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OF
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VOLUME II



SISTER NIVEDITA GIRLS' SCHOOL

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Second Volume of the present edition of the Complete Works of Sister Nivedita mainly includes books, lectures and articles which shed light on Indian life, thought and culture. These writings give a wide survey of Indian people as they lived and thought, to the world which only knew of the horror and ugliness of Indian life as depicted by the foreign missionaries.

Nivedita spoke with authority on this subject for since the beginning of 1898 when she first landed in India till the Autumn of 1911, when she breathed her last, she stayed with the people of this country in close intimacy. It is true that her stay in a northern section of Calcutta made her familiar with the Bengali way of life, and in the series of charming pictures of family life, festivals etc. she describes what she saw and heard around her. But her deep study of Indian literature combined with her keen intellect and deep comprehensive mind helped her to understand India as a whole also. As in a lecture she said:—" . . . the life that I was thus allowed to share was that of the common Indian world. Bengali in its details. it was in its main features that of the masses of the people the country over." (*Complete Works*, VOL. II, P. 460).

In this Volume are included the following works :

The Web of Indian Life.

An Indian Study of Love And Death.

Studies from an Eastern Home.

The book that created the greatest stir in the world after its publication was *The Web of Indian Life*. In a letter to Miss Josephine Mac Leod from Norway (19.7.1901)

Nivedita writes that R. C. Dutt first prompted her to write this book. "Now I am at work on the book which Mr. Dutt commissioned and have just written on caste." The different chapters of the book were written during her stay in America, England, Norway and India between 1901 and 1903. At the back of the title page prepared by herself she wrote: "I finished writing this book Sept. 7th 1903 at 4 p.m. Annotated-Evening Oct. 13th. Posted Oct. 14th 1903." It was first published in 1904 by William Heinemann, London, and since then has gone into six impressions. It was reviewed by the leading newspapers and periodicals of the East as well as the West. To name a few of them: *Christian, Outlook, The Church Times, The Detroit Free Press, The Daily Graphic, Queen, The Indian Spectator, The Yorkshire Post, Pall Mall Gazette, St. James's Gazette, The Westminster Gazette, The Sun, The Sunday Mail, The Madras Mail,* and *Birmingham Post.*

Some of these reviewed the book favourably and some criticised it bitterly. To quote some instances.

Queen (August 24, 1904).

It is seldom that a Western-born author succeeds as absolutely as Miss Noble in her "The Web of Indian Life" in penetrating the Eastern mind and heart. . . . If love is the first qualification towards understanding the character of a people, Miss Noble was thoroughly qualified, for she writes of the East as a lover might write of his beloved ; each intimacy, each familiarity adds to the mystery and fascination exercised by this wonderful alluring East over her spirit. . . . It would be well if those who gather their impressions of our Indian Empire solely from missionaries of preconceived ideas and little sympathy, or from the abstruse works of scholars, or the chatter of the Anglo-Indians, were to revise the impressions they gathered from these sources by the light of this poetically written and scholarly work."

The Detroit Free Press (July 24, 1904).

“The Western world, speaking generally, knows the Indian woman only through the testimony of missionaries. For this reason a book published in London a few days ago, “The Web Of Indian Life” by the Sister Nivedita comes as a revelation ; it is attracting immediate attention ; it is being regarded as an epoch-making book. For in it the inner life of the Indian woman, the life below the surface, the ideals, the mainsprings of action, the aspirations, hopes and all the mysticism of the East, and the reality of the Unseen, are set forth, as has never been done before, by a Western woman imbued with a spirit of reverent sympathy.”

The Athenæum (1904).

“If Sister Nivedita is an unsafe guide in social questions, she is still less to be trusted when she undertakes to deal with matters of Indian History or literature, and it is much to be regretted that no scholarly friend was at hand to prevent the publication of such chapters as those on “The Indian Sagas” and “The Synthesis of Indian Thought”. It would be as easy as it would be distasteful to multiply instances of misunderstanding and misstatement”.

The Church Times (August 19, 1904).

“In “The Web of Indian Life” the authoress lets herself go, so to say, with entire abandon, to give us a *couleur de rose* picture of Indian life and thought. . . . It is all pure undiluted optimism. . . . It is the suppression of the other side of the picture that we deprecate in the interest, not only of the truth, but of the cause of Indian women themselves, whose lot will never be improved if this sort of sentimental idealism about them is allowed to obtain credence. Potentially, we are fully prepared to believe the Indian woman is what she is here described as being.

Actually, the ideas, the sanctions, the customs of the men of India must undergo radical transformation before the ideal can be realised. And only Christianity can effect that transformation”.

In a letter to Miss Mac Leod (30.6.1904) Nivedita makes her purpose in writing this book clear. “You know that my book is out. I trust that you will really feel that it was written by Swami, I suppose it is. Early day yet to say whether or not it is a success. Anyway I hope, in Swami’s name it will (a) end the Zenana Missionaries (b) clear up misconceptions about India, (c) teach India to think truly about herself; this is the most important of the ends I hope for; (d) to do a little to help earnest souls, to put themselves in the current of Swamiji’s writings and teachings”.

She was aware of the fact that the Christian missionaries would react to her book unfavourably. And she reported to Miss Mac Leod (4.2.1905): “We are beginning to have counter-blasts from the Missionaries now—to the book. Sometimes they are very funny, and always they express more than the poor author suspects. It is for *India* to understand my book, and make the world admit that it is not half the truth”.

As Rabindranath Tagore’s Introduction to the 1918 Edition of the book shows in what light India understood and accepted the book it is reproduced as an Appendix at the end of the book.

An Indian Study of Love and Death was first published on August 16, 1905, in pocket size, most probably by Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd., London. The reprint of the same by Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London, in 1908, is slightly enlarged by the addition of *Some Hindu Rites for the Honoured Dead*.

This beautiful small book written in poetic prose and interspersed by free translations of Sanskrit prayers, hymns and litanies keeps up the grave tone of the subject matter.

It shows clearly that in her attempt to understand the life and thought of the people of her love, Nivedita did not leave out the study of the finer emotion of love or the abstruse idea of death and beyond. The dedication is dated August 16, 1905, and the inscription reads:—

Because of Sorrow N.

At the beginning of the first writing there is another dedicatory note which says *For a Little Sister*. In a letter to Miss Mac Leod dated 13.6.1905 Nivedita refers to her sending a message of love and sympathy to "Mdme. W." This lady was Madame Wallerstein who lived in France and was a friend of Miss Mac Leod. The dedication to "A Little Sister" may be inferred as referring to her.

The three articles on *The Beloved*, *Death* and *Play* found amongst her papers immediately after her death were first published by the *Prabuddha Bharata* and the *Modern Review*, in 1911. As they are in thought and sentiment akin to the subject-matter of the book, they have been added here.

Studies from an Indian Home was first published by Longmans, Green & Co. London in 1913. A prefatory Memoir on Nivedita by S. K. Ratcliffe, a close friend of hers and editor of *The Statesman* during her stay in India, makes us infer that he must have edited the work. The civic and religious pageants of Indian life greatly attracted Nivedita's mind and she planned to write on them. With this idea in view she started contributing essays to *The Statesman* in 1905, under the general heading "Indian Studies". On 16th July, 1906, she wrote to Mrs. Sara Bull: "I am planning for a book of *Indian Studies*. These would just be essays of *The Statesman* type". Unfortunately during her life-time the book was not brought out.

The book is not known to have gone into a second edition and has long since been out of print. It has been reprinted here under the same title but the following three pieces have been omitted.

1. *The Northern Pilgrimage* because it has been included in the book *Kedarnath and Badrinarayan* already printed in the First Volume of the Complete Works.

2. *The Land of Waterways* because it is an extract from her book "Glimpses of Famine and Flood in East Bengal in 1906" which will be published in a subsequent volume.

3. *King Parikshit and the Frog Maiden* which will be published with similar mythological stories in a subsequent volume.

Besides these books seventeen lectures and articles of Sister Nivedita have been included in this Volume. The reports on three other lectures are given in Appendix I. As their sources are mentioned in the Chronological Table no mention is made here. Nivedita's lectures are of special value because before she started writing about India she used her oratorical powers both in America and England to remove misconceptions about the Indian way of life and to secure help for her work. She began giving lectures as early as 1899. On November 16, she wrote to Miss MacLeod from Chicago: "I go out at noon today to my first appointed piece of work. I am to spend the afternoon in an Elementary School, telling the children about India. One is going, now, like a man blind-folded, guiding himself through a labyrinth by a silken thread. I cannot tell where the usefulness of things may come in, my business is only to do them as they come and this is the first".

From various sources we gather that in America and London she gave about thirty-five lectures between 1899-1901 and 1908 on India, Indian literature and different aspects of Indian life. A list of which is given in Appendix II at the end of the book. Attempts have been made to collect as many of the lectures as possible, even through friends abroad, but without much success. Those few that have been published are collected from contemporary Indian newspapers and periodicals. From these we come to know with what sympathy, understanding and sincerity

she attempted to portray the most important aspects of Indian life, especially at a time when the narrow outlook and prejudicial propaganda of foreign missionaries had spoilt the fair name of India everywhere.

Nivedita had to face much opposition and criticism even in meetings. The descriptions of her experiences in some of the meetings as given to Miss MacLeod will be quite interesting. "On Sunday I came on a new group of charming people. They were fresh from attacks on India and were full of questions". (LETTER DATED 4.12.1899 FROM CHICAGO). "I had a most exhausting evening yesterday. One of the ladies I met was like twenty storms in a teacup". (LETTER DATED 10.12.1899 FROM CHICAGO). "Life brings experiences. After being indulged and petted like a spoilt child at Ann Arbor, I suddenly found myself yesterday afternoon in a nest of thorns, and learnt the psychological process that makes Swami fight and attack!" (LETTER DATED 16.1.1900 FROM DETROIT). "We had a tremendous challenge from missionaries in Edinburgh and if you are well enough to read anything again, you will enjoy reading the report S. Sara had made of that. They gave a *terrible* account of India and her ways and I had only time to fling defiance at one of them and leave. . . . Now the Club is trying to restrain me from right to reply. They must be much afraid. . . . However some deliberate grappling with missionary opinion I shall do before I stir, in one form or another". (LETTER DATED 7.3.1901 FROM WIMBLEDON).

A few words may be added about some of the lectures included in this Volume. The four reports on the *Vedanta Missionary Work in Wimbledon* were written by Nivedita (then Margaret E. Noble) in 1897 and sent to *The Brahman*. *Influence of the Spiritual Thoughts of India in England*, was Nivedita's first public lecture in India, given on March 11, 1898, fourteen days before her initiation, and receiving of the name 'Nivedita'. The meeting was held at the Star Theatre in Calcutta under the

presidentship of Swami Vivekananda. The actual birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was observed on February 22, in 1898. In *The Birthday Festival of Sri Ramakrishna* Nivedita describes the public celebration which was held on February 27, 1898, at Bally on the land owned by Purna Chandra Daw. Nivedita's two lectures of *Kali Worship* at the Albert Hall on February 13, 1899, and at the Kali-ghat Temple on May 28, of the same year, stirred the blood of the Westernized Hindus of those days. The first meeting was practically broken up by a free fight between the supporters and criticsers of Kali-worship.

At the Hindu Ladies Social Club in Bombay, Nivedita was scheduled to speak on "The Virtues of Indian Womanhood". But after meeting the members of the audience she said: "Indian womanhood is a subject not chosen by myself but was fixed upon for me by my friends. However, at the sight of the large assemblage of Hindu ladies, I feel it would be presumption on my part to speak to you on the subject because Indian womanhood is better understood and practised by each and everyone of you than by me. Consequently, I would rather answer questions put to me or discourse on any other subject chosen by the audience". On being requested to speak on what induced her to change her religion and how she accomplished it, she gave an account which forms the text of the lecture titled *How and why I Adopted the Hindu Religion*.

On Nivedita's return to India in 1902 in the company of Romesh Chandra Dutt, the people of Madras gave them a reception at the Mahajan Sabha on February 4. Her reply to the address is titled *India Has No Apology to Make*.

In lectures and writings the personal equation of the lecturer or the writer is always a thing to be reckoned with. This is conspicuously the case with Nivedita's work. Her whole attitude towards India and the nature of service she offered to her adopted Motherland can be summed up in her own words thus: "What a little thing it would

be to any of us to die for one whom we really loved! Perhaps indeed we do not really love, to our deepest, till we have learnt that to be called to do so would be supreme beatitude. It is such love as this that makes it possible to live and do great service. It is such a *falling-in-love* that India demands of English men and women who go to her to work." (*Complete Works*, VOL. II, P. 450).

Throughout her life, in thought, word and deed, Nivedita acted up to this sentiment of "falling-in-love" with India, and cherished it till she laid down her life in India's service. This the people of the country deeply understood and therefore put up a memorial at Darjeeling where she was cremated, which proclaims to this day—

"HERE REPOSES SISTER NIVEDITA WHO GAVE HER ALL TO INDIA."

In conclusion, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have helped us in bringing out the present edition.

Our best thanks are due to the Belur Math, the Advaita Ashrama, the National Library and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad for permission granted in the readiest and most cordial fashion to make use of certain newspapers, periodicals, blocks etc. in their possession.

PRAVRAJIKĀ ĀTMĀPRĀNA

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

of the

WRITINGS AND SPEECHES OF SISTER NIVEDITA INCLUDED IN THIS VOLUME

Date

- 1897 September 15 ; first report of *Vedanta Teaching in Wimbledon*.
October 1 ; second report of the same.
November 1 ; third report of the same.
December 16 ; fourth report of the same ; all the four are published under the general title of *Vedanta Missionary Work* in *The Brahmavadin* ; the writer's name is given as Margaret E. Noble.
- 1898 March 11 ; lecture on *Influence of the Spiritual Thoughts of India in England* delivered at the Star Theatre, Calcutta, as reported in *The Brahmavadin* of April 1.
The Birthday Festival of Sri Ramakrishna written for *The Brahmavadin* of March 16, under the general title of *Vedanta Missionary Work, Calcutta* ; the writer's name is given as 'An English Lady'.
October ; *The Sociological Aspect of the Vedanta Philosophy* written for *The Brahmavadin*.
Amarnath written for the *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- 1899 February 13 ; lecture on *Kali, and Her Worship* delivered at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, as reported in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of April and June.
May 28 ; lecture on *Kali Worship* delivered at the Kali Temple, Kali-ghat, Calcutta, as reported in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of October and November, 1932.
- 1900 October 22 ; lecture on *New Interpretations of Life in India* delivered at the Sesame Club, London ; reproduced from the *Prabuddha Bharata* of June 1902 ; reprinted in the same in October 1927 under the title *Seeing India With Other Eyes*.

Date
1901

The Setting of the Warp written at Wimbledon.

May 10 ; *Of the Hindu Woman as Wife* written at Wimbledon.

The Indian Sagas written at Wimbledon and Norway. July ; *Noblesse Oblige : A Study of Indian Caste* written in Norway ; first published in *The Brahmacharin* in 1902. *The Wheel of Birth and Death* written in Norway and at Wimbledon ; all these are included in the book *The Web of Indian Life*.

November 30 ; lecture on *The Education of Hindu Women and their Ideals* delivered under the auspices of the Foreign Press Association, at the rooms of the Society of Arts in John Street, Adelphi, London ; as reported in *The Brahmavadin* of November.

1902

The Eastern Mother written in Calcutta ; included in the book *The Web of Indian Life*.

February 4 ; lecture delivered in reply to a public reception at the Mahajan Sabha, Madras, as reported in *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* of February 8, and titled here *India Has No Apology to Make*.

October 2 ; lecture delivered at the Hindu Ladies Social Club, Bombay, as reported in *The Hindu* of December 15, and titled here *How and Why I Adopted the Hindu Religion*.

October 6 ; lecture on *Indian Womanhood* delivered at the Gaiety Theatre, Bombay, as reported in the *Bombay Gazette* of October 7.

Indian Women as they Strike an English Woman written for *The Brahmacharin* ; reproduced from *The Bengalee* of October 15.

December 23 ; *An Open Letter to Hindu Women* written ; reproduced from *The Hindu* of December 24.

1903

February ; *The Synthesis of Indian Thought* written in Calcutta.

June ; *The Immediate Problems of the Oriental Woman* written at Darjeeling.

The Gospel of the Blessed One written at Wimbledon and Darjeeling.

Date

- A Litany of Love* written at Darjeeling.
 July; *The Place of Women in The National Life* written at Darjeeling; first published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of October 1903.
An Indian Pilgrimage written at Darjeeling.
 August; *The Oriental Experience* and *On the Loom of Time* written at Darjeeling.
 September; *Islam in India* written at Darjeeling.
The Story of the Great God Shiva or Mahadeva written at Darjeeling.
Love Strong As Death written in Calcutta. All these are included in the book *The Web of Indian Life*.
- 1904 March 20; lecture on *Islam in Asia* delivered under the auspices of the Calcutta Madrassa, at the Corinthian Theatre, Calcutta; reproduced from *The Englishman* of March 21.
- 1905 February 14; *Saraswati Puja* written for *The Statesman*.
 February 16; *Our Zenana Terrace* written for *The Statesman*.
- 1906 September; A memoir on *Gopaler-Ma* written for the *Prabuddha Bharata*; included in the *Studies from an Eastern Home* with the addition of an introductory paragraph.
- 1908 January 5; lecture on *Family Life and Nationality in India* delivered before the London Positivist Society at Essex Hall, London, as reported in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of February & March.
- 1909 October; Occasional Notes written for the *Prabuddha Bharata*; reproduced as reprinted in the same in June 1929, with the title *Synthesis of Ideals*.
- 1910 April; *The Indian Ash or Tree of Healing* published in *The Modern Review*.
 October; *The Dread Seven* published in *The Modern Review*; both included in the *Studies from as Eastern Home*.

Date

- 1911 May; *The Festival of Ras* published in *The Modern Review*; included in the *Studies from an Eastern Home*. *Western Etiquette in Relation to Eastern Needs* reproduced from the *Prabuddha Bharata* of July, August & September; reprinted in the same in May 1928, with the title *Etiquette—Eastern and Western*.
November; *Play* published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*.
December; *Death* and *The Beloved* published in *The Modern Review*.
- 1912 December; *Hinduism and the Modern Transition* published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- 1930 February; *Beauties of Islam* published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

THE WEB OF INDIAN LIFE

Wah Guruki Fateh !
Victory to the Guru !

*In sending this book out into the world,
I desire to record my thanks to Mr.
Romesch Chunder Dutt for his constant
interest and encouragement, and also to
Prof. Patrick Geddes, who, by teaching
me to understand a little of Europe,
indirectly gave me a method by which
to read my Indian experiences.*

, **NIVEDITA**
Of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda



SISTER NIVEDITA

THE WEB OF INDIAN LIFE

I

THE SETTING OF THE WARP

A HOUSE of my own, in which to eat, sleep, and conduct a girls' school, and full welcome accorded at any hour of day or night that I might choose to invade the privacy of a group of women friends hard by: these were the conditions under which I made my entrance into Hindu life in the city of Calcutta. I came when the great autumn feast of the Mother was past; I was there at the ending of the winter when plague broke out in our midst, and the streets at night were thronged with seething multitudes, who sang strange litanies and went half mad with religious excitement; I remained through the terrific heat, when activity became a burden, and only one's Hindu friends understood how to live; I left my home for a time when the tropical rains had begun, and in the adjoining roads the cab-horses were up to their girths in water hour after hour.

What a beautiful old world it was in which I spent those months! It moved slowly, to a different rhythm from anything that one had known. It was a world in

which a great thought or intense emotion was held as the true achievement, distinguishing the day as no deed could. It was a world in which men in loin-cloths, seated on door-sills in dusty lanes, said things about Shakespeare and Shelley that some of us would go far to hear. It was full of gravity, simplicity, and the solid and enduring reality of great character and will.

From all round the neighbourhood at sunset would come the sound of gongs and bells in the family-chapel of each house, announcing Evensong. At that same hour might the carpenter be seen censing his tools, or the schoolboy, perhaps, his inkstand and pen, as if thanking these humble creatures of the day's service; and women on their way to worship would stop wherever a glimpse of the Ganges was possible, or before a bo-tree or Tulsi-plant, to salute it, joining their hands and bowing the head. More and more, as the spirit of Hindu culture became the music of life, did this hour and that of sunrise grow to be the events of my day. One learns in India to believe in what Maeterlinck calls "the great active silence," and in such moments consciousness, descending like a plummet into the deeps of personality, and leaving even thought behind, seems to come upon the unmeasured and immeasurable. The centre of gravity is shifted. The seen reveals itself as what India declares it, merely the wreckage of the Unseen, cast up on the shores of Time and Space. Nothing that happens within the activity of daylight can offer a counter-attraction to this experience. But then, as we must not forget, the Indian day is pitched in its key. Tasks are few, and are to be performed with dignity and earnestness. Everything has its aureole of associations. Eating and bathing—with us chiefly selfish operations—are here great sacramental acts, guarded at all points by social honour and the passion of purity. From sunrise to sunset the life of the nation moves on, and the hum of labour and the clink of tools rise up, as in some vast monastery, accompanied by the chanting of prayers and

the atmosphere of recollectedness. The change itself from daylight to darkness is incredibly swift. A few fleecy clouds gather on the horizon and pass from white, may be, to orange and even crimson. Then the sun descends, and at once we are alone with the deep purple and the tremulous stars of the Indian night. Far away in the North, hour after hour, outlines go on cutting themselves clearer against the green and opal sky, and long low cliffs grow slowly dim with shadows on the sea. The North has Evening: the South, Night.

Tropical thunderstorms are common through April and May at the day's end, and the terrible convulsion of Nature that then rages for an hour or two gives a simple parallel to many instances of violent contrast and the logical extreme in Indian art and history. This is a land where men will naturally spend the utmost that is in them. And yet side by side with the scarlet and gold of the loom, how inimitably delicate is the blending of tints in the tapestry! It is so with Indian life. The most delicate *nuance* and remorseless heroism exist side by side, and are equally recognised and welcomed, as in the case of a child I knew—a child whose great grandmother had perhaps committed suttee—who ran to his mother with the cry, "Mother! Mother! save me from Auntie! She is beating me with her eyes!"

The foundation-stone of our knowledge of a people must be an understanding of their region. For social structure depends primarily on labour, and labour is necessarily determined by place. Thus we reach the secret of thought and ideals. As an example of this we have only to see how the Northman, with his eyes upon the sun, carries into Christianity the great cycle of fixed feasts that belongs to Midsummer's Day and Yule, approximately steady in the solar year; while the child of the South, to whom the lunar sequence is everything, contributes Easter and Whitsuntide. The same distinction holds in the history of Science, where savants are agreed that in early

astronomy the sun elements were first worked out in Chaldea and the moon in India. To this day the boys and girls at school in Calcutta know vastly more about the moon and her phases than their English teachers, whose energies in this kind have been chiefly spent in noting the changes in shadow-length about an upright stick during the course of day. Evidently Education—that process which is not merely the activity of the reading and writing mill, but all the preparedness that life brings us for all the functions that life demands of us—Education is vitally determined by circumstances of place.

The woman pausing in the dying light to salute the river brings us to another such instance. There is nothing occult in the passion of Hindus for the Ganges. Sheer delight in physical coolness, the joy of the eyes, and the gratitude of the husbandman made independent of rain, are sufficient basis. But when we add to this the power of personification common to *naïves* peoples, and the peculiarly Hindu genius of idealism, the whole gamut of associations is accounted for. Indeed, it would be difficult to live long beside the Ganges and not fall under the spell of her personality. Yellow, leonine, imperious, there is in her something of the caprice, of the almost treachery, of beautiful women who have swayed the wills of the world. Semiramis, Cleopatra, Mary Stuart, are far from being the Hindu ideal, but the power of them all is in that great mother whom India worships. For to the simple, the Ganges is completely mother. Does she not give life and food? To the pious she is the bestower of purity, and as each bather steps into her flood, he stoops tenderly to place a little of the water on his head, craving pardon with words of salutation for the touch of his foot. To the philosopher she is the current of his single life, sweeping irresistibly onward to the universal. To the travelled she tells of Benares and the mountain snows, and legends of Shiva the Great God, and Uma Haimavati, mother of all womanhood. Or she brings memories of the Indian Christ and

His youth among the shepherds in the forests of Brindavana on her tributary Jamuna. And to the student of history she is the continuity of Aryan thought and civilisation through the ages, giving unity and meaning to the lives of races and centuries as she passes through them, carrying the message of the past ever into the future, a word of immense promise, an assurance of unassailable certainty. But with all this and beyond it all, the Ganges, to her lovers, is a person. To us, who have fallen so far away from the Greek mode of seeing, this is difficult perhaps to understand. But living in a Calcutta lane the powers of the imagination revive; the moon-setting becomes again Selene riding on the horse with the veiled feet; Phœbus Apollo rising out of one angle of a pediment is a convincing picture of the morning sky; and the day comes when one surprises oneself in the act of talking with earth and water as conscious living beings. One is ready now to understand the Hindu expression of love for river and home. It is a love with which the day's life throbs. "Without praying, no eating! Without bathing, no praying!" is the short strict rule to which every woman at least conforms; hence the morning bath in the river is the first great event of the day. It is still dark when little companies of women of rank begin to leave their houses on foot for the bathing-stairs. These are the proud and high-bred on whom "the sun has never looked." Too sensitive to tolerate the glance of passers-by, and too faithful to forego the sanctifying immersion, they cut the knot of both difficulties at once in this way. Every moment of the ablution has its own invocation, and the return journey is made, carrying a brass vessel full of the sacred water which will be used all day to sprinkle the place in which any eats or prays.

Their arrival at home finds already waiting those baskets of fruit and flowers which are to be used in worship; for one of the chief acts of Hindu devotion consists in burying the feet of the adored in flowers. The feet, from their contact with all the dusty and painful ways of

the world, have come to be lowliest and most despised of all parts of the body, while the head is so sacred that only a superior may touch it. To take the dust of the feet of the saints or of an image, therefore, and put it upon one's head, is emblematic of all reverence and sense of unworthiness, and eager love will often address itself to the "lotus-feet" of the beloved. Amongst my own friends, health forbade the bathing before dawn, and poverty did not allow of the visit to the river in closed Palkee every day. But half-past nine or ten always found the younger women busy bringing incense and flowers and Ganges water for the mother's "Puja," as it is called; and then, while she performed the daily ceremonies, they proceeded to make ready the fruits and sweets which were afterwards to be blessed and distributed.

It is interesting to see the difference between a temple and a church. The former may seem absurdly small, for theoretically it is simply a covered shrine which contains one or other of certain images or symbols, before which appropriate offerings are made and prescribed rituals performed by duly appointed priests. The table is only properly called an altar in temples of the Mother; in other cases it would be more correct perhaps to speak of the throne, since fruit and flowers are the only sacrifices permitted. So it is clear that the Eastern temple corresponds to that part of the Christian church which is known technically as the sanctuary. The worshipper is merely incidental here; he sits or kneels on the steps, and pays the priest to perform for him some special office; or he reads and contemplates the image in a spirit of devotion. The church, on the other hand, includes shrine and congregation, and has more affinity to the Mohammedan mosque, which is simply a church with the nave unroofed.

Temples are not very popular in Bengal, every house being supposed to have its chapel or oratory, for which the ladies care, unless the family be rich enough to maintain a chaplain. Even the services of a Brahmin in the house or

neighbourhood, however, will not dispense them from the offering of elaborate personal Puja before the morning meal can be thought of. I can never forget a reproach levelled at myself on this point.

It was my first morning in a Hindu home. I had arrived at dawn, tired and dusty after days of railway travel, and had lain down on a mat spread on the floor, to sleep. Towards eight o'clock, the thought of my tea-basket brightened my despair, and I turned eagerly to open and secure its refreshment. Suddenly a little boy stood before me like a young avenging angel. His great brown eyes were full of pain and surprise, such as only a child's face ever adequately shows. He did not know much English and spoke deliberately, laying terrible emphasis on each word, "Have—you—said—your—prayers?" he said.

It is a little strange, during the rains, to have to take an umbrella to go upstairs, but without my two courtyards in the middle of the house the hot weather would have been insupportable in Calcutta. These make the Eastern home, by day, a cave of all winds that blow, and at night a tent roofed in by the starry universe itself. No one who has not experienced it can know quite what it means to return in the evening and open the door upon the sky and stars that one is leaving without. The Indian night is in itself something never to be forgotten. Vast and deep and black it seems, lighted by large soft stars that throb and gleam with an unknown brilliance, while the stillness is broken only by some night-beggar who chants the name of God in the distant streets, or by the long-drawn howl of the jackals crying the quarters of the night across the open plain. Even the moon-light itself, with the palm-trees whispering and throwing ink-black shadows, is not more beautiful than these solemn "dark nights," when the blindness and hush of things brood over the soul with their mighty motherhood.

Just as the housewives of some European university town in the Middle Ages would feel responsible for the

welfare of the "poor scholar," so to the whole of Hindu society, which has assimilated in its own way the functions of the university, the religious student is a common burden. Where he is, there is the university, and he must be supported by the nearest householders. For this reason, I, being regarded as a student of their religion, my good neighbours were unfailing of kindness in the matter of household supplies. Perhaps the most striking instance of this lay in the fact that when I was to have a guest I had only to say so, and friends in the vicinity would send in a meal ready-cooked, or the necessary bedding, without my even knowing the names of those to whom I owed the bounty. And with all this, there was no question as to the course of my study or the conclusions I was reaching—no criticism, either, of its form. They simply accorded to a European woman the care they were accustomed to bestow on the ashen-clad ascetic, because they understood that some kind of disinterested research was her object also, and they knew so well that the management of affairs was no part of the function of the scholar. What do we not read of the depth of a culture that is translated and re-applied with such ease as this? And what do we not learn of the intellectual freedom and development of the people?

Few things, even in Indian life, are so interesting as this matter of the social significance of the beggar. That distaste for property which we see in such lives as Kant's and Spinoza's resolves itself readily in the Indian climate into actual destitution. Shelter and clothing are hardly necessities there: a handful of rice and a few herbs such as can be obtained at any door are alone indispensable. But everything conspires to throw upon such as beg the duty of high thinking and the exchange of ideas with their supporters. Hence the beggar makes himself known by standing in the courtyard and singing some hymn or prayer. He comes always, that is to say, in the Name of God. There is a whole literature of these beggars' songs, quaint

and simple, full of what we in Europe call the Celtic spirit. In his lowest aspect, therefore, the Indian beggar is the conserver of the folk-poetry of his country. Where his individuality is strong, however, he is much more. To the woman who serves him he is then the religious teacher, talking with her of subjects on which she can rarely converse, and in this way carrying the highest culture far and wide.

It is said that the deep familiarity of Punjabi women with Hindu philosophy is the result of the strong recrudescence of the characteristic national charity under Ranjit Singh. When we think of the memories that would linger behind such a visitor—the man whose whole face spoke knowledge, standing at the door one noon and asking alms—we come upon a trace of the feeling that paints the Great God as a beggar.

It is droll to find that the whole city is parcelled out into wards, each of which is visited regularly on a given day. My days were Wednesday and Sunday, and going out one of these mornings about nine, I was fortunate enough to catch the whole procession coming up the lane. Men and women they were, elderly for the most part, but hale and well, with their long staffs in the right hand, and metal or wooden bowls in the left—amongst the most cheerful human beings I ever saw. The fact of this regular division of the city puts the affair at once on the basis of a poor-rate (of which we have none in India), and shows that in ways appropriate to themselves the Hindu people are as able organisers as any. It may be that in Western cities the work-house is a necessary solution, but certainly this Indian distribution of want over the wealthier community, with its joining of the act of giving to the natural sentiment, seems a good deal less mechanical and more humane than ours. It is very amusing sometimes to see how tenacious people are of their own superstitions. I have seen an English woman made really unhappy because an Indian beggar would not accept a loaf she bought and

handed to him, while he would have been very thankful for the money that it cost. The donor and her friends were in despair at what they regarded as utterly impracticable. Yet to the onlooker it seemed that the obstinacy was on their own side. In England we are warned that alcohol is a constant temptation to the poor and ill-fed ; it is better, therefore, to give food than money. In India, on the other hand, there is no risk whatever on this score ; for not one man in a hundred ever tasted liquor, and at the same time a Hindu beggar at least may not eat bread made with yeast, or baked by any but Hindus of his own or better caste. Now the offering made in this case was of yeast-made bread, baked by a Mohammedan, and handled by a Christian ! To the poor man it was evident that the lady was willing to give ; why should she load her gift with impossible conditions ? And for my own part I could but echo, why ?

Among the quaintest customs are those of the night-beggars. These are Mohammedans, but all fields are their pasture. They carry a bowl and a lamp as their insignia of office. It is common amongst these gentlemen to fix on a sum at sun-set that they deem sufficient for their modest wants, and to vow that they shall know no rest till this is gathered. As the hours go on, therefore, they call aloud the balance that remains ; and persons coming late home or watching by the sick are often glad to pay the trifle and gain quiet. Yet there is something weird and solemn in waking from sleep to hear the name of Allah cried beneath the stars in a kind of Perpetual Adoration.

Like a strong tide beating through the months, rise and fall the twelve or thirteen great religious festivals, or Pujas. Chief of them all, in Bengal, is the autumn Durga-Puja, or Festival of the Cosmic Energy. A later month is devoted to the thought of all that is gentle and tender in the Motherhood of Nature. Again it is the Indian Minerva, Saraswati, who claims undivided attention. Those who

have lived in Lancashire will remember how the aspect of streets and cottages is changed towards Simnel Sunday. Every window is decorated with cakes, and every cake bears a spirited picture in comfits of some coaching or other local scene. And everywhere, with us at Christmas-time, the shops are gay with holly and mistletoe, so that there is no mistaking the time of year. Similarly, in Calcutta, as each Puja comes round, characteristic articles appear in the bazaars. At one time it is hand-screens made of beetles' wings and peacocks' feathers and every shop and every pedlar seems to carry these beautiful fans. Through September and October, as the Durga-Puja approaches, the streets resound with carols to the Mother. But the most charming of all is the Farewell Procession with the Image.

For no image may be kept more than the prescribed number of days, usually three. Up to the evening before the feast it is not sacred at all, and any one may touch it. Then, however, a Brahmin, who has fasted all day, meditates before the figure, and, as it is said, "magnetises" it. The texts he chants are claimed to be aids to the concentration of his own mind, and to have no other function. When the image has been consecrated it becomes a sacred object, but even then it is not actually worshipped. Its position is that of a stained-glass window, or an altar-piece, in an Anglican church. It is a suggestion offered to devout thought and feeling. On the step before it stands a brass pitcher full of water, and the mental effort of the worshipper is directed upon this water; for even so, it is said, does the formless Divine fill the Universe. It would seem that the Hindu mind is very conscious of the possibility that the image may thwart its own intention and become an idol; for not only is this precaution taken in the act of adoration, but it is directed that at the end of the Puja it shall be conveyed away and thrown bodily into the river! On the third evening, therefore, towards sunset, the procession forms itself, little contingents joining it from every

house in the village as it passes the door, each headed by one or two men bearing the figure of the god or goddess, and followed by the children of the family and others. It is a long and winding march to the Ganges' side. Arrived there, the crown is carefully removed, to be kept a year for good luck ; and then, stepping down into the stream, the bearers heave up their load and throw it as far as they can. We watch the black hair bobbing up and down in the current for a while, and then, often amid the tears of the children, turn back to the house from which a radiant guest has departed. There is quietness now where for three days have been worship and feasting. But the tired women are glad to rest from the constant cooking, and even the babies are quickly cheered, for it will be but a month or two till some new festival shall bring to them fresh stores of memory.

The great decorum of Oriental life is evident when one has to come or go through a Hindu city in the evening. Doorways and windows are flanked with broad stone benches, and here, after the evening meal, sit numbers of men in earnest conversation. But any woman is safe in such a street. Not even the freedom of a word or look will be offered. As Lakshman, in the great Epic, recognised among the jewels of Sita only her anklets, so honour demands of every man that he look no higher than the feet of the passing woman ; and the behest is so faithfully observed that on the rare occasions when an Indian woman may need to undergo the ordeal I have known her own brother to let her go unrecognised. For one need not say that women do now and then slip out on foot at nightfall, accompanied by a maid bearing a lamp, to enjoy an hour's gossip in some neighbour's house. We are all familiar with the powers of criticism of quiet women who never strayed into the great world, or saw more than the view from their own thresholds would reveal. What is true in this respect of the Western cottage is true also of the Eastern zenana. Woman's penetration is every-

where the same. Her good breeding makes everywhere the same demands. On one occasion I had the misfortune to introduce into my Indian home a European whose behaviour caused me the deepest mortification. But the ladies sat on the case when she had gone, and gravely discussed it in all its bearings. Finally it was gently dismissed with the remark, "she was not well-born." On another occasion I came in one evening at the moment of some distinguished friend's arrival. Such was the *empressement* of her reception, the warmth of the inquiries after her health and so on, that I felt myself to be certainly an intrusion. But a quiet hand detained me when I would have slipped away. "Wait," said the Mother, "till I have finished, for I haven't the least idea who she is!"

There were, however, certain practical difficulties in the life. It had taken some time, in the first place, to discover a house that could be let to an Englishwoman; and when this was done it was still a few weeks before a Hindu caste-woman could be found who would be my servant. She turned up at last, however, in the person of an old, old woman, who called me "Mother," and whom I, at half her age, had to address as "Daughter" or "Jhee." This aged servitor was capable enough of the wholesale floodings of the rooms which constituted house-cleaning, as well of producing boiling water at stated times for the table and the bath. For some reason or other she had determined in my case to perform these acts on condition that I never entered her kitchen or touched her fire or water-supply. Yet hot water was not immediately procurable. And the reason? We possessed no cooking-stove. I asked the price of this necessary article, and was told six farthings. Armed with which sum, sure enough, my trusty retainer brought home a tile, a lump of clay, and a few thin iron bars, and constructed from these, with the greatest skill, the stove we needed.

It took some days to set and harden, but at last the work was complete. Afternoon tea, prepared under my

own roof, was set triumphantly before me, and my ancient "daughter" squatted on the verandah facing me, with the hot kettle on the stone floor beside her, to see what strange thing might come to pass. I poured out a cup of tea and held out the pot to Jhee for more hot water. To my amazement she only gave a sort of grunt and disappeared into the inner courtyard. When she came back, a second later, she was dripping with cold water from head to foot. Before touching what I was about to drink she had considered a complete immersion necessary!

How happy were those days in the little lane! How unlike the terrible pictures of the Hindu routine which, together with that of the Pharisees in the New Testament, had embittered my English childhood! Constant ablutions, endless prostrations, unmeaning caste-restrictions, what a torture the dreary tale had been! And the reality was so different! My little study, with its modern pictures and few books, looked out on the cheeriest of neighbours. Here, a brown baby, with black lines under his eyes, and a gold chain round his waist, carried in triumph by his mother or nurse; there, some dignified woman, full of sweetness, as a glance would show, on her way to the bathing-ghat; again, a quiet man, with intellectual face and Oriental leisure; and, above it all, the tall palm-trees, with little brown villages and fresh-water tanks nestling at their feet, while all kinds of birds flew about fearlessly just outside my window, and threw their shadows across my paper as I wrote. The golden glow of one's first sensation suffuses it still. It was all like a birth into a new world.

One evening, as I prepared for supper, a sound of wailing broke the after-darkness quiet of the lane, and making my way in the direction of the cry, I entered the courtyard of some servants' huts, just opposite. On the floor of the yard a girl lay dying, and as we sat and watched her, she breathed her last. Hours went by, and while the men were away at the burning-ghat, making arrangements for the funeral-fire that would be over before dawn, I sat

with the weeping women, longing to comfort them, yet knowing not what to say. At last the violence of their grief had exhausted them, and even the mother of the dead girl lay back in my arms in a kind of stupor, dazed into forgetfulness for a while. Then, as is the way of sorrow, it all swept over her again, in a flood of despair. "Oh!" she cried, turning to me, "what shall I do? Where is my child now?"

I have always regarded that as the moment in which I found the key. Filled with a sudden pity, not so much for the bereaved woman as for those to whom the use of some particular language of the Infinite is a question of morality, I leaned forward. "Hush, mother!" I said, "your child is with the Great Mother. She is with Kali!" And then, for a moment, with memory stilled, we were enfolded together, Eastern and Western, in the unfathomed depths of consolation of the World-Heart.

II

THE EASTERN MOTHER

THESE eighteen centuries has Europe been dreaming of the idyll of the Oriental woman. For Asia is one, and the wondrous Maiden of all Christian art, from the Byzantines down to yesterday—who is she, of what is she aware, save that she is a simple Eastern mother? Of what fasts and vigils are we told in her case, that she should have known herself, or been known, as Queen of Saints? A rapt humility, as of one whose robe was always, indeed, her veil; a touch of deep silence, and that gracious richness of maternity which we can infer from the full and rounded sweetness of the Child who grew within her shadow—what more do we know of the Blessed Virgin than these things?

What more we may desire to know we can learn in the East itself—in India as well as anywhere. For in the period before Islam had defined itself, overflowing Chaldea, with the impulse, perhaps, of the pastoral life, become aggressive, to remake the desert—in the days when Palestine and Lebanon were cultivated lands, inhabited by peasants of the early type, not as yet made a burnt-offering on the altar of crusading fury, in the closing centuries of the pre-Christian era—the common life of Syria had a still wider identity with that of Hindus than it has today. The ceremonial washings of Pharisees and Sadducees, the constant purifying of the cup and platter, the habitual repetition of a single name or prayer, which some later phase of the Christianising consciousness has stigmatised as “vain”—these things were not *like*, they *were*, what we know today as Hinduism, being merely those threads of the one great web of Asiatic life that happened to touch the Mediterranean coast.

And in matters so fundamental as the relation of mother and child, religious teachers come only to enforce the message of the race. Is it not said by the Prophet himself that the man who kisses the feet of his mother finds himself in Paradise?

Yet how frail and slight and young is often the mother so tenderly adored! No Madonna of the Sistine Chapel can give that lofty purity of brow or delicate untouched virginity of look of any one of these Hindu mother-maidens, whose veil half covers, half reveals, as he rests on her left arm, her son!

The picture is too central to Indian life to have demanded literary idealising. Poetic and mythological presentments of the perfect wife there are in plenty: of motherhood, none. Only God is worshipped as such by men and children and by mothers themselves as the Holy Child! Here the half pathos of Western maternity, with its perpetual suggestion of the brood-hen whose fledglings are about to escape her, is gone, and an overwhelming sense of tenderness and union takes its place. To one's mother one always remains a baby. It would be unmanly to disguise the fact. And yet for her sake most of all it is needful to play the man, that she may have a support on which to lean in the hour of darkness and need. Even a wife has no power to bring division between a mother and her son, for the wife belongs almost more to her husband's mother than to himself. There can, therefore, be no jealousy at the entry of another woman into his life. Instead of this, it is she who urges the marriage; every offering is sent out in her name; and the procession that wends from the bridegroom's house to the bride's some few days before the wedding, bearing unguents and fragrant oils for the ceremonial bath, carries her loving invitation and goodwill to the new and longed-for daughter.

Even in Indian home life, then, full as this is of intensity of sweetness, there is no other tie to be compared in depth to that which binds together the mother and her

child. With the coming of her first-born, be it boy or girl, the young wife has been advanced, as it were, out of the novitiate. She has become a member of the authoritative circle. It is as if the whole world recognises that henceforth there will be one soul at least to whom her every act is holy, before whom she is entirely without fault, and enters into the conspiracy of maintaining her child's reverence.

For there are no circumstances sufficient in Eastern eyes to justify criticism of a mother by her child. Their horror of the fault of Gertrude is almost exaggerated, yet Hamlet's spell is invariably broken when he speaks of the fact. To him, her sin should be sacred, beyond reproach; he ought not to be able to think of it as other than his own.

The freedom and pleasantries of filial sentiment in the West are thus largely wanting in that of the East. A determined stampede of babies of from three to six may, indeed, take place day after day through the room where their mother is at prayer. There may even be an attempt at such an hour to take the city by assault, the children leaping vociferously on the back of that good mother, whose quiet of conscience depends, as they well know, on her perfect silence, so that she can punish them only by turning towards them the sweetest of smiles. "Why, mother," said her family priest to one who appealed to him regarding devotions interrupted thus, "the Lord knows that you are a mother, and He makes allowance for these things!" But though, in the Oriental home, the wickedness of five years old may find such vent as this, the off-hand *camaraderie* that learns later to dub its parents "mater" and "governor" suggests a state little short of savagery, and the daughter who permits herself to precede her father is held guilty of sacrilege. The tenderness of parents corresponds to this veneration of children, and we only learn the secret of feelings so deep-rooted when we find that every child is a nurseling for its first two years of life. Consciousness and even thought are thus awakened long before the closest

intimacy is broken, and a dependence that to us of the West is but a vague imagination, to the Eastern man or woman is a living memory.

How completely this may become an ingrained motive we see in the case of that Mogul Emperor who is remembered simply as "the Great." For Akbar had a foster-brother in the Rajput household whither his father Humayun had fled before his birth and where his first six years of life were passed. Akbar's mother dying, the Rajput Queen took the babe to nurse with her own son, and brought up the boys in this respect as brothers, though the guest was a Mussulman of Tamerlane's descent, and her own the proudest Hindu blood on earth. Events swept the children apart in boyhood, and, destiny fulfilling itself, he who came of a race of conquerors ascended the throne of Delhi, after many years, as Emperor of India. Then he found his Rajput subjects difficult indeed to subjugate. In them, the national idea renewed itself again and again, and insurrection followed insurrection. There was one name, moreover, in every list of rebels, and men wondered at the indulgence with which the august ruler passed it by so often. At last some one ventured to point it out, protesting that justice must surely be done now. "Justice, my friend!" said the lofty Akbar, turning on his counsellor, "there is an ocean of milk between him and me and that justice cannot cross!"

This long babyhood creates a tie that nothing can break. The thoughts and feelings of womanhood never become ridiculous in the eyes of the Indian man. It is no shame to him that his mother could not bear a separation; it is right and natural that he should be guided by this wish of hers. None but the hopelessly degraded ever reacts against woman's weakness in active cruelty. If one asks some hard worker in his old age to what he owes his habit of industry or his determined perseverance over detail, it is more than likely that his reply will take us back to his infancy, and the wishes that a young mother, long dead,

may have expressed for him. Or the man, in perplexity as to the course he should pursue, will go as naturally as a child, to test his question in the light of her feminine intuition. In all probability, she is utterly unlearned, but he knows well the directness of her mind, and judges rightly that wisdom lies in love and experience, having but little to do with letters.

Surely one of the sweetest happenings was that of a little boy of six who became in later life extremely distinguished. His mother, too shy to express the wish for instruction to her learned husband, confided in her son, and day after day he would toddle home from the village school, slate and pencil in hand, to go once more through his morning's lesson with her, and so, with mutual secrecy, she was taught to read by her own child! With almost all great men in India the love of their mothers has been a passion. It is told of a famous Bengali judge who died some twenty-five years ago—one whose judicial decisions were recorded and quoted, even by the Englishmen who heard them, as precedents in English law, it is told of this man, when on his deathbed, that his mother stumbled and hurt her foot on the threshold of his room one morning, as she came after bathing to visit him. Another moment, and, weak as he was, he had crept across the floor, and lay before her, kissing the wounded foot again and again, and bathing it in hot tears of self-reproach for the pain it suffered. Such stories are remembered and repeated in Indian society, not because they occasion surprise, but because they make the man's own name holy. The death scene with Aase would redeem Peer Gynt himself. None who is sound in this basic relationship of life can be altogether corrupt in the rest, nor can his decisions, however adverse, be completely repugnant to us. How curious are the disputes that agitate Christendom as to the sentiment one may fittingly indulge towards the mother of a beloved Son! Is her supreme position in His life not self-evident? What, then, could be more convincing of union

with Him than sweetness of feeling and words of endearment addressed to her? And so, with its wonderful simplicity, the great heart of the East sweeps aside our flimsy arguments and holds up to us the fact itself.

But it is not the great alone who worship motherhood in India. Never can I forget the long hours of one hot March day, when I sat by the bedside of a boy who was dying of plague. His home was of the humblest, a mud hut with a thatched roof. His family were Shudras, or working-folk. Even his father, it appeared, could not read or write. The boy was eleven or twelve years of age, an only child, and he was doomed. The visitor's sole real usefulness lay in taking precautions against the spread of the disease.

Amongst the veiled and silent women who came and went at the other side of the little court where the boy lay, was one who slipped noiselessly to his bedside whenever she could, and exposed herself to the infection with a recklessness born of ignorance. At last I attempted to reason with her, urging her, as gently as I could, to remain at some distance from the lad, and thus avoid the danger for herself and others.

She turned to obey without a word, but as she went the tears poured down her poor thin cheeks, and lifting the corner of her sari to wipe them away, she tried to stifle the sobs she could not altogether repress. At that moment the words reached me from the doorway. "She is his mother." What I did can be imagined. Suddenly I discovered that the boy must be fanned, and that there was a place behind his pillow out of the line of the air current. Here, with his head almost resting on her feet, his mother sat henceforth, crouched up, attending to her child through happy hours.

Often he would grow delirious, and forget her presence. Then he would toss his head from side to side, and his fever-lighted eyes stared blankly at me, while he uttered his one cry, "Ma! Ma! Mataji!—Mother! Mother!

honoured Mother!" To my Western ears it seemed a strange cry for a child of the slums! Sometimes, as memory returned, he would smile at me, mistaking me for her, and once he snatched at my hand and then carried his own to his lips. Sweet, unknown mother, forgive me these thefts of love, that rent the veil from a graciousness so perfect, an adoration so deep!

That day, alas, was their last together. All through the hours, the child had struggled to repeat the name of God. Late in the afternoon he stumbled on a hymn that was much sung at the time about the streets; but he could not say it, and it was my part to take up the words and stand repeating them beside him. A smile of relief passed over his face; he lay quiet for a moment. Then his breath came shorter and shorter, and as the sun set, with his mother's eyes upon his face, he died.

Of such stuff as this are the teeming millions of the Hindu people made. In moments of mortal agony, when Western lips would frame a prayer, perhaps half an oath, the groan that they utter is ever the cry of the child in its deepest need, "Oh, Mother!"

But it is easy to multiply instances. What we want is that epic of motherhood, of which each separate mother and her child are but a single line or stanza, that all-compelling imagination of the race, which must for ever be working itself out through the individual.

We talk glibly of Dante's "Vision of Hell." How many of us have looked into hell, or even seen it from afar off, that we should appreciate what it means to descend there? When the gloom of insanity falls upon the soul so that it turns to rend and destroy its dearest and best, when the blight of some dread imagination covers us with its shadow, is it lover, or child, or servant, who will still find in our maimed and maleficent presence his chiefest good? There is One indeed whom we cannot imagine as forsaking us. One whose will for us has been the law of righteousness, and yet for whose help we shall cry out ins-



ON THE TERRACE



THE HOLY MOTHER AND SISTER NIVEDITA

tinctively in the moment of the commission of a crime. And like the love of God in this respect is, to Hindu thinking, that of a mother. Transcending the wife's, which may fluctuate with the sweetness bestowed upon it, the mother's affection, by its very nature, grows deeper with deep need, and follows the beloved even into hell. A yearning love that can never refuse us ; a benediction that for ever abides with us ; a presence from which we cannot grow away ; a heart in which we are always safe ; sweetness unfathomed, bond unbreakable, holiness without a shadow—all these indeed, and more, is motherhood. Small wonder that the innermost longing of every Hindu is to find himself at home in the Universe, with all that comes thereby of joy or sorrow, even as a baby lying against its mother's heart! This is the dream that is called Nirvana, Freedom. It is the ceasing from those preferences that withhold us that is called Renunciation.

The very word "mother" is held to be sacred, and good men offer it to good women for their protection. There is no timely service that may not be rendered to one, however young or beautiful, by the passing stranger, if only he first address her thus. Even a father, looking at some small daughter, and struggling to express the mystery of futurity that he beholds in her, may address her as "little mother." And the mother of the nation, Uma Haimavati, is portrayed always as a child, thought of always as a daughter of the house. In motherhood alone does marriage become holy ; without it, the mere indulgence of affection has no right to be. This is the true secret of the longing for children. And to reach that height of worship in which the husband feels his wife to be his mother, is at once to crown and end all lower ties.

