

than the means of intellectual interpretation, it has kept its hold upon the people and is indeed the criterion of life in India. By a strange irony, Buddha, the founder of an essentially atheistic creed, has been deified by his followers, and the worship of "Nats," or evil spirits, is widely practiced among them. The same deterioration or inclination to return to the fold of Hinduism is perceptible among the Jains and the Sikhs, which are sects representing early reform movements; even the Mohammedans of the country have to a large extent remained Hindus in many respects. Hinduism is an eminently plastic religion. It remains a unity in spite of its division into mighty sects and constitutes the one common tie of the majority of the people in India. Within it lies dormant a power which, if utilized and properly directed, could be an important factor in bringing about the cooperative spirit so much needed in India.

Without arrogating to oneself Mr. Wells's gift of prophecy, but merely considering India's history, one may venture to say that since India not only has no nationalism but even lacks any sentiment or knowledge of it, she is incapable of forcing her own issue. Those Indians who consider the lack of nationalistic spirit in India as a matter of higher attainment, the ideal of a greater civilization, would do well to apply their minds to a more logical conclusion of the needs of our time.

India needs national solidarity. Nationalism should be the watchword of every Indian who desires better government than that of a British *raj*, and not until they have realized this can they hope to be their own masters.

There is a certain class in India who now hope that on the strength of participation in the war by their fighting classes England may after the conclusion of the war grant them a wider representation in the government than that initiated a few years ago by Lord Minto, a former governor general. Should such expectations be realized, however, it will have little or no effect on the general situation in India.

THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

BY CHINMOY.

IF India can be said to be a congeries of nations, it is to-day also the confluence of many faiths. Besides giving to the world some of the greatest religious thinkers, Hinduism was never intolerant of other religious creeds; and when the fire-worshippers of Persia

found their native land too hot for the practice of their own tenets, they found a ready home in western India. With its vast resources in human ore in the shape of an enormous aboriginal population, and an equally submerged people of the backward castes among the Hindus, the great Indian continent has always supplied very good material for Moslem and Christian propaganda work.

With the Moslems, before the advent of the British rule, religious propaganda was part of their program of political administration of Hindustan; and compulsion played a great part in matters of conversion. With the planting of the British flag in India, however, an era of perfect tolerance in matters of faith has been ushered into existence. And now every religious creed is free to propagate its particular ideas among the Indian people, so long as its proselyting fervor does not overstep the limits assigned by law. Only the other day, a Moslem paper in Northern India was bound down under the Press Law on a security of two thousand rupees, for having cast an aspersion on Christianity. And on its showing that the attack was provoked by a vernacular Christian missionary organ, which had cast a slur upon Mohammedanism, this offending journal also was bound down on exactly similar terms. But occurrences like this are very few and far between.

Hinduism proper, with its cast-iron inflexibility, does not allow any expansion of its fold from outside; so that the Hindu is born and cannot be made by conversion. This essential passivity of Hinduism, which is still the faith of more than two-thirds of the entire Indian population, is responsible for the absence of any missionary enterprise among the Hindus. With the spread of education and culture, again, Indian society is reforming itself on modern lines. And the sharp distinctions which the rigidity of the Hindu caste rules instituted, have begun to be felt as most galling and iniquitous at the present day by those who, though born in the despised classes of Hindu society, are now claiming some of the primary rights of humanity which are denied to them by the higher castes. A combination of these and other favorable circumstances has made the way easy for the Christian and the Mohammedan missionary in India.

According to the census of India held in 1911 the total population of India is 315,156,396, of which 217.3 millions or more than two-third are Hindus. This represents an increase of 5 per cent in ten years.

The term Hindu, it is useful to remember, is remarkable in its comprehensiveness: "It shelters within its portals monotheists, poly-

theists and pantheists, worshipers of the great gods Siva and Vishnu or of their female counterparts, as well as worshipers of the divine mothers, of the spirits of trees, rocks and streams and of the tutelary village deities; persons who propitiate their deity by all manner of bloody sacrifices, and persons who will not only kill no living creature but who must not even use the word 'cut'; those whose ritual consists mainly of prayers and hymns, and those who indulge in unspeakable orgies in the name of religion; and a host of more or less unorthodox sectaries many of whom deny the supremacy of the Brahmans, or at least have non-Brahmanical religious leaders."

Buddhism, although it had its rise in India and is still the faith of more than half of Asia, claims in India proper only one-third of a million people; but there are ten millions in Burma and their number is increasing there.

The followers of Mohammed number 66.7 millions, or more than one-fifth of the total population of India, which is an increase of 6.7 per cent in ten years.

Indian Christians number barely $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions, or 12 per thousand of the total population. This figure stands for 100 per cent increase in thirty years.

