personnel experience that a New Year back Swami Vitasokanandaji was universal adored for his profound learning sense of dedication to duty, genuine religious ideals and practices and his liberal outlook.

For development of religions consciousness among the people and to enable them to understand the true ideals of Indian culture and thought the Ashram organized varied activities like regular scriptural classes, lectures and discourses at Patna Centre of the ashram and the other places outside this city. The objects were also served by organizing special classes and lectures on the occasions of the birthday celebrations of all the monastic disciples of Sri Ramkrishna and also of the Holy mother and of the other great prophets. While perverting over the Ramkrishna birth day ceremony of Sri Ramkrishna in 1949 Sri M. S. Aney the Governor of Bihar and a pious man with profound religious faith, significantly observed I have not doubt that the local Ashram has played a very useful part during the period of 27 years of its existence here and it has now a moral and just claim on the public of Patna to ask for help to carry on its activities with a greater vigour and on a wider scale than before. To deal with minor surgical and first aid cases section was opened in the Ashram on Nov. 6, 1949 by Sri Suglal Chaudhri the then minister of public health in Bihar. Sri M. S. Anney President of

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the Red Cross Society kindly granted Rs. 3550/- for this purpose and this was helped by some public subscription particularly that from col. S K. Bose. One significant event is the history of the Patna centre was the construction of a temple and hall through the generosity of the late Dr. T.B. Banerjee, a physician of outstanding calibre with a genuine charitable disposition who contributed Rs. 10,000 for this purpose. It meant the fulfillments of a long cherished aspiration. Shri Swami Birajanandaji the Sixth president of the order opened and dedicated the temple and the prayer hall on the March 29, 1950. The Ramanama Sanskritana is conducted by the Ashram on Ekadasi days, when large number of people congregated here. To provide additional accommodations for these two wings were added to the prayer hall with funds contributed by the late Dr. T.N. Banerjee. In this year two rooms were provided to extend accommodations in the upper primary school.

One remarkable achievement of the Ramkrishna Mission at Patna in the years 1957-58 was improvement in the condition of the students. Home which had been struggling for its existence for several years (since 1927) to give it a permanent statue and help poor and meritorious student Sri Lawly Sen, a prominent citizen of Patna of charitable disposition made an endowment in memory of his deceased life Shrimati Pratima Sen, Sri Lawly Sen also donated Rs. 12,000 for purchasing through the state government a plot of land on the southern side of the Main Ashram area as a site for the student Home. The foundation of the two storied building of the student's Home was laid by Shrimat Swami Vishudhanandaji the then Vice-President of the order on August 20, 1959. Construction of the building was completed in 1959, and towards the total cost for its rising more than a lakh of rupees the central and state governments contributed Rs. 45,000 and Rs. 40,000 respectively. In a highly impressive ceremony observed with due solemnity Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first president of India who was a highly inspired man formally opened the building of the students Home on October 6, 1959. After recalling his earlier association with the Ramkrishna Mission and describing the various services which the Mission and describing the various services which the Mission had been rendering "In Building man and in building character" Dr. Rajendra Prasad expressed the hope that the Ramkrishna Mission would "become the centre to radiate that moral climate by which youths could from character to become better men to serve the country and the nation." This is indeed a great message, the significance of which should be slightly understand by our youths to day when they are confronted with stupendous challenged of different kinds and when the moral values seem to have

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been shockingly damaged. One highly inspired event in the history of the Ramkrishna Mission has the celebration of Swami Vivekananda Birth day centenary. The celebration started on January 17, 1963 and was concluded on January 8, 1964. It was inaugurated by Sri B. P. Sinha the then chief justice of India and Sri A. S. Ayyanger the then Governor of Bihar presided over its concluding session

The Ramkrishna Mission has rendered immense humanitaries to distress and miseries of the people by conducting extensive relief operation during the period of natural calamities. Its record of such works includes famine relief in the Santal Paragans in 1897. Flood relief in the Bhagalpur district in 189 and at Patna in 1923 Plague relief at Bhagalpur in 1904 and 1905, relief from the savages of the earthquakes of 1933 in Patna, Muzaffarpur, Chhapra, Darbhanga, Champran, Bhagalpur and Monghyr the East Bengal Refugee Relief work at Bihta and Mokamah from May to December 1950, flood relief work at Magalgarh, Darbhanga, District in 1953. Flood relief work in North Bihar in 1954 and relief work during the devertating flood of 1961. The Ramkrishna Mission Tuberculosis somatorium at Dungri situated at a distance of about Nine miles from the Ranchi Railway station is providing proper medical help to the ailing patients to their great relief. Situated in an area of 282 acres of land it is equipped with upto date scientific apparatus and arrangements for the treatment of chest diseases.⁴²It was started 1951 with 32 beds only. Subsequently is the number of beds rose of 200 and these are looked after by several medical officer, the chief of them being trained in males and the U. S. A. For maintenance of this Sanatorium a generous man made a gift of property providing an average income of Rs. 40,000 a year.

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