Who that has ever watched it can forget a Hindu woman's worship of the Holy Child? A small brass image of the Baby Krishna lies, or kneels at play, in a tiny cot, and through the hours of morning, after her bath and before her cooking, the woman, who may or may not

herself be wife and mother, sits offering to this image flowers and the water of the bath, fruits, sweets, and other things—her oblations interspersed with constant acts of meditation and silent prayer. She is striving to worship God as the Child Saviour, struggling to think of herself as the Mother of God. She is ready enough to give her reason, if we ask her. “Does my feeling for my children change according to what they do for me?” she questions in return: “Even so should one love God. Mothers love most those who need most. Even so should one love God.” The simple answer is worth a world of theology. Nor is it forgotten presently that the other children, made of flesh and blood, and answering to her call, are likewise His images. In every moment of feeding, or training, or play, of serving or using or enjoying, she may make her dealing with these an act of devotion. It was her object, during the hours of worship, to come face to face with the Universal Self. Has she done this, or has she brooded over the ideal sentiment till she has made of herself the perfect mother?

By her child, again, her intention can never be doubted. She may turn on him now a smile and then a face of sorrow, now a word of praise and again an indignant reproach. But always, equally, she remains the mother. The heart of hearts of her deed is unfailing love. She knows well, too, that nothing her babies do can mean anything else. The stunny and the petulant, the obedient and the wilful, are only seeking so many different ways to express a self-same dependence. To each she accords the welcome of his own nature. In such a reconciliation of opposites, in such a discovery of unity in variety, lies the whole effort and trend of Eastern religion.

For what thought is it that speaks supremely to India in the great word “Mother”? Is it not the vision of a love that never seeks to possess, that is, content simply to *be*—a giving that could not wish return: a radiance that we do not even dream of grasping, but in which we are con-

tent to bask, letting the eternal sunshine play around and through us?

And yet, and yet, was there ever an ideal of such strength as this, that was not firm-based on some form of discipline? What, then, is the price that is paid by Hindu women for a worship so precious? The price is the absolute inviolability of marriage. The worship is, at bottom, the worship of steadfastness and purity. If it were conceivable to the Hindu son that his mother could cease for one moment to be faithful to his father—whatever the provocation, the coldness, or even cruelty, to which she might be subjected—at that moment his idealism of her would become a living pain. A widow remarried is no better in Hindu eyes than a woman of no character, and this is the case even where the marriage was only betrothal, and the young fiancée has become what we know as a child-widow.

This inviolability of the marriage tie has nothing whatever to do with attraction and mutual love. Once a wife, always a wife, even though the bond be shared with others, or remain always only a name. That other men should be only as shadows to her, that her feet should be ready at all times to go forth on any path, even that of death, as the companion of her husband, these things constitute the purity of the wife in India. It is told of some wives with bated breath, how, on hearing of the approaching death of the beloved, they have turned, smiling, and gone to sleep, saying, "I must precede, not follow!" and from that sleep they never woke again.

But if we probe deep enough, what, after all, is purity? Where and when can we say it is, and how are we to determine that here and now it is not? What is there sacred in one man's monopoly? Or if it be of the mind alone, how can any physical test be rightly imposed?

Purity in every one of its forms is the central pursuit of Indian life. But even the passion of this search grows pale beside the remorseless truthfulness of Hindu logic. There is ultimately, admits India, no single thing called

purity: there is the great life of the impersonal, surging through the individual, and each virtue in its turn is but another name for this.

And so the idea of the sanctity of motherhood, based on the inviolability of marriage, finds due and logical completion in the still greater doctrine of the sacredness of religious celibacy. It is the towering ideal of the super-social life—"As Mount Meru to a fire-fly" compared to that of the householder—which gives sanction and relation to all social bonds. In proportion as the fact of manhood becomes priesthood, does it attain its full glory; and the mother, entering into the prison of a sweet dedication, that she may bestow upon her own child the mystery of breath, makes possible in his eyes, by the perfect stainlessness of her devotion, the thought of that other life whose head touches the stars.

III

OF THE HINDU WOMAN AS WIFE

OF the ideal woman of the religious orders the West today has very little notion. Teresa and Catherine are now but high-sounding names in history ; Beatrice, a true daughter of the Church, is beloved only of the poets ; and Joan of Arc, better understood, is rightly felt to be by birth the nun, but by genius the knight. Yet without some deeper sense of kindred with these it will be hard to understand a Hindu marriage, for the Indian bride comes to her husband much as the Western woman might enter a church. Their love is a devotion, to be offered in secret. They know well that they are the strongest influence, each in the other's life, but before the family there can be no assertion of the fact. Their first duty is to see that the claims of others are duly met, for the ideal is that a wife shall, if that be possible, love her husband's people as she never loved her own ; that the new parents shall be more to her than the old ; that she can bring no gift into their home so fair as a full and abundant daughterhood and a confirmation of their supreme place in their son's love. Both husband and wife must set their faces towards the welfare of the family. This, and not that they should love each the other before all created beings, is the primal intention of marriage. Yet for the woman supreme love also is a duty. Only to the man his mother must stand always first. In some sense, therefore, the relation is not mutual. And this is in full accordance with the national sentiment, which stigmatises affection that asks for equal return as "shopkeeping." When her husband is present or before honoured guests the young wife may not obtrude herself on the attention of her elders. She sits silent, with veil down, plying a fan or doing some little service for the new mother. But through the work of the day she is a trusted

helpmeet and the relation is often very sweet. Nothing is so easy to distinguish as the educational impress of the good mother-in-law. Dignity, with gaiety and freedom, is its great feature. The good breeding of the Hindu woman is so perfect that it is not noticed till one comes across the exception—some spoilt child, perhaps, who, as heiress or beauty has been too much indulged ; and her self-assertiveness and want of restraint, though the same behaviour might seem decorous enough in an English girl of her age, will serve as some measure for the real value of the common standard.

It is not merely in her quietness and modesty, however, that the daughter-in-law betrays good training. She has what remains with her throughout life—a *savoir faire* that nothing can disturb. I have never known this broken; and I saw an extraordinary instance of it when a friend, the shyest of orthodox women, consented to have her photograph taken for one who begged it with urgency. She stipulated, naturally, that it should be done by a woman. But this was found to be impossible.

“Then let it be an Englishman,” she said with a sigh, evidently shrinking painfully from the idea of a man, yet feeling that the greater the race-distance the less would be the impropriety. The morning came, and the Englishman arrived, but in the Indian gentlewoman who faced him there was no trace of self-consciousness or fear. A superb indifference carried her through the ordeal, and would have been a sufficient protection in some real difficulty.

All the sons of a Hindu household bring their wives home to their mother's care, and she, having married her own daughters into other women's families, takes these in their place. There is thus a constant bubbling of young life about the elderly woman, and her own position becomes a mixture of the mother-*suzeraine* and lady abbess. She is well aware of the gossip and laughter of the girls amongst themselves, though they become so demure at

her entrance. Whispering goes on in corners and merriment waxes high even in her presence, but she ignores it discreetly, and devotes her attention to persons of her own age. In the early summer mornings she smiles indulgently to find that one and another slipped away last night from her proper sleeping-place and betook herself to the roof, half for the coolness and half for the mysterious joys of girls' midnight gossip.

The relationship, however, is as far from familiarity as that of any kind and trusted prioress with her novices. The element of banter and freedom has another outlet, in the grandmother or whatever aged woman may take that place in the community house. Just as at home the little one had coaxed and appealed against the decisions of father or mother to the ever-ready grandam, so, now that she is a bride, she finds some old woman in her husband's home who has given up her cares into younger hands and is ready to forego all responsibility in the sweetness of becoming a *confidante*. One can imagine the rest. There must be many a difficulty, many a perplexity, in the new surroundings, but to them all old age can find some parallel. Looking back into her own memories, the grandmother tells of the questions that troubled her when she also was a bride, of the mistakes that she made, and the solutions that offered. Young and old take counsel together, and there is even the possibility that when a mother-in-law is unsympathetic, her own mother-in-law may intervene on behalf of a grandson's wife. Before the grandmother, therefore, there is none of that weight of reverence which can never be lightened in the mother's presence. Even the veil need not be dropped. The familiar "thou" takes the place of the stately "you," and there is no respect shown by frigid reserve.

Long ago, when a child's solemn betrothal often took place at seven or eight years of age, it was to gratify the old people's desire to have more children about them that the tiny maidens were brought into the house. It was on the grandmother's lap that the little ones were made

acquainted ; it was she and her husband who watched anxiously to see that they took to each other ; it was they again who petted and comforted the minute grand-daughter-in-law in her hours of home sickness. Marriage has grown later nowadays, in answer amongst other things to the pressure of an increasing poverty, and it does not happen so often that an old man is seen in the bazaar buying consoling gifts for the baby brides at home. But the same instinct still obtains, of making the new home a place of choice, when between her twelfth and fourteenth year—the girl's age at her first and second marriages—the young couple visit alternately in each other's families.

The Hindu theory is that a long vista of common memory adds sweetness even to the marriage tie, and whether we think this true or not, we have all known happy marriages on such a basis. But about the mutual sentiment of old and young there can be no theory, because there is no possibility of doubt. In all countries in the world it is recognised as amongst the happiest things in life. The reminiscence of Arjuna, one of the heroes of the great War-Epic, gives us the Indian explanation of this fact. "I climbed on his knee," he says, speaking of the aged knight Bhishma, head of his house, "all hot and dusty from my play, and flinging my arms about his neck, I called him 'Father.'" "Nay, my child," he replied, as he held me to his breast, "not thy *father* but *thy father's father!*" With each generation, that is to say, the tie has deepened and intensified.

In all cases where one or two hundred persons live under the same roof, a complex etiquette grows up, by which gradations of rank and deference are rigidly defined. Under the Hindu system this fund of observation has so accumulated that it amounts now to an accomplished culture—a completed criticism of life—rich in quaint and delightful suggestions for humanity everywhere. We may not know why a mother's relatives are apt to be dearer than a father's, but the statement will be approved as soon

as made. It has not occurred to us that our relations to an elder sister and a younger are not the same: in India there is a different word for each, for whole worlds of sweetness lie a world apart in one name and the other to the Hindu mind. Yet a cousin is constantly called brother or sister, the one relation being merged entirely in the other. The mere use of a language with this degree of definiteness implies an emotional training of extraordinary kind. It is, of course, best suited to natures of great richness of feeling. In these, sentiment is developed in proportion to expression, and the same attitude that makes every one in the village "Aunt" or "Uncle" to the children, produces an ultimate sense of kinship to the world. This is perhaps the commonest characteristic of Hindu men and women; shy at first, and passive to slight stimulus, as are all great forces, when once a relationship is established, they believe in it absolutely, blindly; are ready to go to the uttermost in its name; and forget entirely all distance of birth or difference of association. The weak point in the system appears when it has to deal with the harder, more arid class of natures. In these there is less inner response to the outer claim, expressions of difference, therefore, become less sincere and more abject. This is but a poor preparation for the open air of the modern world, where seniority, sanctity, and rank have all to be more or less ignored, and man stands face to face with man, free and equal so far as the innate manhood of each can carry. But such persons—though, naturally enough, they cluster round the powerful foreigner as moths about a lamp—are the failures of Hinduism, not its types, and they are very few. In a perfected education, Western ideals of equality and struggle would present themselves to these for their choosing, while far away in Europe, maybe, hearts born too sensitive for their more rudimentary emotional surroundings would be thankful in turn to find life made richer by Indian conceptions of human relationship.

In a community like that of the Hindu home—as in

all clan-systems—the characteristic virtue of every member must be a loyal recognition of common duties and dangers. And this is so. The wife who refused to share her husband's obligation to a widowed sister and her children was never known in India. Times of stress draw all parts of the vast group together; none of the blood can cry in vain for protection and support: even a "village-connection" (*i.e.*, one who is kin by association only) finds refuge in his hour of need. This great nexus of responsibility takes the place of workhouse, hospital, orphanage, and the rest. Here the lucky and the unlucky are brought up side by side. For to the ripe and mellow genius of the East it has been always clear that the defenceless and unfortunate require a *home*, not a barrack.

Into this complex destiny the bride enters finally, about her fourteenth year. Till now she has been a happy child, running about in freedom, feet shod and head bare, eating and drinking what she would. Till now, life has been full of indulgences—for her own parents, with the shadow of this early separation hanging over them, have seen no reason for a severity that must bring in its train an undying regret. From the moment of her betrothal, however, the girl's experience gradually changes. Just as the young nun, if she runs to find her thimble, will be sent back to bring it "more religiously," so about the newly married girl there grows a subtle atmosphere of recollectedness. The hair is parted, no longer childishly brushed back; and at the parting—showing just beyond the border of the veil with which her head now is always covered—appears a touch of vermilion, put there this morning as she dressed in token that she wished long life to her husband; much as one might, in taking up a fan, blow a kiss from its edge to some absent beloved one. The young wife's feet are unshod, and the gold wedding bracelet on the left wrist, and a few ornaments appropriate to her new dignity, supply the only hint of girlish vanity. But she has more jewels. These that she wears daily are of plain gold, more or less richly

worked, but on her wedding night she wore the *siti*, or three-lined coronal, set with gems, and arms and neck were gay with flashing stones. All these were her dower, given by her father to be her personal property, and not even her husband can touch them without her consent, though he will add to them occasionally at festive moments. She will wear them all now and again, on great occasions, but meanwhile the silver anklets and the golden necklet and a few bangles are enough for daily use. The girl knows her right to her own ornaments quite well, and the world will never hear how often the wife or the mother has hastened to give up the whole of this little resource in order that son or husband might weather a storm or receive an education. The one thing from which she will never part, however, unless widowhood lays its icy hand upon her life, is that ring of iron covered with gold and worn on the left wrist, which is the sign of the indissoluble bond of her marriage—her wedding-ring in fact.

With all the shyness of the religious novice comes the girl to her new home. Its very form, with its pillared courtyards, is that of a cloister. The constant dropping of the veil in the presence of a man, or before a senior, is the token of a real retirement, the sacrament of an actual seclusion, within which all the voices of the world lose distinctness and individuality, becoming but faint echoes of that which alone can call the soul and compel the eager feet. For India has no fear of too much worship. To her, all that exists is but a mighty curtain of appearances, tremulous now and again with breaths from the unseen that it conceals. At any point, a pinprick may pierce the great illusion, and the seeker become aware of the Infinite Reality beyond. And who so fitted to be the window of the Eternal Presence as that husband, who is at once most adored and loved of all created beings?

For there is a deep and general understanding of the fact that only in its own illumination, or its own feeling, can the soul find its highest individuation. To learn how

she can offer most becomes thus the aim of the young wife's striving. All her dreams are of the saints—women mighty in renunciation: Sita, whose love found its richest expression in the life-long farewell that made her husband the ideal king; Sati, who died rather than hear a word against Shiva, even from her own father; and Uma, realising that her love was given in vain, yet pursuing the more eagerly the chosen path. "Be like Savitri," was her father's blessing, as he bade her the bridal farewell, and Savitri—the Alcestis of Indian story—was that maiden who followed even Death till she won back her husband's life. Thus wifehood is thought great in proportion to its giving, not to its receiving. It would never occur to anyone, in writing fiction, or delineating actual character, to praise a woman's charms, as we praise Sarah Jennings', on the score that she retained her husband's affection during her whole life. A good man, says the Hindu, does not fail his wife, but, apart from this, coquetry and vanity, however pleasing in their form, could never dignify marriage. Life-long intimacy, to be beautiful, must boast deeper foundations—the wife's love, daring all and asking for no return; the mother's gentleness, that never changes; the friend's unswerving generosity. To the grave Oriental there is something indecorous in the discussion of the subject on any but this highest basis. And yet Persia, the France of Asia, must have been a perpetual influence towards romanticism in Hindu life. There is said to be no love poetry in the world so impassioned as the Persian. The famous verse:

Four eyes met. There were changes in two souls.
 And now I cannot remember whether he is a man and I a woman,
 Or he a woman and I a man. All I know is,
 There were two; Love came, and there is one . . .

we must believe completely representative of its spirit.* The Persian language, however, has only touched India through the Court of Delhi and through letters. It has

* This verse is actually old Bengali, of the sixteenth century.

been the possession of the Indo-Mohammedan, and of any man here and there who took the time and trouble to master its literature ; but the world of Hindu womanhood has remained probably as remote from it as though it belonged to another planet.

This is not true to the same extent of the romantic aspect of Christianity. The letters taught in English schools result very much in novel-reading, and an indigenous school of fiction has grown up, in the form of books and magazines, which is likely to modify popular ideas on this subject profoundly. Meanwhile, and for long to come, it remains true that according to Hindu notions, the eyes of bride and bridegroom are to be directed towards the welfare of the family and not of themselves, as the basis of society: it is the great springs of helpfulness and service, rather than those of mutual love and romantic happiness, that marriage is expected to unloose. Selfish wives and jealous husbands there must be, as among all peoples, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that here the absolute stainlessness of the wife is considered but preliminary to the further virtue demanded of her, the sustaining of the honour of her husband's house.

With this clue, it becomes easy to understand even what the West considers to be the anomalies of Hindu custom—the laws regarding rare cases of polygamy and adoption. For it is legally provided that if a woman remain childless her husband may after seven years, *and with her permission*, take a second wife, in the hope of gaining a son to succeed to his place. On the European basis of individualism, the permission would probably be impossible to obtain ; but with the Eastern sense of family obligation, this has not always been so, and I have myself met the son of such a marriage whose story was of peculiar interest. The elder wife had insisted that the time was come for the alternative to be tried, and had herself chosen the speaker's mother as the most beautiful girl she could find, for the husband. The marriage once over, she made every

effort to make it a success, and welcomed the new wife as a younger sister. Not only this, but when the son was born, such was her tenderness that he was twelve years old before he knew that she was not his mother. After her death, however, the younger wife became head of the house. Amongst the children to be fed, there were degrees of kindred, certain adopted orphans, two or three cousins, and himself. He was the eldest of all, and protested loudly that he came in last, and his cousins only second, for his mother's attentions. "Nay, my child," she answered, with a Hindu woman's sweetness and good sense, "if I desired to neglect thee, I could not do it. Is it not right, then, first to serve those who have no protection against me?"

The family life which such a story discloses is singularly noble, and it is not necessary to suppose that polygamy entailed such generousities oftener than we find monogamy do amongst ourselves. In any case, the same tide that brings in individualism has swept away this custom; and whereas it never was common it is now practically obsolete, except for princes and great nobles, and even amongst these classes there are signs of a radical change of custom.

"Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased: where they are dishonoured, religious acts become of no avail." "In whatever family the husband is contented with his wife, and the wife with her husband, in that house will good fortune assuredly abide." Few books offer such delights to their readers as that known as the "Laws of Manu." It is in no sense a collection of Acts of Parliament, for the one attitude throughout is that of the witness, and the hastiest perusal shows that it represents the growth of custom during ages, and is in no sense the work of a single hand. This is indeed its first and most striking beauty. As must be, of course, it often happens that the superstition of a habit is stated as gravely as its original intent, but rarely so as to obscure that first significance, or leave it difficult of restoration, and from cover to cover the book throbs with the passion for justice, and the appre-

ciation of fine shades of courtesy and taste, clothed in calm and judicial form. Especially of this type are those dicta on the rights of women, which are household words in Indian homes. We all know the reaction of the written word on life. Fact once formulated as scripture acquires new emphasis, a certain occult significance seems to attach to it, and the words, "it is written" become terrible enough to affright the devil himself. In this way the fear of a feminine curse has become a superstition in India, and I have seen even a low-class mob fall back at the command of a single woman who opposed them. For is it not written in the book of the law that "the house which is cursed by women perishes utterly, *as if destroyed by a sacrifice for the death of an enemy*"?—strange and graphic old phrase, pregnant of woe!

It is evident then that the laws of Manu are rather the unconscious expression of the spirit of the people than a declaration of the ideals towards which they strive. And for this reason they would afford the most reliable foundation for a healthy criticism of Indian custom. The conception of domestic happiness which they reveal is very complete, and no one who has seen the light on an Indian woman's face when it turns to her husband—as I have seen it in all parts of the country—can doubt that that conception is often realised in life. For if the characteristic emotion of the wife may be described as passionate reverence, that of the Hindu husband is certainly a measureless protection. If we may presume to analyse things so sacred as the great mutual trusts of life, it would seem that tenderness is the ruling note of the man's relation. Turning as he does to the memory of his own mother for the ideal perfection, there is again something of motherhood in what he brings to his wife. As a child might do, she cooks for him, and serves him, sitting before him as he eats to fan away the flies. As a disciple might, she prostrates herself before him, touching his feet with her head before receiving his blessing. It is not equality. No. But who talks of a

vulgar equality, asks the Hindu wife, when she may have instead the unspeakable blessedness of offering worship?

And on the man's side, how is this received? Entirely without personal vanity. The idea that adoration is the soul's opportunity has sunk deep into the life of the people. And the husband can recognise his wife's right to realise her highest through him without ever forgetting that it is her power to love, not his worthiness of love, that is being displayed. Indeed, is not life everywhere of one tint in this regard? Does anything stir our reverence like an affection that we feel beyond our merit?

It is often glibly said that this habit of being served spoils the Indian man and renders him careless of the comfort of others. I have never found this to be so. It is true that Indian men do not rise when a woman enters, and remain standing till she is seated. Nor do they hasten to open the door through which she is about to pass. But then it is not according to the etiquette of their country to do these things. With regard to the last point, indeed, their idea is that man should precede woman, maintaining the tradition of the path-breaker in the jungle; and one of the most touching incidents in the national epic of heroic love is Sita's request to go first along the forest paths, in order to sweep the thorns from her husband's path with the end of her veil. Needless to say, such a paradox is not permitted.

Thus, honour for the weaker is expressed in one way in England and quite otherwise in Hindustan, but the heart of conduct is the same in both countries. The courtesy of husbands to their wives is quite unfailing amongst Hindus. "Thou shalt not strike a woman, even with a flower," is the proverb. His wife's desire for companionship on a journey is the first claim on a man. And it is very touching to notice how, as years go on, he leans more and more to the habit of addressing her as "O thou, mother of our son!" and presenting her to new comers as "my children's mother," thus reflecting upon her his wor-

ship of motherhood. In early manhood he trusts to her advice to moderate the folly of his own rasher inclinations ; in old age he becomes, as everywhere in the world, more entirely the eldest of her bairns, and she more and more the real head and centre of the home. But always she remains as she was at the beginning, Lakshmi, her husband's Goddess of Fortune. In those first days he ate from no hand but his mother's or hers ; and one of her devotions was the fast, not broken till he had eaten and their talk was over, though her evening meal might in this way be delayed till long past midnight. Now, with the responsibilities of her household upon her, she feeds a whole multitude before she takes her own turn, and still the mutual pact of soul and soul has not been broken by the strife of "rights." These two have all these years been each other's refuge against the world. And not once have they felt so separated as to offer thanks, or speak, either of the other, by name, as if head and hand could be different individuals!

On that first bridal evening, the little bride was borne before her young husband, and they were told that the moment was auspicious for their first shy look. Then the old Vedic fire was called to witness their rites of union ; the girl flung the garland of flowers about the neck of her bridegroom, in exquisite symbolism of the bond that was to hold them ; and finally they took seven steps together, hand in hand, while the priest chanted appropriate texts for each stage of life. Such was their wedding. Since then, the rights of one have been the rights of the other ; joys, griefs, and duties have been held in common. Till now, if the bride of that distant night be entirely fortunate, the prayer of her childhood is fulfilled to her in the end of her days, that prayer that said :

From the arms of husband and sons,
When the Ganges is full of water,
May I pass to the feet of the Lord.

It has seemed to me in watching Hindu couples that

they were singular in the frequent attainment of a perfect intimacy. To what is this due? Is it the early association, or the fact that courtship comes after marriage, not before? Or is it the intense discipline of absolute reserve in the presence of others? The people themselves, where their attention is called to it, attribute the fact to child-marriage. I remember asking a friend of my own, a man of wealth and cultivation, orthodox and childless, "If you could put away personal considerations, and speak only from the outside, which do you think better in the abstract, our marriage-system or yours?"

He paused, and answered slowly, "I *think*—ours; for I cannot conceive that two people could grow into each other, as my wife and I have done, under any other."

Amongst the luxuries of the West I have sometimes thought that the deepening of the human tie was proportionate to simplicity of surroundings. A people to whom all complexity of externals is impossible must live by thought and feeling, or perish in the wilderness.

But whatever be the truth on this point, I have seen clearly and constantly that the master-note by which the Hindu woman's life can be understood in the West is that of the religious life. This is so, even with the wife. Cloistered and veiled, she devotes herself to one name, one thought, yet is never known to betray the fact, even as the nun steals away in secret to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. The ideal that she, like the nun, pursues, is that of a vision which merges the finite in the infinite, making strong to mock at separation, or even at change. And the point to be reached in practice is that where the whole world is made beautiful by the presence in it of the beloved, where the hungry are fed, and the needy relieved, out of a joyful recognition that they wear a common humanity with his; and where, above all, the sense of unrest and dissatisfaction is gone for ever, in the overflowing fulness of a love that asks no return except the power of more abundant loving.

IV

LOVE STRONG AS DEATH

As to the skies their centre is the Polar Star, so to the Eastern home the immovable honour of its womanhood. Here is the secret of that worship of the mother in which all union of the family and all loyalty to its chief are rooted. Woman in the West may thirst for the glory of love or the power of wealth: in Asia, her characteristic dreams are of perfectness and purity and faith. Woman in the West is a queen, exposed to the fierce light that beats upon a throne, putting to good or evil use the opportunities of sovereigns. Even queens in the East are too sacred to be looked upon by common eyes. They grow, like the tall white lilies of annunciation, set in the dimness beside some altar, screened from the very glances of the faithful at their prayers. The long silken tent through which such ladies move from palace-door to carriage-step is no vulgar prison, but a shrine. Bereft of its concealment, they would feel dishonoured, unprotected, as does the widowed gentlewoman, compelled to fight for bread, amongst the struggling crowd.

The very possibility of this blaze of publicity shed on delicate high-bred womanhood is repugnant to the Oriental mind. Remoteness and shadow, silence and obscurity, seem to it the true environment of holiness. And woman is held to be so much a sacred mystery that no man may even mention the name of another's wife to him. "Art they at home all well?" is the guarded form which the necessary inquiry for her health has to take. The outer courts of the house, where the men pass the day, the verandah and the stoop, where neighbours meet and chat, these are but public places. Here the intellectual life may be lived, and civic affairs transacted. But it is by the

cool grey threshold of the inner, the women's rooms, that the world of *home* is entered. And what an ocean of passionate loving surges through the quiet walls! Here the wife listens for the feet of the returning husband. Here the widow sobs for him who will return no more. Here scamper home the babies to find mother or aunt, grave elder sister, or twin-souled younger comrade. Here youth lays its plans and brings its perplexities, while old age looks on, with the quiet eyes of experience and of faith. Here passes, in short, all that mingling of smiles and tears, of laughter and prayer, of charm and weariness, that goes to make up the bitter-sweet sacrament of daily life. Only the art of mediæval Holland speaks a passion for home as ardent as this of the Orient, which as yet has found no voice!

Standing without in the noonday hush and looking into the semi-darkness of the women's apartments it is as if one caught a glimpse of some convent garden, full of rare and beautiful flowers. This is the women's hour. Their natural guardians are all absent, sleeping, or at business. Only in the outer court a drowsy servant guards the entrance. An air of innocent raillery, of delicate gaiety, pervades all. Friendly confidences and gentle fun are being exchanged. It is now that the long melancholy cry of the pedlar is heard, with his "Bracelets and bangles—who wants?" or "Good, good cloth!" or what not. And the wandering merchant may be called in, to add amusement to the moment by his baiting and bargaining.

Noonday passes, and slender widows in their long white veils fall to telling their beads, unnoticed and absorbed. Here and there a mother glides away to prepare for the children's coming home from school. The sound of laughter and talk dies gradually down, and afternoon wears on to evening, and the hour of prayer. So passes the day's drama, with all its blending of subdued tints, from dainty rose to ashes grey. Yet almost all the windows of the home look inwards, and four blank walls enclose the

whole. True indeed is it that silence and shadow are the ideals of this, the life of Eastern womanhood.

But the ideal itself, that it may be fixed and perpetuated, requires its culminating types and centres, its own duly consecrated priesthood, whose main task in life shall be to light its lamp and wait upon its altar. And such persons, in the world of Indian women, are the widows. Literature consists largely of man's praise of woman in relation to himself; yet it remains eternally true that this heroine of man—Helen, Desdemona, Beatrice—is but one modification or other of her who goes unseen, unhymned, unnamed, the woman of solitude, the woman who stands alone.

Neither Europe nor the modern spirit can claim the glory of having created the idea of woman as an individual. Queen Hatasu had it, in ancient Egypt. In still older Chaldea, Semiramis had it. In the sagas of the North, it is true, no woman goes unwed. But no sooner does Christianity—the Mission of the Asiatic Life—appear amongst us, than mediæval history blossoms into its Hildas, and Teresas, and Joans, its Saxon Margarets and its Spanish Katherines. It is the *self-protecting* woman only, who is born perhaps of the nineteenth century. Of old it was held by Frank and Saxon, by Latin and Teuton, that she who did not marry needed the protection of the Church. And in Asia to this day it is believed that she requires the sanction of the religious life itself, though that life be lived for the most part within the community-house. For the only unmarried woman in India is the widow, and especially the child-widow—that is, one whose betrothed has died before actual marriage.

A kind of faithfulness is implied in this, which is quite different from the faithfulness of the West. There, it is counted for great fidelity if amidst the growing complexities of life there runs the stream of a strong and constant memory; if the bereaved wife be true to the idea for which the husband stood; if she carry his name as a banner,

whose new adherents are won by the power of her own consecration. In India, no growth of complexity can be permitted. Where the life stood when its companion was smitten down, there it must remain, till a second death completes the releasing of that one being who only seemed to others to be two.

How wonderful is death! So cold, so still! The mind is withdrawn from the senses, and steadied, that enters its presence but for a moment. They who dwell there find release into a great calm. The Hindu widow lives out her life with her soul ever present at the burning-ghat. Her white sari, unbordered, her short hair, her bareness of jewels, her scant food and long prayers, her refusal to meet guests and join in festivities,—all these things are but the symbols of its abiding lights and shadows. She has found her vocation, so to speak, and as a nun must henceforth direct her life. If she be a child-widow, this is only the more true. Then, the church in which she lingers is more apt to be the thought of the Divine itself. But if in her widowhood she can remember what it was to be a wife, her altar will be the name of the dead husband, and her austerities will carry with them the unspeakable gladness of the memory that half of all their merit goes to him. This belief in a mystic union of souls was the motive of suttee,—a sacrifice that was supposed to lift the husband's soul at once into bright places, and bring his wife to enjoy them beside him for thousands of years. Who, with such an idea deep-ingrained, could not laugh at fire?

It is clear that this scheme of the widow's life is inherent in a great simplicity. A marriage which had but one duty could alone have led to this bereavement which has but one thought. And yet we must understand that it is in this terrible blight of love that the strong woman finds her widest individual scope.

It is told of Bhaskaracharya, the mathematician, that he had but one child, the maiden Lilavati. Casting her horoscope carefully, he discovered that there was only a

single moment in her life when she could be married without fear of widowhood. Preparations were made for the wedding accordingly, and the father himself constructed an instrument by which to regulate the time of the ceremonies. Water would be admitted drop by drop through a certain hole, from one pot to another, and its reaching a given height was the signal for the sacramental act.

The marriage-rites began, but the child Lilavati grew tired, and went wandering from room to room in search of amusement. In some obscure corner she came upon an unaccustomed-looking pot, and leaned over its edge to watch how the inner section was gradually sinking in the water which it contained. As she did so a tiny pearl fell all unnoticed from her wedding-crown, and stopped the hole through which the water passed! Time went on, but the vessel sank no further. "Ah!" exclaimed Bhaskaracharya sorrowfully, when, the hour already past, he found the jewel that had frustrated all his caution, "it is useless for a man to fight against his destiny!"

Within some few weeks or months the little bride was left a widow. But now her great father resolved to make of her a woman so learned that she should never sigh for earthly happiness—a resolve in which he succeeded to such an extent that to this day it is not known whether the abstruse treatise named "Lilavati" was merely dedicated to her, or whether she asked the questions to which it contains the answers.

This story is historic. But simple instances abound in every village. The kind widowed aunt who lived in the opposite house to ours, did she not count every soul in the Calcutta lane, together with her brother's children, as her own? "Do not leave this country," she would say to some member of our household every now and then, "for you know I count you all my bairns!" When the man in the next house died of cholera, it was not we, the European neighbours, but this Pishi-ma of ours, who was first on the scene with disinfectants. When the immediate

necessity of cleansing the whole house was explained, it was still another and older widow lady who listened, and carried out the work with her own hands. Indeed, wherever one is called in time of need, one finds a group of widow-women already present. There is no act of nursing that these are not ready, and even eager, to perform ; no disease so loathsome or dangerous that they will not gladly take a sick child into their arms ; no injury so bitter that it will prevent their weeping sorrowful tears of sympathy with the injured in his hour of pain and loss.

It is quite natural that widows should be more free for the civic life than other women. Wives have their husband's comforts to attend to, and mothers their thousand and one maternal cares. But the widow, and above all the childless widow, in her agony of solitude, can hear the sobs of children not her own, can stretch hands across the desert of her own mourning to those who are ill, or in poverty, and desolation. In the last generation lonely women had still more scope than they have now. I have heard of one who never sat down to the midday meal till a servant brought her word that every soul in the village had already eaten. Almost every family can remember some aged dame of its own who was famed for her skill in all sorts of remedies for man and beasts. The very cow-goddesses, who are worshipped in Himalayan villages in time of cattle pestilence, may have been actual Hindu women of this type, raised to the rank of deities. But the last half-century in India has been rapidly accomplishing the decay of the middle classes ; and with this decay, brought about by the shrinking of wealth in its old channels, the fall of woman, in social and material power, proceeds apace. Yet still the widows represent the intellectual centres amongst women. The most modern they are, the less likely is it that they can reel off Sanskrit verses, but the more probable that they read books in the vernaculars. In any case, they produce the saints ; and the position of a woman-saint in India is such that no man in her neigh-

bourhood will venture on a journey without first presenting himself before her veiled form, taking the dust of her feet, and receiving her whispered blessing.

Widows have constantly distinguished themselves, especially in Bengal, as administrators of land and wealth. Of this pattern was the great Mahratta Queen of Indore, Ahalya Bai. Her husband died while waging war with Scindia and another, and her first act was to disband her armies, and send word to the sovereigns that she was at their mercy, a defenceless woman. The expected result followed in the complete abandonment of all hostilities. After which, Ahalya Bai Rani lived and reigned for many a long year eating the Hindu widow's handful of rice of her own cooking, and spending her great revenues in public works on the largest scale.

For the wife becomes regent when a man dies during the minority of his son ; and even if the latter be already of age, his ownership of an estate is by no means free and complete during the lifetime of his mother. The whole world would cry shame if he acted without her occasional advice, and, indeed, the Indian woman's reputation for business capacity is so like the French that it is commonly said of encumbered property that it needs a widow's nursing.

In such a case there is, however, for the wealthy woman one temptation. Throughout her married life her relation with her father's house has remained close and intimate. At least once a year, if not oftener, she has returned to it on visits. Her eldest child was born there under her own mother's care. Her girlhood's friends have perpetually renewed her youthful memories by hastening to see her on her arrival, and talk over old times. It was many a year before the revival of familiar associations ceased to make her wholly a child again, so that she would run bare-headed down the lane to a neighbour's house, rejoicing in the unaccustomed freedom of the fact that the only men she was likely to meet were practically

her own brothers, for she had played with them in babyhood.

But if the relation to her early home and to her past be thus deep and exquisite, what are we to say of the bond that knits together the Hindu sister and her brother? Here is the tie that offers to the woman of responsibilities her great temptation ; for it is considered hard, and yet essential, for one who administers a dead husband's wealth not to bestow it in these channels, not to submit to management and direction, not to transfer possession gradually from the one house to the other. And the very insistence upon the dishonour of such a course is in itself testimony to the affection that tempts. The perfect wife is she who loves her husband with a love that forgets even father and brothers if need be. But how arduous is such perfection to attain! One day in the Hindu sacred year is known as "The Feast of Brothers," because on it sisters are visited and give their benisons. And so, even about the detached life of the married woman, made independent of her father's care, early associations continue to twine and grow stronger. They never cease to be an organic part of her life ; and if the stress of her existence throws her back upon them, she knows that on which she leans that it will not fail her at her need, or prove a false staff, breaking in her hand.

And yet her natural longing, in the first days of her widowhood, is to remain, unless forbidden by his poverty, in the household of her father-in-law, for herein lies all her loyalty to the dead. Nay, it will often happen that even a child-widow is anxiously retained by her husband's parents, as a token, in some sort, left by him who is gone. All the glory of womanhood lies in such things as these. Even in her own home, too, a widow has the right to be exacting on a thousand little points regarding her dead husband. Do her father and brothers not remember the great days of obligation of the household into which she married? Do they require reminder, instead of hastening

to be beforehand with her, in suggesting the gifts and offerings she would do well to send? Ah, then, is it only herself for whom they cease to weary themselves, or do they forget *his* dignity who should be as dear as their own blood? And for her own part she watches with solicitude all that passes in the family whose name she bears. Is a new bride received among them? From her own diminishing store of jewels will be sent some trifle—may be only a couple of tiny gold jasmine flowers for the ears—by the bereaved to the newly-wedded daughter-in-law. Or she hears of sickness and arrives to nurse. She comes to wait on the aged, or will assume charge of the young while grave elders go on pilgrimage. All this implies a network of social ideals that tends to make it difficult to divert the income arising from alliance.

Over and above her alleged common sense, on the other hand an estate that passes into the hands of a woman ruler enjoys the economic advantage of her freedom from personal extravagance ; for the energy with which a widow pursues after abstinence is extraordinary. To this day she lives in an ancient India, created by her own habits. In Calcutta she drinks only Ganges water, holding that the municipal supply is contaminated by European use. She will eat only rock-salt in order to avoid the pollution of manufacturing processes. When ill she accepts treatment only from the old Indian doctors, the Vaidya or the Kaviraj, and pays fantastic sums for their medicines if they come from Benares or some other seat of classic learning. If well, she eats one meal of cooked food prepared with her own hands at or after midday, and only a slight refec-tion of milk, fruit, and unleavened bread at nightfall. Her hair is cut short (or in some parts of India the head is shaved), perhaps originally to remove the temptation of beauty, but, as far as custom knows and questions, only that she may bathe the more frequently and easily—every bath conveying to her the notion of a baptism.

Such is her ordinary routine. Her occasional dissipa-

tions consist in a pilgrimage, an extra visit to a temple at dawn or after sunset, or attendance at some ceremony of epic recitation. Is it not well said that she knows no extravagance?

It is because her life is holier than that of others that no hand must touch her food, though she may prepare and serve the meals of any in the house. For the same reason, if questions of precedence arise, she stands higher than married women. Did she not rise before dawn to tell her beads, or to sit for an hour in meditation? Then, when her room was cleaned and ordered, did she not go to the river for the morning bath? Returning with the wet sari that she had washed, according to daily custom, with her own hands, did she not don the silken garment and pass to that ceremonial worship, with flowers and offerings, that lasts for at least an hour or more, and only when that worship was ended could she begin to think of cooking her meal. With the waning of the afternoon she falls again to telling her beads, right hand and rosary both concealed in a little bag. At the moment of "candlelight," she passes once more into actual meditation. Then an hour's chat, the frugal evening meal, and so to bed, to begin at dawn on the morrow again the daily round.

An incomparable moment in the history of a Hindu family is that of the return to it of a young daughter freshly widowed. Unspeakable tenderness and delicacy are lavished on her. A score of reasons for the mitigation of her rule are thought out and urged. In spite of her reluctance, the parents or parents-in-law will insist. Sometimes the whole family will adopt her austere method of living for a few months, and keep pace with her self-denials step by step, till she herself discovers and breaks the spell. "Well, well!" exclaimed an old father brooding over the ruin of his child's happiness at such a crisis, "it was high time for me to retire from the world; can we not renounce together, little mother?" And while she is supported by her father's strong arm, the mother's wings are open wide,

to fold closer than ever before the bird that has flown home with the arrow in its heart. Indeed, this union of theirs has become proverbial, so that if some small son be uncommonly helpful and chivalrous to his mother, friendly neighbours will say, in banter: "But this is no boy! This is surely your widowed daughter, mother!" So pass the years, till, it may be, the mother, herself widowed, becomes as a child, falling back upon the garnered strength of her own daughter. Life ebbs: but discipline gathers its perfect fruit, in lives stately and grave and dignified, for all their simplicity and bareness; in characters that are the hidden strength alike of village and of nation; in an ideal of sainthood justified; an opportunity of power created.

In the long years of her mature life we picture the Madonna standing always beneath the Cross. And we are right. But patience! not for ever shall she stand thus. It shall yet come to pass that in high heaven a day shall dawn, on which, wearing the self-same meekness, clothed in self-same humility, the Mother of Sorrows shall be crowned—and that by her own Son!

V

THE PLACE OF WOMAN IN THE NATIONAL LIFE

As the light of dawn breaks on the long curving street of the Indian village the chance passer-by will see at every door some kneeling woman, busied with the ceremony of the Salutation of the Threshold. A pattern, drawn on the pavement, in lines of powdered rice, with flowers arranged at regular points within it, remains for a few hours, to mark the fact that cleansing and worship have been performed. The joy of home finds silent expression in the artistic zest of the design. Wealth or poverty betrays itself, according as the flowers are a bright network of neuter gourd-blossoms, a stiff little row of two or three white daisies, or some other offering, more or less humble, as the case may be.

But everywhere we read a habit of thought to which all things are symbolic ; the air upon the doorstep full of dim boding and suggestiveness as to the incomings and outgoings which the day shall witness ; and the morning opening and setting wide the door an act held to be no way safe unless done by one who will brood in doing it upon the divine security and benediction of her beloved.

Such thought was the fashion of a very ancient world—the world in which myths were born, out of which religions issued, and wherein our vague and mysterious ideas of “luck” originated. The custom bears its age upon its brow. For thousands of years must Indian women have risen with the light to perform the Salutation of the Threshold. Thousands of years of simplicity and patience, like that of the peasant, like that of the grass, speak in the beautiful rite. It is this patience of woman that makes civilisations. It is this patience of the Indian woman, with

this her mingling of large power of reverie, that has made and makes the Indian nationality.

On its ideal side, the life of an Indian woman is a poem of the Indian soil. For all that coherence and social unity which the West has lost within the last few centuries remain still in the Orient intact. Eastern life is an organic whole, not only as regards the connectedness of its parts amongst themselves, but also in the larger matter of their common relation to place. Even in a city, the routine of a Hindu home is an unbroken reminiscence of the ancestral village; orthodox life is simply rural life maintained unmodified under adverse conditions.

Perhaps this is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in all that concerns the place of the cow in domestic life. Journeying over the country, the eye learns to look to the grazing-lands in order to gauge the prosperity of districts. For in climates which horses support with difficulty the patient bullock is the friend of agriculture, and without his aid the fields could not be kept under the plough.* Thus the Aryan and the cow between them have made India what she is; and never does the peasant forget the fact. Five thousand years of love and gratitude have been sufficient, on the other hand, to humanise the quadruped; and the soft eyes of the gentle beast, as we see it in this Eastern land, look out on us, with a satisfied conviction of kinship and mutual trust, for which the Western barbarian is but little prepared. Its breeds and sizes are almost innumerable. Benares, and the rich mercantile quarters of Northern cities, maintain the lordly Shiva's bulls, who come and go about the streets eating from what shop-front or stall they choose, entirely unmolested. The south, again, possesses a kind of bullock little larger than a Newfoundland dog, which is nevertheless strong enough to

* It is a fundamental law of Indian economics, but one little known to present administrators, that for every acre of land kept in cultivation, the village should have the grant of one acre of grazing land free. The reason and the necessity are alike obvious.

draw a cart containing a couple of men ; and perhaps there are no beasts of draught in the world finer than the Mysore bullocks. But almost all Indian cattle are smaller than their Western compeers and all are characterised by a prominent hump, in front of which the yoke is placed.

It is no wonder that the life of the cow has so large a place in that scheme of the national well-being which we call Hinduism. Who has realised the ages that it must have taken to stock the country with the necessary numbers—ages in which the destruction of one life so precious under the weight of hunger would be an irredeemable crime against society? It is only natural that the poetry of the people should find in these animals one of its central motives ; for all that domestic affection which we spend on the dog and cat, making of such dumb creatures actual comrades and hearthside friends, is here lavished on them. Even in the towns, where the stones of the courtyard are the sole pasture, they are kept, and in the huts of the poor the room occupied by the milk-giver is to the full as good as that of any of the family.

We find it difficult in the North to distinguish the natural festivals of fruit gathering and harvest home from purely religious rites. There is an exaltation of feeling and imagination, and a closeness to the powers of nature, in the one case as in the other, which forms a link between them. The occasion of receiving a new cow into a Hindu family is tinged with a like sentiment. The whole household turns out to welcome the incoming member, who is decorated with flowers and fed daintily as soon as she enters the gates of the dwelling, while endearments are lavished on her in the effort to make her accept the strange abode as home. The psychology of this is not purely self-interested, as when we butter the cat's paws that she may never be happy at a distance from our hearth. There is a habitual, almost an instinctive, recognition in India of the fact that mind is the controlling element in life, and it has become a second nature with them to appeal directly to it.

Even in the case of what we are pleased to term the lower animals, it requires no argument to show a Hindu that the cow will maintain her health and perform all her functions better if her feeling goes with, instead of against, her new environment. The fact is self-evident to him. And in the ceremony of welcome, the intrusion of any violent thought or emotion upon the family circle would be earnestly deprecated, and every effort put forth to hold the mental atmosphere in gentleness and calm.

This way of looking at things finds striking illustration in the education of girls. For throughout a woman's life the cow is to be her constant companion. It is important, therefore, that she be duly equipped with the knowledge of its management and treatment. This necessity is expressed in folk-form by the statement that few families are blessed with good fortune in the three matters of children, of money, and of milk. Even if the home be full of the laughter of little voices, and if there be money enough to feed them, is not the milk apt to turn sour or the cow to run dry? It is essential, then, to choose brides for our sons who have "a lucky hand with the cow"; and to attain the "lucky hand" little girls are made to rise at five o'clock in the mornings, and to sit for an hour or more before her, hanging garlands on her neck, offering flowers at her feet, giving her delectable things to eat, and repeating texts and verses full of the expression of reverence and gratitude.*

And, indeed, there is no end to the household debt. "Milk is the only food," said a Hindu, "that is the product of love." Probably for this reason—in a country where so much thought is given to the mental effects of what is eaten—it is the favourite, being held, with fruit and honey, to be fit nourishment for the saints. But fuel and medicine

* I was informed by so authoritative a body as the professors in the Minnesota College of Agriculture, U.S.A., that this procedure of the Hindu woman is strictly scientific. "The cow is only able to yield her full possibility of milk to a milker whom she regards as her own child."

also are provided by the bovine mother. Cowdung is held to have antiseptic and purifying properties, and to spread it with her own hands, making the mud floor damp proof, and giving it the breath ever fragrant to the peasant, would be thought no more disgraceful to the princess fallen upon evil days of poverty than to the humbler daughter of any poor but well-descended house.

From the Punjab to Cape Comorin, evenfall—the *who is it?* moment of Japan, and the *yellow dust hour* of China—is known as the *time of cow-dust*, recalling in a word the picture of the village, and the herds driven home along the lanes for the night.

It is one of the great glories of countries of the Asiatic type, ranking beside their universal recognition of the sacredness of letters, that in them the simple life of the commonwealth as a whole, and not the artificial and luxurious routine of courts, has always been regarded as the social type. Hence in India, labour, rising into government, stands side by side with prayer and motherhood as the main opportunity of woman, and as her integral contribution to the national righteousness. The domestic necessities of pastoral, may bear less heavily upon her than those of peasant communities, leaving her more time for the use of the needle ; but in Arabia, as in India, the ideal must needs be fulfilled and “Our Lady of the Moslems”* is loved for the fact that, though the daughter of the Prophet, she turned the millstone with her own delicate hands, and toiled in frugal household ways for the good of those dependent on her care, almost as much as for the sweet intercession by which she named “the salvation of all Mussal-mans” as the dowry she would claim of God on the Day of Judgment.

In India, the cowhouse, the dairy, the kitchen, the granary, the chapel, with numerous other offices, divide the day-long attentions of the ladies of the family. In rich

* Our Lady of the Moslems—Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and Khadijah. The Prophet loved her more than any other created being.

old houses there will be a large cooking-room and verandah for the cooks, and in addition, not one but a series of kitchens for the use of mother, daughters, and daughters-in-law. And the herb gardens and orchards are accessible only from the zenana. In all these things nothing is more noticeable than the readiness and spontaneity with which work is subdivided, and the peaceable way in which it is carried out. This is most striking with regard to the preparation of food, a service into which the Indian has been taught from childhood to pour a concentrated sweetness of love and hospitality. Perhaps there is no single institution amongst ourselves by which we can convey an idea of the joy it gives the master of a household to see many mouths fed at his cost, or the mistress to feel that she serves them all. Every woman being a cook, and often of great skill, it was in years gone by considered as the highest compliment to receive an invitation from a neighbouring family on the occasion of some important festivity, to come and help *faire la cuisine*. Even Hindu society, however, is affected by the ideals of Western organisation, and emergency-work nowadays tends more and more to be laid on the shoulders of Brahmins imported for the occasion, but not regarded socially as servants, in spite of the fact that they accept a daily wage.

There is thus a point of view from which the lives of Indian women may be considered as a vast co-operation of the race to perform necessary labour, dignifying it meanwhile by every association of refinement, tenderness, and self-respect. And it might also be claimed that the orthodox Hindu household is the only one in the world which combines a high degree of civilisation with the complete elimination of any form of domestic slavery. Certainly slavery in Asia, under the *régimes* of great religious systems, has never meant what Europe and America have made of it. There are still living persons who were bought in their childhood as Gulams by Rajput and Bengali families. These were orphans, brought up and educated along with

the children of the household, but made useful in minor ways. It never occurred to anyone that when the days of wage-earning arrived, the quondam master and mistress had any claim whatever upon the emoluments of their dependents, yet they could not be held to have done their duty until they had married and settled them in life appropriately. It is a curious consequence of this humanity of custom that the word "slave" cannot be made to sting the Asiatic consciousness, as it does the European.

As one travels through regions not yet exhausted by famine, the signs of Indian peasant happiness become familiar to the eye. The mud homestead, built on its high plinth with deep verandahs, decently thatched or tiled, and almost hidden in clusters of cocoanut palms, bamboos, and plantains, the stretch of green with its grazing cows, or rice-fields and mango orchards, the unbroken dome of blue, edged off, on the horizon, by the tremulous line of foliage where new bamboos veil some fresh village or farm-house, such is the picture beloved by the Indian heart. Even in the distant cities, every festival-day brings back its memory ; for the jars of water, with cocoanuts for lids, and the green shoots of plantain, standing against the pillars, with the garlands of mango-leaves above the doorway, are the "auspicious," and therefore universal decoration.

It is her longing for this natural setting of grove, river, and meadow, that makes the housewife so contented with the severe architectural form of her home, bidding her seek for no irrelevant decorative detail. The Indian does not live in whom the passion for nature is not conscious and profound. And the marble palaces of Rajputana and the North, in which buildings are made beautiful, instead of having beautiful things put into them, are directly related, through this ideal, to the peasant cottages and farmhouses of Bengal.

Indeed, if we would draw the life of an Indian woman truly, it is in a long series of peasant pictures that it must be outlined. Every plant, flower, fruit, in its own season,

calls up some historic or poetic association. Under the Kadamba tree, whose blossoms occur in stiff balls, like those of our plane, stood Krishna, playing on the flute. In the magnificent shade and coolness of the bo—the tree whose leaves are so delicately poised that they quiver like those of our aspen, even in the stillest noon—Buddha, in the heart of the night, attained Nirvana. The soft Sirisha flower that “can bear the weight of bees, but not of humming-birds,” reminds one of all exquisite and tender things—the lips of a woman, the heart of a child, and so on. The Amloki fruit is not only wholesome and delicious for household use, making the work of preserving it an act of merit, but its very name is famous throughout Buddhist Asia, carrying one back to the great age when it was a constant architectural ornament. The fragrance of the mango-blossom is one of the five arrows of Cupid’s bow. The custard-apple was the favourite fruit of Sita.