Having regard to the general percentage of increase of population in the last decade, which is 6.4, the progress made by Christianity is the most remarkable, while Hindus have not been able to keep pace with the general rate of increase of population. This general rate of increase, again, is less than half of that of the Teutonic races of Europe, but exceeds considerably that of the Latin races. In India, the birth-rate is far higher than in any European country; but the heavy mortality, specially among infants, checks the increase in population.

Let us now have a glance at the causes that principally determine the increase or decrease of each particular denomination. We find that in the case of the Hindus the system of early marriage and the infant mortality consequent upon it, enforced and life-long widowhood of women even of child-bearing age, restrictions in marriage owing to hypergamy, are responsible for a certain proportion of the set-off to the general rate of increase. Added to these, the stringent rules of caste and the unfavorable plight of the lower classes are not a little responsible for the defections from the ranks of the Hindus.

In the case of Mohammedans, we find that if their religion is essentially democratic and non-exclusive in character its social system is as much favorable to a growth of population. And al-

though there may be a small but continuous accession of converts, the main reason of the increase of Mohammedans is that they are generally more prolific, their social customs are more favorable to a high birth-rate, they have fewer marriage restrictions, early marriage is uncommon and widows remarry freely among them.

In the case of Christians, the remarkable rise in numbers must be set down mainly to the efforts of those devoted bands of missionaries who have done their best to let in light where there was darkness before, and are always the true help-mates of the down-trodden people of the lower classes in their hour of misery and oppression. There is another very significant circumstance which contributes to the gradual increase of Christians in India. It is the fact that Hindus regard Christianity with no ill-will, indeed instances are not wanting where they have displayed positive sympathy with Christianity. The hatred with which Mohammedanism is regarded by orthodox Hindus is the outcome of the aggressive nature of that religion and centuries of cruel campaigns which were led by Moslem rulers against Hinduism. Christianity, besides being a religion of peace and harmony, is the religion of the sovereign of India—which in itself constitutes a claim for respect. Again the friendliness of attitude which the Christian missionaries have, from the earliest days of British occupation of India, adopted toward Indians—whether in the matter of philanthropy, educational and moral progress, and improvement of the vernaculars, has removed much of the obloquy which might otherwise attach to an exotic faith.

But whatever the attitude of the people toward Christianity, it is very seldom that converts are actuated by a genuine religious prompting to embrace Christianity, conversion being almost exclusively confined among the lower castes without much education. A Catholic missionary, quoted in the census report, states that sometimes "individuals come over from religious motives, but these cases are rare, . . . as a general rule the religious motives are out of the question; they want protection against Zemindari and police extortion, and assistance in the endless litigation forced on them by Zemindars." That the desire for material comforts is the main propelling cause of conversion to Christianity is apparent also from the fact that when famine prevails people become converts in large numbers.

The embracing of Christianity by the lower caste people is not necessarily followed by a complete disruption of all their social ties, or even of their many crude social rites. And the Roman Catholic

missionaries admittedly do not interfere with caste distinctions. They object only to those caste customs which are distinctly idolatrous. Conversion in most cases means an accession of respectability, and is accompanied by facilities for education, assistance in getting employment, and the like.

The increase in the number of converts has been most remarkable in the Panjab and in Madras. In the former province, Hinduism has given 40,000 converts to Mohammedanism during the last decade, and nearly three times that number to Christianity. It is interesting to note that in Upper India the Methodist Mission of America has had by far the largest measure of success, for it has 104,000 converts. The Lord Bishop of Calcutta, who is also the Metropolitan of India, has been amazed at this unexpected movement among the masses in Madras and the Panjab. He is reported to have said that hundreds of thousands could be admitted as converts if the church had the necessary workers.

RABINDRA NATH TAGORE.

THE POET LAUREATE OF INDIA.

BY KSHITISH CHANDRA NEOGY.

THIS is the felicitous appellation which was conferred on Rabindra Nath Tagore by Lord Hardinge two years ago after an appreciative address by the Rev. C. F. Andrews at the Vice-regal lodge. Great as has been the renown of Rabindra Nath as the foremost poet of modern India, it has to be confessed that the rapidity with which the fame of the newest star in the poetic firmament has been traveling over civilized earth, has surpassed the sanguine expectations even of his admiring countrymen. Indeed, the sudden acclamation in the West of Rabindra Nath Tagore as a world-poet of the first magnitude, has made a few critical spirits in India shake their heads in doubt and weigh and scrutinize the meed of praise that has been bestowed on this illustrious son of Ind. Whether the halo that surrounds him to-day will endure is more than one can say. And these Indian critics are inspired with the fear that what appears to be natural splendor radiating from a lustrous gem of the Indian deep, may, after the excitement of the passing hour has spent itself, prove to be but the illusive effect of some handy optical stage device, impressed into service at the impatient call of the