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# SĀDHANĀ

RABINDRANATH TAGORE



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SĀDHANĀ



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# SĀDHANĀ

THE REALISATION OF LIFE

BY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

AUTHOR OF 'GITANJALI'

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1914

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*First Edition, October 1913*  
*Reprinted November and December 1913*  
*January 1914*

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TO  
ERNEST RHYS



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

PERHAPS it is well for me to explain that the subject-matter of the papers published in this book has not been philosophically treated, nor has it been approached from the scholar's point of view. The writer has been brought up in a family where texts of the Upanishads are used in daily worship ; and he has had before him the example of his father, who lived his long life in the closest communion with God, while not neglecting his duties to the world, or allowing his keen interest in all human affairs to suffer any abatement. So in these papers, it may be hoped, western readers will have an opportunity of coming into touch with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of to-day.

All the great utterances of man have to be judged not by the letter but by the spirit—the spirit which unfolds itself with the growth of life in history. We get to know the real meaning of Christianity by

observing its living aspect at the present moment—however different that may be, even in important respects, from the Christianity of earlier periods.

For western scholars the great religious scriptures of India seem to possess merely a retrospective and archæological interest ; but to us they are of living importance, and we cannot help thinking that they lose their significance when exhibited in labelled cases—mummied specimens of human thought and aspiration, preserved for all time in the wrappings of erudition.

The meaning of the living words that come out of the experiences of great hearts can never be exhausted by any one system of logical interpretation. They have to be endlessly explained by the commentaries of individual lives, and they gain an added mystery in each new revelation. To me the verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth ; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation, my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality.

I should add perhaps that these papers embody in a connected form, suited to this publication, ideas

which have been culled from several of the Bengali discourses which I am in the habit of giving to my students in my school at Bolpur in Bengal ; and I have used here and there translations of passages from these done by my friends, Babu Satish Chandra Roy and Babu Ajit Kumar Chakravarti. The last paper of this series, "Realisation in Action," has been translated from my Bengali discourse on "Karma-yoga" by my nephew, Babu Surendra Nath Tagore.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Professor James H. Woods, of Harvard University, for his generous appreciation which encouraged me to complete this series of papers and read most of them before the Harvard University. And I offer my thanks to Mr. Ernest Rhys for his kindness in helping me with suggestions and revisions, and in going through the proofs.

A word may be added about the pronouncing of *Sādhanā* : the accent falls decisively on the first *ā*, which has the broad sound of the letter.



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I

THE RELATION OF THE  
INDIVIDUAL TO THE UNIVERSE

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