Such are a few only of the complex associations that have in the course of ages accumulated about the common Indian life. No home is so bare that it is not beautified by this wealth of dreams, for it has long ago sunk into the very structure of the language. No caste is so high, nor is any outcast so low, as to be beyond its reach. It is an immense national possession, creating mutual sentiment and common memory, offering abundance of material also for the development of individual taste and imagination, and above all acting as an organic and indestructible bond, to attach the Indian mind eternally to its own soil, and in every sense involving permanence of relation, silently and rigorously to exclude the foreigner.

Men are of course initiated into their share of this inheritance in infancy. Afterwards, from their study of letters, they may return and refresh the domestic folklore with a greater accuracy. But the women live always in its atmosphere. This is the actuality against whose background their simple pious lives are set. And through them it maintains unabated its volume and continuity.

We see thus that the Indian organisation of life and society is coherent and necessary, and that its methods and ideals, having sprung directly from the soil, have a stability due to correspondence with their environment which is inconceivable to persons who are themselves content to be favoured members of most favoured nations.

The social unity, as of an individual organism, was expressed in quaint form in the old-time myth that Brahmins sprang from the lips of the Creator, warriors from His arms, the people from His thighs, and the working classes from His feet. But the way in which physical conditions imposed themselves upon the Creator Himself in this process could not be recognised by early observers, who had seen nothing outside their own country.

The modern student, however, educated by a wide range of geographical impression, cannot fail to be struck with another feature of the Indian synthesis—its completely organic character in a territorial sense. Every province within the vast boundaries fulfils some necessary part in the completing of a nationality. No one place repeats the specialised function of another. And what is true of the districts holds equally good of the people as a whole, and the women in particular. In a national character we always find a summary of the national history. Of no country is this more true than of India.

The Bengali wife worships her husband, and serves her children and her household with all the rapt idealism of the saints. The women of Maharashtra are as strong and as actual as any in the West. The Rajputani queen prides herself on the unflinching courage of her race, that would follow her husband even into the funeral fire, yet will not permit a king to name his wife as amongst his subjects. The woman of Madras struggles with agony to reach the spiritual pole-star, building up again and again, like some careful beaver, any fragment of her wall of custom that the resistless tides of the modern world may attempt to break away. And the daughters of Gujarat are,

like the women of merchant-peoples everywhere, soft and silken and flower-like, dainty and clinging as a dream.

Or we may penetrate into the Moslem zenana, to find the same graceful Indian womanhood, sometimes clad in the sari, sometimes in the short Turkish jacket, but always the self-same gentle and beautiful wifhood and motherhood, measuring itself in all its doings as much against the standards of religious obligation, and as little against those of fashion, as any of its Hindu compatriots might do.

Nor, amongst these strong outstanding types, is there any failure of individual achievement. Brynhild herself was not more heroic than thousands of whom the Rajput chronicles tell. Nay, in the supreme act of her life, the mystic death on the throne of flame beside the dead Sigurd, many a quiet little Bengali woman has been her peer. Joan of Arc was not more a patriot than Chand Bibi,* or the wonderful Queen of Jhansi, who, in the year 1857, fought in person with the British troops. The children of men who saw it talk to this day of the form of this woman's father swinging on the gibbet, high above the city walls, hanged there by her order for the crime of making a treaty with the English, to deliver the keys into their hands. They talk, too, of her swift rush at the head of her troops across the drowsy midday camp, her lance poised to pierce, her bay mare Lakshmi straining every muscle, the whizz of the charge so unexpected that only here and there a dazed white soldier could gather presence of mind to fire a shot at the cavalcade already passed. And old men still sing her glory with tears choking the voice.

But the Rani of Jhansi, though a queen, was no purdah woman. She was a Mahratta, with a passion for her country, and practised from girlhood in the chase. She had been the real heart of the kingdom ever since her marriage, for her husband was only a handsome figure-head, who spent in making feeble poetry the time he might

* Chand Bibi—The heroic princess, who defended Ahmednagar against the armies of Akbar. Killed by mutincers, 1599.

have given to rule or to his wife. Her life had been, in fact, as solitary as that of a mediæval saint. And her ostensible reason for fighting was the right to adopt an heir. There has always indeed been a great development of the political faculty amongst Mahratta women, a development which is by no means lost at the present day. It is well known that, long before the time of the Queen of Jhansi, Shivaji owed the inspiration that led to the national reawakening to his mother rather than to his father.

If again we desire to hear of the woman of romance, is it not sufficient to cite the name of that Empress to whom the Taj Mahal was built? To Hindus as to Mohammedans this palace of the dead is holy, for to the one as to the other it speaks with silent eloquence of the perfect wife. We may dream as inadequately as we please of the Queen Arjmand Banu, Crown of the Palace, but two things we cannot forget. One is the tender thought of the woman who could detach herself from the very pains of death to assure her husband that she desired a tomb worthy of his love; and the other is the image of the passing of Shah Jehan, in the sunset-lighted balcony, with his eyes fixed on the snow-white pile at the bend in the river, and his heart full of the consolation of having wrought for her he loved, through the space of twenty years, a work that she had surely accepted at the last. The words, "Even I, even I, am Beatrice," are not more full of the triumphant close of love than this picture of the death of the Mogul Emperor.

Yet we have to admit that to the Asiatic woman in general society does not offer the kingdom of beauty and charm as her sphere. The foster-mother of Moses, the mother of Jesus, the wife of the Prophet, Khadijah, and his daughter Fatima, are the true exemplars of the Moslem woman. And the ideal achievements of Hindu womanhood are likewise of wisdom and service and renunciation, rather than of power and love. Hindu lyrics of romance are always put into the mouth of Radha the shepherdess,

singing to Krishna: and it is interesting to note how the motive of each lover is placed always in the feeling of the other, and how quickly any departure from this canon would disgust Indian taste. Even Persian poetry, the classic of the Mohammedan, is said by those who know it to have avoided in a wonderful way the use of "he and she." "Be I the string, the note be thou! Be thou the body, I the life! Let none hereafter say of us that one was I, another thou." Is this spoken between two lovers, or is it entirely of the soul?

There is doubtless some truth in the idea that society in a military state tends always to seclude its women. The fact that in the aristocratic strictness or retreat the Mussalman ranks first, the Rajputani second, and the Bengali woman only third, in India, goes far to support this conclusion. But the case of the Rani of Jhansi is sufficient indication that the custom is by no means so universal as is often stated. The lower classes move freely in all countries, for household work and the earning of their livelihood compel; and the screen is always more easily lifted for the Hindu than for the Mohammedan. A thousand considerations intervene to mitigate its severity in the case of the former, while in the South and West, where Moslem rule was brief and Moslem fashions had little force, it is actually non-existent.

By this it is not to be understood that any Hindu women meet men outside their kindred with the freedom and frankness of their Western sisters. Very old adaptations of the Ramayana show us the brother-in-law who has never looked higher than the heroine's feet, and the wife who blushes rather than mention her husband's name. But the power of the individual to isolate himself in the midst of apparently unrestrained social intercourse is necessary in all communities, and has its correspondence in Western society itself. Freedom is granted only to the self-disciplined. It might be added that a good wife has as little occasion to realise the possible jealousy of her husband in

the East as in the West, and that an unreasonable fit of suspicion would be considered the same weakness and insult by the one society as by the other.

The liberty of Madras and Bombay is, however, a reality for all its limitations. And in certain parts of the province of Malabar woman is actually in the ascendancy. This curious country, of women learned in Sanskrit, and kings who rule as the regents of their sisters, will have many disclosures to make to the world when India shall have produced a sufficient number of competent sociologists of her own blood. It is commonly said to be characteristically polyandrous; but it is not so, in the same sense as Tibet and some of the Himalayan tribes, for no woman regards herself as the wife of two men at once. The term *matriarchal* is more accurate, inasmuch as the husband visits the wife in her own home, and the right of inheritance is through the mother. Thus, far from India's being the land of the uniform oppression of woman by a uniform method, it represents the whole cycle of feminist institutions. There is literally no theory of feminine rights and position that does not find illustration somewhere within her boundaries.

With regard to the seclusion of women by Hindus, the statement that it arose as a protection against the violence of a ruling race is thoughtless and untrue. The custom in its present rigour dates undoubtedly from the period of Moslem rule. Where that rule was firm and long established, it has sunk deep into Hindu habit, and in Bombay and Madras, under opposite conditions, has been almost passed by. In the plays of Kalidas, and in old Sanskrit literature generally, there is abundant evidence that it was not practised in its modern form in the Vedic, Buddhistic, or Puranic periods.

But although it dates from the era of Ghazni or Ghor—except where the Rajput made an independent introduction of the purdah—there is nothing to show that the cloistering of women was spread in Hindustan by other means than by the force of fashion and imperial prestige.

Indeed, sooner or later we have to face the question: What induced the Mohammedan to screen his women? Islam derives the religious sanction of its social institutions from Arabia, and the Arab woman is said to enjoy considerable freedom and power. Hence it is sometimes claimed that the Mussulman himself adopted the practice from Persia, from China, or from Greece. Such explanations are little more than recrimination. What are we to regard as the root of a convention which in certain parts of the Orient appears to be almost instinctive? Climate, inducing scantiness of clothing, cannot be the whole secret, for in that case Madras would be more deeply permeated by the custom than Bengal, whereas the very opposite is the fact.

Might we not as well reverse the inquiry, and try to assign some reason for the Western assumption of *equality* between man and woman? The first point that strikes us is the very uneven distribution of the theory in Europe itself. It is by no means so strong in Latin as in Teutonic countries, nor so clearly formulated amongst the Germanic peoples as in the Norse Sagas. This fact lends colour to the theory of modern sociologists that fisher-life is the source of all equality between the sexes. For the man, pursuing the conquest of the sea, must leave his wife regnant over the affairs of field and farm. It is supposed by some that the very use of the wedding-ring originated in the investiture of woman at marriage, by means of the signet-ring, with a fulness of authority similar to the husband's outside, over all that lay within the house. Surely it is clear that land and sea are not the only possible antitheses, but that wherever a race is employed in a sustained and arduous conquest of Nature there it will tend towards fulness of co-operation, similarity of manners, and equality of rights as between men and women; and that, other things being equal, under long-settled conditions, from which anxiety is largely eliminated, there is a progressive inclination towards divergence of their lines of activity,

accompanied by the more complete surrender of woman to the protection of man, and the seeking of her individuality in the sphere of morals and emotion.

The tendency to divergence of function would be accelerated in Asia by the nature of the climate, which makes stillness and passivity the highest luxury. This fact would combine again with military pre-possessions, to make the custom of seclusion especially characteristic of royal households, and having once achieved such social prestige it would speedily extend over wide areas. Thus it becomes characteristic of conquering races, and among Hindus is imitated with marked energy by Bengal, which is not only the most idealistic of all the Indian provinces, but also—owing to the existence of the zemindar class—the most persistently feudal, after Rajputana.

If this theory be correct, the freedom of the Indian woman of the first Aryan period is to be explained as an outcome of the struggle with earth and forest. The early immigrations of agricultural races across the Himalayas from Central Asia must have meant a combat with Nature of the severest kind. It was a combat in which the wife was the helpmeet of the husband. If he cleared the jungle and hunted the game, she had to give aid in field and garden. The Aryan population was scanty, and she would often be required to take his place. Vicissitudes were many. At a moment's notice she must be prepared to meet an emergency, brave, cheerful, and self-helpful. In such a life woman must move as easily as man.

It began to be otherwise, however, when the country was cleared, agriculture established on the Aryan scale, and the energy of the race concentrated on the higher problem of conserving and extending its culture of mind and spirit. It is doubtful whether Indian philosophy could ever have been completed on other terms than on those of some measure of seclusion for woman. "This world is all a dream: God alone is real," such an ultimatum could hardly have been reached in a society like that of Judaism,

where love and beauty were held as the seal of divine approval on a successful life. Not that India would decry these happy gifts. But they are secular joys in her eyes, not spiritual. "The religion of the wife lies in serving her husband: the religion of the widow lies in serving God," say the women; and there is no doubt in their minds that the widow's call is the higher of the two.

While we talk of the seclusion of woman, however, as if it were a fact, we must be careful to guard against misconception. In society and in the streets of Indian cities, it is practically true that we see men alone. This fact makes it a possibility for the religious to pass his life without looking on the face of any woman, save such as he may call "Mother." Inside the house, if we penetrate so far, we shall probably meet with none but women. But if we live there day after day, we shall find that every woman has familiar intercourse with some man or men in the family. The relation between brothers and sisters-in-law is all gaiety and sweetness. Scarcely any children are so near to a woman as the sons of her husband's sisters. It is the proud prerogative of these, whatever be their age, to regard her as their slave. There is a special delicacy of affection and respect between the husband's father and his daughter-in-law. Cousins count as brothers and sisters. And from the fact that every woman has her rightful place in some family it follows that there is more healthy human intercourse with men in almost every Hindu woman's life than in those of thousands of single women, living alone, or following professional careers, in the suburbs of London and other Western cities.

It is an intercourse, too, that is full of a refined and delicate sense of humour. Indian men who have been to Europe always declare that the zenana woman stands unrivalled in her power of repartee. English fun is apt to strike the Eastern ear as a little loud. How charming is the Bengali version of "the bad penny that always turns up," in, "I am the broken cownie that has been to seven

markets"! That is to say, "I may be worthless, but I am knowing."

We are too apt to define the ideal as that towards which we aspire, thinking but rarely of those assimilated ideals which reveal themselves as custom. If we analyse the conventions that dominate an Indian woman's life we cannot fail to come upon an exceedingly stern canon of self-control. The closeness and intimacy of the family life, and the number of the interests that have to be considered, make strict discipline necessary, doubtless, for the sake of peace. Hence a husband and wife may not address each other in the presence of others. A wife may not name her husband, much less praise him, and so on. Only little children are perfectly untrammelled, and may bestow their affection when and where they will. All these things are for the protection of the community, lest it be outraged by the parading of a relationship of intimacy, or victimised by an enthusiasm which it could not be expected to share.

This constant and happy subordination of oneself to others does not strike the observer, only because it is so complete. It is not the characteristic of the specially developed individual alone, for it is recognised and required, in all degrees of delicacy, by society at large. Unselfishness and the thirst for service stand out in the Western personality against a background of individualistic conventions, and convey an impression of the eagerness and struggle of pity, without which the world would certainly be the poorer. But the Eastern woman is unaware of any defiance of institutions. She is the product of an ethical civilisation. Her charities are required of her. Her vows and penances are unknown even to her husband; but were they told they would scarcely excite remark in a community where all make similar sacrifices.

This is only to say that she is more deeply self-effacing and more effectively altruistic than any Western. The duty of tending the sick is so much a matter of course to her that she does not dream of it as a special function, for

which one might erect hospitals or learn nursing. Here, no doubt, she misses a great deal, for the modern organisation of skill has produced a concentration of attention on method that avails to save much suffering. Still, we must not too carelessly assume that our own habit of massing together all the hungry, sick, and insane, and isolating them in worlds visited throughout with like afflictions to their own, is the product of a higher benevolence on our part.

Throughout the world women are the guardians of humanity's ethical ideals. The boy would not be so anxious to carry the dead to the burning-ghat if his mother had not filled his babyhood with admiration of the deed. The husband would not be so strenuous to return home at his best if his wife did not understand and appreciate his noblest qualities. But, even beyond this, women give themselves as the perpetual illustration of the ideal. The words, "He that will be chief among you let him be your servant," fall on Western ears with a certain sense of sublime paradox. But the august Speaker uttered the merest truism of that simple Eastern world in which He moved. He roused no thrill of surprise in the minds of His hearers, for to each his own mother was chief, and yet servant of all.

Those who, knowing the East, read the list of the seven corporal works of mercy, may well start to imagine themselves back in the Hindu home watching its laborious, pious women as they move about their daily tasks, never questioning the first necessity of feeding the hungry, harbouring the harbourless, and the like. Truly the East is eternally the mother of religions, for the reason that she has assimilated as ordinary social functions what the West holds to be only the duty of officialism or the message of the Church, and to those who deeply understand it may well seem that Christianity in Europe is neither more nor less than the mission of the Asiatic Life.

VI

THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN

THE student of Greek vases cannot fail to be struck by the frequent repetition of a single theme—the procession of women to and from the well. In ancient Greece, in Palestine, and in India up to the era of water-taps and street hydrants, that is to say till the other day, the women had an established social centre, the well from which the community drew its supply of drinking water. Hither, in the last hours before sundown, came the maidens of various households, young daughters-in-law, maybe, in charge of some elderly aunt or mother-in-law or with each other's company for chaperonage, each bearing her shining metal vessels to be filled. And thence, their mutual talk and task being ended, went the girls to their homes, with towering loads some two or three pots high, and superb swaying walk. Sometimes, it is said, for a trial of skill, they would run and skip, and even dance, as they went along the road, and never a drop of water spilled the while. The hour was held in great esteem. The way was avoided by men, and the women proved, what all women know, that their real motive in dressing well is to compete with each other, not to shine in the eyes of the sterner sex. Showy silver anklets, the pearl-decorated pad or ring on which the water-pots rested on the head, saris draped as severely as in Greek statues—all these beauties were arranged for the discriminating envy or sympathy of sister eyes, not for the enjoyment of a being who may be trusted to think his own wife and sisters beautiful, yet cannot do them the honour to remember what jewels and clothes they wear.

For a vanity not less than that which chooses a gown in Paris, can go to so simple a matter as the fitting of a

dark-blue sari against a fair complexion, that the wearer may look "like the full moon in the midnight sky," the placing of opal or diamond on one nostril or the other, or the selecting of a glass bangle of white or green, according to the tint of the brown skin. The vanity may be no less, and the highest skill always desires the eye of the keenest connoisseur.

This picture of the women drawing water has its pendant in the cluster of men who gather for friendly smoke or chat at evening about the smouldering log, lighted on the outskirts of the village by any wandering Sannyasin who may have taken up his abode for a few days beneath the local banyan tree. But this suggests a wider, more cosmopolitan relation. The men's talk is apt to be of other lands than their own, and the strange customs and lapses of customs prevailing there. Their interests are rather general, abstract, impersonal. For the yellow-robed guest of the village is, it must be remembered, a traveller of the ancient type. He has not journeyed in railway trains and lived in hotels. Rather, tramping his way from village to village, he has shared, at each halting-place, in its personal drama; has begged a meal daily from door to door; has eaten, therefore, the characteristic food, cooked and served according to the ways of each district. By such modes the geographical sense of this old-time wayfarer is developed far beyond that of a generation that lives on maps and learns from the schedules of facts known as newspaper reports and the journals of other men's travels. And it is his geographical knowledge that he shares with the men of the village where he eats and sleeps for a few days. In the old Sanskrit books, kings are represented as receiving such guests with the question, "What have you seen elsewhere?" and asking before they depart, "And what have you noted here?"

But amongst the women gathered about the well it was the civic life that found expression, the civic life of the village or small township. Here they could form a

consolidated feminine opinion, of great weight in local affairs, and exchange the news of the day with each other. The better organisation of public convenience now deprives them of the laborious necessity of meeting in the old way ; but it is much to be desired that, with the dying out of their ancient forms and institutions, new occasions of assembly and new subjects of discussion might spontaneously arise. At present Indian emotion spends itself more and more within the home. Woman, always dominant in private life, by her very affection is co-operating with the loss of public institutions to restrict the activity of Man. Surely, then, Europe has no right to grow contemptuous if rich men prove effeminate and poor men inefficient, or taunt India with the fact that she has not yet seized the *ethos* of the West, that her princes send out no expeditions to discover the South Pole, and her youth grow up with no consuming curiosity about rocks and stars ; for the European organisation quietly defeats all through which the people are accustomed to find expression and yet fails to call them to new responsibilities, in which their mind and character could receive adequate scope and stimulus in a different form.

It is quite evident that if the centre of social gravity is some day to be shifted, if the intellectual atmosphere of India is yet to be saturated with fresh ideals, not only must her womanhood participate in the results of the implied revolution, but they must contribute largely to bringing it about. For it is the home, not the factory, that fills life with inspiration ; and the school, in British India, is no more than a mill or institution in which children master the reading and writing necessary to future clerkships, as they might learn the technical processes of any other industry. A census-taking, index-making age conceives that without literacy there is no education, as if to read the *Strand Magazine* were greater than to be the mother of Shakespeare. With such an age it is difficult to argue regarding the existing education of a Hindu woman. Yet

if a thorough training in a national mode of living, and that extremely complicated, be an education, she has something ; for the ordinary wife can act in any capacity, from that of cook or dairy-mistress to that of chief of commissariat and general administrator for a hundred or more persons. If a knowledge of language, poetry, and folk-lore, with all thereby connoted of logical and imaginative development, form an education, she has this, sometimes to the extent of understanding and reciting works in Sanskrit. More, these women who may not be able to read and write are deeply, and even passionately, possessed of the spirit of the ancient culture. The philosophy of Maya, not seldom bewildering to the Western *savant*, has no difficulty for them. They understand to a hair the meaning of the word Nirvana. It is no one special command to deny oneself and take up a cross and follow, that has weight with them ; but the bearing of the great law of renunciation on the personal realisation of freedom. Add to all this the inbred habit of life in community, and it will appear that under the old scheme women found not only a training and a discipline, but also a career.

It was a preparation and an opportunity fitted only, it is true, to the soil on which it grew. This limitation pervades the whole of the Indian civilisation. The Indian mind is more contented with the architectural and natural beauties of the home, more free from a desire for extraneous decorative detail, than any other taste in the world, perhaps, and in the same way it has devised a daily round of duty which belongs strictly to its place. The good mother-in-law occupies the position of the lady of the manor in English feudal days. But whereas the manorial household could be transplanted to any age or clime almost intact—Japan, Rajputana, Turkey, Scandinavia, and Spain furnishing parallels fairly complete—the same is not true of the Indian type. Here the girls gathered round its head are the wives of her sons, instead of her husband's vassals. And it is the care of babies, the treatment of animals, and

all kinds of cooking and domestic offices, rather than deft spinning and dainty embroidery, with which they are busied under her. Caste equalises the dignity of beggar and king, and the form of work is merely a question of wealth.

At the same time, while every detail of the Indian domestic system is justified and justifiable, we cannot refuse to admit that some great educational readjustment is necessary at this moment, if only because long habit blinds the eye to the forest that looks much upon the trees ; but when the trees grow too scanty it is the forest, as a whole, that demands our care. Today every Indian woman can cook, and that well. But she cannot sew, and she has nothing but gossip and prayer when the afternoon siesta is over wherewith to occupy her leisure. The great-grandmothers of the present generation were as busy in spinning as our own ancestresses, and one of the chief domestic joys was to take the yarn to the weaver with the measure of grain for which he would make it into a web. Today, alas, the weaver finds it difficult enough to maintain himself by the fine work, for which there is always some market, shrunken though it be, and the common sari of the women's daily wear is spun and woven by machinery, far away in Manchester or Glasgow. Here also, then, the modern revolution has narrowed her lot. A like destruction is being felt in all directions. Higher standards of comfort are rapidly arising. The days when the little boys in the village school wrote on the floor in sand are long past. Even the palm-leaf manuscript is little more than a memory. Steel pen, instead of wooden stylus, cheap paper, smooth writing fluids are everywhere. Soap* is becoming a necessity. European utensils for cleaning, for cooking, and even for

* Lest it should be thought that India had ever been a land of the unclean, let me point out here that the use of earths and oils for the bath has always been compulsory. There is, perhaps, no people in the world from whom the culture of the skin receives so much attention, or where it is so successful. But manufactured soap, as producing a chemical change on the epidermis, is theoretically disapproved.

eating, are coming into use. Certain kinds of furniture are growing familiar. Kerosene and tin and modern glass are to be found in every village. But this does not mean that the people are learning to provide these things for themselves, much less does it imply that they are mastering their use and incorporating their production under the old caste-crafts, bringing their Indian taste and intelligence to bear upon creating new modifications of Western forms. What it does mean is that the country has already become a host to the parasite of European trade. Absolutely and fatally obedient to laws of patent and copyright, the people accept any new convenience as it stands, allow the village craftsman to go by the door, cease to use the old-fashioned utensil, whatever it may have been, and allow the stereotyped ugliness of the new acquisition to corrupt taste and standards as long as it lasts. Even the brass-smiths have quietly accepted the fact that their metal is cheapest brought in sheets from Europe, and housewives mourn in vain that their beautiful brass cooking vessels are no longer fit to be heirlooms, as were those of their grandmothers. In all this India is not more careless or easy of corruption than European countries themselves. She has more to lose and is more defenceless, that is all, and she has not learnt to think of such questions on the national scale.

Orthodoxy does, of course, oppose some obstacle to this process of decay. It would still be accounted an act of vulgarity if a man of means gave a piece of English cotton as wearing apparel to a friend. Soap, kerosene oil, and the substitution of chairs for mats, are still regarded askance by the leaders of pious opinion. But this opposition savours too much of mere prejudice. Therefore it can only retard, it cannot overcome, the evil. What is wanted in this regard is a dynamic orthodoxy, capable of enforcing a decision that only what Indian people can make ought Indian persons to use. And such a canon, it is needless to point out, would have to find its root and strength in the women, who are buyers and consumers, reaching the crafts-

men through constituted social and religious channels. Once having obtained a grip of the national conscience, no political or commercial cajolery would be of the slightest avail against this principle ; but then, if the people were capable of understanding and carrying out such an idea—women, priests, pundits, heads of castes, and labourers—the whole problem would already have been solved, and there would be no disaster from which India must be saved.

It is clear that as the objective of the old education of Indian women lay in *character*, the new cannot aim lower. The distinctive element, therefore, in their future training cannot be reading and writing—though these will undoubtedly grow more common—but the power to grasp clearly and with enthusiasm the ideas of nationality, national interests, and the responsibility of the individual to race and country. Even in Europe, habits and opinions tend to stereotype and harden themselves quite as much as in the Orient. But at present there is still a certain flexibility. This flexibility rather than any definite change is what the East requires. It is a form of freedom and mastery. European communities, in consequence of this mobility of structure, enjoy a power of intelligent co-operation towards new but agreed ends which is universally desirable. India has the power to act, but the end must be familiar. A few women will organise themselves at a moment's notice to cook for hundreds or even thousands of guests, without the least waste of energy or temper such as Western women would incur in organising a soup-kitchen. But if we call the guests "the unemployed," and refer to them as "a social problem," the Oriental becomes bewildered, as would we in like manner were it proposed to us to regard them all as visitors. It is clear that the Western mode of approaching such tasks can only be acquired by India, if it be necessary, through an enlarged idea of the public life.

When the women see themselves in their true place, as related to the soil on which they live, as related to the

past out of which they have sprung ; when they become aware of the needs of their own people, on the actual colossal scale of those needs ; when the mother-heart has once awakened in them to beat for land and people, instead of family, village, and homestead alone, and when the mind is set to explore facts in the service of that heart—then and then alone shall the future of Indian womanhood dawn upon the race in its actual greatness ; then shall a worthy education be realised ; and then shall the true national ideal stand revealed.

Such a change, however, is only possible as a direct growth out of old conceptions. The national idea cannot be imposed from without—it must develop from within. And this will be in full congruity with the national religions. Islam, in the days of its power, rejoiced to establish itself as Indian on Indian soil. The architectural works of the Mogul emperors are full of enthusiasm for the Indian past, for the Indo-Saracenic style owes as much to Rajputana as to Mecca and Constantinople. Asiatic among Asiatics—there was no wide gap between Mussulman conquerors and Hindu conquered : no gap in taste, or morals, or style of thought and education. The newcomer settled down as a child of the land, in his own home. His children were first Indian, and only in the second place members of the Mohammedan confraternity. Today, under the necessity of a secular expression, there is nothing whatever to prevent him from projecting himself upon the cause of his own people, both Hindu and Mohammedan, and working for them with that same power with which his fathers once made the deserts of Arabia ring. For the Hindu, the point should be still more obvious. His Avatars have lived always for humanity. They have appeared in the hour of the national need. They have been followed by waves of popular and political rejuvenance. Neither Hinduism nor Mohammedanism has been weak in putting forward the claims of soil. The sacred texts go so far as to say that he who dies for his country at once attains the Beatific

Vision. With regard to their fundamental duties, both faiths stand like converging artillery in the world of motive, ready to shoot forth individuals upon the great common task of remaking the motherland.

But for all this again, there must be a re-reading of orthodoxy, a re-discovery of essentials. Already the revolution has commenced that is to bring this about. Already India has begun to realise that if poverty is to be defeated, if national efficiency is to be achieved, she dare not continue much longer to glorify the element of blind refusal. Vital orthodoxy, however we define it, certainly cannot be the child of fear alone, always on the defensive, never becoming aggressive, its best courage that of endurance or resignation. He whose idea has ceased to advance is already in retreat. There was a time when everything in India was her own. In those days she went forward freely, welcoming the new as an advance in power and knowledge, not meeting it with terror as a defilement. Indian orthodoxy, then, must learn once more to struggle forward. But we are met by a host of questions. Amongst many conflicting paths, which is to be chosen? Towards what goal? By what methods? What is to be included? What eliminated? Here are the actual difficulties. Everyone is agreed that certain things must be done, but no one can distinctly picture how.

Yet the weakness is easy enough to probe. The West conquers the East, as long as the East on the one hand shuns it as contamination, or, on the other, accepts it as a bribe. The idea of assimilating just so much of Western science as shall enable India to compete in the same market by the same processes as the West is as delusive as it is mean. The idea of refusing to participate in Western methods, and dying of starvation if need be, martyrs to national purity, is manifestly impracticable for the people at large, even if it had not long ago been carried out of reach of all on the high tides of economic disaster. What then?

Western Science must be recognised as holy. The idea of that Science must be grasped and pursued for its own sake. Modern astronomy must claim its "star-intoxicated" prophets in the East as in the West. Geology, physics, biology, and the sublime and growing sciences of man, history and morals, must be felt in India as new modes of the apprehension of truth, studied passionately without ulterior object, as the religious experience is now followed, at the cost of all.

Such an attitude is, indeed, of the very essence of the Asiatic genius. To it mathematics have never sunk to the position which they tend to occupy in Europe—a convenient means for the measurement of secular utilities—but have always been held as a sacred inviolable method of expressing the fundamental unity of phenomena. The learned man will mention this subject with the same throb in his voice that we may give to a great picture or a moving poem. The Indian imagination regards all knowledge of beatitude. Nor is any intellect in the world more keenly logical and inquisitive, or at the same time more disinterested and comprehensive in its grasp. A great Indian school of science is therefore no absurdity, but, under necessary conditions, one of the most attainable of all ambitions. The Hindu has but to realise that the world waits for the hundred and eight Upanishads of modern knowledge; the Mussulman needs only to understand that the time is again ripe for Averrhoes and Avicenna; and both will make, not only their own opportunity, but a new era in culture as well.

This is not merely an inspiration of defence. Oriental methods have had an unparalleled success in producing a widely extended amelioration of conduct and cultivation of mind. Any large country town in India may be observed, and the number of its saints and scholars counted. Not even the most favoured of London suburbs can boast, of its commercial or scientific order, so many men severely learned. But the old Indian learning is now complete.

The task is done. There is nothing left for the common mind to add.

It is necessary, therefore, as a vindication of that great intellectual vigour which it has actually bred, that new worlds of mental conquest should be found, new subjects opened, and a new development initiated, in which the common people shall measure their strength against the modern world, and learn their power.

Out of such a revolution, but as an incident, not as its main goal, must inevitably arise a development of mechanical skill which, in the East, might steer clear of the demoralisation produced elsewhere by the worship of usefulness and privilege. It is certain that if India throw herself freely upon a mechanical era, she will restore to the factory hand those human qualities and ethical prerogatives which in the West he tends more and more to lose.

In order to make such changes possible, however, there would need to be a spontaneous appearance, in various parts of the country, of persons with the synthetic habit of mind and heart. India is actually a unity, but few of her people realise the fact, and fewer still feel the appropriate emotion. No parochial ambition can, at this juncture, save the motherland. The Mahratta may not seek the good of Maharashtra, nor the Sikh of the Punjab. There must be no revival of forgotten feuds. Not in such things lies the thrill of nationality. Rather, all must unite in a common glorification of India and the whole Indian past. Each must recognise what the others have contributed. There must be thinkers able to take advantage of every accident in local history, and to turn it to the advantage of the one great cause. The passion of nationality was so strong in the Punjab, in Rajputana, and under Shivaji, that it broke even the power of the Mogul Empire. Yet the fact that she has never had any definite and consolidated form of her own may be the critical element in the history of Bengal, to make her the welder and fuser of all the provinces today.

Such an inspiration as this is social as well as political. It is religious in the highest sense. It has to fill home, school, and market-place. There is no question therefore as to its requiring the co-operation of woman with man. For her, also, there is a new and greater orthodoxy. She must become of her own freedom that which custom now makes her. Eastern piety is often good bacteriology. Shitala, the Smallpox Goddess, is depicted as riding on the washerman's donkey, an unclean beast. But requiring to be worshipped with water and broom, and isolation of the patient. The myth is admirable. Europe can show nothing of its kind so good. But the next step is, obviously, facts at first hand. Woman must be enabled to know, think, and judge freely, on all questions such as those of food and the public health. The severe exigencies of modern labour make the old food and cooking entirely insufficient. Dyspepsia has become a national curse; yet this is certainly one of the difficulties that could be overcome. An extended choice of food-stuffs, and the alternative of simple methods of preparation, would be fully consonant with orthodoxy, which has always aimed at making the body the servant of man, and not his master.

With increasing poverty, and the tendency to break up the family into smaller groups, the career within the community-house is becoming limited. This will have to be counterbalanced by some increase of the power to consider national and communal responsibilities. The Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas, represent the culture of nationality popularised. Every ritual, every sacrament, is full of unwritten history. But the times demand a direct and simple knowledge of the fact even more than of the vehicle. To meet this demand, however, is not to attack orthodoxy, but to fulfil it, to carry it to its highest power.

There is no question here of educating an intellect hitherto left in barbarous ignorance. Only those can do vital service to the Indian woman who, in a spirit of entire

respect for her existing conventions and her past, recognise that they are but offering new modes of expression to qualities already developed and expressed in other ways under the old training. Therefore the fundamental task of grasping and conveying the inspiration of the West must be performed by Easterns for Easterns, and not by foreigners.

Nor ought the result of such a process to be in any sense denationalising. To assimilate an ideal and make our own persons a demonstration of its power—this is not imitation. A merely imitative apprehension of the West—like that of the clerk in his office, the constitutional agitator in politics, the manufacturer who knows only enough of mechanical industry for a cheek-by-jowl competition with Manchester—is indeed the parent of death to the Orient. But to achieve a living, forceful, heart-to-heart appropriation of the Western energy and its immediate re-translation into Eastern terms, is not death but life.

The East suffers, as has been said, from the very perfection of its formulæ. "Tell the truth," says the commandment in the Occident; and again, "Be courteous in thy speech." How often have we not seen crude logic struggle blindly to co-ordinate these conflicting dicta, with how many degrees of ill-success! But in the East, for more than two thousand years, people have lived under the shadow of Manu's saying: "Tell the truth, but not that which is unpleasant; tell the pleasant, but not that which is untrue." Alas, its completeness leaves nothing to be added! That unconquered space which the mind needs to bring out its fullest potentiality; that strip of wilderness to be empirically observed and reclaimed, and finally annexed to the territory of prescribed law; that sense of personal adventure on the great ocean of truth, there to encounter tempests of doubt and negation and overcome by slowly gathered knowledge only,—all these are now most attainable in the view of the Universe which is presented by Western science.

Very little that deserves the name of Education has been attempted in modern India. A machine has been created ; an organisation stands ready. But nothing in all this represents the work of the people themselves, for ends which they spontaneously perceive to be good in themselves. Moreover, liberal ideals of what Education means are wanting. It is obvious that no system can be complete till secular culture exists in all forms and grades as does religious culture now, from that of the child playing with sense-impressions, up to the solitary student, standing on mountain-peaks of knowledge where human foot before his has never trodden, and yet finding abundance of sympathy and understanding and new stimulus again, in the social matrix out of which he climbed, when he returns to recount his vision and his wandering.

The process of creating a great nation out of the rich civilisations and faiths of an Eastern land is by no means simple. Yet there is not a single weapon that is not ready to hand. Long ages of peace (for the trifling feuds of dynasties do not disturb the fundamental peace of agricultural peoples) have somewhat puerilised the military factors in the faiths. Yet still the fencing is exhibited at the Mohurrum ; still the weapons are carried in procession at the feast of Durga ; still the great Kayastha* families of Bengal and the Kshatriyas of Rajputana practise the annual Worship and Tribute of the Sword. And still the women throng to the temples with lighted candles on the eve of the Birth-feast of the War-Lord in December, to make it the most imposing in the year. A still more extraordinary paradox lies in the fact that it is India the peaceful, the patient, the entirely submissive, which possesses the most militant and stirring of all the world's Evangels—the Gospel of the Blessed One, uttered from a war-chariot on the actual field of battle.

* Kayastha families—The Kayasths are the second caste of Bengal. They claim descent from the old Kshatriya, or military caste, but the authenticity of this genealogy is disputed.

There is another feature necessary to the making of a great people—a sense of community among all classes. Sharp distinction of races and manners has made the pariahs of the South a byword among the nations, and the very name of India a synonym for caste as opposed to nationality. Yet even in the South, and amongst these same pariahs, the effort has been made. The whole life of Ramanuja, the great religious leader, was as passionate an offering to the despised and rejected as that of the Teacher of Galilee is represented to have been. Even here, then, the national consolidation sounds no new note in Hindu ears. Islam is nothing if not a great mission of fraternity. Guru Nanak in the North,* and Ramanuja in the South,† have preached the same doctrine in words and lives made ever memorable. And if once the mother-heart of India can grasp the meaning and necessity of these incidents in its own history, we shall see all barriers broken, all difficulties overcome, and a new age inaugurated that shall be at once the flowering-point and blossom of all the realisations of the past.

But how do we propose that Indian women shall grasp an idea of such vastness as this of Nationality? How are they to acquire the knowledge necessary to define it? And how are they to grow in clear and accurate mastery of essential facts? Is it to be expected that the conventional channels of their education—the Homeric singers who chant the epics from door to door—is it to be expected that these shall transform themselves at a stroke from pious rhapsodists into heroic bards, chanting of nationality? No, it is clear enough that such a change could only befall them as result, not cause, of some great upheaval, from which the nation herself had emerged radiant, victorious, impressing herself upon the imaginations of her own children for

* Guru Nanak in the North—Guru Nanak was the first of the ten leaders or Gurus who formed the Sikh nation—the people of the Punjab. He was born 1469.

† Ramanuja in the South—A saint and teacher of marvellous love and mercy. He lived in the twelfth century.

ages to come. But the spring of such an upheaval, where is that to be found?

In answer to such questions we can only assure ourselves that when the world is ripe for some epochal idea—as the Indian world is surely ripe today—that idea pours itself in from all sides upon the waiting consciousness. The very stones speak it, and the timbers out of the wall cry out and answer them; some immense struggle for the common good precipitates itself; idea and struggle act and react, each throwing the other into greater distinctness, till the goal of both is finally achieved.

This is the more true in these days of telegraphy and letter-writing, of a common language and cheap print. A process which in Ashoka's India would have taken at least two hundred years, may now be accomplished in a single decade. And wherever a word of English goes, the national idea constitutes for itself the necessity of an apostolate. No one can say exactly how it will come to birth among the women. Some will catch it for themselves. Some will gather it from the men. Some are possessed of it already. But it is certain that woman, with her determinately synthetic interests, will refuse long to be balked of her right to consider things as a whole. The interest of the mother is ever with the future. Woman will readily understand that a single generation of accomplished defeat is sufficient to divorce a whole race from its patrimony; and she will determine, and effectively determine, that the lot of her own sons shall be victory, and not surrender.

And if once the Oriental woman seize the helm of the ship in this fashion, solving the problems of her whole country, whom is it suggested that she shall afterwards petition for the redress of her own grievances?

VII

THE INDIAN SAGAS

UNSEEN, but all-pervasive, in the life of every community, is the great company of the ideals. No decalogue has half the influence over human conduct that is exercised by a single drama or a page of narrative. The theory of chivalry interests us, but the Idylls of the King help to mould our character.

The whole of history, in so far as it may be known, is the common possession of the race ; but, in addition to this, every language makes its own contribution of literary creations, and national custom determines the degree in which these shall become available to all classes of the community, thereby reacting upon the national type. Few have considered how much might be done to ennoble and dignify common life in England by a wider dispersion of the love for Shakespeare. As it is, the Bible being the only book that is used in this sense, the careers and opinions of a few Syrian shepherds are apt to be more potent among us than that great Brutus, Desdemona, Horatio and their kindred, who are offspring of the genius of our countryman, and in some sense therefore the fruit of English civic life itself.

It is said that in Greece the poetry of Homer and Euripides is known amongst the poorer classes to this day ; and certain it is that the Catholic Church has done a great and little-understood service, in bringing the lives of the saints of all countries to bear upon the development of each. Every man habitually measures himself against some model, therefore every addition to the range of available types is to be welcomed. A king feels himself to be one of a class of royal persons who must be not only authoritative but also picturesque in their behaviour. And,

whether he likes it or not, by this standard he knows himself to stand or fall. His very rank forces his pattern upon him. Amongst those of smaller place and greater personal freedom, capacity more readily shows its own complexion. Some of us, were our commonplace faculties touched with divine fire, would find our destiny in the qualities of the ideal merchant and administrator. That peculiar form of integrity, dignity, and wisdom that belongs to such a function would prove to be ours, or attainable by us. But although this is probably the commonest logical issue in English national life at present, it does not follow that every Englishman is fitted to achieve it. Here and there, especially perhaps among the Celtic contingent, we find one born for the quite different goal of perfect knighthood. Loyalty to leader and comrade, sympathy for the oppressed, far-shining fearlessness and love of freedom, are traits characteristic of an age of chivalry; and persons who embody them represent such a period, it being neither more nor less admirable than that of merchant-prince and caravan-chief. The potentialities of one man lead towards sainthood, of another to poetry, of a third to science or mechanics. One gravitates into leadership, another as naturally becomes disciple. One enjoys knowledge, another ignorance.

Were all of us developed to our own utmost we may take it that every place in life would be filled, every part in the world-drama played, but by men and women of such ripe and determined personality that we could no more confuse one with the other than we could mistake the conduct of Helen of Troy for that of Elizabeth of Hungary, or hers for that of Faust's Gretchen.

We have to notice, moreover, that in European life only the born idealist is deeply influenced by any of the miscellaneous characters of history and literature. Religion alone amongst us can exercise this compelling power on a large scale. And this is related to the fact that only religion gives ideals themselves as motives. Circumstances

have in many cases offered such a setting that a life has been forced into brilliance and distinction, but the self-born intention of the saints could never be wholly fulfilled. Iphigenia could hardly have refused her sacrifice. Joan of Arc, on the contrary, must always have felt that the sword of Michael might have been held still more stainless and with a greater courage. It is this fact that gives to the ideals of religion their supreme power of individuation. We must remember also that they differ from others in making a universal appeal. The girl who aimed at becoming Portia would be guilty of vanity: she whose model is the Blessed Virgin receives the respect of all. To imitate Socrates would be a miserable affectation: to imitate the religious hero is regarded as a common duty.

It may seem impossible to dower the heroes and heroines of literature with this projective energy of the lives of saints; but in India, as to some extent in Iceland, the feat has been accomplished. For India is also one of the saga-lands. At every lull in her history we may hear the chanting of her bards, and the joy of her people in the story of their past. The long twilight of the North is no better adapted to the growth of such a literature than the deep and early night of the South. In verandahs and courtyards, with the women concealed behind screens at the back, it has been the Indian fashion for hundreds of years through the winter months to gather at dusk round the seat of the Wandering Teller, and listen hour after hour to his stirring theme. Surrounded by lights and flowers, gay carpets and burning incense, there is in his performance a mixture of reading, song, and story. It is something of opera, sermon and literature all in one.

Ever since the commencement of our era the Hindu people have possessed in their present forms two great poems, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.* The first of these is their Wars of Troy, their Heimskringla, their

* The theory of the dates of the Mahabharata and Ramayana put forward in this chapter is that of Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt.

Morte d'Arthur. That is to say, it is the book of the Deeds and the Wars of the Heroes. Thanks to the long-established culture of the race, and the prestige which all literature enjoys as "sacred," the Mahabharata is to this day the strongest influence in the shaping of the lives and ambitions of Hindu boys.

The battle which it describes took place, if at all, very nearly fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ. It lasted many days, and the field of combat was called Kurukshetra, being situated on that great plain near Delhi where critical moments in the history of India have been so often decided. For many a century after Kurukshetra the wandering bards all over India sang of the great battle ; and when any new theme claimed their creative powers, it had to be recounted as if originally told by one of the heroes to another at some particular moment in the course of the main narrative. In this way the heart's heart of the whole poem, the Bhagavad Gita (a title translated by some scholars as "Gospel of the Bhagavatas") brings an interesting instance of double drama with it. The Gita consists in itself of a dialogue between a young Chieftain and Krishna, the Divine Personage who is acting as his charioteer, at the moment of the opening of the eighteen days' combat. But the device which enables the conversation to be given in detail is the picture of an old blind king, head of one of the rival houses, seated some miles away, and attended in his anxiety by a man of what is called Yogic, or hyper-æsthetic, that is, psychic sense, who utters to him every word as it is spoken.

The exquisite story of Savitri, similarly, is told by a Rishi, or great sage, to Yudhishtira, at the close of day, during the banishment of the five Pandavas to the forest.

On this plan, more than half the country-side tales of Northern India could be woven into the Mahabharata when it was first thrown into form by some unknown hand, three or four centuries before Christ. It underwent its final recension not more than two or three hundred years later—

a possible fifteen hundred years after the occurrence of the events which are its central theme. It is easy to see that this saga fulfils thus all the conditions of great epic poetry. The stories that it tells have been worked over by the imagination of singers and people for hundreds of years. They have become simple, direct, inevitable. They are spoken out of the inmost heart of a nation not yet dreaming of self-consciousness. They are nothing if not absolutely sincere.

Comparing the Mahabharata with the Iliad and Odyssey, we find it less formed, less highly-wrought ; more amorphous, but also more brilliant and intense. To quote a great writer on Indian thought—"Outline is entirely lost in colour."

These characteristics do not hold good to the same extent of the second Indian epic, the Ramayana, which has a closely-worked motive running throughout. This poem—the tale of the Exile of Sita and Rama—received its present form not long after the Mahabharata, early in the Buddhist period. It is supposed that under Buddhist influence the monastic life had come to be so honoured that the flower of the nation were drawn to it, rather than to the mingled responsibilities and joys of the home. The romantic reaction in ideals which was inevitable gathered itself about the ancient theme of a princely couple of the house of Ayodhya, in whom *all* that was precious in monasticism was found blended with all that was desirable in sovereignty and love. The strong and quiet story spoke straight to the heart of the people, and to this day there are no characters so beloved by the masses as those of the Ramayana, no one force that goes so far towards the moulding of Indian womanhood, as the ever-living touch of the little hand of that Sita who is held to have been Queen of Ayodhya thousands of years ago.

The Ramayana, then, is a love-story which grew up and came to its flowering in the beginning of the Christian era. But it is unlike all other romances of that early epoch

in the subtlety and distinctiveness of its various characters, and in the complexity of its interpretation of life. For though humanity itself may differ little from age to age, we have been accustomed to look for a definite growth in its literary self-reflection. We expect primitive poetry to be preoccupied with events, portraying men and women only in bold outline, as they move with simple grandeur through their fate. We do not look to it for subtle analysis of motive, or any exact mingling of the sweet and bitter cup of the personal life. The progress of literature up to this time has been largely, as we think, the intensifying recognition of human variation within a given psychological area. And in making such a statement we take pains to eliminate from the word "progress" all sense of improvement, since Homer remains for ever superior to Browning. Simply, we find in art a parallel to the physical process by which the race moves on from strong family and communal types to a universal individual divergence. An overwhelming appreciation of spiritual content is what we have been ready in Europe to call "the modern spirit." It is a question whether the name can stand, however, when the Indian Epics become better known; for, strangely enough, in spite of their age and the heroic nature of their matter, they are permeated with this very quality. In the Ramayana especially, as incident leads to incident, we have to realise that this is no story for our amusement, but a woman's soul laid bare before us, as she climbs from steep to steep of renunciation.

Perhaps only those who are in touch with national aspiration can fully understand the roundness and plasticity of its drama. but even the most cursory reader must be struck with this insight and delicacy of the Ramayana.

It is more today than a completed work of art; it is still a means for the development of the popular imagination. Even amongst the written versions we find no two quite alike. All children are brought up on the story, yet those who can read the original Sanskrit are few in number.

To meet this fact translations have been made into various vernaculars by great poets from time to time—into Bengali, for instance, by Krittibas, and into Hindi by Tulsidas. Special incidents again have been selected and worked up into great episodes in Sanskrit, by one and another, such as Bhavabhuti in his "Exile of Sita," or Datta in the "Epic of Ravana."

In these versions the story becomes more and more clearly defined. Pulsing through every Ramayana runs the Hindu reverence for Rama as man, husband, and king. This reverence may seek new modes of expression, but it can never admit that that which is expressed was at any time less than the ideal. Yet we must remember that that ideal is in the ancient terms, Oriental rather than Occidental. It belonged to a conception of duty that placed society far above the individual, and made the perfect king seek the good of his people without any consideration for his own or his wife's happiness. The fact that made his marriage perfect was its complete demonstration that it was as possible for two as for one to devote themselves first to the general weal. For the acquiescence of Sita is given in her twenty years of silent banishment. Once during that time, says one of the regional poets, she saw her husband as he passed through the forest where she was and kept silence still. And though the incident is an addition not found in the original, it only serves to bring out more clearly the intention of the first poem, where every dumb moment of those twenty years speaks louder than words the wife's acquiescence in her husband's will.

Behind the vernacular translators stand all those old nurses and grandams on whose laps the poets themselves first heard the great tale; and it is their perfect freedom to give their own versions of each episode—as must any of us in recounting actual happenings—that keeps it fresh and living and explains its changes of tint in the hands of genius.

Without the recognition of this working of the com-

munal consciousness on the theme, there can be no complete criticism of the Ramayana, for of this are all new transcriptions of the story born. It is more or less in this fashion that the old tale is told :

Long ago, in the age of the heroes, there dwelt kings in Ayodhya, of whose race came one Rama, heir to the throne, great of heart, and goodly to look upon. And Rama was wedded to Sita, daughter of Janaka the king, fairest and purest of all the children of men. Now Rama had been trained in all knowledge and in the sports of princes, living, as was the manner of those days, in the forest, with his brother Lakshmana, in the care of a great sage. And it happened, after he was come home again and wedded with Sita, that there arose a trouble between the king his father, and one of the younger queens, Kaikeyi, who desired that her son Bharata should inherit the throne, and pleaded that her husband had once promised her whatever gift she should desire. And when one told Rama of this contention that was embittering his father's age, he replied at once by a vow to renounce the throne and retire to the forest for fourteen years. And gladly, he said, was this vow made, since it would give pleasure to Kaikeyi, his stepmother, and confer on Bharata, his younger brother, the kingdom and its wealth. And Sita, overhearing the vow, added hers to his, in spite of his entreaties that she should not quit her royal state. Lakshmana also declared that he would not be separated from his elder brother. So all three fared forth together into the great forest. Thither, shortly after, followed Bharata, saying that the king their father was now dead of grief at the wrong done his eldest son, and imploring Rama to return and take his own place in his kingdom, for Bharata had mingled no whit in the scheming of Kaikeyi. But Rama refused till the days of his vow should be ended ; after fourteen years, he said he would return and reign. Then, very reluctantly, went Bharata back to Ayodhya, but he carried with him the sandals of Rama, declaring that these should hold the throne, and

he himself sit always below them, governing in their name.

Left in the forest, the life of Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana, became that of gentle anchorites, and they grew great in all manner of woodcraft, so that the wild creatures answered to their call. But Rama and Lakshmana never ceased to remember their knighthood, holding themselves ready with sword and bow for the service of all who were in distress. It was on one of their expeditions of knight-errantry that they offended a great ogress, and brought on themselves the enmity of her powerful kinsman, Ravana the Ten-headed, king of the island of Lanka or Ceylon.

It was inevitable that some of the skalds who chanted the deeds of Rama should attach themselves specially to the character of this mythical Ravana, elaborating all connected with him. Hence, just as Hector and Andromache are amongst the most beautiful figures in the Iliad, so, in the Indian poem, is Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, one of the strongest personages, at least from a literary point of view. To this day old wives tell of an incident that has crept into no published poem. When the time came, they say, that Rama had conquered and slain his ten-headed foe, Mandodari was inconsolable that she was now a widow. Then it was declared to her that, till her husband's funeral fire was dead she should be no widow, and that that fire should burn for ever. And so, sure enough, we have only to shut our ears tight, and we hear the roaring of the flames that are burning Ravana to ashes!

For so it was, that Rama had to defeat and slay this evil king in order to recover Sita, who had been stolen from him. The story of the Taking of Sita is as beautiful as Pluto's Capture of Proserpine.

It is the close of day in the forest, and Sita is alone. Lakshmana—one of the most "perfect gentle knights" in the whole range of fiction—has left her, at her earnest entreaty that he should go to seek for Rama, but he has first drawn three circles about her with the end of his bow,

and warned her not to step outside. The sun is not yet set, however, when a Brahmin appears, ashen-clad, with matted locks, and begs for charity. Sita pleads that it is late and she is alone, imploring him to go. And this he promises to do if only first she will step outside and give him a little food. She is full of dim forebodings of evil, but pity at last gains the upper hand of fear ; she steps out of her enchanted circles to bestow alms on him ; he throws off the disguise of the Brahmin, appears as Ravana himself, and carries her off to his kingdom in his chariot. It is during the first terrible moment of the journey that Sita drops her jewels stealthily behind her, in order that those coming after may be able to trace her flight.

Surely this picture of the exiled queen, standing amidst the long shadows in her simple hut, lost in the struggle between her desire to aid and all the invisible safeguards of her womanhood, is one that deserves the brush of some great painter.

For years Sita is kept confined in Lanka, and Rama and Lakshmana, in their progress through what is depicted as the wilderness of Southern India, owe her discovery and much of their success in finally releasing her, to the services of their great ally, Hanuman, the monkey-general. It is supposed that if there be any historical foundation for the legend of the Ramayana, this name of Hanuman may refer to the chieftain of some strong aboriginal tribe. In any case, he stands today for all that is great in discipleship. Filled with the worship of Rama, he brings to his service the unquestioning obedience of a child and the genius of a man. It is in his presence and that of Lakshmana that Sita goes proudly, at her own request, through that ordeal by fire which is to prove her stainlessness, and as he dies he declares that the names of Sita and Rama will be found written on his heart.

It is now time for the return to the kingdom, and Sita and Rama go back to Ayodhya, reigning there in perfect happiness close upon a year. Then comes the great crisis

of their parting, in deference to the people's doubt of Sita. She retires to a distant forest, to live the life of a nun, under the care of Valmiki, the old hermit ; and Rama sits alone on the throne of Ayodhya for the rest of his life. Once only does he speak of his loss. His subjects desire him to take a new queen, for the performance of a state sacrifice that he cannot make alone. But here the wrath of the king blazes forth. No woman shall ever be put in Sita's place, but a golden image of her is made, and fills her part in the appointed ceremonies.

Shortly after her arrival in the forest, Sita had become the mother of twin sons, and Valmiki, their foster-father, brings these up as princes, only taking care to add to their education the knowledge of his own great poem, the Ramayana. He allows it to be supposed, also, that their mother is dead. When the boys are some twenty years of age, news goes about the country of a great religious festival to be held at the Court of Ayodhya, and the hermit makes ready to go up to it, taking his two foster-sons in the character of minstrels, and the queen.

The rest of the story is inevitable. The eyes of Rama discover his boys as they recite before him the deeds of his own past, and calling Valmiki to him, he speaks with hopeless longing the name of Sita. The old man draws her forward, and she unveils her face to her husband. At this moment, as the two look, each upon the face that has been present to every thought for twenty years, the murmur of the people's doubt is once more heard, and the cry rises from the crowd, "Let her be tried by fire!"

No woman's pride could brook this renewed insult. Sita, the proud, the silent, the stainless, cries out for death. At her words, the ground opens, a chariot appears, and in the arms of her Mother Earth she is withdrawn from the world of men. Rama waits only to bestow the kingdom on his sons, and then plunges into the forest, to be for ever lost to humanity.

The story of the Mahabharata would be less easy to recount. Mighty warriors, beautiful women, and great saints move to and fro across its scenes in a glittering *mêlée*. The local colour is rich to a fault. The poem abounds in descriptions of social customs, domestic comfort, the fashions of old armour and similar details. But it is in the conception of character which it reveals that it becomes most significant. Bhishma, the Indian Arthur, is there, with his perfect knighthood and awful purity of soul. Lancelot is there—a glorified Lancelot, whose only fall was the utterance of a half-truth once, with purpose to mislead—in the person of the young king, Yudhishtira. And Krishna, the Indian Christ, is there, in that guise of prince and leader of men that has given him the name in India of “The Perfect Incarnation.” One of the rival houses consists of a family of no less than a hundred children, so that the multiplicity of persons and incidents is best left to the imagination. Yet certain main features belong to the treatment of all characters alike. For the attention of the poet-chronicler is fixed on the invisible shackles of selfhood that bind us all. He seems to be describing great events; in reality he does not for one instant forget that he is occupied with the history of souls, depicting the incidence of their experience and knowledge on the external world.

One story is typical. The young princes are taking a lesson in shooting, and a clay bird has been set up as target. One by one they are asked by their master what they see. They reply, “A bird,” “A branch supporting a bird,” and so on. Till at last he puts the question to Arjuna, one of the youngest, and receives the answer, “A bird’s head, and in that head only the eye.” The moment of the telling of this story to an Indian child is tense with feeling. For it embodies the culminating ideal of the nation, inasmuch as “Concentration of Mind” stands among Hindus for the supreme expression of that greatness which we may recognise in honour or courage or any kind of heroism.

The central character of the Mahabharata fulfils a very subtle demand. Bhishma is intended for the type of king and knight. Now, knighthood implies the striking of many blows, and kinghood the protecting of manifold and diverse interests but perfection requires that nothing shall be done from the motive of self-interest. In order, therefore, that he may display all the greatness of character that is possible to man in these relations, Bhishma is made, as heir to the throne, to renounce all rights of succession and even of marriage, at the beginning of his life, by way of setting his father free to marry a fisher-girl whom he loves, and make her son his heir.

From this point, having set aside the privileges of parent and sovereign, Bhishma is made to bear to the full the responsibilities of both ; and finally, in the energy and faithfulness of his military service, life itself can only be taken from him when he with his own lips has given instructions for his defeat. In Bhishma, therefore, we have the creation of a people who have already learnt to regard detachment as a necessary element of moral grandeur.

It is strange to us, but perfectly consistent with this point of view, that as long as Bhishma remains a militant figure in the battle of Kurukshetra he is acting as generalissimo for what he regards as the worse cause of the two. He has done his best to prevent the war, but when it is determined on, he sets himself to obey his sovereign, in the place that is his own. He is filled, as the Indian poet represents him, with supernatural assurance that his side must lose, yet he strikes not a single blow either more or less for this consideration. In like manner it is told of Krishna that after he has done his utmost for peace in the interests of justice, he is approached by both parties for his aid, and that such is the calmness of his outlook on life that he submits the matter to a moral test. To one claimant he will give his armies ; the other he will serve in person unarmed, he says, leaving the choice to themselves. It is clear that the man whose greed and ambition are

plunging whole nations into war will not have the spiritual insight to choose the Divine Person for his champion, rather than great hosts. And he does not.

Such stories illustrate the Hindu endeavour to understand every man's relation to a given situation, and to read in conflicting lines of conduct that same irresistible necessity which, acting from within, hurls each one of us upon his fate. In this endeavour lies the real secret of that tolerance which has so puzzled observers in the Indian people. Not only has there never been religious persecution among Hindus, but the sceptic, the atheist, or the Christian missionary is as free to preach on the steps of the temple as the believing priest. The European correlative of the trait is found in the dramatist or novelist of genius who can represent the motives of opposing sides so as to draw equally upon our sympathy ; but this has always been an exceptional ability with us, and not a common attitude of mind. In the Mahabharata itself the most perfect expression of such reconciliation of opposites is perhaps found in the story of Shishupal, the enemy of Krishna. Shishupal's mother had won Krishna's promise that her son might sin against him a hundred times, and yet be forgiven. But this cup of error was already full, when his crowning blasphemy occurred. The occasion was that of the offering of certain honours to the Chief of Knights. Krishna, in right of his divinity, had already been named, and the decision that to him should the sacrifice be made was spoken. To the deep-rooted hostility of Shishupal, however, this was unendurable. He broke out into indignant protest. In what sense, he asked, was Krishna greatest of the knights? Was not Bhishma present? Was not Yudhishtira their liege? Let the honours be paid to one of these.

Shocked and outraged, every one looked to Bhishma to punish the impiety ; but that aged clansman's face was turned towards the Avatar. Then, as all waited in suspense, from behind the Blessed Knight flashed forth the

bright discus of Vishnu, and striking the helmet of Shishupal clove him through, even to the ground. And lo, before their eyes, the soul of that sinful one came forth like a mass of flame, and passed over and melted into the feet of Krishna. "For even the enemies of God go to salvation," says the old chronicler, "by thinking much upon Him." A later increment of explanation makes the point still clearer. It had happened in some previous age that a great and enlightened spirit had fallen under a curse—had strayed, that is to say, into those circles of destiny that would involve him in human birth. And the All-Merciful, being touched with pity, offered him the path of return through seven births as the friend of God, or three as His enemy. The second alternative was his instant choice, and he became in one life Ravana, the foe of Rama ; in another, a certain persecuting king ; and in the third, this Shishupal, now once more absorbed into Eternal Bliss.

Few characters in literature can rank with the heroic figure of young Karna. Dark with anger, but perfect in chivalry, he resents to the death a slight levelled at his birth, yet turns in the midst of princely acclaims to salute reverently the aged charioteer supposed to be his father. Full of a palpitating humanity is Draupadi, the Pandava Queen. Beautiful and high-spirited as she is, she has all a woman's inability to keep a secret, and her foolish boastfulness almost betrays the heroes before their time is ripe. The strongest attraction of such figures is always the actuality. There is nothing incredibly exalted about them, but good and evil are entwined in their natures, strong and heroic though they be, as in us all.

The end of Bhishma is like that of some ancient Norseman. Lying on the field of battle where he fell, he refuses to be moved, and asks only for a bed and pillow such as are fit for knightly bowmen. One of the young chiefs divines his meaning, and, stepping forward, shoots arrows into the earth till what was desired has been provided. And on his bed of arrows Bhishma dies.

Such are some of the characters who form the ideal world of the Hindu home. Absorbed in her "worship of the Feet of the Lord," the little girl sits for hours in her corner, praying, "Make me a wife like Sita! Give me a husband like Rama!" Each act or speech of the untrained boy rushing in from school, may remind some one, half-laughing, half-admiring, of Yudhishtira or Lakshmana, of Karna or Arjuna, and the name is sure to be recalled. It is expected that each member of the family shall have his favourite hero, who will be to him a sort of patron saint, and may appear as the centre of the story, if he is bidden to recount it. Thus, when one tells the Ramayana, Ravana is the hero; another makes it Hanuman; only the books keep it always Sita and Rama. And it is well understood that the chosen ideal exercises a preponderant influence over one's own development. None could love Lakshmana without growing more full of gentle courtesy and tender consideration for the needs of others; he who cares for Hanuman cannot fail to become more capable of supreme devotion and ready service. And justice itself must reign in the heart that adores Yudhishtira.

The character of Bhishma in the Mahabharata as that of Sita in the Ramayana is a proof that Indian philosophy was completed before the Epics. But that philosophy itself, we must remember, was directly related to the common life of common folk. Only this fact can explain the recognition and welcome of such conceptions by the whole nation. Let us look at the love story of Sita. Her feeling is consecrated by the long years of poverty filled with worship, in the forest. When it is thus established, she undergoes the dreary persecution and imprisonment at the hands of Ravana. Every moment finds her repeating the name of Rama, her faith unshaken in her ultimate rescue. At the end she herself suggests the fiery ordeal, and goes through it with dauntless courage.

Then for one short year, as wife, and queen, and future mother, she tastes of entire earthly happiness, only

to be swept away from her home again in the sternness of her husband's will for his people's good. Through twenty years of acquiescent silence she keeps now, in all its fulness, that love that sent her first to share Rama's exile in the forest, and yet the perfection of her pride of womanhood is shown when she dies of the insult conveyed in a spoken doubt.

We believe vaguely that the power to renounce distinguishes the human from all life known to us ; but a conception of rerunciation so searching, so austere as this appals us. It is clear that a commanding philosophy of self-discipline lay behind, or the poet's hand could not have been so remorseless ; but it is also clear that that philosophy was living in the heart and effort of the people, or Sita and Rama could not have been so loved.

We ask in vain what can have been the life of India before she found refuge and direction in such dreams as these. For today it has become so one with them that all trace of the dawn before they were is lost. They penetrate to every part of the country, every class of society, every grade of education. Journeying in the mountains at night-fall, one came upon the small open hut of the grain-dealer, and saw, round a tiny lamp, a boy reading the Ramayana in the vernacular to a circle of his elders. At the end of each stanza they bowed their heads to the earth, with the chant, "To dear Sita's bridegroom, great Rama, all hail!" The shopkeeper in the city counts out his wares to the customer, saying, "One (Ram), two (Ram), three (Ram)," and so on, relapsing into a dream of worship when the measuring is done. Nay, once at least it is told how at the "Four (Ram)" the blessed name was enough to touch the inmost soul of him who uttered it, and he rose up then and there and left the world behind him. The woman terrified at thunder calls on "Sita Ram!" and the bearers of the dead keep time to the cry of "Rama Nama Satya hai!" ("The name of the Lord alone is real!")

What philosophy by itself could never have done for

the humble, what the laws of Manu have done only in some small measure for the few, that the Epics have done through unnumbered ages and are doing still for all classes alike. They are the perpetual Hinduisers, for they are the ideal embodiments of that form of life, that conception of conduct, of which laws and theories can give but the briefest abstract, yet towards which the hope and effort of every Hindu child must be directed.

We are in the habit of talking of the changeless East ; and, though there is a certain truth in the phrase, there is also a large element of fallacy. One of the most striking features of Hindu society during the past fifty years has been the readiness of the people to adopt a foreign form of culture and to compete with those who are native to that culture on equal terms. In medicine, in letters, in science, even in industry, where there has been opportunity, we are astonished at the intellectual adaptability of the race. Is the mere beckoning of the finger of the nineteenth century enough to subvert predilections as old as Babylon and Nineveh? we ask, amazed. By no means. Such changes as these are merely surface deep. The hauteur of the East lies in the very knowledge that its civilisation has nothing to fear from the social and intellectual experiments of its youngsters, or even from such complete changes of mental raiment as amongst newer peoples would constitute revolutions of thought, for the effort of Eastern civilisation has always been to the solitary end of moralising the individual, and in this way it differs essentially from Western systems of culture, which have striven rather for the most efficient use of materials. If Alexander, capable of organising the largest number of his fellows most effectually for a combination of military, commercial, and scientific ends in that most difficult form, an armed expedition over hostile territory—if Alexander be taken as the type of Occidental genius, then, as the culminating example of the Oriental, we must name Buddha ; for clear and intense conceptions of perfect renunciation and inner illumination are the

hidden springs of Hindu living, around which the home itself is built. These it is of which the Epics are the popular vehicles, these it is which give its persistence to Indian civilisation through the centuries, and this is why no examination syllabus, no alien's kindly inspiration, no foreigner's appreciation or contempt, can ever hope to have one iota of permanent influence on the national education at its core.

Reforming sects are very apt to reject what is much cultivated amongst the orthodox—the folklore that has grown up round the Epics in the Puranas and other literature. But to the poems themselves all cling fast. None fail to realise that they bear the mark of supreme literature, and so they remain a constant element, capable, like all great interpretations of life, of infinitely varied application, a treasure greater, because more greatly used, than any Anger of Achilles, or Descent into Purgatory, amongst them all.

VIII

NOBLESSE OBLIGE: A STUDY OF INDIAN CASTE

A GRAVER intellectual confusion than that caused by the non-translation of the word *Caste** there has seldom been. The assumed impossibility of finding an equivalent for the idea in English has led to the belief that there is something mysterious and unprecedented in the institution. People become bewildered as to whether it is a religious or a social obligation. Every one demands of the reformer a conflict with it. The whole question grows obscure and irritating.

Yet all this time we have had an exact synonym for the word, and the parallel is the closer since our word connotes the same debatable borderland between morals and good taste. *Caste* ought to stand translated as *honour*. With Oriental quaintness, it is true, India has given a certain rigidity to this idea, but her analysis of the thing itself is as profound as it is acute.

Our conduct is commonly governed far more by social habit than by considerations of right and wrong. When the tide of the ethical struggle has once set in over some matter, we may regard ourselves as already half-lost. Why are my friend's open letters absolutely safe in my presence, though I am longing for the information they convey? Why can money given for one purpose not be used for another, when all the canons of common sense and expediency urge that it should? Who will confess to an effort in speaking the truth at any cost whatever? Why, when I am annoyed, do I not express myself in the language of Billingsgate? To each of which questions one would reply,

* The word "*Caste*" is of Portuguese Origin.

somewhat haughtily, that the point was one of honour, or, that such happened to be the custom of one's class.

Yet if we examine into the sanction which honour can invoke there is nothing beyond a rare exercise of the power of ostracism. The Church excommunicates, the law imprisons, but society merely "cuts" the offender in the street. Yet which of these three inflicts the deepest wound? It is as true of London as of Benares that caste-law is the last and finest that controls a man. For it comes into operation at that precise point where tribunals fail. It takes cognisance of offences for which no judge could inflict penalties. It raises standards and demands virtues that every man will interpret according to the stringency of his pride, and yet that no one can feel himself to have wholly fulfilled. And it does all this without once permitting the sensation of merit. Having done all, one remains an unprofitable servant. For no one would count the punctual discharge of debts (all debts are debts of honour), the hauteur that brooks no stain upon the name, the self-respect that builds the whole ethical code upon itself, as religious observances. These things were due, we say, to our birth or blood, or position before men. It is true that their non-fulfilment would leave a stain upon the conscience, and it is also true that the attempt to work out the obligations of honour must be the immediate test of the sincerity of one who proposes to lead a life of greater devotion and earnestness than common. Still, caste is not the same thing as personal piety, and perhaps for this reason complete renunciation of its claims and benefits is essential in India to the monastic life.

There is another point about our Western conception of *noblesse oblige*. Few as the persons may be who could formulate their sentiment, the fact pervades the whole of the social area. Each class has its own honour. If honourable employers feel compelled to think of the comfort of their workers, honourable servants feel equally compelled to keep their lips shut on their masters' affairs, and either

responds to an appeal in the name of his ideal. The priest may find the honour of his profession in conflict with that of the detective, but all the world will uphold the faithfulness of both. The efficient realisation of his ideals by the schoolmaster will involve an occasional pardon, even of a grave offence, if he conceives forgiveness to be the best formative influence which at the moment he can command. The very same effort in the merchant will require a distribution of punishment that is rigorous and just, since order, integrity, and unfailing promptitude—not the development of human character—are his ends. Thus every man, in every critical act of his life, calls silently for the judgment of his peers and refuses all other.

The weaknesses of caste everywhere are manifold. For society, like the individual, is always apt to insist upon the tithing of mint and rue, and to neglect the weightier matters of the law. But it is not usually the martyr who marks its worst failure. He is the white dove cast forth by crows, that is, a member of a higher tried by consensus of the lower castes. We have here a case of government usurping the functions of society, much as if the headmaster should exercise authority in a dispute among boys. For it is essential to the very idea of honour that every caste should be autonomous. The true failure of caste occurs whenever it establishes such an ascendancy of social opinion over the individual's conscience that his power of advance is impeded and he becomes less of a man, or less really beneficent socially, by remaining more of a gentleman—a state of things which is not uncommon among ourselves. For we may postulate that all ideals are helpful only in so far as they subserve a man's manhood and freedom, and destructive the instant they render him less able to express his own inmost will. It is he, therefore, who ought to have been a martyr and chose ease, who is the true caste victim, not the hero of an *auto-da-fé*.

That this is a real danger, we all know. What Protestant has never exalted the creed of his sect over freedom

of thought? What Catholic has never put comfort above spirituality? What politician has not preferred party above principle? What student of science has never been prejudiced against new truth? And if we look without, where do we not see the mere breaker of conventionality treated as outside brotherhood? Where do we not find persons conforming to usages that displease them, merely because they would be inconvenient to dispute?

A certain sweeping justification of such facts may be urged, inasmuch as there are circumstances under which the cohesion of the group is well worth the sacrifice of the liberty of a few individuals. And the habitual outrage of custom without reason is perhaps rightly held to be as anti-social as any felony. In the last resort, however, social pressure must be held in bounds, for nothing should interfere with a man's right to try himself, or sap the roots of his independence. And society is a vague and irresponsible magistrate, with so little illumination as to his own purposes and tendencies that he frequently mistakes the pioneers of his march for deserters and orders the stoning of prophets, whose sepulchres and monuments will be erected by his children.

The question of the inner trend or intention of the social movement must form the law in whose name all doubtful cases are tried. And, while it is never easy to determine the point accurately for one's own people, in the case of the Hindu race the supreme purpose of their past evolution is quite apparent. Even a cursory reading of the Laws of Manu displays Indian society as united in a great co-operation for the preservation of the ancient race-treasure of Sanskrit literature.

The feeling must have grown up when the Vedas alone required conserving, and the families entrusted with various portions were encouraged to become in all ways dependent on the community, that every energy might be devoted to the task in hand. This is the real meaning of prostration at the feet of Brahmins, of the great merit

acquired by feeding them, and of the terror of the crime of killing one. It is not the man, it is race-culture, that is destroyed by such an act.

As ages went on and the Upanishads and other things were added to the store, that which was hitherto memorised became entrusted to writing. The Vedas became *Scriptures*—and now the *methods* of psychology, of astronomy, of mathematics made themselves felt as integral parts of the Aryan treasure, in common with Sanskrit literature. This widened the conception of culture without liberalising the social bearings of the question, and the Brahmin caste continued to be recognised as the natural guardians of all learning, the old religious compositions being still regarded as the type.

If we ask how it happened that the Aryan folk became so early conscious of their responsibility in the matter of Sanskrit letters, there can be only one answer. They found themselves in the presence of other and unlearned races. This point brings us to the question of the origin of strongly differentiated castes in general. In its nature, caste is, as we have seen, honour; that is to say, an ideal sentiment by whose means society spontaneously protects itself from some danger against which it is otherwise defenceless. For instance, life in Texas having been for many years dependent on the possession of horses, and safeguards against the horse-thief being few and difficult, he came to be the object of unprecedented social abhorrence. Horse-stealing was the last crime a lost soul would stoop to. In a similar way, as some think, may have grown up the Indian feeling about cow-killing. If the cattle, in time of stress, were killed for food, agriculture would be unable to take a new start, and so a people accustomed to eat beef grasped the situation perhaps, and renounced the practice. But since these two sentiments pervade whole nations, they are not exactly what we are accustomed to think of as caste, inasmuch as in the latter there is a distinct gradation of rank connected with the sentiment. In the term "blackleg"

applied by trade-unionists to competing forms of labour, we have an instance of the kind we want. Here we have an occupational group giving birth immediately to the ideal which is necessary to its safety. Throughout the worlds of love, of war, and of work, indeed, honour is an instinct of the very greatest potency. How few men, after all, desert to an enemy as spies! How strong is the feeling of class-obligation amongst servants and working men! This element is very evident in the Indian industrial castes, which are often simply hereditary trade-unions. No Englishman is so powerful, nor is any Hindu so hungry, that one man could be bribed to take up the trade of another. Nothing would induce the dairyman, for instance, to take charge of a horse, or a laundryman to assist the household.

But the very strongest, and perhaps also ugliest, of all possible roots of caste is the sense of race, the caste of blood. We have an instance of this in the animosity that divides white men from negroes in the United States, and we have other instances, less talked of, all up and down our vast British possessions. There is probably no other emotion so inhuman which receives such universal sympathy as this. For it is fundamentally the physical instinct of a vigorous type to protect itself from fusion. And both sides participate in the revulsion. Here we have the secret of rigid caste, for the only rigid caste is hereditary, and of hereditary caste the essential characteristic is the refusal of intermarriage.

Granting, then, what could not well be denied, that the Aryan forefathers found themselves in India face to face with inferior and aboriginal races, what may we gather, from the nature of the caste system today, to have been the elements of the problem, as they more or less clearly perceived it?

Those elements we may infer to have been four in number :

1. They desired above all things to preserve the honour of their daughters from marriage with lower and

savage peoples. Exclusion from marriage with any but one's own caste became the rigorous rule, the penalty fell on the father and the family that permitted a woman to go unguarded on this head. To this day, if a son marry beneath caste he degrades himself; but if a daughter be wrongly given, the whole family becomes outcasted.

2. They seem to have desired to preserve the aboriginal races, on the one hand from extermination, and on the other from slavery of the person—two solutions which seemed later the only alternatives to Aryan persons in a similar position!

Those aborigines, therefore, who became dependent on the Aryan population, had their definite place assigned them in the scale of labour, and their occupations were secured to them by the contempt of the superior race.

We must not forget, in the apparent harshness of this convention, its large factor of hygienic caution. The aborigines were often carrion-caters, and always uncleanly in comparison with their neighbours. It was natural enough, therefore, that there should be a refusal to drink the same water, and so on.

On the other hand, it is one of the mistakes of caste everywhere, that it institutionalises and perpetuates an inequality which might have been minimised. But we must not forget, in the case of the Indian system, the two greater evils which were avoided altogether.

3. The Aryans realised very clearly that it was not only their race but also their civilisation that must be maintained in its purity. The word Aryan implies one acquainted with the processes of agriculture, an *earer* of the ground, to use an Elizabethan word—accustomed therefore to a fixed and industrialised mode of living, evidently in contrast to others who were not.

Fire and the processes of cooking and eating food are easily distinguished as the core of the personal life and establishment in a climate where habits can at any time be made so simple as in India. It is these that can never be

dispensed with, though they may be arranged for tonight in a palace, and tomorrow in the jungle under a tree.

In view, then, of the necessity of safeguarding the system of manners, grew up the restrictions against eating with those of lower caste, or allowing them to touch the food and water of their betters. The fact that the Aryan could eat food cooked by Aryan hands alone, implied that the strictest preliminaries of bathing had been complied with.

By a continuous crystallisation, all caste laws—from being the enunciation of broad canons of refinement as between Aryan and non-Aryan—came to be the regular caste-barriers between one class and another of the same race. In this way they lost their invidious character.

It is undeniable that this caste of the kitchen, so wittily named “don't touchism” by a modern Hindu leader, lends itself to abuse and becomes an instrument of petty persecution more readily than the intermarriage laws. Some of the saddest instances of caste-failure have occurred here. Nevertheless, the original intention remains clear and true, and is by no means completely obscured, even with the lapse of ages.

4. It was, however, in their perception of the fourth element of the problem that the early Aryans triumphantly solved the riddle of Humanity. They seem to have seen clearly that amongst the aborigines of India themselves were many degrees of social development already existent, and that these must be preserved and encouraged to progress.

From such a comprehension of the situation sprang the long and still growing graduation of non-Aryan castes, some of which have established themselves in the course of ages within the Aryan pale. Marriage, for instance, is an elaborate and expensive social function in the highest classes. But as we descend it becomes easier, till amongst the Baghdis, Bauris, and other aboriginal castes, almost any connection is ratified by the recognition of women and

children. This is a point in which Eastern scores over Western development; for in Europe the Church has caused to be reckoned as immoral what might, with more philosophy, have been treated as the lingering customs of sub-organised race-strata.

As is the nature of caste, mere social prestige constitutes a perpetual stimulus and invitation to rise, which means in this case to increase the number of daily baths and the cleanliness of cooking, and to restrict to purer and finer kinds the materials used for food, approximating continually toward the Brahmin standard. For is it not true that *noblesse oblige*? This fact it is that makes Hinduism always the vigorous living banyan, driving civilisation deeper and wider as it grows, and not the fossilised antiquity superficial observers have supposed.

Such, then, is the historic picture of the rise of caste. The society thus originated fell into four main groups:

- (1) Priests and learned men—the Brahmins;
- (2) The royal and military caste;
- (3) Professional men and merchants—the middle-class or *bourgeoisie*, as we say in Europe; and
- (4) The working people, or Shudras, in all their divisions.

(Of the second group only the Rajput branch remains now stable. For the military caste, finding itself leaderless under the Maurya dynasty, is said to have become literary, and is certainly now absorbed in the *bourgeoisie*.)

This functional grouping, however, is traversed in all directions nowadays by the lines of caste. In the mountains it is no uncommon thing to find the Brahmin acting as a labourer, impressed as a coolie, or working as a farmer, and in the cities he belongs largely to the professional ranks. Many of India's most learned and active sons, on the other hand, belong to the third and even fourth divisions. And the new castes, which are of constant growth, are less easy than the old to classify.

Every new community means a new caste in India.

Thus we have the Mohammedan, the Christian, and the modern reform castes—of all of which one peculiarity is non-belief in the caste principle!—as well as others. And who shall determine, for instance, to which of the four main grades Mohammedanism, with its inclusion of peasant, citizen, and prince, belongs?

The fact is, if a man's mode of life be acceptable to his own caste-fellows, the rest of Indian society has no quarrel with it. And this autonomy of castes it is which is the real essential for social flexibility and fundamental equality. As bearing on this point, few utterances have ever been so misquoted as the great dictum of Buddha, that "he who attains to God is the true Brahmin." For this is misquoted whenever it is made to imply that the Brahmin holds in any sense a monopoly in religion. No possible statement could be more foreign to the genius of Hinduism. When we read that shortest and greatest of India's gospels, the "Bhagavad Gita" (a poem composed by Brahmins, preserved by Brahmins, and distributed through the length and breadth of the country, always by Brahmins), we find ourselves in the presence of the most comprehensive mind that ever contemplated Hindu life. The compassion of Buddha, perhaps, looms greater across the centuries, but in dealing with social problems his very tenderness and spiritual fire make him second to Krishna, who was always calm, broad, and consistently national in his outlook. We must accept the Gita as an authoritative pronouncement on Hindu society. And the Gita rings with the constantly reiterated implication that "he who attains to God is the true *man*," while it interprets all life and responsibility as a means to this end. Thus, "Better one's own duty, though imperfect, than the duty of another well discharged. Better death in one's own duty; the duty of another brings on danger." We have to remember, too, that the Gita is made up of the very best of the Vedas and Upanishads, and was specially written for the benefit of women and the working classes, who, as destitute of classi-

cal learning, had little chance of studying these great scriptures. But its contents were to depend upon Brahmin effort for promulgation. Another witness to the fact that spirituality has always been regarded in India as the common human possession lies in the Hindu word for religion itself—Dharma, or *the man-ness* of man. This is very striking. The whole weight of the conception is shifted away from creed, much more from caste or race, to that which is universal and permanent in each and every human being. And last of all we may remember that the greatest historical teachers of Hinduism—Rama, Krishna, and Buddha, besides many of the Upanishadic period—were men of the second, or military, caste.

No, the Brahmin was never in any sense the privileged monopolist of religion: he was a common *channel* of religious lore, because his actual function was Sanskrit culture, and Sanskrit happens to be the vehicle of the most perfect religious thought that the world ever produced; but “realisation” itself has always been recognised as a very different matter from this, and, Brahmin or non-Brahmin, has been accepted wherever it appeared. The advantage that the priestly caste did undoubtedly enjoy, however, lay in the fact that in their case the etiquette of rank led directly to the highest inspiration, as the scholar’s life, even in its routine, will be nearest to that of the saint.

One peculiarity of the place of the religious life in the Indian system is that it is an inclusive term for all forms of higher individuation. Theoretically, to the Hindu mind, all genius is inspiration, the perception of unity; and the mathematics of Euclid or the sculpture of Michael Angelo would be as authentic an expression of the religious consciousness as the sainthood of Francis. Only the result of this method of interpretation is that sainthood takes precedence of all others as the commonest form of greatness. Scientific research, as in the astronomy of Bhaskaracharya and the psychology of Patanjali, has not had sufficient opportunity of securing defined and independent

scope. And literature has been yoked to the car of mythology as much as the art of mediæval Italy.

Nevertheless, India is too well acquainted with genius to forget that the caste of the spirit is beyond human limitation, often beyond recognition. It is held that the best lower men can do for that brotherhood which asserts itself in the consciousness of greatness is to give it freedom. Hence a man can always be released from social obligations if he desire to live the life of ideas, of the soul. Only, it is held that if he will not fulfil the law, neither shall he add to the burdens of the community. So he who claims to be one of the great spiritual beyond-castes must renounce family and property, relying upon the charity of men for his daily bread, and knowing well that for any work of scholarship—such as the observatories at Benares and Jeypore—a Hindu government at least would provide him ample means. It is only as long as one avails oneself of the benefits of the social structure that it is held not unreasonable to require conformity to its usages.

This renunciation is Sannyasa, the Indian form of monasticism, and Sannyasa, theories to the contrary notwithstanding, has always been open to all castes. Indeed, it is held that when the responsibilities of life are over, a man's duty is to leave the world and spend the remainder of his days in that state; and in some parts of Northern India one meets with "Tyagi Mehtars," or monastics who were by birth the lowest of the low.

Theoretically, the monk is caste-fellow of the whole world, prepared to eat with any one; and where, by sheer dint of spirituality and self-discipline, such a feeling is realised, every Hindu in India considers the broken bread of this lover of mankind as sacramental food. It is usual, too, to eat from the hands of holy men without inquiry as to their standing when in the world.

One of the most interesting points in all this to a Western mind is the difference implied and established between the caste of priests or chaplains on the one hand,

and the fact of spiritual realisation, outside all caste, on the other. Nothing in the Indian thought about life can be more striking than this. The family chaplain in Bengal may be the official teacher, but every man and woman discards his authority silently the instant they find some soul (in the world or out of it ; it may be husband or child, or the holy man living in his garden ; usually it is an ascetic), with a quickening spiritual touch upon their own. He or she then becomes the Guru, or teacher, and this relationship is made the central fact of life.

The appearance of this new teacher, when he is powerful enough to be an important social phenomenon, is the historic origin of almost all new castes. The Sikh nation was formed in this way by a succession of gurus. Chaitanya welcomed all castes to Vaishnavism and made it possible for them to rise thereby. The scavengers, too low to venture to claim either Hinduism or Mohammedanism as their own, were raised in consideration and self-respect by Guru Nanak and Lal Begi Mehtar—the last a saint of their own degree.

The preacher arises and proclaims the new idea. He gathers about him men of all classes: the educated won to the service of his thought, the ignorant swept in by the radiance of his personality. Amongst his disciples distinctions of caste break down. The whole group is stamped with his character and prestige. Eventually, if it contain a preponderance of Brahmin elements, it may take rank with the best, carrying certain individuals up with it. But if it be composed chiefly of the scum of society, it will remain little considered ; and yet, in the strength of its religious and intellectual significance may certainly claim to have progressed beyond its original point. Such is likely to be the fate of the present Christian converts. Those who are recruited from the lowest pariahs may acquire a certain prestige from their new faith and take a better place in the social scale, consequently, in centuries to come. At the same time we must not forget that forty or fifty years ago, conversions were made that undoubtedly involved

great sacrifices, and the descendants of these Christians may lose rather than gain in the long run.

Taking the history of Hinduism as a whole, we observe a great systole and diastole of caste, the Buddhist and the present Christian periods ranking as well-marked eras of fusion, while the intervening centuries are characterised by progressive definition, broken every now and then by a wave of reform which thought itself a movement towards caste abolition, but ended simply in the formation of a new group. For this is the fact in which all would-be reformations in India find at once their opportunity and their limit. It may now be taken as proved that in order to affect caste widely, the agitator would need to aim deeper than the external phenomena, at underlying spiritual impulses.

If this theory of caste be valid, then, we find that the word signifies not so much mere rank in society as the standard of honour which is associated with rank. And as the private's conduct may be governed as much as his officer's by enlightened self-respect, we have seen that honour is something which applies to the whole of society equally. Even Tennyson, it will be remembered, pictures the country youth as outvaunting Lady Clara Vere de Vere in her pride of birth. The word caste, therefore, is by no means that antithesis of *democracy* which has been so commonly assumed.

Neither, amongst a people familiar with the process of self-organisation, would it prove any barrier to efficient co-operation. For the one essential to this power is an established habit of ignoring all points of mutual difference not germane to the matter in hand. What we call good-breeding, or what India calls *caste*, ought to make this easier. For any group of men met together for a common purpose find their individual rights secured to them in this way, and are free, by age-long acceptance, from any suspicion of another's desire to interfere with them. This is a basis of strength and not of weakness; so that it seems, if Indian men and women are not at present capable of

combined action to any great degree, it is a matter of their own neglect of the habit, and not a necessary consequence of their institutions. We need not too readily accept the statement of such weakness, either, as infallible. My own observation has been that the Hindu people are capable enough of vigorous co-operation along the lines natural to them, those of the undivided family, the village community, and others. That inability which Europeans would show to face these tests, they may be expected to display before ours.

To be absolutely just, however, we must admit that the observance of caste law has entailed many foolish and irritating losses upon society during the last fifty years. We have seen that there are definite reasons, not wanting in cogency, why a man of good birth should not eat in all companies, or of food cooked by hands supposed less cleanly. Such rules, however, cannot be kept by those who, for any reason, cross the seas to Europe. This fact, more than any other detail, makes it a matter of outcasting to take the journey, and persecutions have sometimes ensued which are shocking to contemplate. A man may care little about the loss of station for his own sake, but the shoe pinches when he finds himself unable to make worthy marriages for his daughters; hence he will often submit to a heavy fine in order to buy back his position. This rouses the cupidity of ignorant and conventional persons who happen to have authority with the stay-at-home community, and such are apt to be unscrupulous in bringing about the ruin or recantation of any who resist their power. This is a series of events which does occur occasionally; but it need not be supposed that every Europe-returning Hindu who is kept at arm's length is a martyr. There is an element of distrust for the moral results of a visit to the West in the situation; and this is not altogether unreasonable. It is chiefly with regard to possibilities of political, practical, or technical education that caste deterrence is to be regretted, and it is obvious that as commu-

nities progress in the power of estimating modern conditions, they must recognise the suicidal nature of such an attitude. Yet it is curious to note here how caste may become thus a very real instrument of equality, for the power of the individual to advance is by this means kept strictly in ratio to the thinking of the society in which he lives. This fact is characteristic. The good of caste, of race, of family stands first, and only second that of the individual man or woman in India. To take another plane. Let a man of the lower castes become wealthy, and he is compelled to educate men of his own rank to marry his daughters. Thus the group to which he owes birth, vigour, and development receives from him again the benefits of his life's work. This is the exact opposite of the European device, where the upper class absorbs money, talent, and beauty from the lower, while that is continually recruited by the failures from above.

The fact that every human force is polar in its moral activity needs little demonstration in the case of social pride. Every day we see this working on the one hand for the highest idealism, on the other for revolting egotism. Social exclusiveness may be condoned, it may even be robbed of its sting; but, especially when coupled with personal exultation, it can never be made anything but vulgar-looking to the disinterested outsider. It is not to be supposed that Indian caste forms any exception to this rule of double effect. Nevertheless, it is well to understand the conditions of the sentiment, perceiving how inevitably this very thing repeats itself wherever two physically-distinguishable races are found side by side.

And it cannot be denied that great benefits as well as great evils have accrued from caste. It is an institution that makes Hindu society the most eclectic with regard to ideas in the world. In India all religions have taken refuge*—the Parsi before the tide of Mussalman conquest;

* Parsi, Jew, Christian. The Parsis took refuge in India a thousand years ago, fleeing before the Mohammedan conquest of Persia. There are ancient communities of Jews and Christians also from Asia Minor and Syria.

the Christians of Syria ; the Jews. And they have received more than shelter—they have had the hospitality of a world that had nothing to fear from the foreigner who came in the name of freedom of conscience. Caste made this possible, for in one sense it is the social formulation of defence minus all elements of aggression. Again, surely it is something that in a country conquered for a thousand years the door-keeper of a viceroy's palace would feel his race too good to share a cup of water with the ruler of all India. We do not easily measure the moral strength that is here involved, for the habit of guarding the treasure of his birth for an unborn posterity feeds a deep, undying faith in destiny in the Hindu heart. "Today here, tomorrow gone," says the most ignorant *sotto voce* as he looks at the foreigner, and the unspoken refrain of his thought is, "I and mine abide for ever." Caste is race-continuity ; it is the historic sense ; it is the dignity of tradition and of purpose for the future. It is even more : it is the familiarity of a whole people in all its grades with the one supreme human motive—the notion of *noblesse oblige*. For though it is true that all men are influenced by this principle, it is also probably true that only the privileged are very conscious of the fact. Is caste, then, simply a burden, to be thrown off lightly, as a thing irksome and of little moment?

And yet, if India is ever to regain national efficiency, this old device of the forefathers must be modified in the process,—exactly how, the Indian people themselves can alone determine. For India today has lost national efficiency. This fact there is no gainsaying. Her needs now are not what they were yesterday. The Brahmins lose distinctiveness in these days of cheap printing and widespread literacy. But this only means that the country requires multiplied methods of self-expression as the goal and summit of her national endeavour. She wants a greater flexibility, perhaps, a readier power of self-adjustment than she has ever had. But it ought to come in an

influx of consciousness of those great spiritual tides on whose surface all questions of caste and non-caste can be lifted into new and higher interrelations. Chief among all her needs is that of a passionate drawing together amongst her people themselves. The cry of home, of country, of place is yet to be heard by the soul of every Indian man and woman in Hindustan, and following hard upon it must sound the overtones of labour and of race.

Then the question of whether to walk or not in the ways of the forefathers will be lost in the knowledge of the abundant power to hew out new roads, as those fathers did before them. Has India the possibilities still left in her own nature which can bring to her such an epoch?

There are some who believe that there is no task beyond the ultimate power of the Hindu peoples to perform. The nation that has stood so persistently for righteousness through untold ages, has conserved such vast springs of vigour in itself, as must ultimately enable her to command Destiny. The far-seeing wisdom and gentleness of her old constitution may unfit her for the modern world, but they are a sure proof, nevertheless, of her possession of sufficient sense of affairs to guide her to a full development once more.

For, after all, who were these old forefathers, with their marvellous cunning? What inspired them so to construct the social framework that every act of rebellion and invasion should end henceforth only in contributing a new morsel of colour to fit into the old mosaic? Ah, who were they indeed? We may well ask, for have we not all this time been calling by their name one far greater than they, one infinitely more deserving of our reverence—the Communal Consciousness, namely, of a mighty patient people, toiling on and on through the ages up the paths of knowledge, destroying never, assimilating always, what they gain of truth and science, and hesitating only a little before fresh

developments, because they are so preoccupied with the problems of the past that they do not realise that that stage is done, and that the sun is risen today on a new landscape, confronting them with fresh perils and unthought-of difficulties?

IX

THE SYNTHESIS OF INDIAN THOUGHT

When existence was not, nor non-existence,
When the world was not, nor the sky beyond,
What covered the mist? By whom was it contained?
What was in those thick depths of darkness?

When death was not, nor immortality,
When night was not separate from day,
Then *That* vibrated motionless, one with Its own glory,
And beside *That*, nothing else existed.

When darkness was hidden in darkness,
Undistinguished, like one mass of water,
Then did *That* which was covered with darkness
Manifest Its glory by heat.

Now first arose Desire, the primal seed of mind,
[The sages have seen all this in their hearts,
Separating existence from non-existence.]
Its rays spread above, around, and below,
The glory became creative.
The Self, sustained as Cause below,
Projected, as Effect, above.

Who then understood? Who then declared
How came into being this Projected?
Lo, in its wake followed even the Gods,
Who can say, therefore, whence It came?
Whence arose this projected, and whether
sustained or not,
He alone, O Beloved, who is its Ruler in the
highest heaven knoweth,
Nay, it may be that even He knoweth it not!

I

LIKE the delicate charm that is common to honourable women ; like the distinctive greatness of saints and heroes ; like the intellectual breadth of a university city ; like all the finest things in the world in fact, Indian thought had remained till the year 1893 without a definition, and without a name. For the word Dharma can in no sense be taken as the name of a religion. It is the essential quality, the permanent, unfluctuating core, of substance,—the *man-ness* of man, *life-ness* of life, as it were. But as such it may assume any form, according to the secret of the individuality we are considering. To the artist his art, to the man of science his science, to the monk his vow, to the soldier his sovereign's name, to each believer his own particular belief—any of these, or all, may be Dharma. There is indeed another, and collective sense—somewhat akin to the English *commonwealth* or, better still perhaps, translated as *the national righteousness*—but even this does not connote a creed. It applies to that whole system of complex action and inter-action, on planes moral, intellectual, economic, industrial, political, and domestic—which we know as India or the national habit. It was for this Dharma that the Rani of Jhansi fought. By their attitude to it Pathan, Mogul, and the Englishman, are judged, each in his turn, by the Indian peasantry. As head of this system, Yudhishtira, the Indian Charlemagne, received the name by which the people know him to this day, of Dharma-Raja. And what this Dharma was, in all its bearings, is perhaps best laid down in the charge of the dying Bhishma to the future sovereigns of India, in the eighteenth book of the Mahabharata.

It is clear that such a conception is very inadequately rendered by the English word "religion." It is clear also that to dissect out and set in order the distinctively religious elements in an idea so definite at its centre, and so nebulous at its edges—claiming thereby to have defined the religion of the Indian peoples—would be a task of

extreme difficulty. It must have been in the face of just such problems that Max Müller exclaimed, "Ancient words are round, and modern square!"

As the forest grows spontaneously, of many kinds, each like all the others only in the common fact of the quest of light, and every plant having a complete right to regard its own as the chosen seed, so amongst the Hindu people, up to the twentieth century of this Christian era, grew faiths and creeds. Islam itself was scarcely an exception to this rule. For the spirit that makes a township, after learning English, differentiate itself sharply into Hindu and Mohammedan social cliques, is of modern growth. It appears to be a result of that false interpretation which reads the history of India as an account of the struggle between the two ideas. In the life of the villages there is no such strong distinction. In Bengal and Behar, the sons of Hindu and Mohammedan gentlemen grow up in the closest fraternity and fellowship. In the North-West Provinces they mingle their names. In the Moslem zenanas of the same districts the Hindu babies of the village are privileged guests. Every Hindu guru accepts Mohammedan as well as Hindu disciples. Every Mohammedan fakir is sought by Hindu as well as Mohammedan devotees. In the South, narrowly orthodox as the South is counted, the proudest feature of Trivandrum is the shrine dedicated to a Mohammedan princess, who forsook courts and palaces for the worship of Trivandrum's local god. Over and over again, in the political world, have the armies of Delhi and the Nawabs been led to victory by Hindu generals; and in every Native State to this day will be found positions of responsibility and power assigned to men whose creed is that which the sovereign's is not. A more beautiful tribute was never surely paid than that spoken of the Mahratta queen: "she was peculiarly kind and considerate to such of her subjects as differed from her in faith." But indeed the intolerance of Mohammedanism itself has been grossly exaggerated by Christian observers, who seem curiously

incompetent to grasp the secret of an Eastern attitude. This intolerance could never, for instance, be compared with that of the Roman Church. The necessity of making a strong and competent nation out of a few warring tribes led to the enunciation of a brief and simple religious thesis ; but the Prophet did not fail, in true Asiatic fashion, to remind his people that "God is the God of all creatures, not of one section only," and to exempt especially from condemnation all the alien religions definitely known to him, namely, Christianity and Judaism, "the peoples of the Book." Truly the quarrel of that stern spirit of righteousness was with unfaithfulness, not with other faiths, however strongly, under unforeseen military and political exigencies, it might seem to lend itself to the contrary interpretation. The fact that Mohammedans have sometimes held another opinion is no argument as to the teaching of their religion in its purity, and it must be remembered that "dog of an infidel" is an expression hurled as freely against Spaniard and Crusader, as ever against what Christians call a Pagan. No. The feud between Delhi and Ghazni was no more a battle between Din and Dharma than was that so long existing between France and England, the combat of the Catholic against the Protestant Churches. Even Sikh and Mahratta risings were only the psychological transfer of regional power-centres. The famous jewelled shawl of the Hindu State of Baroda was made quite naturally under the old *régime*, to be sent to the tomb of Mohammed at Medina!

Some air of the deserts, some tradition of the pastoral habit, some strong memory of Persia and Arabia, must indeed have come with the successful invader to make the stay-at-home invaded resenting and distrustful. But the talk about cow-killing can hardly be taken as sincere, since in that case the arms of chivalrous Hindus would today be turned against a newer power. It must be understood as purely symbolic of the strained relations naturally existing between industrialised agricultural communities on the one

hand, and on the other the militant sons of the desert accustomed to live by keeping and killing flocks and herds. But the same process that tamed the nomad into a member of a peasant community, and converted boatmen and tillers of the soil into Mussalmans, minimised in course of time even these differences of association. The familiar sight of the Mohammedan bhisti, holding his goatskin below the hydrant-mouth for water, and the Hindu water-carrier with his earthen pot coming in his turn, is an instance of the contrast as it now exists. Two different civilisations stand side by side, but they are friendly castes, not rival nationalities.

In the religious consciousness of Islam there is nothing that is without analogy amongst the faiths that have sprung up on Indian soil. Every one is tolerant of the idea of "the one true church," for it is held by Hindus to be a necessity of the early stages of religious development. Allah is of course the Personal God: but then the worshipper of Vishnu has always had to admit his brother's right to offer praise to Shiva, though the name left himself unstirred. Why not Allah, therefore, equally? The Hindu uses images: to the Mussalman the image is abhorrent. True, but every Hindu hopes to escape some day from the necessity of using images. Who is not touched by the devotional custom of Hindu women, bathing the reflection of the Holy Child in the mirror and saying, "This which we bathe is not the image: neither is the image He whom we worship!" Are not the saints for ever telling the idolater that even to name the Infinite Unity is sacrilege? And what Mohammedan saint has failed to say the same? The dispute about the image, in the light of such facts, becomes a mere difference of opinion as to the use of the concrete in the early stages of an education. Indeed, Hinduism itself has shown its power in modern times to throw out sects that decry the use of images as strongly as Islam.

Hence it would appear that the important points at

issue between Hindus and Mussalmans are rather details of purification and domestic practice, than religious or doctrinal. This fact becomes increasingly evident as the higher phases of the two faiths are reached. For the more completely either is realised, the more perfectly is it fused in the other. Sufi-ism* leads the soul by love, and the Vedanta leads it by knowledge, love, or emancipated motive, as the case may be ; but for both alike the theme is of a common goal, where all sense of difference shall cease, and the small self be swallowed up in the universal. Of each of the two faiths, then, it may be said, that it has nothing to lose and everything to gain by the more complete development of the other. Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, Shankaracharya,† are not so many deplorable obstacles in each other's paths, but rather widely separated examples of a common type—the radiant Asiatic personage, whose conception of nationality lies in a national righteousness, and whose right to be a leader of men rests on the fact that he has seen God face to face. Such souls cannot fail to recognise each other, and the Prophet was not slow to salute Moses and the Christ, the only examples of his own order whose names he knew.

Thus it is easy to realise that as long as Hinduism remained nameless and vague, the sense of difference between itself and Islam was also obscure, subject to all the mitigating influences of a common Orientalism, intensified here and there doubtless by political ideas, but tempered again by manifold social and economic bonds. And if, with definition, the Indian religions are to take on a more

* Sufi-ism—A mystic sect of Mohammedans. It rose in Persia, and at first suffered persecution, because the doctrine of the oneness of the soul with the Divine sounded to the orthodox Mohammedan like a suggestion that a creature could be "partner with God." The Sufis now maintain secrecy as to their experiences and convictions. Their doctrines and those of Hindu Vedantism are practically identical.

† Shankaracharya—"The father of modern Hinduism," often foolishly referred to as "a persecutor of Buddhism." A great saint and scholar. Born in Ma'abar, Southern India, 788 A.D. Wrote several famous commentaries, notably that on the Vedanta-Sutra, in which he formulated what is known as the philosophic doctrine of "Adwaita." He is said to have died at the age of thirty-two.

sectarian character, is it not clear that this is only in order to be joined again with the faith of Arabia, in a new and deeper consciousness of that which is their actual ground of union—the Asiatic synthesis of life?

It is not difficult to understand the mental outlook that is expressed in the namelessness of Hinduism. An immense people, filling a vast territory, unconscious of the completeness of their boundaries, or of any sharpness of contrast between themselves and neighbouring nations, were necessarily incapable of summing up their thought, to give it a name. A knowledge of limits and of difference there must be, before there can be definition, and it is only when India sees herself reflected as a whole in the glass of a foreign administration and a foreign language that she can dream of limitation. Besides, in things religious, what was there that was not included within the Hindu area? If, crossing the Himalayas and reaching China and Mongolia, men came in contact with unknown rites and superstitions, they could always supply parallel or analogy from their home life and association. Strange and powerful goddesses were adored in China. But the worship of the Mother is so old in India that its origin is lost in the very night of time. What an age of common faiths that must have been that left us the Virgin Kanya (Kanya Kumari) as tutelary deity of Cape Comorin, and Kwannyon the Mother as the giver of all blessings, in Japan to this day! Who is to say which is older, *Kari*, the Mother-Queen of Heaven, of Chinese mythology, or *Kali* of Bengal? Even these conceptions, however, dating as they clearly must from the days of that matriarchate, when nations and races were not yet differentiated—even these do not represent the earliest stratum of religious thought in India or in Asia.

All through the Old Testament, and throughout the story of the rise of Mohammedanism, we hear of "stones" as objects of worship. It is the black and mystic Kaaba, that is to this day the symbol of their unity to all the peoples

of Islam. And throughout India still there are races of working folk who ask no better symbol of divinity than rude stones, selected with some care possibly, and then set up, singly or in a row, perhaps in an enclosure, perhaps not, to be regarded henceforth as objects of reverence. The people who use these emblems—for they cannot be regarded as images—may be anything, from Shudras, or peasants, as I have seen them in the South, to Bhutias, or gipsy-like wanderers, as one meets with them in the Himalayas.

Everywhere in common life the miraculous elements are fire and light. And perhaps it is natural that oil, with its mystic power of leaping into flame, should be the characteristic offering in the worship of these stones. A Bhutia shrine will sometimes contain nothing but lamps. These are small and made of iron, like round-bowled dessert-spoons at right angles to the handle, which is a spike stuck into the ground, and I have seen as many as sixteen or seventeen in one tiny temple. There was here neither image nor symbol other than the lamps themselves, and the pilgrim on leaving would tear off a shred of his garment, and tie it to a bush or a tree close by, there joining hundreds of tokens like itself of the wayfaring congregation whose spirits had met unseen in a common act of adoration. But the place, as is always the case with these peasant oratories, was where the view was finest, and the cry of the soul to commune with Nature most intense. Sometimes the sacred stones themselves are smeared with oil, for the very touch of the wondrous fluid that nourishes light seems to be holy.

To richer races in India only clarified butter is good enough for use in the service of the altar, and we of Europe require the great wax tapers. But can we not trace through all these a single common process of the sanctification of labour by the products of labour? "We worship the Ganges with the water of the Ganges, but we *must* worship," said a Hindu. Similarly does the peasant dream

of the sacred oil, and the pastoral Toda* worship his cow-bells. Is it not true that if all could be blotted out in a moment from the human memory, the Eucharist and the sanctuary-lamp from Christianity, flickering light and fragrant flowers from the Mussalman grave, oils and fruits and incense from the Eastern worshipper, it would only be to spring forth fresh again tomorrow—corn, wine, and oil to the peasant, scented gums to the lover of gardens, the Good Shepherd the ideal of the herdsman, the ship of salvation the hope of fisher-folk? What are mythologies after all but the jewel-casket of humanity, by means of which its wealth of dreams and loves and sighs in every generation becomes the unperishing and imperishable treasure of the after-comers? The mystery of the birth of faith is about us always.

All the great Asiatic faiths—that is to say, the world-religions—would seem to have been born of the overflow of something that may be called tentatively the Aryan thought-power, upon the social and religious formations of earlier ages. Taoism in China, Zoroastrianism in Persia, and Hinduism in India, are all as three different applications of a single original fund of insight and speculation, and Islam itself has incorporated Sufi-ism after reaching the Aryan region. Doubtless of all these India developed her share of the inheritance with the greatest freedom and perfection, but we recognise common elements in all alike.

II

As the basis of Indian thought rests deep in the very foundation of human evolution, so it has not failed, at each new point in the historic development, to add something to the great superstructure. The whole story of India may be read in a philosophic idea. The constitutional ceremonies of the kingdom of Travancore contain clear indica-

* Toda—An aboriginal tribe in the Nilgiris.

tions of the transition from the matriarchate which was probably characteristic of the old Dravidian* civilisation, to the patriarchate, which was Aryan. In the yearly village-worship of the heroic figures of the "Mahabharata" which is common throughout the South, we have what may be the effort of distant peoples to include themselves in the "Great India" of Bhishma, Yudhishtira, and the national Epics.† The charge of country gunpowder which is fired off in the temples of the Southern Deccan on festival days is sufficient evidence that orthodoxy was once aggressive, eager, absorbent of things new, fearful of nothing, and friendly to advance. It is a popular superstition that the East stands still. Children observe no motion of the stars. But the fact is that one generation is no more like another at Benares than in Paris. Every saint, every poet, adds something to the mighty pile which is unlike all that went before. And this is quite as true of the thought expressed in the vernaculars, as of the all-dominating culture contained in the classic Sanskrit. Chaitanya in Bengal, the Ten Gurus of the Sikhs, Ram Das and Tukaram in Maharashtra, and Ramanuja in the South—each of these was to his own time as the very personification of the national philosophy, relating it again in its wholeness to the common life. Each such great saint appears to the people as the incarnation, the revelation, of themselves and their own powers, and the church by him founded becomes a nation. Thus arose the Mahratta Confederacy. Thus arose the kingdom of Lahore. And far away in Arabia, Islam formed itself in the same fashion. For the law that we are considering is not peculiar to India; it is common to the whole of Asiatic life.

* Dravidian civilisation—The country of Dravida is that in the south of the Indian Peninsula, and includes Malabar. The languages of this region are non-Sanskritic, and the architecture peculiar and imposing. Some scholars are inclined to suppose a common origin for the Dravidian, Babylonian, and ancient Egyptian civilisations.

† In Southern India, rude figures of men and horses, of heroic size, are made of clay, hard-baked, and kept in enclosures outside the villages for annual worship. The illiterate worshipper explains these figures as likenesses of the characters in the Mahabharata.

The Hindu world in its entirety then, is one with the highest philosophy of Hinduism. The much-talked-of Vedanta is only the theoretic aspect of that synthesis whose elements make up the common life. The most unlettered, idolatrous-seeming peasant will talk, if questioned, of the immanence of God. He recognises that Christianity is fundamentally true, because the missionaries are clear that there is but one Supreme. The question, what would happen, could the nation be divorced for a single generation from knowledge of Sanskrit is only another way of asking, what is the actual dynamic force existing at a given moment in the Hindu people? What are the characteristic ideas that are now an inbred habit, past the reach of authority to substantiate, or disaster to shake? It is given only to great events and to the imagination of genius to find the answer to such questions. Yet some indications there are, of what that answer might be.

Buddhism was the name given to the Hinduism of the first few centuries of the Christian era, when precipitated in a foreign consciousness. What authority did it claim? What explanations did it give of the existence of the physical universe? Of the soul? Of evil? What did it offer to humanity as the goal of the ethical struggle? The answer to these questions will certainly have to be given in terms of ideas, or variants of ideas, derived from the pre-existent stock of Hinduism. And so, though the particular formulation may be regarded as heresy, the significance of its testimony on the point we are considering cannot be disputed. It must be remembered that there never was, in India, a religion known as Buddhism, with temples and priests of its own order. There was a tendency towards popularising truths that had previously been regarded as fit only for the learned, and there was an immense unofficial enthusiasm for a towering personality, doubtless, and for the interpretations which were identified with him, even as there is in Bengal today for Chaitanya. There came also to be a vast imperial organisation, highly

centralised, coherent in all its parts, full of the geographical consciousness, uttering itself in similar architectural forms in the East, and West of India, passionately eager to unify and elevate the people and to adorn the land. This Indian Empire was in full and living communication with China, Japan, Syria, and Egypt. It had traffic and commerce by land and sea. It sent abroad ambassadors, merchants and missionaries. And within its own territories it made roads, planted trees and orchards, dug wells, established hospitals, and insisted on the cessation of violence even towards dumb creatures.*

Just as the Protestant Reformation, releasing the mental energy of the people from thralldom to authoritative commentaries, has been the power within the rise of modern Europe, so the kernel and spring of the Ashokan and succeeding empires was a similar assertion—not of the right of private judgment: this never required vindication in India: but—of the equal right of every section of society to enter the super-social, or monastic life. For we must not forget that in the East enfranchisement is always primarily religious and moral, not political. Power civic and national is there amongst the direct effects of the higher consciousness, never its cause. It is a man's right to renounce the world, and not manhood suffrage, which constitutes his equality with the highest. This sudden realisation of the spiritual life in all parts of society at once conferred on every man under Buddhism, whatever his birth or position, the right to make his opinion felt, the strength to exercise his full weight of moral influence. The result was an immense consolidation and blossoming of nationality. Men felt that they walked on air. They were born to receive and pass on the great message of human brotherhood. They were to go out into *all* the world and preach the Gospel to *every* creature. What must not have been the faith and enthusiasm of the

* Ashoka's inscriptions on the Dhauli rock, Orissa, and at Girnar in Gujarat.

common people, when merchants, traders, and caravan-servants could suffice to make a permanent contribution to the religion of the powerful Empire of China? It was a great age, and only those who have seen the colossal fragments which remain of it to this day can form any idea of its wealth and vigour.

And yet Ashoka's conversion had not been to a new religion, but only into the piety of his time. "I, King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, obtained true intelligence ten years after my anointing." Hence the thing that we call Buddhism ends its career in India very gradually. He who has first visited Ellora* is surprised, on entering Elephanta,† to find the Buddha-like figure on his left to be Shiva, and the Triumph of Durga on his right. At Ellora itself there must be a gap of centuries between the cathedral-like caves of Tin Tal‡ and of Kailas§. Yet even there we see the solitary figure of the teaching or the meditating Buddha give place by degrees to a rich pantheon of devas and guardian kings. But the hope and delight that are expressed so freely in the architecture and sculpture, and in the cosmopolitan intercourse of the Buddhist period die away imperceptibly into the rich imagery of the Puranic age¶ and the manifold social and political problems of Shankaracharya and the age of chivalry.

The common tendency of Brahmins and yogis had

* Ellora—Buddhist cave-temples close to the north-western frontier of the Nizam's dominions. The town of Rosa, containing the tomb of Aurangzeb, is close by; and the whole is a few miles from Daulatabad, the ancient Deogiri.

† Elephanta—A series of cave-temples on an island in the Bay of Bombay, between the second and the seventh century.

‡ The Tin Tal—A cave-temple at Ellora which consists of three tiers or storeys. Hence its name. The most perfect of the purely Buddhist structures.

§ Kailas—The most ornate and modern of all the cave-temples at Ellora. Cut with marvellous elaboration out of solid rock.

¶ The Puranic age—The Puranas are the third class of Hindu sacred literature, the first being the Vedas and Upanishads, and the second the national Epics. They consist of a series of books of very mixed character, of which the representative specimens were written between the sixth and twelfth centuries. Hence this period is spoken of as "the Puranic Age."

been to hold out the emancipation of the whole nature through self-discipline as the goal of endeavour. This doctrine came to be regarded in a loose way as characteristically Hindu. The Buddhist conviction was, on the other hand, that the same goal was to be reached, not so much by a gradual ripening of the self, as by ceasing from the illusion of egoism. Nirvana, not Mukti, became the watchword. The fact that these two ideas are related to each other as the obverse and reverse of a coin, cannot have escaped the contemporary mind. But its own generation must have given a more antipodal value to the divergence than is obvious to Western thought at the present day. It would seem to them to include all possible theological differences, and it is not unlikely that this fact contributed largely to the belief so explicitly stated in the Gita, and so markedly Indian, that all religions express a single truth.

In the period of the Upanishads, the conception of Brahman—the one real appearing as many—had been reached. This implies the doctrine of Maya, or the illusion of things, as popularised under Buddhism. It is clear that in this theory the whole question of the origin of evil is put aside. Evil and good are alike shadows on the wall, cast by our sense of personal convenience in magnified and distorted form. The saints recognise neither pain, insult, nor self-interest, being swallowed up in the joy of God.

The cyclic manifestation of the Cosmos—never created, but eternally self-existent, self-destroying, self-repeating—was another idea sown broadcast by Buddhist teachers. Here we have an interpretation that is significant of the immense scientific energy that has always gone hand in hand with Hindu religious speculation, making the spirit of research inherent in the spirit of devotion. Perhaps had orthodoxy offered the same resistance to science in the East that it did in the West, Indian investigation would have appeared more imposing today in the eyes of foreigners. But the only thing that the Indian

priesthood has conceived itself set to guard has been the social system. It has opposed nothing save social aberrations. Knowledge has gone unhindered. And it will not be difficult to show that the much vaunted science of Moorish Spain was neither more nor less than the tapping of Indian culture for the modern world.

But perhaps the most significant of all points in the Buddhist propaganda is its assumption that the word of the Blessed One Himself is all-sufficient authority. Hinduism recognises only one proof, and that is direct perception. Even the sacred writings give as their sanction the direct perception of saints and sages, and the Vedas themselves declare that man must reach beyond the Vedas. That is to say, the books allege as their authority that realisation out of which they were written. The Jains refuse the authority of the Vedic texts. But there is less divergence between them and other sects of Hinduism than would appear on the surface. Common language and the historic acceptance of the race alike, lead up to the last great pronouncement on the subject—"By the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times."

"It is Veda," we say in India of a statement which we perceive to be profoundly true. It is held in a general way that there are two classes of Scripture, one Vedas, the other Puranas. Vedas are eternal truth. Puranas are characterised by containing stories of the creation and destruction of the world, tales of the life and death of holy persons and avatars, accounts of their miracles, and so on. These elements are commonly mixed up, but can easily be disentangled. Thus, when the Christian Gospel says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul," it speaks Veda ; but when it says, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king" it is only a Purana, and may contain some elements of error.

And so, if the word be rightly defined, it may be said that the Vedas themselves are the sanction of Buddhism, of Mohammedanism, of Christianity, and of Confucianism; but it may at the same time be claimed on behalf of India that there, and not in the West, has this fact been understood.

Some of the greatest of French and English thinkers hold that the history of the West is made into a unity by the evolution of science and its progressive application to life, from the sixth century before Christ to the present day. These thinkers maintain that Greece, Imperial Rome, and the Catholic Church have been the three integral formative influences of what we call the European mind. To the student of Oriental history it appears equally clear that the history of Asia is that of a single living organism, of which India may be taken as the heart and focus. Regarded thus, in relation to its surroundings, the culture to which we give the name of Indian thought becomes likewise a unity, as clear, as continuous, as consistent in its development as is the evolution of the scientific idea in the West. Considered as an appanage of Europe, India is meaningless: taken in and for herself, and for that to which she rightly belongs, it need not surprise us if we find her the essential factor of human advance in the future as in the past.

III

India is the heart of Asia. Hinduism is a convenient name for the nexus of Indian thought. It would appear that it takes some thousand to fifteen hundred years to work out a single rhythm of its great pulsation. For this is about the period that divides the war of the Mahabharata from Buddha, Buddha from Shankaracharya, and Shankaracharya from Ramakrishna, in whom the immense pile reaches the crowning self-consciousness. Of the long prehistoric evolution that went to the building up of

Mahabharata, Great India, the heroic age, we can say little, for nothing is left to us, save the legend of Sita and Rama, out of the night of time. Yet we know that this period must have been long. Three thousand years seems not too much, if enough, to allow. Behind this again loom up the millenniums spent on the tableland of Central Asia, that head-water of world-civilisation where Aryan man entered the patriarchate, and closed the account of his first combat with Nature, having tamed the beasts, learned the use of tools, domesticated corn and fire, produced the fruit-trees, and divided the week.* Of the sublime dreams, the poetry and song with which he consoled himself during those ages of Herculean struggle, the fragments known as the "Rig Veda" still remain. And we learn therein how broad was his outlook upon Nature, even as that of the mind that declared "and the evening and the morning were the first day." How long did it last? Was it ten thousand years? Were there another five thousand before the war of Mahabharata? However this be, the enthusiasm of succeeding periods strikes us as extraordinary.

There is no question that the characteristic product of the civilisation that succeeded the Great War was the forest-universities, notes of whose sessions have become the Sutras and Upanishads. But we must not forget also that during the same period the Vedas were written down, and the searching scrutiny of society initiated which was later to result in those accumulations of reverent and sympathetic interpretations now known to us as the Laws of Manu.

It is only with difficulty that we realise the sense of vastness to which the thinkers of this period strove to give expression. The Celt, it has been said, strives ever towards the infinite of emotion. The Hindu, in the same way, cannot rest content, short of the infinite of thought. We

* That learned and fascinating book, "The Arctic Home in the Vedas," is destined to work a revolution in our ideas on this subject. If the author's theory be correct, it would appear that Aryan culture was not acquired in Central Asia.

see this, even so early as the hymns of the Rig Veda. "When darkness was hidden in darkness, undistinguished, like one mass of water," opens the great Anthem of Creation. Still larger is the sweep of the Upanishads—"they that see the Real in the midst of this Unreal, they that behold life in the midst of this death, they that know the One in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto *them* belongs eternal peace—unto none else, unto none else." The Vedas were the capital with which Aryan culture began its occupation of India, and these immense and subtle generalisations of the Upanishads represent the first achievement of the national mind in its new place. Surely this is the secret of the striking fact in Indian history that all great eras of rejuvenescence, like Shankaracharya's, and even minor movements of reconstruction like Guru Nanak's and Ramanuja's, have had to go back to the Upanishads and place themselves in structural continuity with them. In this light we begin to suspect that the war of the Mahabharata itself represents the apparent exhaustion of Vedic inspiration at the end of the first period, and the restoration of pristine vigour by force of Krishna's personality.

The dim twilight of Indian forests in the pre-Buddhistic age is resonant, to the historic ear, with chants and prayers. But the succeeding epoch leads us into the busy life of villages and cities. For the ballads and songs of the people are crystallising now into the great Epics. Their religious activity—stirred by the sublime spectacle of a life that represents the whole of Upanishadic culture, the national dream in its completeness—occupies itself with gathering together, and weaving into a whole, all the religious ideas innate amongst the masses, and those peculiar to the Indian environment. There is a sudden accession of force given to such practices as pilgrimage and relic-worship, and Brahmin intelligence is more or less unconsciously preoccupied with the interpretation of images, symbols and rituals in relation to those truths which had

been the first realisation of the race. The distinction and larger scope of this Buddhist period lay to a great extent in its political, commercial, and sub-religious elements, in letters, arts, and sciences.

Certain evils must have come in the train of the ideas then elaborated, essential as they were to prove themselves in the long run to the completed fabric of Hinduism. We can understand that monastic notions may have attracted too much of the national energy out of the safe paths of domestic virtue, with a tendency to bring about not only the depletion of family life, but the disintegration of morality itself. No doubt it was at this time, and to meet this error, that the song of the ideal sang itself so clearly, first through the lips of Kalidas,* in his "Birth of the War-Lord," and again, in the final recension of the Ramayana, as the love of Sita for Rama, that glorified wifehood, before which the renunciation and faith of the cloister grow pale.

From the point of view of purity of doctrine, we can believe, too, that the very breadth of the welcome extended to religious ideas of all kinds, especially in the closing centuries of this age, had led to the undue emphasising of the popular notions, to the inclusion of an unnecessary multiplicity of symbols, and possibly to the interpretation of symbols already existing in rude or gross ways.

But agitation against abuses has never been the method of Hinduism. Rather has the faith progressed by lifting repeatedly in moments of crisis the banner of the highest ideal. Already, in the era we are considering, this organic law of the national genius, the law of the Avatars, was well known. "Whenever the Dharma decays, and when that which is not Dharma prevails,† then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the

* Kalidas—the poet—one of the famous "nine gems" of the Court of Vikramaditva, of Ujjain. Kalidas may have lived in the sixth century A.D. or earlier. He wrote the play of "Shakuntala," which so deeply touched the poet Goethe.

† Literally, the a-dharma—non-dharma. The prefix is privative. See p. 125.

evil, for the firm establishment of the national righteousness, I am born again and again." So says the Bhagavad Gita—and never was any prophecy more conclusively vindicated than this, by the appearance of Shankaracharya, early in the ninth century after Christ.

This wonderful boy—for he died at the age of thirty-two—was born at the end of the eighth century, and had already completed a great mission when most men are still dreaming of the future. The characteristic product of Oriental culture is always a commentary. By this form of literature the future is knit firmly to the past, and though the dynamic power of the connecting idea may be obscure to the foreigner, it is clearly and accurately conveyed to the Eastern mind itself. The whole of Confucianism is contained in a commentary on the Eking, or Book of Change, and European Protestantism might almost be described as a special kind of commentary on the Christian sacred literature. The Sanskrit Sutras lend themselves to critical writing, and even demand it, in a special degree: for the word *Sutra* means *thread*, and is applied to works which are only the main line of a given argument, and require expansion at the end of every sentence. This literary convention obtains in all Oriental countries, and must date from the period when the main function of writing was to assist memorising. Obviously, by writing a new commentary on a given Sutra, the man of genius has it in his power to re-adjust the relationship between a given question and the whole of current opinion. Hence it is not surprising to find that the masterpiece of Shankaracharya's life was a commentary on the Vedanta-Sutra.

The problems which faced the Indian mind during his lifetime, with the single exception that the country was then rich and prosperous, must have been curiously like those of the present day, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in his eyes they assumed national dimensions. Religious practices had lost their primitive simplicity, and also perhaps their compelling power. Ideas as

to national and unnational (for the word "orthodox" was but the Asiatic word for "national") were conflicting and confused. Men lived much in the thought of the recent sectarian developments of the faith, and tended to lose sight of its austere imperative, pointing to the highest realisation, of its antiquity, and its close-knit continuity. Lakshmi, Goddess of Fortune, was one of the chief objects of worship. Sects and kingdoms alike had lost their sense of mutual solidarity. Never perhaps was an Asiatic people nearer precipitating itself on a purely secular development.

At this moment the whole of the national genius awoke once more in Shankaracharya. Amidst all the brilliance and luxury of the age, in spite of the rich and florid taste of the Puranic period, his soul caught the mystic whisper of the ancient rhythm of the Vedic chants, and the dynamic power of the faith to lead the soul to super-consciousness, became for him the secret of every phase of Hinduism. He was on fire with the love of the Vedas. His own poems have something of their classical beauty and vigour, and his books may almost be described as chains of quotations from the most piercing and comprehensive sentences of the Upanishads, to which he has contributed links and rivets.

Shankaracharya wandered, during his short life, from his birthplace in the South as far as the Himalayas, and everything that he came across in his travels related itself to the one focus and centre, in his mind. He accepted each worship, even that to which he was at first averse, but always because he found that the great mood of One-without-a-second was not only the Vedic, but also the Puranic goal. This is the doctrine that he expresses in his twelve epoch-making commentaries, especially in his crowning work, the commentary on the Vedanta Sutra. And this idea, known as the Adwaita Philosophy, constitutes, for the rest of the Hindu period, the actual unity of India.

Western people can hardly imagine a personality such

as that of Shankaracharya. In the course of so few years to have nominated the founders of no less than ten great religious orders, of which four have fully retained their prestige to the present day ; to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy, and impress himself on the scholarly imagination of India in a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake ; to have written poems whose grandeur makes them unmistakable, even to the foreign and unlearned ear ; and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant joy and simple pathos of the saints—this is greatness that we may appreciate, but cannot understand. We contemplate with wonder and delight the devotion of Francis of Assisi, the intellect of Abelard, the force and freedom of Martin Luther, and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyola ; but who could imagine all these united in one person?

Subsequent critics have painted Shankaracharya as the persecutor of Buddhists. Inasmuch as he asserted a co-ordination of mythologies and doctrines instead of preaching a single exclusive method of salvation ; inasmuch as to him the goal was a positive, and not a negative affirmation, and in so far also as he insisted upon the worthlessness of ritual apart from philosophy, of worship without illumination he may be taken as the enemy of one school or another. It is almost unnecessary to add that this enmity was purely controversial in its character, and to Buddhists of the Northern School, a clearer historic knowledge will reveal him as the very opposite of a persecutor, as, rather, another example of the race of inspired religious teachers to which their own apostle, Nagarjuna, belonged.*

Buddhism as a whole, with the succeeding Puranism, had been the creation of the lay mind, the creation of the

* Nagarjuna—An Indian monk, whose name is well known in China and Japan. He followed in the wake of previous teachers, in the second century of the Christian era. He gave ultimate theological form to the first school of Buddhism.

people. The work of Shankaracharya was the relinking of popular practice to the theory of Brahman, the stern infusion of mythological fancies with the doctrine of the Upanishads. He took up and defined the current catch-words—Maya, Karma, reincarnation, and others—and left the terminology of Hinduism what it is today. At the same time, we must not neglect to remind ourselves that in all this, if he had been other than the expression of that which it was the actual tendency of the race to formulate, he would not have found the scope he did. The recognition of a great man is as essential a factor in his history, as his own power and character. His complete appropriation by his nation only shows that he is in perfect unison with its thought and aspiration.

The two or three centuries immediately succeeding Shankaracharya are commonly known as the dark ages of Indian history. The application of the term is obscure. In what sense were these ages dark? They were centuries of chivalric dominance, and in many a Rajput line the bardic annals are still preserved that will one day enable a generation of Indian historians to read their record. Even the wars of such a period were never destructive; for, apart from their specially chivalrous character, Oriental military usage has always secured the safety of non-combatants. The lives of water-carriers and commissariat servants were scrupulously respected in Asiatic warfare. It is said, indeed, that the European gipsy is an example of this. These poor people were originally a tribe of petty merchants who used to accompany the march of armies. Wherever the camp was pitched, they could run up a bazaar in half an hour, and their caste-honour lay in telling neither side the secrets of the other. When Genghis Khan invaded Hungary, these particular clans were carried there, never to return.*

But it was not only camp-followers who were protected

* In the year 1200 A.D.

by a law such as that which now defends the Red Cross Sisterhoods of Europe. A like consideration prevailed, with regard to the peasant working in the fields, and the craftsman toiling at his anvil. The young crops were honoured in ancient combat, as would be Cologne Cathedral or Notre Dame de Paris in modern. Under these circumstances a battle became only a deadly form of tournament, involving in its peril none but fighting men.

But if such contests could not become destructive, neither could they succeed in educating the masses of the people to the common duty of military defence. This result could only be achieved when a religious idea should become the war-cry of whole regions, conferring on all men the right of struggle without distinction of caste. This right, so necessary to the completion of nationality, the Mohammedan invasion gave, and it is difficult to imagine any other way in which the lesson could have been widely learnt.

The great tide of vigour that emanated from Shan-karacharya swept round India by south, west, and north, in a spiral curve. Ramanuja, Madhvacharya,* Ram Das and Tukaram,† the Sikh Gurus†† and Gauranga,‡ were all in turn its products. Wherever it touched the Mussalman consciousness, it created, chiefly by means of contest, a well-centred nation. Where it did not come in contact with Mohammedanism, as in the extreme south, this spiritual energy did not succeed in evoking a nationality. And where it did not lead to definite fighting, as in Bengal under Chaitanya, the sense of national existence remained more

* Ramanuja and Madhvacharya—Flourished in the South of India in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

† Ram Das and Tukaram—Two Mahratta saints to whose inspiration Shivaji's passionate defence of his own people was due. Tukaram was born about 1605.

†† The Sikh Gurus—These were ten in number, Guru Nanak born 1469, was the first, and Guru Govind Singh, who died 1708, was the last. By the lives and teachings of these ten leaders was formed the Hindu nation of the Punjab, the Sikhs. Amritsar is still the sacred city of this sect of Hinduism.

‡ Gauranga—Another name for Chaitanya, born 1486, the saint in whom Bengal first begins to realise herself as a united consciousness.

or less potential. Thus the advent of Islam into India during the post-Shankaracharyan period cannot be regarded as a revolutionary invasion, inasmuch as under the new power there was no loss of Asiatic modes. New arts of luxury were introduced, but the general economic system remained undisturbed. India received a more centralised government than had been possible since the Ashokan Empire, but no new forces came into operation, tending to reduce her own children to the position of agricultural serfs or tenants. And we have seen that even the wars which arose between contiguous populations of Hindus and Mohammedans must be regarded rather as those athletic contests between brothers and cousins which confer individuality, than as conquests on the one side or the other. The victor after victory attempts neither to exclude his rival's creed from office, nor to create invidious distinctions. "The great bankers and nobles of Bengal remained Hindu under the rule of the Nawabs, as naturally as the Mussalman maintained his faith in the shadow of a Hindu throne."*

Nor have the clearness and self-consciousness that its definition has added to Hinduism in any way tended to impair its inclusiveness. For the personality that the nineteenth century has revealed as the turning-point of the national development is that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa,† whose name stands as another word for the synthesis of all possible ideals and all possible shades of thought. In this great life, Hinduism finds the philosophy of Shankaracharya clothed upon with flesh, and is made finally aware of the entire sufficiency of any single creed or conception to lead the soul to God as its true goal. Henceforth, it is not true that each form of life or worship is tolerated or understood by the Hindu mind: each form is justified, welcomed, set up for its passionate loving, for

* Torrens' "Empire in Asia."

† Ramakrishna Paramahansa lived in a temple-garden outside Calcutta from 1853 to 1886. His teachings have already become a great intellectual force.

evermore. Henceforth, the supreme crime for the follower of any Indian sect, whether orthodox or modern, philosophic or popular, shall be the criticism of any other, as if it were without the bounds of "the Eternal Faith." "Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to truth," becomes in future the formula that constitutes belief.

At this point we could almost have prophesied, had it not already happened, that some great disciple of this master would declare, on behalf of the whole nation, that the final differentia of Hinduism lay in the acceptance of the doctrine of the *Ishta Devata*. *i.e.*, the right of every man to choose his own creed, and of none to force the same choice on any other.*

At last, then, Indian thought stands revealed in its entirety—no sect, but a synthesis; no church, but a university of spiritual culture—as an idea of individual freedom, amongst the most complete that the world knows. Certain conceptions, such as *Maya*, *Karma*, and reincarnation, popularised by Buddhism, and *Mukti* or the beatific vision, sown broadcast alike by *Shankaracharya* and the *Sufis*, are characteristic of large areas. But they are nowhere and in no sense regarded as essential. For it is as foreign to the genius of Hinduism to require an oath of conformity to any given religious tenet whatever, as it would be to the habits of an Oxford don to require adherence to the doctrines of *Plato* as against those of *Aristotle*. It would thus appear that the reforming sects of the *Mohammedan* period and of the nineteenth century itself, have to the full as good a right to call themselves Hindu as the most orthodox priest of *Shiva*, or the most learned *Sanskrit Pundit*.

We have seen then, that it is certainly a mistake to

* I desire to say that in thus referring to my own gurus, *Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa* and the *Swami Vivekananda*, I do not intend to imply that every one will or ought to be willing to assign them the same place in the evolution of Hinduism that seems to myself to belong to them. Whether their names be accepted or not, however, I believe that all Hindus will agree regarding the *ideas* which are here stated as constituting Hinduism.

read the history of India at any time as the account of a struggle between Hindu and Mohammedan thought, though it is a mistake which is perhaps inseparable from the European conception of the influence of faith on politics. But it cannot, on the other hand, be too clearly understood that the problem which the Indian idea has had to face, during the period between Shankaracharya and the nineteenth century, was the inclusion of the Mohammedan element in a completed nationality. From the nineteenth century onwards, it becomes the *realisation* of that single united nationality, amidst the vast complexity which has been the growth of ages.

It is said that nations and systems of culture fulfil special functions, as organs of humanity just as individuals fulfil special uses in the community. If this be so, it would almost appear that within the bounds of India lies one of the focal or polar points of the race. The great task of the reconciliation of opposites would seem to devolve on the peoples within this pale. It is not enough that the Mussalman should inhabit the pastoral belt, the Mongolian rest secure behind the Thian Shan, and the Aryan and Dravidian dwell peacefully side by side in the Southern peninsula. It was decreed from the beginning, it lay unavoidably in the very nature of things, that sooner or later all these should meet in the land of the Indus, and learn their mutual significance and responsibilities. Buddhism may be regarded in one aspect as simply the synthesis of Eastern Asia. Neo-Hinduism (to borrow a term which has been coined in no friendly spirit) is equally indicative of a place found in Aryan thought for Semitic formulæ, and who shall say what is yet to be born of that conjunction between all these, in which Asia shall find herself to be—not, as she has so long been told, “merely a congeries of geographical fragments,” still less a concert of rival political units, held in mechanical combination by a due admixture of mutual hopes and recriminations, but a single immense organism, filled with the tide of one strong

pulsating life from end to end, firm-rooted in the soil of common origins and common modes? The value which we may attach to the prospect of this future will depend on the idea that we have already been able to form, of the place of Asia in the evolution of humanity, but to those who foresee a future moralisation of international relations it may well appear that this question is among the most important in the world.

X

THE ORIENTAL EXPERIENCE

THE spiritual intellect refuses to believe in any good tidings of dogmas and happenings. It is St. Thomas Aquinas himself who points out that prayer cannot avail to change the will of God, but may, in any given case, be the appointed means of its accomplishment. Truth is not something that is told of in books or stated in words. It is the self-evident, the ultimate. It is that of which all our modes of seeing and saying are but so many refractions through a falsifying medium. All the teachings of Christianity put together are but as a vase or form, within which is conveyed to us the central actuality, the beautiful myth of the Christian soul.

And rightly so. For what is the real stuff of the human tragedy, the hunger for bread, or the longing for salvation? The answer is not doubtful. And this, although it may be, more than half of us are without any conception of that which we seek to save, or what it is from which we seek to fly. The fact remains, the human race is dominated by an inexpressible desire for the well-being of a metaphysical something which it cannot conceive of, but calls the soul. And any scheme, even the wildest, that makes profession of accomplishing this object, will meet with some measure of welcome and approval, provided only that he who offers is sufficiently convinced of the efficacy of his own method.

Most beautiful, perhaps, of all those known to us, is the series of pictures in which Catholicism paints her promise of deliverance. The little bark of life, in which the soul puts out to sea, to be guided in its tossings and wanderings by a science that the Church names saving knowledge; the mysterious transition of death, by which it lands on the shores of purification; and, finally, the

pain of sanctification exhausted, its being received up into heaven, and attainment of the Beatific Vision.

But, after all, are not the symbols somewhat crude? Heaven and hell, reward and punishment! Is it not possible for even a child to go beyond these? Can we attempt to describe what is meant by the moral sense, without implying that we would choose good, though we suffered countless ages for it, and refrain from evil, though it brought us Heaven? Besides, are there not amongst us parents who refuse to act out a melodrama of judgment every time a baby steals a sugar-plum? Is the whole universe, multiplied by eternity, only one vast kindergarten? Or are we somewhere to learn that in self-control itself is beatitude? How are we to believe in salvation that is expressed as an *event*? in unchangeable happiness conferred upon us from without? in a *process* of knowledge and praise?

Do we not feel within us an ungovernable protest against these artificialities, an irrepressible claim for something that is the Nature-of-things, and requires no stage-management; a desire to be done with vicissitudes, alike of heaven and hell, salvation and perdition, and find some fixed mean, some centre of enduring poise, which shall confer freedom from all perception of antitheses, and knowledge at last of That which is the thing in itself? Or are we so in love with the limitations of the personal existence, with the fact that our good is another's ill, that present joy is future pain, that we would, if we could, prolong the experience?

Some such protest, at least, is apt to be roused in the Oriental by Western dreams of a future life. It is all physical, all sense-impression, he says, and as such is necessarily subject to that law of change and decay which must sooner or later apply to all compounds. In the sublime imagination of the Beatific Vision, he catches a hint of a deeper reality, but why, he asks, this distinction between time and eternity? Can the apprehension of the

Infinite Good be conditioned by the clock? Oh, for a knowledge undimensioned, untimed, effect of no cause, cause of no effect! Reaching That, and That alone, we could be sure of unchanging bliss, of existence ultimate. But if accessible at all, it must be now in the earth-life or never. It must transcend and still the life of the senses, when the senses are most active ; it must absorb and transmute the personal, when personality is capable of every eager claim, or remain for ever incredible, save as one swing of a pendulum, some day to be reversed.

This is the illumination that India calls the knowledge of unity, and the gradual appropriation of it by the whole nature, so that it ceases to be mere words and becomes a living actuality, she names realisation. Thus every step, every movement in life is either dull and dead, or on fire with the growing knowledge that we know as spirituality. The highest genius becomes only an incident on the road to supreme blessedness. And the passionless desire of Pheidias that wrought Olympian Zeus, the love of Dante for Beatrice, the "glorious nothingness" of S. Teresa, and the light on the face of Faraday the physicist, are all alike and all equally beads on that rosary where the soul's experience is told. For the whole story in all its forms is summed up, to Indian thinking, in the struggle to pass from the perceiving of manifoldness to the perceiving of One, and every heightening of common knowledge is to be regarded as a step towards this. The kitten at play will pursue first one object and then another with all the bewilderment and disconnectedness of the animal mind, while even the youngest baby will show the superiority of human faculty by its greater persistence of purpose and pertinacity of desire. The man of low type is led hither and thither by every impulse of sensation, while Archimedes is so absorbed in thought that he never perceives the Roman enter his presence, nor dreams of begging more than time to finish his speculation.

It must be remembered that to the Eastern intellect

man himself is the universe, for all differentiation is within the mind. India may accept as a working hypothesis the theory that sociology is the synthesis of all the sciences, but her own fundamental conviction is that psychology occupies this place. Hence to her, power is always lodged in personality. Mind is the lord of body, undoubtedly ; but mind, like body, is only the tool of the great Self of Things that stands behind and uses both for its own purpose. Like a strangely complex telescope, one part of the instrument stands pointed to give reports of many kinds—of light, sound, weight, smell, taste, and touch ; and by another we are led to conceive of vast ranges of these, outside the possibilities of our immediately perceiving, by which we can build up the conception that we call the Cosmos. But, according to Indian thinking again, perfect control over the apparatus has only been attained when every part of it can be directed at will to a common point—the whole power of investigation brought to bear on any object. When this is done, when the intensest vibration of the whole being is reached and every faculty is convergent on the point of attention, then declares India, we, being one, perceive oneness, the mind sees truth face to face.

How we shall interpret and express the vision is determined wholly by our own past language and discipline. The mother comes out of it to love and serve ; Joan of Arc commands armies with unfaltering insight ; Sir Isaac Newton gives us the law of gravitation ; Mozart produces his Requiem Mass, and the Messiah comes down from the mountain side whispering, "I and My Father are One." That is to say, the self-limited joys of sense have given way to the pursuit of the good of others as an end in itself. The man is overpowered by a beauty and a truth that he must needs share with the whole world. Or the finite personality is completed, transcended in union, with the absolute and universal.

There are thus, as the East counts, two modes of

existence—one the personal, or egoistic, and the other the impersonal, or supra-personal, where egoism and altruism are alike forgotten. The realisation of this illimitable existence is itself salvation, and is to be reached in life, not death. Concentration is its single secret, and real power is always power over oneself.

What, then, are the common hindrances to this centring of thought and feeling that we are not all constantly immersed in the Divine intoxication? And what are the paths by which we are ordinarily led to overcome such hindrances? For it is to be supposed that, if the experience be authentic, men first stumbled upon it by accident, and formulation of theory came afterwards.

The mind of man sweeps an infinite circle, and from every point upon the immeasurable circumference runs a life-path to the vision of Unity as the common centre. Each man is, as it were, a new window through which all others may look upon the Infinite, each life a new name for That which we call God. The paths, therefore, are countless. No two methods can be exactly the same. Yet there are certain broad characteristics which are more or less general.

The soul that thirsts for service, gradually expunging from the area of motive even the subtler shades of selfishness—such as the preference for special forms of activity, exactingness on behalf of work, and desire for sympathy and affection as the result—this soul will more readily than another lose itself in the supreme intuition of the good of others. “The People” with Mazzini, “the fair realm of France” with Joan of Arc, the fulfilment of duty to his country with the great sovereign or statesman, are amongst the forms which this realisation takes. In such a mood of uttermost blessedness, some have even suffered death by fire.

The temporary experience, in which the subject becomes unconscious of bodily sensation, is called Samadhi. The process by which he comes out of Samadhi time after

time, to work its volume of force, so to speak, into his daily life, is known as realisation. And the path of service in purity of motive, is spoken of as Karma-yoga, or divine union by work.

Again, we can in some measure understand the development of a nature to whom everything appears in degrees of loveliness. This was undoubtedly the method of S. Francis, and after him of S. Teresa. It is called in India Bhakti, or devotion. Gradually, in such souls—guided by the thought of reaching the Infinite in abnegation of self—the power of love becomes a fire scorching, burning, consuming the barriers of individuality. “One cannot understand,” says S. Teresa, “what is meant by talking of the impermanence of worldly joys. For one would renounce them so much the more gladly, could they but be eternal.” Then there is a fusing of all things in the one conception of the Beloved. Lastly, distinction ceases, self is forgotten, there is left nothing, save the Infinite Love. First the prayer of quiet, then the prayer of union, last the irresistible rapture, says the great Carmelite. Such is Bhakti-yoga, the road by which the vast majority of the saints have gone.

Highest of all, however, is Union by knowledge or Jnana-yoga. A life whose whole struggle is the passion for truth; a soul to which falsehood or superstition is the worst of sins; a mind clear as the black depths of a mountain-pool; an atmosphere of joy, all stillness, all calm, all radiance without emotion; to these comes the growing intensity of recognition, the increasing power of direct vision, and finally that last illumination, in which there is neither knower, knowing nor known, but all is one in Oneness. It is much to be regretted that we have in English no word corresponding to Jnana. *Insight* has a certain affinity, but is not sufficiently intense. The fact is, the habit of thought that leads up to the conception is foreign to us: a true parallelism is, therefore, out of the question.

The greatest Jnani that has appeared in human history was undoubtedly Buddha, for the calmness of intellect predominates in Him, living through a ministry of more than forty years, though it was the immense outburst of His love and pity (explained as the fruit of five hundred sacrifices of Himself) that drove Him forth on His passionate quest to serve mankind. Then He is also in a high degree a combination of the three types of realisation—by intellect, heart and work. Some measure of this amalgamation there must be in all who use their knowledge for the good of others, of whom the Incarnations are the culminating type. For in Jnana by itself, the personal existence is seen to be a dream, a mere illusion, and it is impossible for him, who has once received its overwhelming revelation, to believe that there exist outside himself other centres of illusion for whose emancipation he might work.

For Karma, or service, again, there could be no sufficient motive, without the impulse of Bhakti. And the madness of divine love, unlighted by knowledge, unawakening to compassion, is almost unthinkable.

Such are the three ways—truth, devotion, and good works—by which it is said that souls may reach their goal. He who has attained, and remains in life, is called a Paramahansa, or swan amongst men. And of all such, Shuka—he to whom it was given while in mortal form to drink a handful of the waters of the ocean of super-consciousness—is ideal and head. For most men die, it has been said, having heard only the thunder of its waves upon the shore ; a few come within sight ; fewer still taste ; to Shuka alone was it given to drink. Many Mohammedan saints have become Paramahansas, and are equally loved and revered by all religions alike.

So far of the apprehension of unity when consciousness and self-direction have made it vital spirituality. The hindrance to our reaching it is always, it is declared, one, namely, under whatever guise, want of the power to give

up self. "When desire is gone, and all the cords of the heart are broken, *then*," says the Upanishad, "a man attains to immortality." And by "immortality," it should be understood, is here meant the quality of deathlessness. For this reason, all religions are a call to renunciation ; all ethics negate selfishness of personality ; all disciplines are a repression of individual impulse. In the Indian doctrine of One immanent in the many, all these receive interpretation. The scholar's austerity of study ; the artist's striving to become the witness ; the lover's desire to sacrifice himself ; all speak, however unconsciously, of our longing not to be, that the infinite, the universal consciousness, may abide within us.

The fact that the final achievement is variously known as Freedom, Mukti, or Nirvana, the annihilation of the limited, requires, at this point, little explanation. The idea that the perception of manifoldness is Maya or illusion, that the One is the real, and the many unreal, underlies the whole theory. "They that behold the One in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto *them* belongs eternal peace—unto none else, unto none else."

Obviously, the final truth of the doctrine is capable of no other proof or disproof than that of experience. But the attitude to it of the common Indian mind is strictly scientific. We cannot prove, save by making the experiment, but we can point to the fact that the accumulated observation of life goes to establish the tenableness of the proposition, says India in effect. And when we are shown one morality that does not demand the holding of unity of principle against manifoldness of impulse ; one science that does not grow by the correlating of apparent discrepancies in continually stricter unities ; or one character that does not find perfection in surrendering the personal to the impersonal, the theory of Maya—real unity amidst apparent diversity—will fall to the ground, and must be acknowledged a misconception. Hitherto, it may be claimed, the whole history of the world has not sufficed to

furnish the required exception.

Thus the beatific vision of Hinduism is not unlike that of Dante's Empyrean, only it is to be relegated to no distant future, but triumphantly vindicated within mortality itself. The name of God and the conventions of piety are as unreal as anything else in Maya, but they have the power of enabling us to break its bondage, whereas the delights of the senses only fasten it the tighter.

One point remains. The doctrine with which we have been dealing represents a national culture. Very few in the West can be said to have grasped the whole secret of that for which their country stands. Very few will be found to understand deeply any given idea or subject. The very reverse is the case in the East. Men who have no emancipation into the scheme of modern knowledge are emancipated into the sequence of renunciation and freedom. Though India is daily losing her grip on her own character, she is still the motherland of hundreds of the saints. And amongst that people of ancient aristocracies the realm of the ideal is so completely democratised that the poorest peasant, the meanest workman, comprehends what is meant by the great daily prayer of Hinduism:—

From the unreal, lead us to the Real!
 From darkness, lead us unto Light!
 From death, lead us to Immortality!
 Reach us through and through ourself,
 And evermore protect us—O Thou Terrible!—
 From ignorance by Thy sweet compassionate Face.

XI

THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH

Reflection has taught me that there is nothing mightier than Destiny. . . . Zeus bows to her power. She surpasses iron in hardness—EURIPIDES' *Alcestis*.

Heredity is a condition, not a destiny—BJÖRNSSON.

As a man casts off worn-out clothes, and puts on others which are new, so the embodied casts off worn-out bodies, and puts on others which are new—*Bhagavad Gita*.

THE crucial feature of the Greek conception of life was the dramatic distinction which it made between will and the conditions with which will had to cope. Just as surely as our birth on the planet Earth gives us a place, definite, however infinitesimal, in the solar system, relating us in our degree to all that occurs within the orbit of the farthest satellite, so it is clear that our position, geographically, ethnologically, historically, upon that planet, places us from the beginning at definite points on lines of cause-and-effect, to which, as human beings, we can but exercise the function of acceptance. This Not-to-be-refused, which modern science calls natural law, was simply to the Greek an unexplained and unexplored Necessity or Fate.

To the ancients, a curse, for example, was no exercise of the volition of the speaker. It was in no sense a threat. Our own more frivolous use of the word is a case of degradation by the death of a conception. To the old Greek, as indeed to the Hindu and the Norseman, a curse was entirely a prophecy. It was pronounced by way of warning or revelation that upon a certain act certain results would be found to follow. Apollo perceives that if Laios begets a son, disaster will result. He does not determine that it shall be so. Evidently, will is regarded as free up to

a certain point, or we should not have the alternative imagined, of begetting no son. But to Œdipus and his children there is no alternative; he and they have been born in that circle of destiny where they can only fulfil the lot marked out.

This fact the Greek mind appears to accept without further inquiry. For it, overwhelming interest attaches, not to an analysis of the nature and conditions of fate, but to the spectacle of the human will in spiritual conflict with it. This spectacle is the theme of the whole of Hellenic tragedy. The Christian doctrine of grace introduces something confused and miraculous into the European idea of life, and for centuries the pursuit of the knowledge of things as they are is thwarted by a supernatural metaphysic of things as they ought to be, and are not. With the Renaissance, however, the intellect of Europe springs back sharply to the Greek position. *Macbeth* and *Othello* are in some ways as completely Hellenic as anything of Æschylus. Temptation is once more placed outside a man; true and false incentives are inextricably blended; and the will is shown as the mere plaything of its own blindness. On these points, and in the feeling of vastness with which he covers his subject, Shakespeare's delineation is all Greek.

In *Macbeth*, it is true, a sense of ethical suffering somewhat blurs the outline. But nothing dims the perfect beauty of *Othello*. Untortured by misgiving, its heroic figures move from the dawn of their love to the noontide of supreme vindication of its purity in death. The particular problem is not antique. Its delicacy of tint is somewhat modern, but in simplicity and grandeur, in the conviction that life is a mere straw swept along on the current of necessity *Othello* is an ancient drama.

One great difference between the Hellenisms of antiquity and of the Renaissance lay in the fact that organisation was at the disposal of the modern. Isolated genius writes dramas, elaborates philosophies, or carves statues:

organised genius produces scientific inquiry. In some sense modern science is nothing but the efficient development of the Aristotelian and Alexandrian elements of classical thought. The human will itself, however, is the one thing eternally baffling to human research. There is no crucible in which it can be melted. All science, therefore, resolves itself into the old problem of the Greek dramatist—the problem of due observation of the conditions which confront the will; and it is by a strictly logical development of the thought of the ancients—a thought which scarcely dreamt of any distinction between a man and his body—that we arrive at the modern conception of body-and-brain as the last and crucially important element of destiny.

Its *naïveté* is at once the strength and weakness of European thought. The springs of modern fiction are still brackish with the salt of our enthusiasm about heredity. Recent talk of degeneration is little more than the bitterness left within a cup. Like every single truth mistaken for the whole, heredity would impose as great a bondage on the human spirit as any system of fatalism. Of what use the fight against the weakness or ignorance of one's ancestors? What hope of victory over the taint that is in the blood? And yet, high over all law and all instruments rose, rises, and shall for ever rise, the human will, its brow bright with the sunshine of freedom, its foot on the foe that our subtle criticism had pronounced invincible, serene in the knowledge of its own power to defy alike heredity and the nature-of-things, and make for itself out of the web of failure the mantle of a supreme victory.

But this will so often seems asleep! Unaroused, or ignorant as a child, it has turned aside perhaps for every wayside flower, for any shining pebble, and in the hour of the crisis is simply missing. Or it may be that it suffers from some base intoxication of falsehood or desire, and has fallen down to kiss the feet of evil as though it were good, courting slavery and defeat as maidens to be caressed. Surely here, and here alone, is the crux of things, in the

difference between the enlightened and the unenlightened will. Necessity is but the sum of the conditions. Heredity is but one, though the most critical, of those conditions. In the setting of the will itself towards bondage or towards freedom lies the secret of the unity of life.

There are thus three factors in the interpretation of human life, and it has been the distinction of Asiatic thought to have recognised all three. A profound certitude that cause must sooner or later be followed by effect, while effect has as surely been preceded by cause, gives to the Indian temperament an air of quiet resignation which is far from being the inactive fatalism so commonly supposed. For there is surely the difference of extremes between a dignified acceptance of things because they are unaccountable and not to be interfered with, and a similar dignified acceptance because they are so entirely accountable that events require no acceleration!

That India understands the doctrine of heredity is demonstrated by caste. There alone, amongst all the countries of the world, it has been held for ages an unpardonable social dishonour to allow the diseased or deformed or mentally alienated to marry. For such, the quietly enforced decree of caste has been always—no posterity. But more than this, the very meaning of the institution is, amongst other things, the attempt to develop still further the brain of the Brahmin, the hand of the tool-bearer, and every form of expert faculty. It is true that it rejects the *crossing* of blood as a means to this end, but it looks to the cumulative influence of careful selection from generation to generation, to that of the occupational environment, and to the inheritance of the effects of clean-feeding. The last is held specially important to the user of the brain: hence the Brahmin represents more than any other the fibre produced by countless generations of care in this respect, and the lower we go in society the less do we find of such transmission.

But the Indian comprehension of the nature of things

and of heredity as complementary elements in the scheme presented to the will has never meant blindness to the last and most important consideration of all—the efficiency of the will itself. If this were not the determining factor, India would say, it would not be possible, as it is, to watch two brothers, with the same inheritance, the same material opportunities, and the same moral environment, journey, one to glory and the other to shame, by a common road. And if it were not also the ultimate standard of success or failure, the Greek story of Aristides, for instance, would lose all its pathos. For we all know how, when an ignorant man asked his help in casting his vote for the condemnation of Aristides, the great man first complied with his request, and then, on mildly inquiring its reason, was answered, “I am tired of hearing him called ‘the just.’”

Is it here, or in the story of Dives and Lazarus, that we catch a glimpse of inequality? Which is the crueller perplexing of our sense of justice—that one man receives wealth and another poverty, or that one cannot wish well, nor another ill?

The answer of India is not doubtful. There is one tool and only one, she says, that is finer than the most perfect human brain, and that is the tool of a noble intention. No more than other delicate instruments is this, she claims, immediately producible wherever we may wish to see it. Just as faculty grows from feeble and unrationalised to its perfection, just as organisms progress from minute and simple to large and complex, so must we suppose that will passes through all the stages of egotism till it reaches that illumination which we know as perfect charity. At each stage the possibilities of aspiration are limited, though they become less and less so as the goal is approached. The whole Hindu outlook is thus critical and scientific. There is no longer a vague horrible something called sin: this has given place to a clearly defined state of ignorance, or blindness of the will. Nor is this ignorance conceived of as a stationary or fixed quantity. So surely as trees grow and

rivers seek the sea will it sooner or later give place to knowledge, in every human soul; and then a man's mere forgetfulness of his limited personality and its aims may look to others like nobility: to himself it will not even be apparent, lost in the larger yearning of more universal life. Thus a great and generous thought is like a position near the river-mouth to the water springing at the source, not by any means to be reached without traversing the complete distance. The supreme good fortune possible to man would consist of a noble intention, joined to a great brain, joined to an external position of mastery and freedom—an advantageous point, that is to say, on some line of cause and effect. Such, we may take it, to Gautama the Buddha, was the opportunity of his birth. Most lives, however, represent every possible degree, and combination of degrees, of the three conditions. We see the great position made the background of stupidity and meanness. We see the kind wish rendered futile by feebleness of intellect. Very occasionally there is no discord between person and circumstance; but now and again the discrepancy takes the acute form of the lion caught in the net, or the common criminal wearing an emperor's crown. Whence have these anomalies arisen? In what firm order do they stand rooted?

The Hindu mind seems always to have been possessed of the quiet confidence that all phenomena will yield themselves to a rational explanation. Since "that which exists is one," it is absurd to suppose an ultimate contradiction between the human reason and the universe. The mind that is normal and right amongst its fellows is normal and right in its relation to things. If we see and hear and taste, it is because in primal vibration there is something correspondent to sight and sound and the rest, of which our human sense has been the necessary outcome. Our faculty, that is to say, may be feeble, but we must assume it to be true. If thirty years of life can impress us with a sense of terrible duration, utterly disproportionate to their

relative importance, it is because in the Absolute there is no passage of time, all the infinite eternities of consciousness lying in the Now. If human love can oppress us with a vastness undreamed of, suddenly opened before us, it is because in it we have approximated to a state which transcends all limit and all change. Whatever be the nature of the Real it must include, not exclude, consciousness. This being so, we must take it that the order of things as we see them—time, space, and causation—applies to life itself as naturally as to all that within the limits of life we perceive. Our appearance here from birth to death is a simple case of the sequences that every moment of our stay brings to our notice. It is the effect of some cause which could no more have failed to find its fulfilment in time and space than the self-striking of a bird's wing could fail to be accompanied by flight. Everything, again, within the general effect, is a subordinate effect conditioned by its own subordinate cause. Physical, mental, and moral, are only terms denoting so many dimensions, as it were, within which the seed has germinated and come to its fruition. So much for the effect. Do things, as we see them, give us any hint as to the nature of the *cause*? Yes, there is one force—the force of desire—that we see at work daily, making, cherishing, gathering, action and its fruits. Without this as creative antecedent it will be found on examination that nothing that we know of comes to pass. Hence if life as a whole be regarded as but a phenomenon similar in kind to those which it encloses, we are impelled to the conclusion that of it also the efficient cause has been the human will. We dreamed of ourselves as bodies. Falling into some strange error, we longed for the sweets of sense. And we awoke and, without knowing it, found ourselves in prison, there but to continue adding to the energy of those desires, each of which was already a fetter binding us the faster. Such is the Hindu interpretation of our presence here. Of what led to our self-deceit he attempts no account, conceiving that his right to a rational

theory applies only to the phenomenal, meaning those things that are perceived within the play of reason.

Thus, life is a harvest reaped at birth. It is also the sowing of fresh harvests for the painful reaping of the future. Every act is as a seed, effect of past cause, cause of effect to come—Karma. The unending wheel of birth and change and death. For the Hindu does not consider that a single life alone is to be accounted for. The very constitution of our minds forces on us the idea that phenomena are cyclic; that appearances recur; that the starry Universe itself blooms and will wither like another flower. Clearly then the causes that have placed us here today must bring us again; must, in the circling of infinite ages, have brought us infinite times before. This is the doctrine of Reincarnation. Our ignorance now tells of a deeper ignorance in the past. The desires that burn within us are but our subjective apprehension of what is yet to be. For that which we long for must come to our hand. The Karma of each birth is only the harvest of our ancient wishes.

What the victim of desire so constantly forgets, however, is the twofold nature of things, and their constant state of flux. Good brings evil; wealth is succeeded by poverty: love is but a messenger sent before the feet of sorrow. In fact, the seeming benefits of material things are in reality scourges, sooner or later to lash the very back of him who drew them to himself. None, for instance, could be so puerile as to declare palaces, jewels, and horses a good in themselves, so that their chance possession now and again should be any compensation for the suffering of requiring them. It is little more exalted, says the Hindu, to claim love, intellect, and salvation, as necessities. The world of Maya consists of the perpetual alternation of opposites. Every desire carries its fulfilment, its decay, and its retribution hidden within itself. That what we would have we must first give, is the lesson of austerity.

The Karma of an individual, then, consists of a given

condition of taste or knowledge, a given physical equipment, and a given share of material fortune or misfortune. Taste sometimes rises to genius, or sinks to brutish appetite. The physical equipment may include a mathematician's brain, a violinist's hand, or a body tortured by perverse temptations. In any case, according to the theory, the will that has come to administer, earned exactly that endowment, and in this respect life is justly distributed. It is thought not unnatural that the soul of a Bach should seek incarnation in a family of musicians, since here it could best find the conditions it demanded. With regard to such matters, a vast lore has been accumulated, into which it is interesting to dip. There is a popular belief amongst Hindus that marriage is always contracted between the same two persons, and that the merit of either is divided equally with the other. However this may be, love at first sight—an occasional experience the world over!—is held a sure proof of past friendship and acquaintance. Very perfect relationships, by which is meant, amongst other things, those that are complex in their quality, would be considered in the same way, to be long-rooted. The religious life is one of the most fascinating subjects of speculation. It will sometimes happen that the stern ascetic in the midst of his austerities yields to, or at least harbours, some vain desire. This is enough to precipitate him once more into the world, where his position and power will be exactly equal to the severity of his past renunciations. He may thus very easily become a monarch, and it is believed that a faint memory of the religious habit often haunts the throne. The great Akbar of Delhi told of such a reminiscence in his own case. He had been a monastic novice, and had fallen in love! When sovereignty was exhausted, however, he would return to his prayers and gain freedom, without another fall. An impression of this kind about Queen Victoria was the real secret of the influence of her name in India—an influence, be it added, which would have been much deepened had

she succeeded in abdicating some few years before her death, in order to devote the rest of her life to God.

We must remember, however, that the Oriental, born to the idea of reincarnation, rarely becomes so infatuated with it as to make it his sole dependence in interpreting life. He does not lose his head over it, as may one who hears of it for the first time. He is well aware that, on his own hypothesis, we are engaged in the sowing of seed, as well as the reaping of grain. He will not therefore attempt to explain every new introduction from an imaginary past. This life is to him but one measure in a long passage of music. The great majority of its tones gain all their beauty and meaning from the fact that they were prepared beforehand and will be resolved after, but some nevertheless are new. That we do not, as a rule, remember our pasts is, he argues, no disproof of their existence, since neither do we remember our birth and infancy.

It is this clearness of logical speculation that lends its terror to the Indian notion of existence. To the wise man, frankly, life is a bondage, and the only question how to be freed from it. Suicide cannot solve the problem. The reasons for this act may be frivolous or weighty. It is an instrument as much within a man's own power as the tools of his calling or the weapons of self-defence. Only, it offers no escape from the misery of existence. Can the schoolboy make progress in arithmetic by wiping from his slate the sum he could not work? Will not that particular difficulty recur whenever he would take an onward step, confusing, taunting, blinding him, till it is conquered? Even so is the lot of the suicide, thinks the Hindu. He desired to escape the rope of justice? Then in some future incursion into life it will become his Karma to stand on the scaffold and undergo the extreme penalty, for a crime he has not committed. He would flee from a dishonour he had not strength to endure? No coward's self-banishment shall suffice to save him. Sooner or later the ordeal must be met and faced. Or was it the abstract hatred of

life that used his own hand to slay the man? Fool! saw he not that the act was part and parcel of an extreme self-indulgence, and must bring its terrible consequence of exile from all that could make existence beautiful and blessed?

Desire, in short, is the ego-centripetal, the self-assertive, self-regarding force. The current must be turned out deliberately, not drawn inward. The passion for self must be destroyed in the thirst for service. Desire must be burnt to ashes in the fires of renunciation. Then, and then only, will there be escape from the incessant turning of the wheel. Then alone can the victim become the conqueror, and the slave master of the world.

This is the "cosmic suicide" of Schopenhauer, the much-talked-of "pessimism" of the East. It is indeed a familiar conception to all Hindus, so familiar as to be an integral part of language. But it is hardly "pessimism." Does the prophecy of victory carry with it sadness? the certain promise of his freedom embitter the slave? There is a sense in which, if Hindu philosophy be not optimistic, it is difficult to know what the world means by optimism. Taking the doctrine of reincarnation as a whole, we find it so necessary to the theory of Maya that even the Buddhist formulation could not exist without some version of it. At the same time, a clear understanding of it is a valuable corrective of slipshod misconceptions as to the philosophy of illusion. That this involves no lazy intellectual uncertainty regarding phenomena we have seen, since the whole doctrine of Karma is based on the Hindu's implicit conviction of the entire calculableness of law. It cannot be too clearly understood that the argument of Maya is compatible with, and tenacious of, the severest scientific research, and that, to Oriental thinking, only that man who has in his own person, by some method of self-discipline, achieved a realisation, compared to which all that we know through the senses is unreal, has a right to speak of the phenomenal universe as, to him, fundamentally an illusion. The effort to reach this vision remains, nevertheless, to the

Oriental mind the one end and justification of existence, the one escape from the wheel of life, and mankind is for ever divisible into those who see and struggle towards such a goal, and those who are engaged in sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind, of Desire.

The battlefield of Kurukshetra lies silent these many centuries, yet still to the ear of the wise man it echoes the doom of Humanity in the terrible words "of that which is born, death is certain: of that which is dead, birth is certain."

XII

THE STORY OF THE GREAT GOD: SHIVA OR MAHADEVA

Thou that art knowledge itself,
Pure, free, ever the witness,
Beyond all thought and beyond all qualities,
To Thee, the only true Guru, my salutation,
Shivaguru! Shivaguru! Shivaguru!

Salutation to Shiva, as the Teacher of the Soul.

IN India's great moments, the Himalayas have always been her highway, not her boundary. Those strings of pack-mules, with their sorry-looking rice-bags, that we meet on every hill-path, as we wander through the mountains, are the remains of a great continental traffic that once carried the religion into China. For beliefs, like diseases, do not travel alone. The pilgrim is accompanied by the pedlar: the begging-friar dogs the footsteps of the merchant; the faith follows the line of trade. It may be that if Chinese silk and turquoise had not found their way to India many centuries before the birth of Buddha, the news of the Great Nirvana could never have reached the remoter East.

To this day, we find ancient capitals and their ruins, old fortresses, royal temples, scattered up and down the heights from Beluchistan to Nepal, in regions long depopulated. And Himalayan shrines and cities have an art and architecture of their own, which is more severely beautiful, because more directly related to the common early Asiatic, than the later styles, to be found further south. For the first culture-area of humanity had these mountains as its rim. Long before a local prepossession had named the Mediterranean, Asia was. And of that Asia, Egypt, Greece, Etruria, were outlying provinces. The

Saracen and Moor, with all that they brought of art and chivalry, with all the intellectual vividness they conferred on Europe, were but the relic-mongers of its past. In the West, even now, we admit a people to be civilised only if we can trace its intellectual descent from this ancient Asia.

Above all, it is the broken voices of its primitive consciousness that are hailed today in every civilised country as divine revelations. India herself is no exception to this rule. For all the migrations of Ashokan and other periods pale beside the memory of the still more significant era when for the first time there came to settle on the Northern Plain those little communities of people, already agricultural and industrial in their habits, who carried with them the culture of Central Asia. It was not a regimented immigration. The Lall Kaffir, or pale folk, dwelling to this day in the Hindu Kush, were not deserters, turning aside from the line of march. We must rather suppose a gradual overflow, through many centuries, of the Himalayan region. And yet, at some time or place, it must have been sufficiently consolidated and self-organised to become conscious of its great heritage of thought, to commit its knowledge to writing, and to give form and definition to the Aryan civilisation.

Wherever and whenever it may have happened, this was the moment at which long ages of accumulating reflection and observation precipitated themselves into form as the Vedas. Even so are all Scriptures born. The Tartar herdsman, facing his unknown future as a peasant, records at once his ideals and his memories, and we have the Eki, or Book of Change, of the Chinese people. The austere self-isolation of a few tribes of Syrian shepherds fronts with terror the degradation of Babylonian cities, and the prophets pour out their sublime woes. The Latin Church carries to the Norse peasant with one hand the waters of baptism, with the other the script, by means of which he is to write down his magnificent sagas. The old order blossoms into

complete self-consciousness at that very instant when every petal trembles to the fall.

So passed the Vedic age, for the Aryans settled down in India, and became Hindus. The process by which this was accomplished must have been complex and gradual. In some directions towards a greater luxury, it must have been fundamentally a simplification of life. The builders of the Himalayas had used wood and stone. The builders of the plains used bamboos, mud, and bricks; and their architectural designs began to approximate to those of pottery. The weavers of Central Asia had worked in wool, doubtless of marvellous dyes. The craftsmen of the South were driven to cotton and silk. That system of ritual purification which was common to the whole of the Asiatic culture, and which is still retained by Europe in the form of sacraments and rubrics, must have been deepened and extended to meet the new climatic conditions. Natural metaphor underwent transformation. Coolness was exchanged for warmth as the qualification of friendship. Himalayan scenery was no longer present to give constant birth to grand myths and colossal imagery. That gradual absorption of regional thought and worship began, which was to produce what in its latest phase would be known as Hinduism. But it was always to be absorption. It was always to be the play of the Aryan intellect upon the indigenous symbol; never the acceptance of a superstition that could not be rationalised. This wonderful continuity of thinking marks the solidarity of Hinduism as nothing else could. Every creed within its frontiers—and they are wide enough to include all types of religious thought—can prove the Vedas to be its authority. Even the image of the Goddess Kali is held to be foreshadowed in the sublime Anthem to Creation of the Rig-Veda:

The Self sustained as Cause below,
Projected as Effect above.

We find in India, then, a classical nation like Egypt

or Greece, which has been allowed to develop freely on the mental plane, and has held the thread of its thought unbroken to the present day. It may be said broadly that great culture and subjective philosophies are almost always continental in their origin, while the sense of nationality and insistence on the beautiful are insular. If this be true, it would explain the greater sympathy between Hellenic and Japanese developments than between Greek and Indian.

For the Hindu imagination long ago detached itself from the cycle of physical beauty, to seek its fullest satisfaction in subtler realms. This fact is extraordinarily evident in Kalidas' poem of "The birth of the War-Lord," where he depicts the wooing of Mahadeva by Uma, the Himalayan princess. Here, the poet places his heroine at the very acme of maidenly charm, kneeling in worship to lay flowers at the feet of the Great God, and having as her background the forest of plum and cherry and almond, all suddenly burst into blossom, because to them comes Spring, as the comrade of Love. And then, with a single sweep of the brush, the picture is blotted out; the Great God has vanished from beneath his cedar; Eros is burnt to ashes; and the royal maiden kneels alone, while the bitter wailing of Desire, the beautiful wife of Love, fills the whole woodland. Uma's triumph is reached, and the Divine Spouse drawn to her side, only when, in the midst of unheard-of austerities, she gives supreme proof of courage and devotion as nun, and worshipper, instead of woman and lover. This touch lies far beyond the range of the Greek.

A similar tendency to use physical symbolism as a system of notation merely, instead of seeking in it the direct and adequate expression of spiritual conceptions, as did the classical genius of Europe, is to be found throughout the whole conception of Shiva or Mahadeva, the Great God Himself. The tiger-skin in which he is clad, and some of the names of this deity, induce Tod in his "Annals of Rajasthan" to regard him as simply a new version of the Greek Bacchus. It is a great deal more likely that behind

the two, in the dim North, and in the distant past—in some Lake Manasarovar of thought, to quote Max Müller—there may loom up a common ancestor. But this probability only makes more significant the divergences between the two conceptions.

Anyone who visits Northern India must desire to know the meaning of the little black stones under every conspicuous tree, which are so evidently set up for worship. They are said by Europeans to be of phallic origin; but if so, Hindus are no more conscious of the fact than we of the similar origin of the maypole. Wherever one goes, one finds them, by the roadsides in cities and villages, on the river-banks, or inside the entrance to a garden, if there is a tree that stands alone. For in such places one is glad to think that the Great God, begging His handful of rice, from door to door, may have seated Himself to bless us with His meditation.

The small stone pillar, called the Lingam—the word *lingam* is literally *symbol*—may have been taken from the bed of a stream, and in that case is likely to be of a long egg-shape. But if it has been cut by the hand of man, it is short and slightly tapering, with a thimble-like top. Sometimes, in all good faith, the features of a human face have been more or less crudely marked on it, with white paint. In any case, it is only a question of time till some woman, passing by on her way from bathing, stops to pour a little water, or sprinkle a few grains of rice tenderly over the head of the stone, perhaps also to add Bel-leaves, trifoliolate like our clover; or a garland of white flowers; or, prompted by a heart more devoted and loving than usual, to touch it with a spot of sandal-paste, so cool and refreshing in this hot climate! Then the earth is touched with the head, and the worshipper passes on.

The simple act is not without its perplexities, and we seek for interpretation. At first in vain. Or the explanations given are more bewildering than helpful. Hindus are too conscious of the symbolistic nature of every faith,

and too sensitive also to the scornful irreverence of most foreign inquirers, to speak out, or argue out, the heart of their heart with the passing stranger. Rather they will turn on one, with a strange pity. "Do you not understand," they will say, "that this is the Great God who is emblemated here? He can have neither visitor, nor history, nor worshipper. Such things are vain dreams of men. Only for our own hearts' ease, and to carry ourselves nearer to the inner vision, do we set up a stone whereon we may offer rice and water and lay a leaf or two!" It will be difficult in all India to find a woman so simple, or a peasant so ignorant, that to them worship is not, as some one has said, "a conscious symbolism, instead of a fragment of primitive personification." Yet by degrees the great myth leaks out. Little by little we learn the associations of the name.

The Lingam, after all, is but a fragment of stone. Far better images of Mahadeva are those who come and go yonder, amidst the passing crowd—the monks and beggars, some clad only in ashes with matted hair, others with shaven head, and clothed from throat to foot in the sacred yellow, but most of them bearing one form or another of staff or trident, and carrying a begging bowl. And finer still will these be, when, retiring into the forest, or climbing to the verge of eternal snows, they sit, even like this stone Lingam, bolt upright in the shelter of tree or rock, lost to the world without, in solitary meditation.

About the whole conception there is a striking reminiscence of the Himalayas. Whether we will or not we are carried back, as we listen, to the great age of the Vedas, when the Aryan immigration was still taking place. It is a day of sacrifice, and at the forest-clearing people and priests are met, to heap the offerings on the mighty fire, chanting appropriate texts. Hour after hour, sometimes day after day, the mound of pure flame lasts, and long after it has ceased the hot white ashes lie in their immense bed, thrilling now and then to a faint trickling spark,

sighing themselves out into the coldness of death. Who was it that first came and rubbed himself with those soft white ashes, in order to be clothed upon with the worship of God and separation from the world? Who was it that first retired into cave or jungle, and meditated, until his hair became a tangled mass, and his nails grew long, and his body emaciated, and he still pursued the sublime bliss of the soul? However the idea of such an exterior grew, the whole genius of India has spoken for many a century in just such a picture—the hermit clad in wood-ashes, with masses of neglected hair, piled on the top of his head, indifferent to the whole world, bent only on thought.

As the Aryans wandered in sight of the snow-mountains, with the fire-sacrifice for their central rite, an indissoluble connection arose in their minds between the two ideas. Were not the flames of the offerings white like the Himalayas, always mounting upward like the aspiring peaks, leaving behind them ashes for eternal frost? Those snowy heights, we must suppose, became the central objects of their love. Lifted above the world in silence, terrible in their cold and their distance, yet beautiful beyond all words, what are they like? Why, they are like—a great monk, clothed in ashes, lost in his meditation, silent and alone! They are like—like—the Great God Himself, Shiva, Mahadeva!

Having arrived at this thought, the Hindu mind began to work out all sorts of accessories and symbols, in which sometimes the idea of flame, sometimes of mountain, sometimes of hermit is uppermost—all contributing to the completed picture of Shiva, the Great God.

The wood was borne to the sacrifice on a bull: Shiva possesses an old bull, on which he rides.

As the moon shines above the mountains, so He bears on His forehead the new moon.

Like the true ascetic, begging food at the householder's door, He is pleased with very simple gifts. The cold water of the bath, a few grains of rice, and two or three green

Bel-leaves, are His whole offering in the daily worship. But the rice and water must be of the purest, for they are presented to a most honoured guest. Evidently the Bel-leaf, like the shamrock, refers to the Trinity. For, as we all know, this doctrine is Hindu as well as Christian and Egyptian.

To show how easily Shiva can be pleased, the people tell a pretty story. A poor huntsman—that is to say, one of the lowest of the low—once came to the end of a day's hunting without having snared or killed a single creature. Night came on, and he was far from home, in the jungle, alone. Near-by stood a Bel-tree, with branches near the ground, and he was glad to climb into it, to pass the night in shelter from wild beasts. But as he lay crouching in its branches, the thought of his wife and children starving at home would come to him, and for pity of their need great tears rolled down his cheeks, and falling on the Bel-leaves broke them by their weight, and carried them to the ground. Under the sacred tree, however, stood a Shiva-lingam, image of Shiva, and the tears fell, with the leaves, on its head. That night a black snake crept up the tree, and stung the man. And bright spirits came, and carried his soul to Heaven, and laid it down at the feet of Shiva.

Then, in that holy place, rose the clamour of many voices questioning: "Why is this savage here? Has he not eaten impure foods? Has he offered right sacrifices? Has he known the law?" But the Great God turned on them all in gentle surprise: "Did he not worship Me with Bel-leaves and with tears?" He said.

Looking closer at the *flame*, however, one thing was very clear. It was white, but it had a blue throat—we see it even when we light a match!—and in order to bestow a blue throat upon Shiva, the following story arose:

Once upon a time, all the splendour and glory of the gods seemed to be vanishing from them. (Are such tales, we wonder, a reminiscence of the period when the old gods,

Indra, Agni, and the lords of the universe, found themselves growing unfashionable, because the Trinity, Brahma—Vishnu—Shiva, was coming into favour?) What to do, the gods did not know, but they determined to pray to Vishnu, the Preserver of the World, for advice. He told them, perhaps contemptuously, to “go and churn the ocean!” and the poor gods trooped forth eagerly to do his bidding.

They churned and churned. Many great and splendid things came foaming up, and they seized them with avidity, here a wonderful elephant, there a princely horse, again a beautiful wife for some one. Each was only greedy to be first in the handling of the next delight, when all at once something black began to come. Welling up and up, and then spreading over the whole ocean, it came. “What is it?” they asked each other in horror. It was poison—death to them, death to the world, death to the universe. It came to their very feet, and they had to retreat rapidly in fear. Already they were in the midst of darkness, and there was nowhere that they could flee, for this dense blackness was about to cover all the worlds. In this moment of mortal terror, all the gods with one voice called on Shiva. He had taken no part in the receiving of gifts, maybe He would be able to help them now. Instantly, the great White God was in their midst. He smiled gently at their dilemma and their fear, and stooping down He put His hand into the waves, and bade the poison flow into the hollow of His palm. Then He drank it, willing to die, in order to save the world. But that which would have been enough to destroy all created beings was only enough to stain His throat, hence He bears there a patch of blue for ever.

Perhaps one of the most characteristic myths that have clustered round the name of Mahadeva is the Legend of the Boar-Hunt. As we read it, we stand on the snowy heights of the third range of the Himalayas, and seem to watch a mighty snow-storm sweeping through the ravine

before us.

Arjuna, one of the principal heroes of the Great War, and the second figure in the dialogue of the Gita, had gone up into the mountains, to spend three months in worshipping Shiva, and invoking His blessing. Suddenly one day as he was praying and offering flowers before the Lingam, he was roused by a wild boar, which was rushing forward to attack him. It was only an instant, and Arjuna, the practised archer, had seized his bow and shot the animal. But at the self-same moment a shout of warning was heard, and simultaneously with Arjuna's a second arrow pierced the body of the beast. The hero raised his eyes, and saw, coming towards him, a formidable-looking hunter and huntress, followed by an innumerable retinue of women, attired for the chase, and attended, at some distance, by a dim host of shadows—the armies of demons and hobgoblins. A second later, the whole hunt had come to a stop before him.

“The quarry was mine!” cried the Hunter—and his voice sounded like the winter-blasts, amongst the mountains—“the quarry was mine. Mine is the lordship of these forests! How dared you touch it?”

At this address, Arjuna blazed with anger, and picking up the bow and arrows that he had thrown aside before returning to his worship, he challenged the Hunter to a personal combat.

“Accepted,” was the reply, and the duel began. But to the hero's dismay, he seemed to be attacking some terrible phantom, for, one after another, his good stout arrows disappeared into the person of his antagonist, working him no harm.

“Let's wrestle then!” shouted Arjuna, and casting aside his bow, he flung himself upon his foe. He was met by the quiet touch of a hand on his heart, and fell to the ground stunned.

“Well, come on!” said the Hunter, as he recovered himself a few seconds later, and turned aside from the

contest. But he seemed almost intoxicated. "I must finish my worship first," he said, in a thick voice, taking up a garland of flowers, to fling about the Shiva-lingam. The next moment the eyes of Arjuna were opened, for the Hunter towered above him, blessing him, and the flowers were about his neck.

"Mahadeva! Mahadeva!" cried the worshipper, flinging himself on the ground, to touch with his head the feet of the God. But already the hunt had swept on down the valley, and the Hunter and Huntress had disappeared, with all their train.

Such are a few of the stories told of Shiva, so deeply loved by all his devotees. To them there is nothing in the world so strong and pure and all-merciful as their great God, and the books and poems of Hindus are very few in which he is not referred to with this passionate worship.

Sometimes He is entirely a personification of the Himalayas, as when the Milky Way is made to fall upon his head, wander round and round amongst the tangled locks, and issue from them at last as the Ganges. Indeed, the imagination of the people may be said to make of their northern ranges one vast shrine to Him; for it is far away, they say, across the frost-bound heights, where the Himalayas are at their mightiest and India passes into Tibet, that the Lake Manasarovar lies, at the foot of the great ice-peak of Kailas. Here is the reign of silence and eternal snow, and here, guarding the north, is the holy home that Shiva loves.

He is the very soul of gentleness, refusing none. Up here have gathered round Him all those who were weary of earth, having found no acceptance amongst the fortunate. The serpents, whom all the world hates and denies, come to Kailas, and Mahadeva finds room for them in His great heart. And the tired beasts come—for He is the refuge of animals—and it is one of these, a shabby old bull, that He specially loves and rides upon.

And here, too, come the spirits of all those men and

women who are turbulent and troublesome and queer, the bad boys and girls of the grown-up world, as it were. All the people who are so ugly that no one wants to see them ; those who do things clumsily, and talk loudly, and upset everything, though they mean no harm, and the poor things who are ridden by one idea, so that they never can see straight, but always seem a little mad—such are the souls on whom He alone has mercy. He is surrounded by them, and they love and worship Him. He uses them to do His errands, and they are known as Shiva's demons.

But Shiva is more even than this. He is the Self-born, the eternally-existent postulate of freedom and purity and light. He is the great teaching soul of things. His function is to destroy ignorance, and wherever knowledge is achieved, He is. His name of "Hara! Hara!" ("The Free! The Free!") was the battle-cry of the Mahrattas. More yet, He is Rudra, the Storm, the Terrible ; and it is under this aspect that Hinduism raises to Him its daily cry:

Evermore protect us,—O thou terrible!—
From ignorance, by thy sweet compassionate face.

For, after all, a human quality is always limited to one of two, the Divine must be lifted above good as well as evil, above joy as well as pain. We have here the Indian conception of same-sightedness, and perhaps its devotional significance is nowhere interpreted as in the Hindi song of Surdas, which is here repeated as a nautch-girl was heard to sing it in a Rajput Court:

O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
By Thy touch, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me pure.*

* *Literally*, Make us both the same Brahman—i.e., Let the Singer—low dancing-girl as she may be—become one with God Himself in the Supreme Essence, Brahman. The theological conception here is so difficult for Western readers that I have preferred to use the simpler alternative translation also furnished by my Master, the Swami Vivekananda.

One drop of water is in the sacred Jamuna,
Another is foul in the ditch by the roadside,
But when they fall into the Ganges,
Both alike become holy.

One piece of iron is the image in the temple,
Another is the knife in the hand of the butcher,
But when they touch the philosopher's stone,
Both alike turn to gold.

So, Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
Make us both the same Brahman.

XIII

THE GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED ONE

We worship Thee, Seed of the Universe,
Thou one unbroken Soul.
We worship Thee, whose footstool is worshipped by the gods.
Thou Lord of the Saints,
Physician of the World-disease,
To Thy lotus-feet our salutation, O Great Soul!

Hindu form of salutation to a Divine Incarnation.

I

It is told of a certain Bodhisattva that, all his struggles done and illumination reached, he was about to pass over into Nirvana. But as his feet touched the threshold of supreme blessedness there rose to his ears the sound of the sorrowful crying of humanity. Then turned that great soul back from Nirvana and entered again into life, declaring that till the last grain of dust in the universe had passed in before him, he would by no means go into salvation. And this Bodhisattva is he who sits on the throne of the Dalai-Lama in Tibet, watching the world of men with eyes of divine pity from afar off.

Called by various names, arrayed in widely-differing garb, we come constantly in Hinduism on the attempt, as here in the story of the Dalai-Lama, to express the idea that in the great Heart of the Absolute there dwells an abiding charity towards men. It would seem as if, to the religious instinct of humanity, the dream of "the pursuit of the soul by God" is a necessity; and the Hindu, well aware of the impossibility of giving it logical expression, veils his effort in mythology. Whence the stories of the Avatars. For our conception of the doctrine of reincarnation is only complete when we understand that now and

again the Eternal Love is represented as projecting itself into the sphere of manifestation, taking shape as a man, in order to act as a lamp amidst the darkness of delusion, a counter-magnetism to the attractions of desire.

It is absurd, says the Hindu—whose imagination can never be charged with provincialism—to think that such an Incarnation, supposing it to occur at all, could visit the world only once. Is respect of persons a divine attribute? Or is the need of mankind at any time less than complete? Can we believe, again, that the power of creative energy to assume and throw off the shell of personality is exhausted in a single effort? Rather must the taking upon Himself of mortal form and limitations be to the all-pervasive “as the lifting of a flower’s fragrance by the summer breeze,” a matter of play; or like the shining of a lamp through the window wherein it is set, without effort—nothing more.

The orthodox Hindu is thus usually in no position to deny the supernatural character of the Babe of Bethlchem. He is only unable to admit that the nature of Christ stands alone in the history of the world, holding that his own country has seen even more than the three—Rama, Krishna, and Buddha—who were His brothers. Still more cogently does he claim sometimes that all these and possibly others of whom he has not heard, are but one soul, one expression of Godhead coming back at different times to lay hold on the hearts of men. And he quotes in support of this contention the familiar words of Krishna: “Whenever religion decays, and when irreligion* prevails, *then* I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of the Dharma, I am born again and again.”

It is natural enough to the Hindu intellect that around each such forth-shining of the Divine should grow up a new religious system or Church. But each of these is only a special way of expressing the one fundamental doctrine

* Literally, Dharma and A-dharma. The prefix here is adversative—Dharma and non-dharma. See p. 251.

of Maya, a new mode of endearing God to man. At the same time it is thought that every one, while recognising this perfect sympathy of various faiths for one another, should know how to choose one amongst them for his own, and persist in it, till by its means he has reached a point where the formulæ of sects are meaningless to him. "For it is good," say the people, "to be born in a church, though it is foolish to die there."

In this sense—somewhat different from the religious partisanship of Europe—the popular and growing belief of the Hindu masses consists of various forms of the worship of Krishna. It is this creed that carries to those who need it, a religious emotionalism like that of the Salvation Army or of Methodism. In the hottest nights, during periods of "revival," the streets of a city will be crowded with men bearing lights and banners, and dancing themselves into a frenzy to such words as:

Call on the Lord,
 Call on the Lord,
 Call on the Lord, little brother!
 Than this name of the Lord,
 For mortal man,
 There is no other way.

Krishna, like Rama and like Buddha, is considered to be a special incarnation of Vishnu, God the Preserver. It is therefore pertinent to appeal to Him for the goods of life, for consolation in sorrow, for deliverance from fear. He is known as the Holy Child, born in humility amidst cowherds by the Jamuna; the Gentle Shepherd of the People, the Wise Counsellor, the Blessed Lord, tender Lover and Saviour of the human soul; and by other names not less familiar to ourselves. It is an image of the Baby Krishna that the Indian mother adores as the Bambino, calling it "Gopala," her cowherd. His name fills gospels and poems, the folk-songs of all Hindu races are full of descriptions of Him as a cowherd wandering and sporting

amongst His fellows; and childish literature is full of stories of Him, curiously like European tales of the Christ-child. To the ecstatic mystic, He is the Divine Spouse.

If we dip into His history, we shall think it a strange medley. So many parts were never surely thrust upon a single figure! But through it all we note the predominant Indian characteristics,—absolute detachment from personal ends, and a certain subtle and humorous insight into human nature.

His main spiritual significance for India does not, perhaps—with one exception—attach to that part of His life which is related in the Mahabharata, but rather to what is told of Him in the Puranas—works not unlike our apocryphal Gospels. But the one exception is important. It consists of no less an incident than that conversation with the chieftain Arjuna which comprises the Bhagavad Gita, or Song of the Blessed One. Of this little poem—only some three or four times the length of the Sermon on the Mount, and shorter even than the Gospel of St. Mark—it may be said at once that amongst the sacred writings of mankind there is probably no other which is at once so great, so complete, and so short. It provides the worship of Krishna—and incidentally all kindred systems—with that open door upon abstract philosophy without which no cult could last in India for a week. But it is by no means the property of the Vaishnavas exclusively. From Kashmir to Cape Comorin it is bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of all forms of religious thought.

Its ideas are unmistakably Indian in colour: its *feeling* is just as unmistakably universal. The voice that speaks on the field of Kurukshetra is the same voice that reverberates through an English childhood from the shores of the Sea of Galilee. We read the gracious words, "Putting aside all doctrines, come thou to Me alone for shelter—I will liberate thee from all sins, do not thou grieve." "Fixing thy heart on Me, thou shalt, by My grace, cross over all difficulties," and we drop the book, lost in a dream of One

who cried to the weary and heavy-laden, "Come unto Me." We certainly now understand, and cannot again forget, that for the Indian reader the eyes of the Lord Krishna are most kind, His touch infinitely gentle, and His heart full of an exceeding great compassion, even as for us are the eyes and the hand and the heart of Him Who spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd.

Like our own Gospels, the Gita abounds in quaint and simple metaphors. "As a lamp in a sheltered spot, not flickering" must be the mind. All undertakings are surrounded with evil, "as fire with smoke." The round of worship is "as a wheel revolving." So great is wisdom that though thou shouldst be "even the most sinful of all sinners, thou shalt cross safely to the conquest of all sin by the bark of wisdom alone." One of the most beautiful, referring to those perceptions which constitute the Universe as we know it, says, "All this is threaded upon Me as gems upon a string." Nothing is mentioned that would not be familiar to the poorest peasant, living on a fertile plain, diversified only by a river and an occasional walled city.

And indeed it was for these, labouring men, unlettered and poor, that the Gita, with its masterly simplicity, was written. To those who had thought salvation and the beatific vision as far beyond their attainment as a knowledge of the classics—to these humble souls the Divine Voice declares that, by worshipping God and doing at the same time the duty of his station, every man may attain perfection. "Better for one is one's own duty, however badly done, than the duty of another, though that be easy." Again and again, as we read the Gita, we are driven to the conclusion that we hear an infinite mercy addressing itself to a people who had imagined the knowledge of God to be the monopoly of priesthoods and religious orders, and bidding them be of good courage, for the true monk is he "who neither hates nor desires," the true worshipper anyone "who offers to Me with devotion even a leaf or a flower or a cup of water." No wonder that the Indian

people, saluting a Divine Incarnation, call Him *the physician of the world-disease!* Never did speech know how to be more interior. "Those who worship Me, renouncing all actions in Me, regarding Me as supreme, meditating on Me with entire devotion, for them whose thought is fixed on Me, I become ere long, O son of Pritha, the Saviour out of the ocean of this mortal world." . . . "For I am the abode of Brahman, the Immortal and the Immutable, the Eternal Substance, and the unfailing Bliss." We kneel in a vast silence and darkness, and hear words falling like water drop by drop.

Nothing is omitted from the Gita that the unconsolated heart requires. There are even the tender promises of daily bread, so dear to the anxious. "They who depend on Me, putting aside all care, whatsoever they need, I myself carry it to them," runs one verse. Of this a beautiful story is told in the villages. The Brahmin sat copying the text, but when the word "carry" had been written, he felt a doubt. "My dear," he said, turning to consult his wife, "thinkest thou not it is irreverent to say 'carry' here? Did not our Lord mean 'send?'" "Beyond a doubt, beloved," answered his wife, "it is as thou sayest. Let the word be 'send.'" Then the man took his penknife and erased the word he had just written, substituting his own commendation for it. A moment later he rose up to go and bathe. But his wife stood before him with troubled face. "I told thee not," she said, "that there is no food in the house, and nought have I to cook for thee." The Brahmin smiled gently. "Let us call upon our Lord to fulfil His own promise," he replied quietly; "meantime, I shall go and bathe," and he passed into the next room. Only a few minutes had he gone, when his wife was called to the door by a beautiful youth, who stood there with a basketful of delicious foods, ready for eating. "Who sent me this?" the woman asked in amazement. "Your husband called me to carry it," said the lad carelessly, putting the basket as he spoke into her hands. But to her horror, as he lifted

his arms, the housewife noted cuts and gashes above his heart. "Alas, my poor child, who hath wounded thee?" she cried. "Your husband, mother, before he called me, cut me with a small sharp weapon," was the quiet answer. Dumb with astonishment, the Brahmin's wife turned away to bestow the viands he had brought, and when she came back to the door the youth had gone. At that instant her husband re-entered the room, having returned, as she supposed, from bathing. Her wonder about the food was forgotten in indignant sympathy. "Why," she cried, "didst thou so hurt thy messenger?" The man looked at her without understanding. "Him whom thou sentest to me with food, as thou didst go to bathe," she explained. "To bathe!" he stammered, "I have not yet been!" Then the eyes of husband and wife met, and they knew both who had come to them, and how they had wounded the heart of the Lord. And the Brahmin returned to the sacred text, and once more erasing a word restored it to its original form, for there can be no doubt that the true reading is, "They who depend on Me, casting aside all care, whatsoever they need, I myself *carry* it to them."

Such are some of the associations which cling to the little image of Krishna that the children about Calcutta can buy for a few farthings. It is made of lime, and painted blue—for just as white, to the dweller amongst northern snows, signifies purity, so blue, the colour of sky and ocean, to the child of the South, is the token of the Infinite. The left hand of the image holds a flute to the lips; the right carries a thin golden scroll, referring to the Gita. The feet are crossed carelessly, like those of any strolling peasant-player, and the head is crowned. Simple toy as it is, there is hardly a detail of the composite figure in which a devotional system does not centre.

"O Thou that playest on the flute, standing by the water-ghats, on the road to Vrindavana!" sing the lovers of Krishna, and their hearts melt within them while they sing, pierced as by S. Teresa's wound of seraphic love. Of

all its elements, however, there is none which has the unequalled importance to the world of the scroll in the right hand, both as throwing light on Indian habits of thought and as an exposition of the science of religion. The questions, therefore, On what fundamental experience does the Gita base itself? To what does it appeal? What does it single out in life as requiring explanation? What is its main imperative? are of singular interest. That place which the four Gospels hold to Christendom, the Gita holds to the world of Hinduism, and in a very real sense, to understand it is to understand India and the Indian people.

II

It is believed by Hindus that when great forces are in action, on occasions such as those of battle and earthquake, a certain state of etheric vibration is produced, which makes it easy for minds trembling on the verge of supreme knowledge to vault the barricades of sense and find illumination. Perhaps this is because a great intensity of experience has to be found and transcended. Perhaps the conditions, apparently simple, are really more complex than this. At any rate, the story of the Bhagavad Gita is of the coming of such beatitude to a young soldier named Arjuna, some three thousand years ago.

Incidentally, the opening of the poem presents us with an impressive picture of an ancient battle-field. On the great plain of Kurukshetra, already the scene of the prayers and austerities of saints and pilgrims for hundreds of years, two armies face each other. The leaders of both sides occupy chariots drawn by white horses; over each waves his personal ensign; and each carries a conch-shell, by way of trumpet, to enable him to give signals and enforce attention to his commands. Both armies are represented as great hosts, but indications are not wanting that that of Duryodhana, the usurper, under the leadership of Bhishma, is the larger and stronger. And this is natural, since

Duryodhana, rightly or wrongly, is still suzerain of the whole country, while the five Pandava brothers, his cousins, are only bent on the recovery of their rights from him. We have to call to mind that this is an ancient battle, consisting of an immense number of small fights, before we are able to give our thoughts calmly to the narrative, for we are told that from all parts of the field and on both sides the white conch-shells have been blown, giving the signal for assault, and that already "the discharge of weapons" has begun, when Arjuna requests Krishna, who is acting as his charioteer, to drive him into the space between the two hosts, that he may single out those with whom he is to enter into personal combat during the fray.

The sight of the foe, however, has an extraordinary effect on the mind of the chieftain. Instead of looking on his enemies with an accession of faith in the justice of his own cause and a heroic determination to struggle to the last in its defence, he seems to realise for the first time the consequences of the attack. Amongst the foes stand all he has ever loved or honoured—Bhishma, the head of his house, the adored grandsire of his childhood; Drona, to whom he owes his education, and for whom he cherishes a passionate reverence; and cousins and relatives innumerable besides, of whom the very worst is an old playfellow or a gallant combatant in tourney. The path to victory lies through the burning-ghat of the dead! The ashes of all he loves are scattered there! As he realises this, Arjuna's great bow slips from his hand, and he sinks to the floor of his chariot in despair. We must remember that this is no mere failure of courage. The soldier has been tried and proved too often to be open for a moment to such an imputation. Neither is he represented as entertaining the slightest doubt of ultimate triumph. To the fortunes of war he gives not a thought, assuming, as do all brave men, that they must follow the right. He simply realises that for the sake of a few years of dominion he is about, with his own hand, to rid the earth of everything

he loves. He realises, too, that this widespread slaughter will constitute an enormous social disaster.

This feeling of Arjuna's finds religious expression. "I desire not victory, O Krishna, neither kingdom nor pleasures. . . . It would be better for me if the sons of Dhritarashtra, arms in hand, should slay me, unarmed and unresisting, in the battle." Surely the moral situation is finely conceived! A prince, of the proudest lineage on earth, is eager to be offered up as a sacrifice rather than accept empire at the price to be paid for it. On the battlefield of life does any case need better stating? Yet this thirst for martyrdom, which looks so like renunciation, is really quite another thing. "Thou art grieved for those who require no grief, yet thou speakest words of wisdom," says Krishna. For, instead of the actual indifference to the world and to his own part in it, of one who perceives that all before him is unreal, Arjuna is betraying that determination to maintain things as they are which belongs to those who hold that affection at least is a very actual good. It is on this distinction that the whole treatise is based.

At first, indeed, the charioteer affects to meet the chieftain's hesitation with all the contempt of knighthood for panic. "Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha!" he exclaims. "Ill doth it become thee. Cast off this base weakness, and arise, O terror of foes." It is not till Arjuna, with a touching acknowledgment of grief and confusion, makes a supreme appeal for intellectual enlightenment, that Krishna, in the character of divine teacher, enters on that immortal pronouncement regarding the Real and unreal, which ends by sending the knight back to the duty of his birth, unshrinking, with the words: "Firm, with undoubting mind, I obey Thy word."

As the dialogue proceeds, the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of battle die away. We are standing alone in some chamber of the soul, holding that colloquy between human and divine, finite and infinite, which never ceases during life for any one of us, however little

able we may be to disentangle it from the voices of the world. At the culminating moment of the interview, when the worshipper receives the sudden revelation of all existing in and by the Lord Krishna, as mere multiform expressions of His sole energy, even at this moment, and during the rapt and broken praise which follows it, we find nothing discordant in the *mise-en-scène*. A chariot of war has become, as only a Hindu pen could have made it, silent as any cell of meditation. The corner of a battle-field has grown as remote from the whirl of life as the inmost recesses of a heart at prayer.

The main argument is, as we might expect, that as all appearances are delusive, action is to the wise man indifferent, and should be performed, once he is sure that he is called to it, without fear of consequences. "Him the wise call a sage—the man whose undertakings are all devoid alike of objects and desires, whose acts have been burnt to ashes in the fire of wisdom." "Never did I not exist, nor thou, nor these rulers of men ; and no one of us will ever hereafter cease to exist." Therefore, "Free from hope and from selfishness, without any anxiety of mind, plunge thou into battle!"

The words are addressed to one who is pre-eminently a man of action, a soldier—supposed, saving a due regard for his military honour, to be swayed by the passion for justice, and the impulse to defend it. These things being the stake, throw for them, and throw boldly, says Krishna, and as results, take whatever may chance to come. "Man has always the right to work: man has no right to the results of work," is as much the heart and core of the Gita, as "Thou hast no right to success if thou art not also equal to failure," is of Stoicism. In application the two doctrines seem identical, but we have only to read, in order to see the advantage which the idea of Maya gives to the Indian thinker. Clear, sharp, incisive as chisel-strokes, are the utterances of Epictetus: like thunderbolts out of a tropical night the words of Krishna.

The Gita, however, does not consist of a single chain of reasoning, moving in definite progression from beginning to end. Rather is the same thing said over and over again, in as many different ways as possible. Sometimes even a form of words is repeated, as if nothing mattered save to make the meaning clear. There is ample scope here for the digressive energy of ages, of which the outcome is the richly-woven texture, set here and there with those strangely-cut Oriental jewels, which must remain amongst the greatest recorded words of religion to all time.

But readers will completely miss the sense of the Gita who permit themselves to forget its first ringing words: "Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Prithā! Ill doth it become thee. Shake off this base weakness, and arise, O terror of foes!" The book is nowhere a call to leave the world, but everywhere an interpretation of common life as the path to that which lies beyond. "Better for a man is his own duty, however badly done, than the duty of another, though that be easy." "Holding gain and loss as one, *prepare for battle.*" That the man who throws away his weapons, and permits himself to be slain, unresisting, in the battle, is *not* the hero of religion, but a sluggard and a coward; that the true seer is he who carries his vision into action, regardless of the consequences to himself; this is the doctrine of the Gita, repeated again and again. The book is really a battle-cry. Spirituality is with it no retreat from men and things, but a burning fire of knowledge that destroys bondage, consumes sluggishness and egoism, and penetrates everywhere. Not the withdrawn, but the transfigured life, radiant with power and energy, triumphant in its selflessness, is religion.

The Gita is today the gospel of the Indian Revival. And never was book so well suited to such function. For its eighteen chapters are the expression of an overwhelming national vitality. It is as true of peoples as of individuals, that when the age is full and rich, living is apt to outrun knowing. It is then that large questions press for solution.

Great areas of experience require to be related to their common centre and to each other. And so pre-eminently does the Gita do this, that the Mussalman and the Christian can sit indifferently with the Hindu to gather its interpretations.

The nature of all faith, the relation of all worship to worshipped and worshipper, the dependence of knowledge on non-attachment under all its forms: it is with problems like these, and not with any particular *Credo*, that the Gita concerns itself. It is at once therefore the smallest and most comprehensive of the scriptures of the world.

That indifference to results is the condition of efficient action is the first point in its philosophy. But there is no doubt that the action should be strenuous. Let every muscle be hard, every limb well-knit, let the mind sweep the whole horizon of fact; with the reins in hand, the fiery steeds under control, with the whole battle-field in view, and the will of the hero lifted high to strike for justice, "Arise!" thunders the voice of Sri Krishna, "and be thou an apparent cause!"

It is the supreme imperative. Play thy whole part in the drama of time, devoting every energy, concentrating the whole force. "As the ignorant act from selfish motives, so should the wise man act, unselfishly."

Just as the child sees the sun above his head, and the earth beneath his feet, distinguishing himself from both, while to the man of science, sun, planet, and child are all single points in a great ocean of force-matter, absolutely continuous from its centre to its farthest bounds, so to us all, in the sense-plane of thought, God, soul, and relation exist. Having reached that truth, however, which is the Beatific Vision, any one of them will seem the whole, for all conception of limitation will be blotted out. As we ourselves are seen to be but light transformed; as thought and perception, life and motion, sun and planet, are all but different manifestations of a something that we call Solar Energy, so God, self, and universe, are now known

to be only distinctions made by sense in that one, Brahman, "the immortal and immutable, the eternal substance, and the unfailing Bliss."

An account of such a vision gives us the culminating chapter of the Gita. Krishna suddenly bursts forth on the sight of his astonished worshipper as the Universal Form, in Whom all that exists is one. Characteristically Indian in expression, full of the blaze and terror of the cosmos, this great scene can only perhaps be thoroughly appreciated by a Western mind if it has first understood something of the craving that it fulfils, caught some flash, may be, of the radiance it describes. Yet if the rest of the Gita were destroyed, this one chapter might take its place, for it makes all its logic actual. Arjuna's single sight becomes the sacrament of a whole world's hope.

It was midnight when I reached Thanesar. The fierce white light of a tropical moon bathed the great common in front, where only trees and bushes, with their coal-black shadows, could be seen, and not a single human habitation was in sight. Behind, the dak-bungalow lay in darkness, and the train by which I had come had passed on long ago into the night. One was alone on the Plain of Kurukshetra with three thousand years.

But the silence did not remain unbroken. Clear and distinct on the still air rose the accents of the immortal dialogue. "Man has the right to work: man has no right to the fruits of work," said, once more, the divine Charioteer. Yet many a memorable battle has been fought, India herself has heard a thousand dialogues, preaching the truths of the Bhagavad Gita. Why, asked my heart, does one come to this spot? For what thing, above all others, does the world remember Kurukshetra?

And then I saw why, never to forget. Kurukshetra was the place of the Great Vision, the field of the Divine Illumination of Arjuna.

XIV

ISLAM IN INDIA

I

THE single continent of the Old World, outside the forests of Africa, is broadly divisible into the agricultural valleys of the East, the sands and steppes of the pastoral belt, and the countries of the European coast-line—and the geographical division is strangely correspondent to the history of its moral development. Civilisation and religion are born amongst peasants, become aggressive amongst sailors, and are passed from one to the other by the nomad races of the desert strip.

For adequate culture-histories of Venice, Genoa, and the Crusades, the world is still waiting. When they are written, men will be astonished to learn both how completely Europe is indebted to Asia, and also how far the Semitic races have been in modern times the stewards of that debt.

It has been administered through the Jew as well as the Mussalman. But the Jew was the spiritual heir of Egypt, and as such could not individualise the desert pure and simple. His religious ideas were too complex, his social system too exclusive, his national sentiment too unfixed. When he ceased to be a peasant in Syria, the world was before him as scholar and trader.

To the Arab, on the other hand, belonged the shifting constancy of the desert sands. No luxury of cities could fire him with ambition to leave home and kindred, the scanty fare and hardy contests of his youth, that he might eat well and sleep soft amongst aliens. To this day the seamen in the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean will pass those curious, square-sailed boats known as Arab dhows, and will

carelessly shout their bearings in answer to the inquiry of the navigators within, who are steering their way on the ocean as they would across the desert, by the position of the sun. But these boats are rude merchantmen merely, not emigrant vessels. They are going out, only that they may return and enrich their own people with the benefits of trade. When the Arab of old did set his eyes upon the capitals of the world it was to possess them. He went forth in his armies, taking his kindred with him, and seated himself in their palaces, upon their thrones. And yet the city where that idea of his own solidarity was born which enabled the Mussalman to ignore petty feuds for a great unifying idea, was the open port of its day and place, and the Prophet himself was more travelled than most of his contemporaries. It is always so. Behind the rise of a world-swaying idea there is always the sentiment of the advancement of truth, the impulse to assimilate all that is newest and best in foreign influences ; there is always, too, the power of outlook in more than common degree. Mohammed had reached his burning tenderness for his own people, and his consciousness of a national perplexity, by direct contact with Syrian market-places and Byzantine townfolk. Long talks beside the caravan fires at night with men of many different nations, had given him his education, setting dim thoughts and mighty longings vaguely astir within him. It is difficult for the modern world to realise the largeness of primitive thought and personality. We feel that we have triumphed mightily in the invention of the steam-engine and the railway train ; and so, along one line, we have. We forget, however, that henceforth the leader of our travel is to be a mere mechanic, managing a few cog-wheels, and superintending water and coal. Once upon a time, in the same capacity, he was something of patriarch, savant, poet, and ship's captain all in one.

Similarly of the personal courage required in war, and the breadth of nature-painting in early literature. The progress of time and thought means the deterioration of

these qualities. No modern poet can speak of the sunset like a Red Indian. No user of Maxim guns has the personal prowess of an old-time pirate. Strong individuality is demanded by undeveloped, unregimented conditions, and later civilisation is only a specialisation upon this, growing by degrees more subtle and detailed, in which the man has often lost in proportion as the institution has gained.

Depth of observation, vastness and nobility of hope, and wealth of assimilated experience—all, in short, that constitutes essential education—are often but inversely proportioned to literacy. Therefore there is no room for the library-and-museum learned of the twentieth century to refer to a camel-driver of the seventh as ignorant. The Prophet Mohammed can have been nothing of the sort. With rare beauty and sweetness of nature, he combined social and political genius, towering manhood, and an intellectual culture of no mean kind. As has so often been the case with the initiators of new faiths, he was in a special sense the blossom of the old, for not only were his family the guardians of the Kaabah, but his father had been intended in his childhood to be a sacrifice to the gods, and Mohammed was an only son, early orphaned. Indeed, had he belonged to any city but Mecca, the pilgrim-centre of the Arabian peninsula, he could not possibly have seen the Islamising of the whole Arab people within his single lifetime.

We think of the Prophet too much as the preacher of a religion, too little as the maker of a nationality. We hear the Name of God so frequently that we forget the love of humanity that is taught. We fail, in short, to understand the Asiatic character both of messenger and message.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

But the word that follows argues little enough, at least in early days, about the Unity of God. After all, this is a fact that we recognise instinctively. No man, least of all the dweller in the desert, in his heart believes that

God is two. The Prophet's first task is to give life and vigour to this supreme intuition by making it only the starting-point of a searching appeal to conscience, an authoritative condemnation of insincerity and evil custom, and terrible pictures of judgment and hell-fire. In all this he must only have uttered what was already in the air. Social life in Arabia must have been ripe for change. The sacredness of property, the protection of childhood, and the fixing of woman's status, had already doubtless been felt as necessities by good men of all tribes and cities. But the gigantic power of conviction that could use these very reforms as a means of welding the scattered and divided kinships into a single brotherhood, fired with a common purpose of righteousness and armed with the mighty weapon of a divine mission—this was the sole right of one whose boyhood had been spent among the sheep-folds, and whose manhood had known the solitary watch, with the awful trance of revelation, in the mountain caves.

From one point of view, Islam represents a transition between Asia and Europe. An Asiatic people takes on the consolidation, the mobility, and the militarism of a European State. It anticipates the West in so doing by many a century. It accomplishes the Napoleonic task of destroying the Persian and Byzantine empires, and setting itself up in their place; and yet, inasmuch as it does all this in the strength of an idea, inasmuch as its sanction lies in one man's superconscious inspiration, it remains at heart profoundly Asiatic.

The relation between the master and his disciples is always one of the most vital elements in the life of Asia. In this case, whole nations are the disciples of a single man. They are taken into his kindred. They form his family. They strive to approximate to his method of life—in dress, food, manners, even to some extent in language. Whenever they pray, they place themselves mentally in Arabia. Such facts make religion in the East a matter of enormous social consequence. The convert in India imme-

diately changes his style of cookery. One can eat a dinner in that country, Hindu, Mohammedan, Parsi, Jain, Jewish, Christian or Buddhist in kind ; but assuredly without changing his food no man could be held to have sincerely changed his faith. It is inevitable, therefore, that communities which accept the creed of Islam should become Arabised in every possible way.

This does not mean, however, that they should remake the desert. Mohammed's whole polity made towards settled and industrial conditions. His last great speech, in which he gathers all his people together, knowing not if he shall ever again address them, reminds them of the sacredness of private property, and the rights of women, slaves and children. Nor was there any barbarism about the Mohammedan empires of the next six or seven centuries. Western Asia did not fail to build itself upon the arts of the Roman Empire, did not fail to assimilate Hellenic culture, and to display an original impetus in science, from the blending of Greek and Oriental elements. The history of the great Spanish schools is too well known to need comment. The splendours of the Abbasside Caliphs at Baghdad were well borne out by the Ommiades at Cordova, and an architecture that deserves to be the wonder of the world was the fruit of Saracenic civilisation. The blasting of Persia, Syria, and Asia Minor, would seem to have been the work of the Mogul invasions of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These invasions sound through the pages of history like irruptions of subterranean forces. They were similar to, but incomparably vaster than, those which brought about the sack of Rome by Alaric and Genseric, and which left the city and Campagna, under the guardianship of monks, to the insidious decay of many centuries. The geographical position of the Eternal City and her surroundings was, however, some protection, whereas the Eastern provinces were exposed to the tramp and re-tramp of every hostile force. Gibbon says of Genghis Khan that he destroyed in four

days what five hundred years had not sufficed to restore. The common statement that the blighting of Asia Minor has been the work of Mohammedanism may therefore be put down to historical ignorance and theological prejudice.

The utmost stigma that can attach to Saracenic governments has been that they have not had the energy and patience to bend themselves in such cases to the incredible task of beginning all over again the work of civilisation and polity. But are they peculiar in this? Would France, England, or Italy—were the past blotted out, and all sovereign and responsible persons removed, as at a single blow—show more courage, more persistence, than the Arab or the Turk? The very grandeur of the cities that had vanished would add to the hopeless inactivity of the generations that found themselves orphaned and despoiled. An additional factor in the case is—not the genius of Islam, whose purely destructive and desolating tendencies may at least be questioned by those who have seen its work in India, but—the nature of all conquests. The whole opportunity of a conqueror lies in the loyal submission of himself to the past of the conquered. Failing this, the structure that he rears must be, if not destructive, at least evanescent. No power remains at its height for ever ; and in this decline, the ability to guard with decency and stability what it has created, preserving the hope and possibility of resurrection, will depend exactly on the amount of force that was put into that creation.

It is a curious fact that from the Parthenon to the Taj Mahal, the appearance of a memorable national art has always been coeval with the existence of a powerful centralising consciousness. Pericles adorned Athens with the tribute of the Greek States. Ancient Rome was decorated with the trophies of the world. Mediæval cathedrals and town-halls grew out of the vigorous craft and municipal solidarity. Florence and the Vatican were the blossoms of the Church. The commercial nexus of Venice was an empire wide as the planet. The diggers of Buddhist cave-

temples in India, and the builders of Indo-Saracenic palaces and tombs, alike worked under the shadow of imperial thrones, which articulated for them the enthusiasm of the wholeness of things.

But what of a flower without leaf, stem and root? Times of blossom are few and far between, at least equally sacred and important is the task of maintaining and increasing the common life. Even so with the growth of nations. The humble, mole-like work of developing civilisation through the daily life and the simple home, is still more important than the ephemeral glory of an age of exploitation, and the persistence of a nationality is assuredly proportionate to the degree in which it represents the utmost of such unseen, steady, and joyous co-operation amongst its members.

It may be charged indeed against the flying squadrons of the desert that of such slow-accumulating toil they brought too little to the making of Baghdad, and the ruling of Damascus. It may be urged that in the stimulating union of Chinese, Hindu, Persian and Hellenic elements, over which the Arab there reigned supreme, there was too little intensity of culture and research ; that the regal race was content to furnish its universities with translations only of the foreign texts on which so much of their learning was based ; that there was too marked a tendency to despise the associations of its subjects ; too great a readiness to build its own mosques out of the ruins of their palaces ; and finally, that to a struggle so easy, an end was inevitable, a decay as long and inglorious as its triumph had been brilliant and short-lived. Such arguments may be true, but their truth constitutes a reproach against all conquests, not a stain on the Arab faith.

II

No one can stand and face the ruins behind the Kutub-Minar* at Delhi, no one can realise, even dimly, the beauty

* Kutub-Minar, a famous tower or minaret, about eleven miles from Delhi.

of Persian poetry, without understanding that Arab, Slav, Afghan, and Mogul came to India as the emissaries of a culture different indeed from, but not less imposing than, that of the people of the soil. The arches in the broken screen of Altamish, as it is called, which are all that remains of a mosque of the twelfth century, are as perfect in taste and devotional feeling as anything in the Gothic. The complete building must have lacked somewhat in weight and solidity, but it was not the work of ruffians and barbarians, nor were the men who thronged to it for prayer, mere lovers of wanton destruction.

A Hindu historian would have the first right to chant the pæan of the Mussulman faith, for it was, upon Akbar, a sovereign of that creed, that the inspiration dawned to make a nation and a nationality out of the people of modern India.

The sixteenth century in Europe has been known as the era of great kings. Leo X of the Papacy, Charles V of the Empire, Henry IV of France, and Elizabeth of England, are amongst the strongest personalities to whom thrones were ever given. And if we take the English Tudors alone, we shall find four notable figures, with strong policies of their own, out of the five members of that dynasty. About the last two, there is, however, one peculiarity. Even those who sympathise most strongly with the Catholic Queen would probably recognise that it was well for the country that Elizabeth reigned after her, and not before. Few would dispute the great statesmanship, and more synthetic character of the policy, of the latter of these two sovereigns. Indeed the fact is well enough proved by the loyalty and enthusiasm with which her Catholic subjects united with the Protestant to repel the Spanish Armada.

The history of India, from the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth centuries, displays a curious parallelism and contrast to this of England during the sixteenth. The reign of Akbar was contemporary with that of Elizabeth, and, with a still greater statesmanship and

breadth of mind and heart, he undertook to inaugurate a vast national, as distinguished from a sectarian policy. Few indeed of the world's monarchs have ever used so marvellous an opportunity with such wisdom and magnanimity as this Emperor of Delhi. An almost equal sympathy with the speculations of all religions, a deep understanding and admiration of the old Indian system, with a desire only to complete and extend, never to nullify it; a love of everything that was national, with a habit of striking swiftly and pardoning generously—all these qualities gave Akbar a place in the hearts of his subjects which makes "Secundra, the Great," a sufficient name for him to this day. He had been born in a Rajput household, and his greatest act, after the modelling of his administration on the ancient "dharma," was the marrying of a Hindu princess, and making her the mother of the heir-apparent. Aurungzeb was the first of his successors who was not Indian in this complete sense, of having had a Mussulman father and a Hindu mother.

Akbar's three immediate descendants—Jehangir, his son, Shah Jehan, his grandson, and Aurungzeb, his great-grandson—were all men of marked ability. They retained intact the empire which his genius had consolidated. But unfortunately, of them all, Aurungzeb's was the sectarian and somewhat narrowly devotional temperament of the English Catholic queen, better fitted to make him a saint of Islam than welder of the Indian nationality; and Shah Jehan alone had a genius of administration comparable to his grandfather's of initiation. In other words, India had the misfortune in her own case to see Elizabeth succeed, not preceded by Mary.

Such were the four great Moguls, whose united reigns began two years before the accession of Elizabeth, and ended at the date of the Parliamentary union of England and Scotland, scarcely yet two hundred years ago. Their Tartar blood, for they came of the race of Tamerlane, gave them unflagging energy and perseverance. Their Moham-

medan faith gave them strength and simplicity of creed, unexhausted by the three hundred years' adhesion of their tribes. Their soldierly origin gave them the power to adopt the ruder side of military life at a moment's notice, while, at the same time, all their habits and associations imposed on them the power and means of unequalled splendour. Such were they all; but of them all, Akbar stands unrivalled in liberal statesmanship, and Shah Jehan in personal genius.

In the hands of this last monarch the unity of India became a visible fact, symbolised by the dazzling beauty of his buildings, and even Leo X must give way to him for taste. Now it was the Taj, raising its stately head above its jewelled walls and lacc-carved windows of white marble, in inconsolable love and sorrow. Again, it was the Pearl Mosque of Agra, vast in proportion and almost unadorned, in severity of creamy stone, of sun-steeped court, and shadowed aisles and sanctuary. Yet once more some dainty palace or exquisite oratory, the baths of an empress or the hall of audience of a king, testified to the fact that a lord of artists sat upon the throne. But it was not only in white marble that Shah Jehan gave the reins to his pride in the Indian soil and the Indian people. He built the modern Delhi, with her red walls, her broad streets, and her magnificent fortress. He made the peacock throne, of gold and jewels, which was removed to Persia by Nadir Shah a hundred years later. He and his court and household were collectors of choice books and pictures. And, like all the Moguls, he was himself a pastmaster in the art of illuminating manuscripts.

Not the least part of the beauty of his buildings lies in the acoustic properties of their domes, which act as bells, taking up every whisper and groan that may sound below them, and making it into music in the height above. There is no voice so harsh or vulgar that it is not in their presence made rich and harmonious; and if any poor old Mussalman be asked why every mosque is domed, he will answer

in bewilderment that he can only suppose that it is to make the name of Allah resound again and again.

In all this Shah Jehan proved himself the monarch, not of some section, but of all his subjects, and as such he is regarded by India to this day. He might not be in active sympathy with every phase of the popular creeds, but there is none who is cut off from sympathy with him. The enthusiasm that spoke in his works is deeply understood. His addition of a third style to the architectural glories of the country is never forgotten. And it is still remembered by the people that, according to the unanimous voice of history, India was never so well administered as in his day.

The Mohammedan brought roses into India. "They are of the caste of the emperors," said a Hindu, sitting near, as two beggars came into my verandah in a southern province and offered me these flowers, "they are of the caste of the emperors. Even their begging is that of kings!"

The remark is significant of a liberalising influence upon social usage wherever the Mogul Empire has penetrated; for orthodox Hinduism is perhaps a little too barren of all luxury, a little too much hemmed-in by strict requirements and consideration of the highest motives. "The West," it has been said, "has mastered the knowledge of the ways and means of life, and this the East may well accept from her." Mohammedanism is much more than a half-way house towards the point at which such knowledge becomes possible. It is even said sometimes by Hindus that no gentleman can fulfil the requirements of modern life unless he have a Mohammedan servant.

The very courtesy of Mohammedan bearing speaks of palaces and of military life. Were India an independent country, her most important embassies would doubtless be filled by Moslems. The act of salutation is almost as devotion amongst the sons and daughters of Islam. The pause of reverence, the evident depth of feeling with which

the hand of the elder is lifted by the younger to the forehead and then kissed, the beautiful words, "Salaam alaikum!" ("Peace be unto you!"), which accompany a bow—all these things are the tokens of a culture of humanity which produces a depth of sympathy and tenderness not unworthy of that Prophet whose burning love of God found no adequate expression save in the love and service of man. It is a humanity in which still breathes the fragrance of that great pastoral peace of desert and steppe which is the living force and unity of the whole Moslem world, however the accidents of time or place may seem to betray it. The patriarch seated at his tent door welcoming strangers, loving and just in his dealings with wives and kindred, trusted and revered by all his tribe, and giving his very heart, as is the fashion of the men of Islam, to little children, is an integral imagination of the race. There is nothing in the world so passionately tender as a Hindu mother, unless it be a Mohammedan father.

It is this human aspect of the Arab faith that prepares us for its proselytising power in India. It represents to the low-caste Hindu what the Buddhist orders once represented—a perfect democracy, in which stains of birth, of blood, of occupation, are all blotted out by the utterance of the formula of fraternity, "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet." However low and degraded was a man's past, he may now be and do whatever he desires and can. The word "Sheikh" prefixed to his name indicates that he comes of a family so adopted by conversion; and the vast majority of Mohammedan cultivators, boatmen, and builders in India, are thus Hindu by blood and instinct, and Moslem by creed. The gods of the old faith become the saints or "pirs" of the new. They pray at their tombs *to* the dead, as well as *for* them, and are regarded indulgently by the orthodox and learned of their new faith as illiterate, and therefore superstitious. That brotherhood which is talked of by Christianity is realised by Islam. The message of the Prophet is a message of

humanity and freedom to the whole race of man.

Most religions have two phases: one the Puritan, and the other the ornate. The Puritan side of Islam finds expression in the Sunni sect, and the ornate aspect in the Shiah. It is the Shiahs who commemorate the Caliph Ali and the deaths of Hassan and Hussain. They carry the tombs of the martyrs in procession at the Mohurrum, and whenever they are bereaved they mourn for the family of Ali instead of for their own. Geographically, the Shiahs are Persian, and in India are most numerous in Bengal and round Lucknow. The sterner and narrower teachings of Sunni-ism formed the royal faith of Delhi and Hyderabad. Besides these, there is a third sect of Mohammedans in India, known as the Wahabi. This is described somewhat satirically as the religion of those who had one parent a Shiah, and the other a Sunni. It is in fact a modern reform. As amongst Hindus, however, his particular shade of religion is a matter of the individual's own choice, and the women are even more pronounced than the men, regarding personal doctrinal conviction.

The influence of the Indian environment is felt, further in many of the social developments of the Islamic community. It is not unnatural that there should be a great aptitude for the formation of castes, and a stern refusal to break bread with those who are not of the chosen group. In other directions also there is an approximation of custom. Many Mussalman families in Bengal would turn with horror from the eating of beef. The wife insists that her own hands and no others shall cook the food eaten by the husband. The remarriage of widows is discountenanced by the highest standards of taste, and in the royal family of Delhi the life of a widowed princess was spent exactly like that of a Hindu woman who had lost her husband—in austerity, prayer, and study. Finally, that hymn to the Ganges which is among the first things learnt by a Hindu child, was written three or four centuries ago by a Mussalman.

On its divine side, ignoring those dim reaches of Sufism which only the saints attain, and where all saints, of all faiths, are at one, ignoring, too, all sectarian differences as between Sunnis and Shiahs, Islam stands in India as another name for Bhakti, or the melting love of God. In the songs of the people the Hindu name of *Hari*, and the Mohammedan *Allah* are inextricably blended, and as one listens to the boatmen singing while they mend their nets, one cannot distinguish the hymn from the poem of love.

It was Mohammed's realisation of God's love for man, however little he may have put it into words, that thrilled through the Arab world, and drew the tribes as one man, to fight beneath his banner. His was no triumph of the fear and majesty of God. Five times every day, after his ablutions, does the pious Mohammedan turn towards Mecca and say:

Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds,
 The compassionate, the merciful.
 King of the day of judgment!
 Thee we worship, and Thee we ask for help.
 Guide us in the straight way,
 The way of those to whom Thou art gracious;
 Not of those upon whom is Thy wrath, nor of the erring.

And again:

Say: He is one God;
 God the Eternal.
 He begetteth not, nor is begotten;
 Nor is there one like unto Him.

The prayer and creed, for all their ring of pride and awe, are not the words of beaten slaves, but of loved and loving children, confident of the depth of that mercy whereto they appeal. Something there was indeed in the fierce ethical passion of Mohammed, the basis of his piercing appeal to the conscience of his people, which might look like terrorism. If all men knew of hell and judgment, he said, what he did, there would be little laughter

and much weeping amongst them. But all this is on behalf of conscience and the voice of righteousness. A nature itself so radiant in compassion for women, for the poor, for slaves, and for dumb beasts, could not long remain in contemplation of the terrors of the Divine. Throughout the creation he sees one law writ large, "Verily my compassion overcometh my wrath," and Mohammed, who believes in austerity, but not in self-mortification, feels all the passion of the Flagellant, as he utters the word *Islam*, or uttermost surrender of self to the Truth that is in God.

XV

AN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

THE old roads of Asia are the footways of the world's ideas. There is a camel-track that crosses the desert from Egypt into "Sooria," broken at the Suez Canal by a ferry. What road in Europe, Roman or barbarian, can compare in charm and pathos with this sandy path? On it we might yet see a woman carrying a child on the back of an ass, and an old man leading them, even as the legends picture the Flight of the Holy Family. By it long ago marched the armies of Egypt to meet those of Assyria in destructive conflict on the borders of Israel. By it Judea sent the streams of her burning thought and fierce ethical emotion to Alexandria, before Christianity was born.

Similarly, all over India, away from her ancient high roads, and thrown like a network across her proudest Himalayas, are little thread-like paths like this—ways made indeed by the feet of men, but worn far deeper by the weight of impelling ideas than by the footprints of the toil-stained crowds.

Such roads must once have connected China with Kashmir. Afghanistan, always a province of India, must by just such paths have sent its wandering merchants with nuts and raisins to the South, as long ago as the days of Solomon. Even now it is by ways unpaved, deep-trodden, that the long-haired goats scramble down with their loads through the snowy defiles from Bokhara and Tibet, to be sheared in the sunny valley of the Jhelum, and furnish wool for its famous shawls. Which comes first, we wonder, commerce or pilgrimage, the trade route or the palmer's path? Would it not appear that the utilities of exchange draw men from their homes to points organically related, and does it not seem reasonable to believe that associations

of beauty, arising spontaneously at place after place on the line of march, give birth to the notion of religious privilege and obligation in making a return to particular spots?

At any rate, it is certain that behind sanctity of pilgrimage lies admiration of place, of art, even of geographical significance. Benares in the North, and Conjeeveram* in the South, are loved and visited in India for the same reason as Durham or Cologne amongst ourselves. They are cathedral cities, rich in architecture, in treasure, and in the associations of saints and scholars. Jagannath† is placed where it is, for sheer beauty of the sea, and perhaps a little also for the old cosmopolitan grandeur of the port through which flowed the Eastern trade. Allahabad is sacred, because there two mighty rivers join their waters, making her the strategic key to two vast basins, inhabited by different races, with diverse traditions, hopes, and folk-lore. It is the solemn beauty of the Himalayas that makes them the refuge of holy men. The four most meritorious pilgrimages†† of the Hindus are the four extreme points of India—North, South, East, and West—knowing which the country must be known. The worship of the Ganges, and the reverence that makes a Deccan villager journey, as an act of piety, to look on the face of one who has seen any of the seven sacred rivers, amongst peoples less poetic, would be simply called the love of place. How large an element in Hinduism is the folk-lore of the country! To the student who is looking for this, it appears to be past all computing. The Maha-

* Conjeeveram—A town in the Madras Presidency, which contains some of the most beautiful specimens of Dravidian architecture. Often called the Benares of the South. Ramanuja lived here, and Shankaracharya visited it.

† Jagannath—Or Juggurnath—Lord of the Universe. The famous place of pilgrimage, and the "Car of Juggurnath," on the coast of Orissa, at Puri. This temple is distinguished for the fact that all castes eat together of its consecrated food. The oneness of all men is the religious idea which is associated with it.

†† "The four pilgrimages," which constitute the Hindu counsel of perfection, are Kedar Nath in the Himalayas, in the extreme North; Dwarka Nath in the West; Rameshwaram in the South; and Puri, or Jagannath in the East.

bharata, the Ramayana, and the Puranas are to a great extent the outpouring of passionate fancy in local interpretation. In the story of Sati, the perfect wife, who can miss the significance of the fifty-two places in which fragments of the smitten body fell? "And one finger fell in Calcutta, and that is still the Kalighat . . . And the tongue fell at Kangra (Jwala Mukhi) in the North Punjab, and appears to this day as licking tongues of fire, from underneath the ground . . . And the left hand fell at Benares, which is for ever Annapurna, the Giver of Bread."* No foreigner can understand the crowding of associations into these few sentences.

Even the Pole Star has its Indian myth in the legend of the child Dhruva, whose heart was the steadiest point in all the universe.

Nor is the historic element lacking, in this unconscious worship of country. Like that of some Indian Bernadette is the story told at a beautiful Southern temple of a cowherd who had one cow that gave no milk. He followed her into the jungle, and found a natural Lingam in the rock, over which she poured her offering freely, of her own devotion. And, in proof of the occurrence, does the temple altar not consist today of that same Lingam set in rough living rock? Of such stories the villages are full. Assuredly, a deep and conscious love of place pervades the whole of the Indian scheme. It has never been called patriotism, only because it has never been defined by boundaries of contrast; but the home, the village, the soil, and, in a larger sense, the rivers, the mountains, and the country as a whole, are the objects of an almost passionate adoration. And nowhere are we more impressed by the completeness of Eastern idealism, than in this, its relating of itself to Nature. Norway, with her broken crags and azure seas and sombre pines, her glacier-crowned mountains, and her

* Some mistake has crept into this quotation. According to the Tantra, four fingers of the right foot fell at Kalighat, Calcutta, and the carings fell at Benaras, where the Devi is called Vishalakshi.—Ed.

island-dotted fjords, is surely beautiful. But Norway's memories are always of the heroes, and we miss those voices of the saints that greet us at every turn in every part of India. Brittany, windy and grey, storm-tost and boulder-strewn, is beautiful. Here too the miles are marked with rude *Calvaires*, and the tales of the saints lie like her own moorland mists across the whole Breton land. But this Catholic sainthood never reaches the stern intellectual discipline of Hinduism, and we long in vain for that mingling of mystic passion and philosophic freedom, where holiness merges into scholarship, that at once distinguishes the Orient, and weds its races and all their dreams to their own soil. It might almost have been S. Francis, but it is actually a Bengali poem of the people, that says :

Oh, Mother Earth, Father Sky,
 Brother Wind, Friend Light,
 Sweetheart Water,
 Here take my last salutation with folded hands!
 For today I am melting away into the Supreme,
 Because my heart became pure,
 And all delusion vanished,
 Through the power of your good company.

Beauty of place translates itself to the Indian consciousness as God's cry to the soul. Had Niagara been situated on the Ganges, it is odd to think how different would have been its valuation by humanity. Instead of fashionable picnics and railway pleasure-trips, the yearly or monthly incursion of worshipping crowds. Instead of hotels, temples. Instead of ostentatious excess, austerity. Instead of the desire to harness its mighty forces to the chariot of human utility, the unrestrainable longing to throw away the body, and realise at once the ecstatic madness of Supreme Union. Could contrast be greater?

It is commonly said that Hindus derive the idea of pilgrimage from the Buddhist worship of relics. But the psychological aspects of the custom make this appear unlikely. Doubtless the great commercial nexus of the

Buddhist period made transport easy, and thus strengthened and stimulated the tendency, just as railways have in modern times opened up the country, and created the possibility of a geographical sense amongst classes who in older days could not have aspired to travel far or often. But in its essence, the institution is so entirely an expression of love for the Motherland, that it must have been anterior to Buddhism by at least as much as the Aryan occupation of India. If one visits the Kennery caves, hidden amongst the jungles to the north of Bombay, this fact is brought home to one. Here are a hundred and eight cells, cut out of the solid rock. They are grouped in pairs; each pair has its own water-supply; and, wherever the view is finest, wherever a glimpse can be caught of the meeting-line of sea and forest, there a staircase and seat will be found specially carved in the stone, for purposes of contemplation. For Nature is the eternal fact, and the landscape from this point a thousand years ago was as beautiful as it is today.

Ellora shows at a glance that through century after century it has been a holy place. The Buddhist found it already so, and in due time the Mussalman confirmed the ancient choice, by bringing his illustrious dead to lie in the mighty fane on its hilltop. But why was it first selected? None who has wakened to the dewy freshness of its morning, none who has gazed thence across the sea-like plain, can ask. To all eternity, while the earth remains what she is, Ellora will be one of the spots where the mystery of God is borne in, in overwhelming measure, upon the souls of men, whatever their associations, whatever their creed.

But we are dominated more by the idea that is behind us than by the spontaneous impressions of our senses. To the nomad of the desert, accustomed to the shifting of hot sands, and ceaseless moving of the Camp, with what coolness and refreshment must rise the thought of death! Mussalman piety has three motives—the glory of man,

the charm of woman, and the holiness of the grave. In very early times we see the august pastor Abraham seeking out a cave in which to place the body of his wife. Death, the fixed, the still, the cold, must be shrined within the steady and imperishable. "The long home," a great rock in a weary land, endless rest, eternal cold and silence, all these are to be found in the grave. Is it not easy to understand that while the peasant, from the banks of Ganges to the banks of Tiber, turns naturally to burning of the dead, the wilderness-dwellers bury him deep in mother earth, or build him about with unyielding granite, and thenceforth make this dwelling-house of the beloved as the centre of their own wanderings?

Hence, what the sacred place of pilgrimage is to the Hindu, that the Taj Mahal or the tomb of Aurungzeb, or the ever-memorable grave at Medina, is to the pious Mussalman. Almost every Mohammedan village in India, too, has its sleeping-place of some "pir" or saint; and I have seen a poverty-stricken God's acre where the sole treasure of the people was a gnarled and scarcely-living stump that marked the last home of a long remembered holy man. For it is the ideal of the desert—rest from their wanderings and shadow from its scorching sun—it is this ideal, and not the natural dictation of their own birth-place, that has become the guiding-power behind the life and choice of these Moslemised Indian folk. And yet all their old poetry of soil comes out in the spot they choose! The tomb in the village-grove; the Taj at the river-bend; the iris-covered graves on the riversides and hillocks of Kashmir; what pictures do these make at dawn and sunset, or through the long Indian night, with its mysterious voices sighing and whispering about the dead! Surely, by thus adding the pastoral tradition to her own, India grows rich, not poor, in the things that form the true wealth of men.

A pilgrim's camp is like some scene taken out of the Middle Ages. Or, rather, it would be like it, but that it is so largely depleted of militant elements. The Nagas, or

armed friars, are no menace to anything in the modern system, which indeed at this moment they do not understand ; and the authority that actually protects and keeps order amongst the pilgrims is to be sought rather in the unarmed district officer, or Tehsildar, than in anything that could be recognised as forceful by the naked eye. In the South, which is the home of orthodoxy, pilgrimage has gone out of fashion since the advent of railways. Fewer people, certainly fewer widows, visit Benares, since it became easier to do so. And those who have seen a genuine crowd of shrine-farers, in some place remote from steam, cannot wonder at the shock which the pious imagination suffers at the sight of a locomotive. Amongst other things that the religious traveller has a right to expect is the opportunity of a flight from the New India to the Old, as an actual environment. From any point where many ways meet, and various streams of pilgrims converge upon each other, the road to the sacred place will be divided into regular stages of a day's journey, and at each halting-place a camp will be pitched for the night. Even these rest-camps will be situated as far as possible at spots peculiar for their beauty or interest. Is there a cluster of springs? The place is said to be "holy," and we must halt there for worship. Originally, this referred only to beauty and convenience ; but in process of time one cannot doubt that a certain atmosphere of insight and devotion has really thrown its halo about the dust and water of the locality, and in the place where so much simple faith has spent its rapture, the highest love and prayer have become easier to all comers.

But the temples are all visited, the bathing is performed, evening worship is over, and silence and sleep fall upon the pilgrim's camp. The moon grows to the full, for we must arrive at the goal on the fifteenth day. And again, it is the simple beauty of the world which determines the law, that under the young moon shall be the going forth, and with her wane the return home. The moon is near

the full, and weariness sleeps sound. At what hour is the first tent struck? When does the first sleeper rouse himself, and take again to the road? Who can tell? Certainly not one who has never been able to rise so long before dawn that others were not up and afoot before her, their tents gone; and little heaps of white ashes from the cooking-fires the only sign of their twelve hours' tenancy of tree-shadow or stream-side.

On go the pilgrims, singly or in groups. Old women, bent double with age, toil, hobbling along by the help of the pointed alpenstock. Monks of all descriptions are to be seen. Some of them are covered with ashes, have long reddish-looking hair, wear only the yellow loin-cloth, and carry curious tongs and begging-bowls. These may be Yogis, of the order that believes in the mortification of the flesh; or Nagas, the militant monks, who were once ready to defend the Faith at any moment, and who to this day are powerfully organised to meet the shock of a world that has long ago, alas, passed away like a dream. The Sannyásin, often a man of modern education, decently clad in the sacred salmon-yellow, accepting no alms save food, refusing the touch of any metal, is here, doing the distance cheerfully on foot. Next comes an ascetic with withered arm held aloft and useless this many a long year. Again, a proud Mohant, abbot of some rich foundation, master of elephants and treasure uncounted, is borne past. Or, as one climbs, having abandoned the open Dandy that costs such intolerable labour to the bearers on a mountain march, one may be joined in kindly chat by some one or two of the "Naked Swamis"—men who wear neither ashes nor clothing beyond the necessary scanty rag, who wander amongst sunny deserts and snowy mountains alike indifferent to heat and cold, and of whom, when one talks with them, one remembers nothing, save that here are friends of the culture of scholars, and the breeding and rank of gentlemen.

But the crowd is still more motely. In camp, the strips of yellow cloth that so often do duty as a shelter for

the religious, stand side by side with tents of all sizes and conditions. And here now are zenana-ladies carried in scarlet-covered Palkees ; other women, again, on horse-back ; men and women alike on foot, or in open Dandies ; householders, widows, Sannyasinis in beads and yellow cloth ; there are even some, too weak for walking or climbing, who are borne in straw chairs, strapped to the back of a man carrying a stout staff. On and on presses the irregular host, mixed up with Mohammedan baggage-carriers and servants, cooks, and food-vendors of all sorts.

Here the road is broken by a glacier. There it becomes a mere goat-path, running across dangerous crags. Here is the lake into which an avalanche, brought down by their hymn of triumph, once precipitated thousands of returning pilgrims. Now we have reached the heights where the ground is carpeted with edelweiss instead of grass. Again, we are wandering amidst wildernesses of flowers, while every few yards the dominant note in the composition is changed imperceptibly: first the yellow wallflower, then flame-coloured Iceland poppies, again the long-stalked single-headed Michaelmas daisy of the Himalayas. When the journey began, almost the only blossoms were the orchids on the tree-trunks in the region of maiden-hair fern. Now we have passed the last of the pine woods. Even the white birches, like smitten silver veining blown sharp twisted against the mountain sides, are gone: and tonight, when the tents are pitched over purple and white anemones, there will be no fuel save the juniper scrub that clings to the face of the rock in sheltered niches. On the edge of the last glacier, growing beside the gentian, we find an evergreen forget-me-not, unknown to us hitherto, and making the third or fourth new species—from a large crimson and purple myosotis onwards—which our pilgrimage has bestowed.

Our neighbours in the tents about us are not amusing themselves by botanising, probably, but they are communing with Nature none the less truly than ourselves.

On the last day, drawing near to the shrine, we shall see them risk their lives to gather the great nodding columbines and the little Alpine roses growing on the rocks. Their talk is all of Shiva. As they are borne along, they are striving, doubtless, to fix their minds on the repetition of His name, or the contemplation of His form. But the awesome grandeur and beauty of the heights about them will always be remembered by them as the Great God's fit dwelling-place. They are in a church. Rocks and glaciers form the sanctuary. Snowy passes are the pillared aisles. Behind them stand the pine-forests for processions of singers carrying banners, and overhead are the heavens themselves for cathedral roof. It is the peculiarity of Eastern peoples to throw upon the whole of Nature that feeling which we associate only with the place of worship. But is their love less real, or greater, for this fact?

The day of the full moon comes, the last and most dangerous points are surmounted, and the Shrine is reached. Happy the man or woman, who, on this journey to God, is snatched out of life! One false step, and the soul that was struggling to see may be carried up at once in a swift sure flight. Or death may come in other ways. "It is so beautiful! I must be one with it!" sighed a man who stood on a precipice, looking down at the valleys. And before any one could stop him, he was gone. Such things are not premeditated. There is a genuine ecstasy of the soul in which it hears the voice of the Eternities calling to it, and the prisoning body becomes suddenly intolerable. Is it a stain upon Hinduism that it has never called this "suicide while of unsound mind"?

But the Shrine itself—where is it? what is it? Perhaps a temple, placed above some gorge, on a beetling rock, with sister snows in sight. Perhaps the source of a sacred river. Perhaps a cave, in which continual dripping of water makes a stalagmite of ice, a huge crystalline Lingam that never melts. One can picture how such a place would first be discovered. Some party of shepherds, losing themselves

and their flocks amongst the ravines on a summer day, and entering the cavern by accident, to find there the presence of the Lord Himself. Men and beasts, awed and worshipping, how dear is such a picture to the Christian heart!

Worship! Worship! The very air is rent with prayer and hymns. From the Unreal to the Real! From the Many to the One! Lord of Animals! Refuge of Weariness! Shiva! Shiva! the Free! the Free!

Hours pass, and ere dawn next day the descent to the valleys is begun. Wonderful is the snowy stillness of the lofty pass, when, with our faces set homewards, the moon fades behind us, and the sun rises before. The pilgrims march with less regularity now. All are anxious to return, and some push on, while others break off from the line of route. We reach our own village, and say farewell to the acquaintances of the pilgrimage, adding what comfort we may to the provision for their further journeying. The nights grow dark now, and the great experience becomes a memory, marked always, however, in the Hindu's life, by some special abstinence, practised henceforth as the pilgrim's thank-offering.

It is easy to believe that the scenes in which we have mingled are nowadays denuded of half their rightful elements; that once upon a time as many of the travellers would have been Tartar or Chinese as Indian; that the shrine represents what may have been the summer meeting of great trading caravans; that Nagarjuna and Bodhidharma, going out to the Further East with their treasures of Indian thought, were in the first place pilgrims on some such pilgrimage as this. Even now, many of the functions of a university are served by the great gathering. Hundreds, or even thousands, of religious men meet, in a manner to eliminate personal ties of friendship and affection, and emphasise and refresh the ideal and intellectual aspects of their lives.

At the vast assemblies of Sadhus, which occur once

in every twelve years at Hardwar, at Nasik, at Ujjain, and at Allahabad, there are fixed halls of learned disputation, where, for hundreds of years, Hindu philosophy has been discussed, determined, and expanded, something in the fashion of the Welsh Eisteddfod. Here come the wandering monks from every part of India. Here the householder finds himself in vigorous and renewed relation to his faith. Here fresh voices of learning and devotion are able to win for themselves ecclesiastical authority. Such opportunities must have been the means by which Shankaracharya asserted his undisputed mastery of the world of Hindu scholarship. Did it, we wonder, occur to Alexander that learned Greeks might be sent to such wandering colleges in order to hear and to tell new things?

Sanskrit is the *lingua franca* of this ancient learning. To this day the visitor to a Calcutta Toll* may hear the boys dispute with each other on time-worn themes in the classic tongue, and may picture himself back in the colleges of Thebes or Athens in the long ago. But here in the great Melas are the crowning achievements towards which are directed the hardier ambitions of those Brahmin boys. And we need not wonder at their enthusiasm for such distinction. The great open competition, with its thousands of years of the prestige of learning, is like all the learned societies of a European metropolis thrown into one. The canvas city of a few weeks at Nasik or Allahabad serves all the purposes of Burlington House to London. But the system of culture to which Nasik belongs is no longer growing, it will be said. This is, indeed, its defect. The statement is not entirely true, for even now the test of a supremely national personality would still be, for the Hindu world, his power to add to their philosophy. But

* Toll—A toll is a Sanskrit school, in which a Brahmin lived with his disciples, studying and teaching. The ideal Toli consisted of a series of mud cottages with wide verandahs, built round a small lake or "tank," with its cluster of bamboos, palms, and fruit-trees. Poverty and learning were the inspiration of the community. These tolls formed the old Indian universities.

it is true to the extent that there is nothing left for collective thought to discover. The common mind of India has now to sweep great circles of intellectual exploration in worlds that as yet are virgin as the Polar ice, or India will die. Of this there can be no doubt.

Far away from the noisy throng of learned saints, or taking a humble place in white cotton garb as visitors amongst them, are the men whose lives are passed in the libraries of kings. For the system of patronage is part and parcel of Indian scholarship, and as the Japanese *daimio* or the Italian prince maintained his artists and artificers, so, under the old *régime*, did every Indian palace possess its staff of palace-pundits—men whose lives were made free of anxiety in order that they might heap up knowledge and pore over ancient texts.

The supreme privilege of the great is to foster piety and learning. But, on the other hand, Manu does not fail to point out that there is no crime for the Brahmin like the acceptance of gifts from one who is not the lawful king. And it is not royal persons alone who are charged with the duty of supporting scholars. Never a wedding or a requiem can take place amongst the higher ranks of society without the distribution of money to tolls and pundits. For it is one of the postulates of ethical, and therefore of Eastern, economics, that all great accumulation is for subsequent great distribution.

It is a strange world that has been revealed to us in this camp of pilgrimage, and it is not easy to reach its full significance. Scarcely in any two tents do they understand each other's language, and we shall do better to ask for bread in Sanskrit than in English. Malabaris and Bengalis, Sikhs and Madrasis, Mahrattas and even Mussulmans, dwell side by side for the nonce. Could incongruity and disunion be more strongly illustrated?

Yet it was unity and not disunity that impressed us as we looked. From one end of the camp to the other the same simple way of life, the same sacramental reverence

for food and bathing, the same gentleness and courtesy, the same types of face and character, and, above all, one great common scheme of thought and purpose.

The talk may be in different languages ; but no matter at what tent door we might become eaves-droppers, we should find its tone and subject much the same—always the lives of the saints, always the glory of the soul, always fidelity to Guru and Dharma. By two formulæ, and two alone, renunciation and freedom from personality, is all life here interpreted.

Other countries have produced art, chivalry, heroic poems, inventive systems. In none of these has India been altogether wanting, yet none is her distinguishing characteristic. What, then, has she given to the world that is beyond all competition? Today her gifts are decried by all men, for today the mighty mother is become widowed and abased. She who has held open port to all fugitives is unable now to give bread to her own children. She with whom Parsi, Jew and Christian have been thankful to take refuge, is despised and ostracised by all three alike. She who has prized knowledge above all her treasures, finds her learning now without value in the markets of the world. It is urged that the test of utility is the true standard for things transcendental, and that an emancipation into modern commerce and mechanics is a worthier goal for her sons' striving than the old-time aim of knowledge for its own sake, the ideal for itself.

And the modern world may be right.

But, even so, has India in the past given nothing, without which our whole present would be the poorer?

Who that has caught even a whisper of what her name means can say so? Custom kept always as an open door, through which the saints may dance into our company, thought sustained at a level where religion and science are one, a maze of sublime apostrophes and world-piercing prayers ; above all, the power to dream rare dreams of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among men that they

may behold His glory—are these things nothing? If, after all, the higher transformation of man be the ultimate end of human effort, which has more deeply vindicated its right to exist, the modern nexus of commerce and finance, or that old world on which we have gazed in the pilgrims' camp?

XVI

ON THE LOOM OF TIME

THE essential differences between countries of the Asiatic and European types are as yet but little understood, and a main difficulty in the growth of an understanding is the absence of elements in the English language, embodying any wide power of social survey. The disciples of Auguste Comte have done much to popularise certain important words and conceptions, but the hearts of angels and the tongues of poets would be too little to meet all the necessities of the task.

The word *theocracy*, for instance, which is essential to an understanding of Asia, either territorial or historic, has but an ambiguous sound in English. To the learned Positivist it means "the social system built up on theism"; to the vulgar, it indicates some fabulous scheme of divine monarchy, such as is popularly attributed to Israel before the days of Saul, or to England in the dreams of Oliver Cromwell.

To persons thinking in the latter fashion, the two statements that India is a theocracy, and that it is at present occupied by the British raj, seem incompatible. It is clear that only detailed and penetrative knowledge of concrete examples can build up in our minds such a conception of the essentials of a theocratic system as shall give us the power of handling the term as confidently and intelligently as we now feel capable of using more purely political expressions. And of such examples it will be found best to take the nearest first.

In the history of the world, the city of Rome occupies a unique position, as the Occidental cradle and battle-field of two opposing forces, the Imperial and the Theocratic, or, as one may prefer to call them, the European and the

Asiatic ideas. For it was Rome that first imposed upon the West that notion of organised force which is almost all that is at present meant by the state-empire. And through all the feuds and disorders of the Middle Ages, it was the Roman impulse that was working itself out by the energy of barbarian peoples, to its perfect triumph in the nineteenth century. Cæsar conceived, Napoleon completed, the imperial scheme. Alexander as an individual may have seen what they saw ; but Greece was far too near to Asia, and his military designs could but evaporate before their time into mere learned observations and the exchange of interesting thought.

It was left to Rome to elaborate into fixity of precision that destiny which could not perhaps have been avoided by the peoples of a coast-line, kept militant by the daily conquest of Nature, tempted to aggression by the very habits of their life. For empire in the European sense is a very different thing from the marauding hosts of the East going out to warfare headed by a commander of brilliant prowess. Rome instituted, and modern Europe has inherited, the idea of one *people* exploiting another, under rights strictly defined by law, with an appearance of order which would deceive the very elect.

The Cæsars failed by the strength of the unassimilable elements which their Empire had to meet. Napoleon failed because those whom he temporarily subdued were as strong to react in imitation as to be assimilated. Today the Roman Empire is represented by some eight or ten emulous peoples and princes, all armed to the teeth, all bent on appropriating the world. But it is the Roman Empire still.

And yet Rome herself is the one character whose part in the drama is completely transformed. For no one yet thinks of her as the metropolis of the juvenile kingdom of Italy. To the imagination of humanity she is still the city of the Church. St. Peter's and the Vatican still form

her central point. The Pope still rules. This contrast between her first and second selves is much more startling than the transition by which the brigand-chief becomes the sainted ancestor. Before it happened, it would have seemed far more absurd than it would be today to propose to make the name of Oxford or Benares a synonym for the vulgar competition of trade. For Rome, the supreme, the invincible, has actually been conquered by the ideas of the East. The poor and the lowly have taken her by storm. Henceforth is she to be in Europe not the voice of domination, but of renunciation ; not the teacher of aggression, but of self-sacrifice ; royal in her rank and her prerogatives certainly, but far more deeply and truly the friend of the people than of kings. Henceforth, those who are in a special sense her children will live sequestered from the world, pursuing after poverty instead of riches, after self-mortification instead of self-indulgence ; men and women apart, as in the Eastern household. Every simple act that she enjoins will possess a sanctity out of all proportion to its intrinsic value. Her customs will become rituals. Her journeys will be pilgrimages. The simplest ordinances of life, administered by her, will now be sacraments. The expression of her forgiveness will be absolution ; of her affection, a benediction. Her very rulers will claim no personal right to their high places, but will declare themselves simple executors of the divine will. "Servant of the servants of God" will be, to the thinking of the world, their proudest title.

In the eyes of the Church, henceforth, all men are to be equal, at least until one has made himself a saint, and another Judas. The differences of rank established by the world are to be as nothing before her, and even ecclesiastical gradations are to be merely as conditions on which grace can work. Many of the saints will be humble and unlearned. Many a bishop will reach the lowest hell. Rank, at least theoretically, is nothing to Rome. Her children are all to be the sharers of a common supernatural

life, of which a religious banquet is the token. A great responsibility is to rest upon them, of living worthily of the name by which they are called. Their life, as related to each other and to her, can be expressed only in terms of the exploration and manifestation of certain ideals, laid down broadly in authoritative writings, known as *Scriptures*, and with less clearness and power in secondary writings and teachings, called *traditions*.

In other words, the Imperial city has transformed herself into a pure theocracy. If we blot out the idea of birth by a sacramental rite, and substitute that of a chosen place and race, keeping everything else approximately the same, the Church is re-transmuted into any one out of half a dozen Eastern countries—ancient Egypt, Judæa, Arabia, modern India—under the government of the religious idea. Here, too, the priesthood dominates all classes equally, and the priestly interpretation of life prevails—the very gifts one brings home from a journey are explained as temple-offerings. Here, too, the political system is extraneous: custom is sacred, so that a grammar of habit takes the place of legislation; men and women live apart; merit is the sole real condition of social prestige; and so on.

It is due to the purely natural character of the great complexus, that we have in India the—to us so extraordinary—spectacle of a society handed over to the power of a priesthood, without in any way losing its sense of the universal sacredness of learning and freedom of thought. In the case of Rome, where an artificial system was created on the basis of a foreign experience, the crude temper of the old imperialism betrayed itself primarily against mind and thought, which it conceived as the legitimate sphere of its authority. In Catholic Europe, a man might scarcely venture to believe that the earth moves; must apologise for enjoying the cosmic speculations of La Place; could hardly study Plato without grave suspicion. In India, atheism itself might be preached on the very steps of the temple. All that the people would demand of the preacher

would be sincerity.* In Christendom, knowledge has been so much feared that men have again and again suffered torture and death for no other crime. In India, knowledge has always been held to be beatitude. Abundance of words, in every Indian language, testify to the honour paid to scholars. Persian and English books are held as sacred as the Sanskrit. And we should seek in vain, throughout history and language, for any trace of limitation imposed, or suggested to be imposed, upon the mind of man.

Even the vexed question of the right of literature to reveal more than is permitted to conversation, was foreseen long ago and settled in a flash of wit by the legislator who, writing of defilement by the touch of the mouth, makes three exceptions, in favour of "the beaks of birds, the lips of women, and *the words of poets.*"

In fact opinion is so free that religious propaganda is actually discouraged by Hinduism, lest zeal, outrunning discretion, prove mischievous to society. "A man has a right to hold his own belief, but never to force it upon another," is the dictum that has made of India a perfect university of religious culture, including every phase and stage of thought and practice, from that of the kindergarten, where all is concrete, to that of the higher research student, who has direct visualisation of the solutions of problems which most of us cannot even understand.

But freedom of thought in the East has not been the prerogative of religion alone. The deeper we go into the history of Hindu philosophy, the more perplexed we are that with its obviously scientific character it should never have created a scientific movement of the prestige and *éclat* of that of the West. Patanjali,† who wrote his

* The Charvaka system of philosophy, one of the orthodox schools, is a purely agnostic formulation. I have myself met a Charvaka on a pilgrimage. His statements of belief sounded like mockery of the people about him. The word "orthodox" here only means that by adopting Charvaka doctrines, a man did not cease to be called a Hindu.

† Patanjali wrote "Yoga Aphorisms." "Raja Yoga" by the Swami Vivekananda is a translation of this work, with a compilation from some of Patanjali's commentators.

great psychology in the second century B.C., was obviously a physiologist, studying the living body in relation to that nervous system which in its entirety he would call the mind. The action and interaction of the living neuro-psychosis is a question which modern science, content with a more static view of human structure, has hardly yet ventured to tackle, and students of Patanjali cannot be controverted if they hold that when it is reached, it will only be to corroborate the ancient investigation step by step. But a still more interesting feature of Patanjali's work lies in the fact that it is obviously the final record of a long research, carried out, not by a single individual, but by a whole school, experimenting continuously through many generations. Each man's labour was conditioned by the fact that he had no laboratory and no instruments outside his own body, and there can be no doubt that life was often sacrificed to the thirst for knowledge. The whole, therefore, is like a *résumé* of two or three centuries of the conclusions of some English Royal Society, or some French Academy of Sciences, dating from two to three thousand years ago. And we must remember that, if the terminology of this old science has a certain quaintness in our ears, this is probably not greater than that which our own talk of forces and molecules, of chemical affinities and sphygmographic records, would have, if it were suddenly recovered, after a lapse of two thousand years, by a new civilisation, stationed, say, in Mexico.

What is true of the psychology is equally true of Indian mathematics, astronomy, surgery, chemistry. The Oriental predilection for meditative insight is an advantage in the field of mathematics, where deduction is a necessity. But at the same time its fundamental solidity and originality are shown by the fact that highly abstruse problems are stated by Hindu thinkers in concrete, and even in poetic terms. And it will be remembered that less than a hundred years ago, De Morgan* celebrated the solution at

* De Morgan died 1871. Pére Gratry and George Boole were other

sight of certain hitherto uncompleted problems of "Maxima and Minima," by a young Hindu called Ram Chandra.

The law of gravitation itself was enunciated and discussed by Bhaskaracharya in the twelfth century. And the antiquity of the Sanskrit word *shunya*, for *nought*, together with the immemorial distribution of the system all over the country, conclusively proves that our decimal notation is Indian, and not Arabic, in origin.

How is it, then, we repeat, that a more imposing scientific activity has not been the result of a faculty so undeniable? Many considerations may be adduced in explanation. There is a vast international organisation of scientific effort in Europe today, operating to make an incomparable sum of results. Ancient India knew what was meant by scientific co-operation, but by organisation scarcely. And no one nation, working alone, could have produced the whole of what we know as Modern Science, or even one division of it. Ancient Greece gives us the first word on electricity. What a leap from this to Volta and Galvani! Where, again, had these been without the German Hertz, the French Ampère, the Hindu Bose? And then Italy for a second time takes up the thread of inquiry, and produces the apparatus for wireless telegraphy.

Again, we must remember that in Europe today we have renounced almost everything for science. Art and letters are almost at a standstill. In these departments—at least, in every country outside France and Russia—we are living almost entirely on the treasures of the past. In religion we see the same superficial eclecticism, the same absence of genuine contemporary impulse. But India never was in this position. Side by side with the learned man, speculating or experimenting on the secrets of Nature, the builders were raising the village temple, the shuttle flew to and fro in the loom, the clink of the tools was heard

distinguished mathematicians deeply aware of their indebtedness to Eastern systems.

in the brass smithy, the palace pundits busied themselves with their collection of ancient texts, the saints poured forth the rapture of their souls, the peasant waked and slept in the good company of Nature, rice field and palm tree, cattle and farmstead. Faith, art, and industry lived on undisturbed.

After all, is it not possible that we deceive ourselves? The true secret of our elimination of every other intellectual activity in favour of science, is it really the depth of our enthusiasm for knowledge, or is it not rather our modern fever for its mechanical application? How far is the passion for pure truth unimpaired by commercial interests? How far is our substitution of specialisms for synthesis conditioned by finance merely? When our utilitarian ingenuity draws nearer exhaustion, when the present spasm of inventive ability has worked itself out, then, and not till then, will come the time for estimating the actual profundity and disinterestedness of our scientific ardour. Will our love of knowledge continue to drive us on to a still deeper theoretic insight, or will our investigations languish in our hands, lingering on as a mere fashion in learning, even as Aristotle lingered on through the Middle Ages? Till such questions are nearer finding their answer we are in no position to assume that the present period is, or is not, ultimately scientific.

Meanwhile, in India this danger of a mercenary science was always foreseen, and viewed with perhaps and exaggerated horror, so that from the beginning the disciple has been required to seek knowledge for its own sake, renouncing all ulterior motive. The value derived at the present stage of development from incorporating a progressive science in a progressive civilisation was thus lost; although we must remember that in a very real sense such a transition, shorn of its lower elements, has occurred in the East from prehistoric times, whenever new plants and animals were to be domesticated, or new tools invented. On the other hand, it is still open to India, facing the actual con-

ditions of the modern world, to prove that the innate capacity of her people for scientific work and inquiry has been in no way lessened by this long abstention from its vulgar profits.

In spite, nevertheless, of the relative non-development of natural science in India, it is the perfect compatibility of the Hindu religious hypothesis with the highest scientific activity, that is to make that country within the present century the main source of the new synthesis of religion for which we in the West are certainly waiting. Several nations cannot suddenly come into contact by the use of a common language without a violent shock being given to their prejudices in favour of local mythology. Such an occurrence was inevitable in English-speaking countries under present circumstances, and has been accelerated, as it happens, by the agnosticism born of scientific activity. Christianity, moreover, has been further discredited by the discovery that its adherents possess no ethics sufficiently controlling to influence their international relations, and finally by that worship of pleasure which an age of exploitation necessarily engenders. Thus neither the sentiment of childhood, the reasoning of theology, the austerity of conscience, nor the power of idealism, has been strong enough to maintain the creed of the West against the assaults to which the age has seen it subjected. Everything seems to be going through a transition. Social morality, intellectual formulas, legal and economic relationships, all have broken loose from their old moorings, and are seeking for readjustment. The first agony of the loss of belief is now over, but it has only given place to a dreary hopelessness, a mental and spiritual homelessness, which drives some in whom heart predominates into the Church of Rome, while others in whom the faculties are more evenly balanced, try to forget their need in social service, or in the intellectual and artistic enjoyments of an era of *résumés*.

Protestantism has at last delivered herself of a

genuinely religious product of the highest order, in that love of naked truth which finds its voice and type in modern science. For all other forms of non-Catholicism are more or less compromises, mere half-way-houses on the road to this. But, even in this, the environment of spirituality and the communion of saints are apt to be left behind with the Mediæval Church. Is there no way to combine these things? Can the devotional attitude receive no justification from the clear and unbiased mind? Does religion, which has made so much of *faith*, want less than absolute conviction as its basis? Is that sentiment which has produced all the greatest art, and almost all the greatest conduct, to be relegated to the mental lumber-room, as, after all, only a superstition? Surely, if so, there is an eternal inharmony and divergence between the creative and the inquiring faculties of man.

But the very constitution of our minds forbids us to accept this paradox. It may be that we are no longer able to believe in the exclusive authenticity of any single religious system. But we are fast inclining to the opinion that even here there must be some observable sequence; that creeds and mythologies must be as genuine a product of the Unity-of-Things as the animals and the plants; that order and meaning there must be, in the one case as in the other. Instead, therefore, of a contemptuous disregard of all faiths as equally untrue, we are beginning to adopt to all alike an attitude of respect as equally significant.

Only in India has this recognition of law in religious conceptions ever been held in its completeness as a part of religion itself. Only in India have inspired teachers been able to declare that the name of God, being also an illusion, differed only from worldly things in having the power of helping us to break our bondage to illusion, while they, on the other hand, increased it. Only in India has it been counted orthodoxy to believe that all is within the mind, that the forms of gods are but objectifications of our own sense of what is best to be attained, that prayer is only the

heightening of will. And therefore it is from India that we shall gather that intellectualisation of belief which is to re-establish, in the name of a new and greater synthesis, our confidence in our own past. In this new synthesis every element of our own thought must find a place—the conception of humanity and the worship of truth, of course because without these it would have no *raison d'être*. But even the emotionalism of the negro must not go unplaced, uninterpreted, any more than that wondrous mood in which the explorer of knowledge finds himself launched on a vision of Unity that he dare not name. Neither the Catholic organisation of monasticism nor the Protestant (taken from the Mohammedan) inspiration of common prayer can be left out. There must be a religious consciousness strong enough to recognise the anguish of denial as its own most heroic experience, and large enough to be tender and helpful to the ignorance of a child.

In that other synthesis which grew up under the Roman Empire, all the Mediterranean peoples and those originally related to them found a part. The doctrine of immortality came from the desert; resurrection, mediatorship, and personal consciousness of sin from ancient Egypt; many elements from Persia and Syria; purity and asceticism from the Ashokan Essenes; the basis of ethics to be transcended from Judæa; the spirit of inquiry and the necessary feeling of an intellectual void from Greece, or at least from the Greek elements in Mediterranean society; the instinct of organisation from Rome; and the all-absorbing renunciation and compassion for the world that alone can give sufficient nucleus for a new religion from one sweet central Personality, in whom each of these various hungers found its own Bethlehem—its house of bread.

Similarly, in the new upgrowth of our own days, many preparatory influences now at work are to find fulfilment. All who have felt the love of the disinherited and oppressed, all who have followed truth for its own sake, all who have longed to lose themselves in a paradise of

devotion and been refused by the armed reason standing at the gate, all who have felt out for a larger generalisation, as they saw the faith of their babyhood falling away from them,—all these have helped and are helping to build up the new consciousness, to make the faculty that is to recognise and assimilate the doctrine of the future. But the evangel itself will be mainly drawn from India.

And then, having thus renewed the sources of the world's inspiration, we may be pardoned if we ask, What of India herself? The Egyptian delivered up his whole treasure, and where is he now? Buried under many a layer of foreign invasion; tilling the soil as patiently and hopelessly as one of his own oxen; scarcely remembered, even as a name, by those who make so-called plans for the country's good, and are wakened only to a stupid wonder, as at the sound of something familiar from books, when they hear that to kill a cat today in the bazaar in Cairo would almost cost a man his life. The Jews produced Jesus, and what have they become? Pariahs and fugitives amongst the nations of men. Who remembers them with any feeling of gratitude for that which they have given? A miserable formula, "the Jews who crucified Him," has taken the place amongst the devout of any memorial of the fact that they created the language, the thought, the habits of life, and the outlook of righteousness, in which He assumed the garb of humanity.

Is something of this sort to be the fate of India? To give a religion to the world may be a sufficient proof that one's past was not in vain, but evidently it is no sort of safeguard for the future. The process by which the peoples of a vast continent may become mere hewers of wood and drawers of water has already begun, is already well afoot. Their indigenous institutions are all in decay. Their prosperity is gone. Some portion or other of the immense agricultural area is perpetually under famine. Their arts and industries are dead or dying. They have lapsed into mere customers for other men's cheap wares. Even their

thought would seem to be mainly imitative. The orthodox is apt to tread the round of his own past eternally. The unorthodox is as apt to harness himself to the foreign present, with an equal blindness. In suicidal desperation, the would-be patriotic reiterate the war-cries of antagonistic sects, or moan for the advent of a new religion, as if, by introducing a fifth element of discord, the Indian peoples could reach unity. Nor does the education at present offered promise any solution of the problem. It is the minimum that is possible to the efficient clerk, and even that minimum is undergoing reduction rather than increase.

In spite of the absence of any theory of history that might elucidate the course of events in the East during the next two centuries, one truth reveals itself with perfect plainness. A nation becomes whatever she believes herself to be. She is made great, not by her relative superiority, but by her thought about herself. It becomes important therefore to ask—What conception of her own nature and power forms the inheritance of India?

As Roman Catholicism is but one element inhering in a great whole called Christianity, and as a man may well claim to be a good Christian without being a Catholic, so the religious system of Hinduism is only a fragment inhering in a vast social-industrial-economic scheme called the Dharma, and a man may well and rightly be the servant of the Dharma, without calling himself a Hindu. It is this Dharma, in its large and non-sectarian activity, that determines the well-being of every child of the Indian soil. The word itself is an ancient name for national righteousness or national good. It is true that the Brahmin who bows before one who is not the rightful king is held many times accursed by Manu. It is true that the Bhagavad Gita is the only one of the world gospels that turns on the duty of fighting for the true sovereign against usurpers. And yet it is also a fact that the person of the ruler is always a matter of singular indifference to the theocratic consciousness. It has been hitherto indeed a mere detail for military

persons to fight out amongst themselves. The secret of so curious an attitude is reached when we discover that in the eyes of the Indian peasant, the sovereign himself is only the servant of the Dharma. "If he uphold it, he will stay: if not, he will have to go," they all say when questioned. Little do they dream, alas! that themselves and their children and their children's children may be swept into oblivion also by that same failure to uphold!

Thus, whoever was the master that an Indian statesman served, whether Hindu, Mussalman, or British sat upon the throne, it was the minister's duty, as the loyal and obedient child of an Asiatic race, to use all his influence in the best interests of his people and his country. It is this element in the national system that tends, with its great regard for agriculture, to rank the cow almost on a level with the human members of the commonwealth, making the Hindu sovereign forbid beef-eating within his frontiers. It was this that made a certain prince, in despair, hand over his salt-mines to the British Government, rather than obey its mandate to tax this commodity to his people, and thus derive personal benefit from their misfortune. It was this that made it incumbent upon many of the chiefs in the old days to provide, not only salt, but also water and fruit free to their subjects, a kind of "noblesse oblige" that has left the wayside orchard outside every village in Kashmir, till that favoured land is almost like the happy island of Avilion, "fair with orchard lawns, and bowery hollows crowned with summer sea." It was this power of the Dharma to safeguard the welfare of its people, through a law as binding upon the monarch as upon his subjects, that brought about the immense network of custom which regulated the relief of beggars, the use of water, the provisioning of pilgrimages, habits of sanitation, distribution of grazing-lands, the forest-rights of the peasant, and a thousand other matters of importance. The mere fact that the king's personal devotions were offered in a mosque could not interfere with his acceptance of the system, in

any important measure. It was the language of rule, dominating all rulers alike, by every detail of birth and upbringing, and by the very impossibility of imagining any deviation. Hence it could never be more than a question of time till some new prince had assimilated the whole, and Mussalman, co-operated actively with Hindu in the great task of enforcing and extending the essentials of the common weal. We may regret, but we cannot condone, the strange indolence by which the Indian people have permitted themselves to lose sight of these national and civic responsibilities of their ancient civilisation, and become absorbed in its personal and domestic rites. Nor can we for one moment admit that this substitution of the trees for the forest deserves the name of orthodoxy.—faithfulness to the Dharma.

It is, however, an essential weakness of theocratic rule that while it can tolerate any neighbour, it has no idea of dominating and unifying diverse elements round itself. The great mass of its subjects, too, see life indirectly through the nimbus of the supernatural. Instead of subordinating the priesthood in national affairs to the recognised leaders of the nation, exalting it only in its rightful capacity of influence upon the social and individual conscience, a theocracy is apt to require that its leaders move, encumbered by the counsels of the priests.

It was the Prophet's clear perception of these facts that gave its peculiar characteristics to Islam. He established a strong confraternity, and made subscription to a brief and concise formula its sole condition of membership. But Arab blood was comparatively unmixed and the greater part of Mohammed's work was done for him, in the close bond of consanguinity that united his central group. At one bound, and without any means save that power of personality which is the first demand of the theocratic method, he performed the double task of creating an all-absorbing consciousness of nationality, and carrying his people through the required emancipation of

thought. To this day the great Semitised belt that divides Eastern Aryans and Mongolians from Europe, reminds us, whenever we look at the map, of the reality of his achievement. And the history of the origins of European learning remains to attest the enthusiasm of freedom which he conferred on the Saracenic intellect.

Geographical conditions impose upon India the same necessity of unification at all costs, and yet combine with other facts to make her the meeting-ground of all races. Especially is this the case in modern times, when the ocean has become a roadway instead of a boundary. She is almost a museum of races, creeds, and social formations, some hoary with age, some crude with excessive youth. Thus her problem is vastly more difficult than that of Arabia before the seventh century. Yet she contains in herself every element of self-recovery.

If the fact had been open to doubt before, the British rule, with its railways, its cheap postage, and its common language of affairs, would sufficiently have demonstrated the territorial unity of the country. We can see today that India's is an organic, and no mere mechanical unity. "The North," it has been said, "produces prophets, the South priests." And it is true that her intellectual and discriminating faculty, her power of recognition and formulation, lies in the South; that Mahratta, Mussalman and Sikh, form her executive; while to Bengal, the country that has fought no battle for her own boundaries, falls the office of the heart, which will yet suffuse all the rest with the realisation of the vast inclusiveness of meaning of the great word "India." Historically the Indian unity is obvious. And if socially it appear doubtful, the country itself could set aside the doubt in an instant by grasping that intuition of nationality which alone is needed to give the spiritual impulse toward consolidation.

But the bare fact of an actual social, historical, and geographical unity, waiting for precipitation as a national consciousness, is not the only possession of India at the

present crisis. She has a great past to return upon, and a clearly defined economy for model. Her traditions are unstained. There is no element of national life—art, poetry, literature, philosophy, science—in which she has not at some time been exceptionally strong. She has organised at least two empires of commanding character. In architecture, three of the most imposing styles in the world have been hers—the Dravidian in the South, the Buddhist across middle India from Orissa to Bombay, and the Indo Saracenic in the North.

There can be little doubt that her next period will confront India with the necessity of introducing some community of ritual as between priest and people; and this of itself must create fresh architectural needs, a new architecture of the communal consciousness which would be sufficient to make the required appeal to the national imagination, and at the same time give the needed scope to the passion of democracy.

For in looking to the growth of a sentiment of nationality as the solution of Indian problems, we are of course turning away from kings and priests, and appealing to Woman and the People. A similar appeal, in the only form possible to the unmixed theocracy of that day, was made by Buddhism; and the whole history of India, from the Christian era onwards, is the story of the education of the popular consciousness, by the unifying and ameliorating influence of Hinduism, as it was then thrown open. Today, if we adopt moral and intellectual tests as the criteria of civilisation, we can hardly refuse to admit that in such issues the East has been more successful than the West. In strength of family ties; in sweetness and decorum of family life; in widespread understanding of the place of the personal development in the scheme of religion as a whole; in power of enjoyment of leisure, without gross physical accompaniments; in dignity, frugality, continuous industry without aggressive activity; in artistic appreciation of work done and doing; and above all in the ability

to concentrate the whole faculty at will, even the poorest classes in India, whatever their religion, will compare favourably with many who are far above them in the West. Such are some of the results of the Buddhist period.

The Mogul Empire fell into decay and failed, simply because it did not understand how to base itself on a great popular conception of Indian unity. It could neither assimilate the whole of the religious impulse of India, nor yet detach itself completely from it. Hence, as a government, it succeeded neither in rooting itself permanently, nor in creating that circuit of national energy which alone could have given it endurance. Nevertheless, it contributed invaluable elements to the national life of the future, and it is difficult to see how that life could hope to organise itself without its memorable preliminary experiment.

The foreign character of the English period produced, as its first effect, a wide sense of bewilderment and unrest, which gave birth to a hundred projected panaceas. There were social reformers, who thought that by a programme more purely destructive than they then realised, their Motherland would be best served. And while we may deprecate the form taken by their zeal, we can but admit that no other testimony could have been given to the living energy of the race which would have been so convincing. If Indian civilisation had really been stationary, as is so sapiently supposed by the West, the embers could hardly have leaped into such flame, at the bare touch of new ideas. If, on the other hand, the country had accepted the superficial theory, and run agate in the endeavour to reform itself, we could not thereafter have conceived of India as possessing sufficient depth and stability to make hope possible. Meanwhile the reformers have not failed to bring forth fruit. They have produced groups of persons who represent what is valuable in Western thought and habits, without necessarily being denationalised, and they have demonstrated once for all the fact that India contains sufficient forces of restitution within herself to be

completely independent of foreign advice and criticism.

Next came political agitators, who seemed to think that by entire deference to an alien idea their country would be saved. There can be no doubt that here also a valuable contribution had been made. The foreign idea can never save India—indeed, the use of the word “politics” in the present state of the country may strike some of us as a painful insincerity—but at the same time, the mastery and assimilation of the foreigners’ *method* is an absolute necessity. The education of the people, also, to a knowledge of their common interests, and the throwing of a net of friendship and mutual intercourse all over the country, are great services.

Outside social and political movements, again, there are a hundred emancipations and revivals of religious centres, all of which are noteworthy symptoms of inherent vitality. And still a fourth school declares that the one question of India lies in the economic crisis, and that that once surmounted all will be well.

At this moment, however, a new suspicion is making itself heard, a suspicion that behind all these interpretations—the social reform, the political agitation, religious movements, and economic grievances—there stands a greater reality, dominating and co-ordinating the whole, the Indian national idea, of which each is a part. It begins to be thought that there is a religious idea that may be called Indian, but it is of no single sect; that there is a social idea, which is the property of no caste or group; that there is a historic evolution, in which all are united; that it is the thing within *all* these which alone is to be called “India.” If this conception should prevail, it will be seen that social, political, economic, and religious workers have all alike helped to reveal it; but it can never be allowed that the whole problem is economic, grave as the last-mentioned feature of the situation undoubtedly is. It is not merely the status, but the very nature and character of the collective personality of a whole nation,

occupying one of the largest areas in the world, that has to be recaptured. In the days when ancient Egypt made an eternal impression on human civilisation, the personal belongings of her great nobles were no more than those of an Indian cowherd today. It was the sentiment of fraternity, the instinct of synthesis, the mind of co-ordination, that were the secret of her power.

The distinctive spirituality of the modern world depends upon its ability to think of things as a whole, to treat immense masses of facts as units, to bring together many kinds of activity, and put them in true relation to one another. This is the reality of which map, census, and newspaper, even catalogue, museum and encyclopædia, are but outer symbols. In proportion as she grasps this inner content will India rise to the height of her own possibilities.

The sacraments of a growing nationality would lie in new developments of her old art, a new application of her old power of learnedness, new and dynamic religious interpretations, a new idealism in short, true child of the nation's own past, with which the young should throb and the old be reverent. The test of its success would be the combining of renewed local and individual vigour with a power of self-centralisation and self-expression hitherto unknown.

But before such a result could come about, we must suppose the children of every province and every sect on fire with the love of the Motherland. Sikh, Mahratta, and Mussalman, we must imagine possessed each by the thought of *India*, not of his own group. Thus each name distinguished in the history of any part would be appropriated by the country as a whole. The Hindu would prostrate himself on the steps of the mosque, the Mohammedan offer salutation before the temple, the Aryan write the history of Islam with an enthusiasm impossible to those within its walls, the Semite stand forth as the exponent of India's heroic past, with the authority of one who sees for the first time with the eyes of manhood.

For we cannot think that a mere toleration of one another's peculiarities can ever be enough to build up national sentiment in India. As the love of David and Jonathan, a love the stronger for distance of birth, such is that last and greatest passion which awakes in him who hears the sorrowful crying of the young and defenceless children of his own mother. Each difference between himself and them is a source of joy. Each need unknown to himself feeds his passion for self-sacrifice. Their very sins meet with no condemnation from him, their sworn champion and servant.

But has India today the hidden strength for such developments? What of the theocratic consciousness? What of warring religious convictions?

Whether or not she has adequate strength for her own renewal, only the sons of India are competent to judge. But it is certain that in the nationalising of a great nation, the two theocracies would reach, on the human side, their common flowering-point. Do not all kingdoms of God hold forth the hope of a day when the lame shall walk, and the blind see, the leper be cleansed, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them? The theocratic consciousness is never jealous of the social good, but profoundly susceptible of it. It seeks it indeed as its true goal. What of the theocratic consciousness, what of religion, should a day ever come to pass in which men discovered that divine revelations were meant to unite humanity, not to sunder it? Surely the question is hardly serious. The old orthodoxy of the Arab would still be the austerity of the Mohammedan. The ancient piety of the Hindu would still and for ever be the church of the devoted life. Yet both would have found new purpose and common scope, in the remaking of the Motherland.

Nevertheless, the question remains. The road is clear, but has India strength to follow it?

Jackals prowl about the buried cities and deserted temples of the Ashokan era. Only a memory dwells

within the marble palaces of the Mogul. Is the mighty Mother not now exhausted? Having given to the world, is it not enough? Is she again to rouse and bestir herself for the good of her own household? Who can tell? Yet in all the impotence and desolation of the present, amidst the ruin of his country and the decay of his pride, an indomitable hope wakes still in the heart of the Indian peasant. "That which is, shall pass: and that which has been, shall again be," he mutters "to the end of time." And we seem to catch in his words the sound of a greater prophecy, of which his is but the echo—

"Whenever the Dharma decays, and Adharma prevails, *then* I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, *for the firm establishment of THE NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS* I am born again and again."

APPENDIX

Introduction by Rabindranath Tagore to the 1918 Edition.

INDIANS, like all other peoples of the world, are naturally susceptible to flattery. But unfortunately they have been deprived of their share of it, even in wholesome measure, both by the Fates presiding at the making of their history as well as by the guests partaking of their salt. We have been declared inefficient in practical matters by our governors, foreign missionaries have created a vast literature proclaiming our moral obliquity, while casual visitors have expressed their opinion that we are particularly uninteresting to the intellectual mind of the West. Other peoples' estimate of our work is a great part of our world, and the most important other peoples in the present age being the Europeans, it has become tragic in its effect for us to be unable to evoke their appreciation. There was a time when India could touch the most sensitive part of Europe's mind by storming her imagination with a gorgeous vision of wealth. But cruel time has done its work and the golden illusion has vanished, leaving the ragged poverty of India open to public inspection, charitable or otherwise. Therefore epithets of a disparaging nature from the West find an easy target in India, bespattering her skin and piercing her vital parts. Epithets once given circulation die hard, for they have their breeding-places in our mental laziness and in our natural readiness to believe that whatever is different from ourselves must be offensive. Men can live through and die happy in spite of disparagement, if it comes from critics with whom they have no dealings. But unfortunately our critics not only have the power to give us a bad name, but also to hang us. They play the part of Providence over three hundred millions of aliens whose language they hardly know, and with whom their acquaintance is of the surface. Therefore the vast accumulation of calumny against India, continually growing and spreading over the earth, secretly and surely obstructs the element of heart from finding an entrance into our government.

One can never do justice from a mere sense of duty to those for whom one lacks respect. And human beings, as we are, justice

is not the chief thing that we claim from our rulers. We need sympathy as well, in order to feel that we have human relationship with them and thus retain as much of our self-respect as may be possible.

For some time past a spirit of retaliation has taken possession of our literature and our social world. We have furiously begun to judge our judges, and the judgement comes from hearts sorely stricken with hopeless humiliation. And because our thoughts have an organ whose sound does not reach outside our country, or even the ears of our governors within its boundaries, their expression is growing in vehemence. The prejudice cultivated on the side of the powerful is no doubt dangerous for the weak, but it cannot be wise on the part of the strong to ignore that thorny crop grown on the opposite field. The upsetting of truth in the relationship of the ruler and the ruled can never be compensated by the power that lies in the grip of the mailed fist.

And this was the reason which made us deeply grateful to Sister Nivedita, that great-hearted Western woman, when she gave utterance to her criticism of Indian life. She had won her access to the inmost heart of our society by her supreme gift of sympathy. She did not come to us with the impertinent curiosity of a visitor, nor did she elevate herself on a special high perch with the idea that a bird's eye view is truer than the human view because of its superior aloofness. She lived our life and came to know us by becoming one of ourselves. She became so intimately familiar with our people that she had the rare opportunity of observing us unawares. As a race we have our special limitations and imperfections, and for a foreigner it does not require a high degree of keen-sightedness to detect them. We know for certain that these defects did not escape Nivedita's observation, but she did not stop there to generalize, as most other foreigners do. And because she had a comprehensive mind and extraordinary insight of love she could see the creative ideals at work behind our social forms and discover our soul that has living connexion with its past and is marching towards its fulfilment.

But Sister Nivedita, being an idealist, saw a great deal more than is usually seen by those foreigners who can only see things, but not truths. Therefore I have heard her being discredited by the authority of long experience, which is merely an experience of blindness carried through long years. And of these I have the

same words to say which I said to those foreign residents of Japan, whose long experience itself was like a film obscuring the freshness of their sight, making them conscious of only some outer details, specially where they irritated their minds. Instead of looking on the picture side of the canvas, if they look on the blank side it will not give any more value to their view because of the prolonged period of their staring.

The mental sense, by the help of which we feel the spirit of a people, is like the sense of sight, or of touch—it is a natural gift. It finds its objects, not by analysis, but by direct apprehension. Those who have not this vision merely see events and facts, and not their inner association. Those who have no ear for music, hear sounds, but not the song. Therefore when, by reason of the mere lengthiness of their suffering, they threaten to establish the fact of the tune to be a noise, one need not be anxious about the reputation of the music. Very often it is the mistakes which require a longer time to develop their tangles, while the right answer comes promptly.

It is a truism to say that shadows accompany light. What you feel as the truth of a people, has its numberless contradictions, just as the single fact of the roundness of the earth is contradicted by the innumerable facts of its hills and hollows. Facts can easily be arranged and heaped up into loads of contradiction; yet men having faith in the reality of ideals hold firmly that the vision of truth does not depend upon its dimension, but upon its vitality. And Sister Nivedita has uttered the vital truths about India life.

October 21, 1917

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

**AN INDIAN STUDY
OF
LOVE AND DEATH**

-BECAUSE OF SORROW

N.

Aug. 16, 1905

AN INDIAN STUDY OF LOVE AND DEATH

AN OFFICE FOR THE DEAD

TO BE SAID WITHIN THE HEART :

HOW is the city become desolate, and how lonely is now the household, that once were full of people! . . .

How is the fountain stopped up, and the lamp become extinguished !

How is our fire gone out, and how are the ashes scattered upon the hearth !

For now the hand of the Potter hath shattered the vessel that He made.

And the Mother hath hidden from us with a veil, the face of our Beloved.

Dark is the night, and terrible is the storm in the midst of the burning-ghat.

Swift and deep is the river to bear away the scattered dust.
Infinite is Time, into which hurry the passing souls.

And Love cries out in vain to stay the hand of death.

Verily are the flowers withered, O Beloved, in our forests.
And all the pools are emptied of their lotuses.

For us are the voices of the singing-birds become silent, and dark clouds have passed over the face of the stars.

Since thy feet come never again across our threshold. Neither is light seen again within thine eyes.

Written for a little sister.

THE SALUTATION OF THE DEAD

O thou that wert beforetime with us, and hast left us,
hear once again, before thou goest forth, our salutation and
farewell !

For all wounds and loneliness,
For all angry and impatient thoughts,
For all wherein we failed in love,
Or loving, failed to say to thee, we loved,
 Forgive !
For all thy need in life,
For all thy need in death,
For labour that left thee weary,
And for love that failed to comfort thee,
 Forgive !

Tenderly here at thy dead feet we make memorial of
all thy past.

With infinite lovingness do we live through again in
thought thy baby-days.

One by one do all thine acts of help and sweetness and
gentle self-suppression come before us.

Wondrous is the memory of our journeying together.
Most holy art thou now unto us, in the presence of death.

But know, thou little flower of our great love for thee,
that never, till we too are wrapped in Death beside thee,
shall we forget to send thee constant aid of love and
prayer.

Know thou that Love is strong as Death, that many
waters cannot quench, nor the floods overwhelm it.

Thy hand is not unclasped from our hand. Nor is
thy name gone out of our heart's life.

And well we know that this, our longing desire and
will of love, can by no means fail to reach and give thee
strength. Here or hereafter.—As God will.

But thou—dear one—rest now and be at peace. Then
waking, rise and pray with us, now and in the death-hour,
evermore.

THE WORSHIP:

Thou terrible dark Night !
 Thou, the Night of Delusion !
 Thou, the Night of Death !
 To THEE our salutation.
 Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
 Thee we salute.

As a man puts off worn-out garments, and puts on others which are new, even so doth the embodied put off worn-out bodies, and put on others which are new. . . .

Of that which is born, death is certain: of that which is dead, birth is certain. . . .

Never is the embodied soul destroyed. . . .

These bodies alone of the embodied Self,—which is eternal, indestructible, and unknowable,—are said to have an end. . . .

Know That to be imperishable, by which all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of That, the Inexhaustible. . . .

“The body comes and goes.” From Death lead us to Immortality! . . .

“Peace be to you, O people of the graves ! Ye have gone on before, and we are following you!” . . .

“O great and mighty Dead ! O happy Dead ! The world unnumbered ages has been weeping for the dead. Weep not for the dead ! Weep rather for the living, for they have yet to die !”

THE BENEDICTION OF THE DEAD:

The Lord bless thee and keep thee.
 The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee,
 And be gracious unto thee,
 And give thee peace.

Send thee help from the Sanctuary,
 And strengthen thee out of Zion.
 Give thee thy heart's desire,
 And fulfil all thy mind.

PRAYER :

O Krishna, Thou loving Shepherd
 of the people,
 Buddha, Lord of infinite compassion,
 Jesus, Thou lover and Saviour of the soul,
 May Ye and all the nameless Masters of
 the spirit,
 Visions of divine compassion,*
 Receive and save this soul !
 Keep *her* in Thine own presence, O Lord God,
 And let light perpetual shine upon *her*.

REST IN PEACE : †

Speed forth, O Soul! upon thy star strewn path,
 Speed, blissful one! where thought is ever free,
 Where time and sense no longer mist the view,
 Eternal peace and blessings be on thee !

Thy service true, complete thy sacrifice,
 Thy home the heart of love transcendent find,
 Remembrance sweet, that kills all space
 and time,
 Like altar-roses, fill thy place behind.

Thy bonds are brokc, thy quest in bliss is found.
 And,—one with That which comes as Death
 and Life,—
 Thou helpful one ! Unselfish e'er on earth,
 Ahead, still aid with love this world of strife.

* In the 1st Edition we have the following two lines instead of these two lines :—

"Ramakrishna, Thou face of the Divine Mother, and
 Vivekananda of the mighty heart,
 Receive and save this soul!"

† By the Swami Vivekananda.

PRAYER TO RUDRA :

From the Unreal lead *her* to the Real !
 From Darkness, lead *her* unto Light !
 From Death, lead *her* to Immortality !
 Reach *her* through and through *her* self,
 And evermore—O Thou Terrible !—protect *her*
 from ignorance,
 By Thy sweet compassionate Face !

THE SALUTATION OF THE MOTHER :

Thou the giver of all blessings,
 Thou the fulfiller of desires,
 Thou the doer of all good,
 To THEE our salutation.
 Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
 Thee we salute.

Thou terrible dark Night !
 Thou the Night of Delusion !
 Thou the Night of Death !
 To THEE our salutation.
 Thee we salute ! Thee we salute !
 Thee we salute !

MEDITATIONS

OF THE SOUL

It was evening, and we sat on our zenana terrace. About us, our hidden garden bloomed, and the wind blew softly in the Neem-tree, while beyond the roof, to the south, looked down on us the Southern Cross. At first in loneliness. Then, as the darkness deepened, it shone to the front only of a whole network of dimmer stars behind it. And then again, these faded out, and left the Southern Cross alone. For the moon was rising. And it sank, as the hours went, slowly to the West. And we talked in low tones of those who love and those who suffer, and of the seven-times happy dead. Till there fell silence there beneath the stars, and the soul watched alone:

Q. Lo, wherever I look, I behold two. Today, life and laughter; tomorrow, death and tears. I behold joy. True, but pain is its shadow. And there, in the darkness, where I can see no further, how shall I know that my Beloved still persists?

A. Because all things bring forth their opposites. Because life is a rhythm, a rhythm of rhythms, and rhythm is but a continuous movement from one point to the reverse. Every experience within life is made up of such movement between two, and we cannot conceive that life itself should be different from all its elements. But if so, it must itself, in experience, be succeeded by death. Bodily consciousness must be succeeded by bodily unconsciousness. Manifestation by non-manifestation. This mode of acting and knowing, by not acting and not knowing in this mode.

Yet as I am myself a constant factor, in my own

waking and sleeping, in health and in disease, so there must be a factor which remains constant, and undergoes this experience, of death as well as of life. This factor we call the soul.

The soul then persists.

Q. Yet, since my Beloved is withdrawn from me, even though he persist, what is that to me? Why should I not be sorrowful?

A. Is he then withdrawn? Is he unconscious? Is his persistence indeed of no avail? Let us look closer into Love itself. . . .

In life, what was it that you loved? Was it his form, his bodily presence, the sight, the sound, the touch of the house wherein he dwelt? Or was it he, the dweller within the house, whom you rather loved? Was it his mind, his spirit, his purpose, in which you were at one? What presence was to you his presence? Was it this? Or was it merely the presence of the body. . . .

Nay, the question answers itself. Grief for the body is indeed without hope, full of despair; but it is short-lived. It lasts but a little time, when the body itself is gone. It is not different in kind from the distress we feel at the loss of a valued robe or jewel. The love that endures is the love of the mind, of the soul.

If then, in life, all joy was in the presence of the soul, if the experience of the soul was the whole of love, how, in mere dying, shall this undergo change?

For the soul dwells ever in the presence of the soul. At death, a veil that confused and dimmed has been withdrawn. Shall we weep for the veil, as for the wearer of the veil?

Was there union in life?

Then two souls were set to a single melody. And they are so set still. In this setting of the soul is faithfulness.

To the soul, time does not exist. Only her own great

purpose exists, shining clear and steady through the mists before her.

To her, death brings no change. Death changes the body alone. The soul loses not her own consciousness: she loses body-consciousness. And that is all.

The cares of the body are gone. The hopes and fears and memories of the body no longer exist. But that which was the life of the soul, the thought of God, or the yearning to bless, or the burning hope of truth, remains still, gathers ever to its perfect consummation in the eternal.

In that unconsciousness of earth-life, all the experience of the earth-life gathers together, unknown to us, and finds new momentum for the renewed expression that is to come. For this is the law of experience,—impression, thought-germination, expression. And life itself is but a single complex impression, which germinates in the silence and darkness, and rises to new intensity in the next effort.

The spirit that has passed out of sight knows nothing of my struggle with poverty, of my battle with things temporal, of my toil and my defeat. No. And would I have him know? Were he here now, is this the offering I would hasten to make to him? . . . But in supreme moments, when need or insight is quickened, so that the soul casts off her wrapping of flesh and rises alone, keen in her pain or spiritual joy, then who is to say that she felt not the stirring of her comrade? Who is to say that she was not enfolded by a prayer or a tenderness from beyond?

Look at the Catholic picture of a woman, brooding over the world, in its sin and sorrow, in eternal prayer.

Look at the Mussalman dream of a bride, setting between herself and God, as her bridal dower, the salvation of every Mussalman.

These are race-visions. And they are true. They are the great pulsations, the heart-beats of Humanity, made up of a million tiny pulses, the efforts of individual souls.

The dead do intercede, do pray, do remember us in God.

Death, then, makes nothing different. Where the soul was, at the moment of the coming of sorrow, there it remains. And its friend and lover remains ever at its side.

All that was purely of the spirit, we share still. Grief is nothing but a clouded communion. His soul progresses still towards its own beatitude. Mine still serves that beatitude in him, and on earth carries out the purpose of his life.

Where, then, is there room for pain?

The mother watches beside her sleeping child. Does she weep, because at this moment she cannot hear his voice, cannot feel his tiny arms about her neck, cannot play and laugh and chatter with him? Or does she not rather surround him with peace and love and happy faith, knowing well that the sleep he needed carries him on to a stronger and more perfect manhood?

It may be that we, could we but see with sufficient clearness, should weep for the Beloved at his hour of birth into the bondage and limitation of the flesh, and rejoice at the moment of his release. For to the soul gone out, the memory of the earth-life must seem like a dream of impotence and darkness. And to the watcher left behind, even the body is lost, only as it is lost in sleep, or as a garment is laid aside, till it be again called for.

For still can the Beloved be served by prayer, by loving thought, by healing benediction, by charity wrought on his behalf, and by service given to the purpose of his life.

“Of that which is born, death is certain : of that which is dead, birth is certain.”

OF LOVE

Let me commune with my own heart, and bid it tell to me again what were the tokens by which, here on earth, I knew him whom my soul should love!

Were they not secret tokens, passed by, by others, unnoticed, but to me full of significance, by reason of their response to something in myself? Outwardly, our lives had been different. But inwardly, we saw them for the same. One had led to just that need which only the other could understand. One had led to just that will, in which the other could perfectly accord. That aim which I could worship, embodied itself in him. I had dreamt great dreams, but did he not fulfil them at their hardest?

Were there not moments in which I seemed to look through the windows of the body, and see the soul within, striving and aspiring upwards like white flame? Then knew I the Beloved, because he sought loss, not gain; to give and not to take; to conquer, not to enjoy. And I took him as my leader, and vowed myself to his quest, and knew that while I would lose myself to him, I would yield him up in turn for the weal of all the disinherited and the oppressed.

Such were the tokens, by which I recognised my Beloved, of old, and long before, the companion of my soul.

Nor is he different, now that he is withdrawn from sight. His life was as a single word, uttered to reveal the soul. The soul that was revealed, remains the same.

Much was there that the strife with earth made difficult to tell, and this has grown in him, not lessened.

That reply that my mind made to his, the reply that was the soul of love, remains eternally apt, eternally true.

Then can I not watch and pray beside him while he sleeps, or wait to join him in that self-same silence?

OF THE INNER PERCEPTION

There is more knowledge perhaps in simple folk-ideas of death than we often think.

For we have all known death many times, as well as life, and unconscious memories often haunt our dreams.

Like the large pulsation, made up of innumerable small pulses fused in one, so is every great and clear act of the mind, or intuition of the soul, made up of the results of countless efforts, countless experiences of the past. An irresistible conjecture is often unremembered knowledge.

And again:—

A true insight into, and discrimination of, life, is at the same time a revelation of all that comes to us outside of life. For experience consists inevitably of opposites, and the only constant is that which experiences, the Self.

Here, then, an ever-accumulating sense of weariness and loss: there, an accumulating sense of rest, and renewal of vigour.

Here, meeting followed hard by parting: there, an abiding sense of deep communion. Here, separateness: there, oneness.

Further:—

Have we learnt to discriminate with certainty the pain of the yearning that accompanies the transition from one plane of perception to another?

A pang of longing came to me for the sight of one, and at that very moment, his step was on my threshold.

My heart went out to the Beloved, in his absence, and at that very moment a letter was put into my hand, or his thought, it may be, suddenly touched mine.

Those who have watched their own experience, know this. Grief for absence is often but a veiled perception of presence.

And if there be indeed a unity in all things, then this

is a consequence we might almost have deduced. For the sense and the object, the sorrow and the fact, come out of a single order, and are but two different formulations of the same thing.

What then is the message?

The message is—*Be at peace*. Peace is ever true. It is alone true. Whosoever is at peace can see truth. And he who is not at peace can see only distortion and violence.

Be at peace. For all is well, O sorrow-stricken soul, with thy Beloved!

Be at peace. For even now can thy peace serve his uttermost beatitude.

Even now can thy soul in prayer companion his. Even now canst thou fulfil his purpose, and satisfy his desire.

Be at peace. For even now, it is also true, thou hast it in thy power to shake his calm, to trouble his joy, with the sound of thy sobbing upon earth.

Think, when he was beside thee, what he was! Could he then have left thee to weep alone? Couldst thou leave him?

And now that he is stronger and freer and more himself than he ever was, could he be less tender than he was on earth?

Be at peace. Dwell altogether in that setting of the soul wherein ye were as one. For the soul, there is no time. Years may pass, but her purpose burns only clearer and brighter. Thought is eternity.

Faithfulness lies in community of soul-life.

Separation is but an austerity that passes.

When soul is one-d with soul, then is union deeper for the dismissal of the body.

Ye journey to a higher goal. In all great love, there have been many separations.

OF PEACE

But always the wheel of Birth and Death! What then of the goal?

As long as ego remains, so long the wheel revolves. Lose ego in love. Lose love in sacrifice for others. So the Beloved becomes the Divine, and the lover forgets self.

And know thou, moreover, that when self is forgotten, then, even for the Beloved, there is no loss. For to him also, in that moment, is the Divine revealed.

Thus we cannot wander outside the circle of God's Heart, that mighty love that has revealed itself to us in glimpses here and there.

We can come home to it like the soaring eagle, and the personal can become the impersonal. Or we can wait in peace, beside the empty praying-place, knowing that he who knelt there beside us once, will kneel beside us there again.

For his beatitude and ours are one. And peace is truth. And truth is found in peace.

OF TRIUMPHANT UNION

—And of that knowledge, the knowledge of the Beloved, presence and absence are but two different modes.

Either, without the other, is incomplete. For had presence been prolonged, we should have thought that presence, that companionship, was the end. But they who think thus are deluded. UNION is the end.

And union is not an act. It is a quality, inherent in the natures that have been attuned.

And that infinite music, whereby our spirits are smitten as they were harp-strings, into endless accord of sweetness and sacrifice, that music is what some know as God.

Only through God can human beings reach each other, and be at one.

Therefore must love be in restraint of sense. And separation by death is to a lover the severest of all austerities.

It is also the highest, because it is imposed by God alone.

Pain borne with intention carries us to fresh heights.

Separation consecrated by faith reaches to deeper union.

Thus Love is crowned by sorrow. And Love, to be made perfect, *needs* sorrow as well as joy.

But when he is crowned, then doth Love put sorrow beneath his feet, and shine forth alone. And this is in truth, O blessed soul, the very Triumph of thy Love.

THE COMMUNION OF THE SOUL WITH THE BELOVED

The Soul:

. . . Long silence. Silence and aloneness. Yet am I sure that I am not cast out into the abyss where he is not! . . . All is so quiet. The lamps before the altar burn like distant stars. Out in the forest, the dead leaves fall from the winter boughs. The sea breaks, grey and tideless, on the long, curving shore. Only time flies, urging me ever further onward, from the hallowed moment. Fain would time make the place of parting into a shrine of memory. Fain would let die the last tones of his voice within my ear, the look of his eyes, his touch upon my head . . .

But I will not be carried! Time it is that shall be conquered. Memory shall not creep into the heart, to take the place of love. All must give way, and I again walk the roadway of life in that same thought I should have known, had he not left me . . .

O Thou Ineffable Sweetness, wherein I was wont to see the face of my Beloved, rise Thou once more within my heart, that I may find him whom my soul seeks!

. . . But what is this calling-in of sense that visits me? Like ore drawn to a magnet, I sink deeper and deeper into some other state. Deeper and deeper, darker and darker it grows. . . All is still. . . Silence is His name. . .

I feel that here is the world of eternity. All is changeless, stirless, full of steadfastness. Here, earth is seen to be indeed a dream. Where, then, is this world?

Answer:

This world also is within the soul.

The Soul:

A deep satisfaction makes itself felt within me, by which I know that I must be at last in the presence of the Beloved. Yet do I not hear. Yet do I not see.

Answer:

Nay, listen! Soon will the silence become audible. Look! for the darkness is light invisible. Thou art on the threshold of revelation. Make thyself ready in great stillness.

There is quiet. In the heart, veil after veil falls. Till at last there is a great darkness. A shoreless sea of darkness. And a voice is heard, very slow and soft, as it were a throbbing of the dark :

Om! Hari Om! Infinite Oneness!
 Thou art He! Thou art He!
 Stirless ocean of bliss! All-containing fulness!
 Universal energy!
 Thou art He! Thou art He!
 Secret of all wisdom! Soul of all knowledge!
 Eternal within eternity!
 Om! Hari Om! Thou art He!

And the soul swoons with excess of sweetness, and in that swoon she is found by the Beloved, and awakens at His feet. . .

The Soul, speaking after long silence :

Ah! At last see I Thy face, radiant in glory. Withdraw not Thyself again from me, I beseech Thee.

The voice of the Beloved, heard within the Soul :

Come, then, little one! Let us arise, and walk with the dawn upon the mountain tops. Let us pace beneath the forest-trees at sunset, and commune.

Here, where all is oneness, is long speech, long sight, impossible. Such separateness, such manifoldness, cannot even be imagined.

The Soul :

Lo, these many days have I sought Thee, mourning,
and even now know I not how Thou camest unto me!

The Beloved :

Nay, foolish one! Never was I absent from thee.
Here in my heart's heart I bear thee ever, one with myself.
Nay more, that knowledge unknown, that love unloved within,
is the power whereby I centre myself on God, and all my being is praise.

Only thy need recalled me to the without, and broke my song. . .

The Soul :

How Thy face shines! How bright is the halo above
Thy brow!

The Beloved :

It is the shining of God through the self-life. To me,
thou art set in the self-same light.

The Soul :

And behind Thee, I see a great light reaching upwards,
as if it would focus from above in Thee.

The Beloved :

The focus thou seest is in thine own great love. For here,
and no other where, is thy ladder of light, to reach to God.
Deny not thy love. Know only that separation is a dream,
parting is but on the surface. Thou art in me, and I in Thee.

The Soul :

Glorious art Thou unto me, O my Beloved! And yet most terrible. The strength of Thy praise scorches through all my being. Time conquers again. I am being withdrawn from Thee.

The Beloved :

Nay, each of us for the other is passing into the within. Hard upon thee weigh the superstitions of earth. Here, on the shores of Oneness, time is without power. This closeness of thy vision abideth for ever. Itself yieldeth but to a deeper possession, a more real union. Thou shalt find me ever in the presence of God. Thou art ever in mine own heart.

For thou art evermore one-d. Evermore. Evermore.

And the soul, after long sleep, arose and went about the ways of earth. And ever it knew a growing peace. For oft-times visions bring the truth, though at the first men say they do but dream.

A LITANY OF LOVE : INVOCATION

O Love, lifted high above all qualities and persons!
Love, delivering from bondage,
Love, casting out all fear,
Love, in which the body has no part,
Love, eternal—transcendent—universal,
Love of the Sacred Heart, ever self-consumed
in its own light,

To Thee our salutation.
Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
Thee we salute.

Soft wings of the divine Motherhood,
Folding into their own depth and shadow all things
that cannot bear the light,
All little children crying out that they are lost,
All error and defeat, all sin and sorrow,
All loneliness and weakness, and all unprotectedness
and simplicity of love ;
Thou the All-pitiful, folding us closer to one another
beneath Thee,

To Thee our salutation.
Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
Thee we salute.

Thou Naked Sword of Purity!
Thou, that cleavest all bondage,
Thou, Destroyer of Ignorance,
Thou, Refuser of attachments,
Thou, that remainest ever Thyself,

To, That perfect love which (alone) casteth out all fear.

Supreme Love, that manifestest Thyself in
 Thy power, and passion is burnt to ashes.
 Wondrous Equanimity, Foundation-stone of holiness,

To Thee our salutation.
 Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
 Thee we salute.

Thou Tempest of the freedom of the soul!
 Wind of the spiritual mountains,
 Insatiable longing for self-sacrifice,
 Realisation of our self as all,
 Love for the sake of love,
 Work for the work's own sake,
 Renunciation without an object,

To Thee our salutation.
 Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
 Thee we salute.

Love all transcendent,
 Tenderness unspeakable,
 Purity most awful,
 Freedom absolute,
 Light that lightest every man,
 Sweetest of the sweet, and
 Most Terrible of the terrible,

To Thee our salutation.
 Thee we salute. Thee we salute.
 Thee we salute.

O Infinite Love, reveal to us Thy face!
 O Infinite Love, awake and abide in us!
 O Infinite Love, burn us till we be consumed!
 We desire not to possess Thee.
 We desire not to behold Thee.
 We desire to become one with Thee.

SOME HINDU RITES FOR THE HONOURED DEAD

The moment of sunset or dawn for the flight of souls. Sunset or dawn, and the turn of the tide. But darkness, and the silence of night, and the sound of water lapping against the shore, for the builded pile, and the flames of the death-fire!

In that Indian house where the coming of death is waited, the distant children are all called home; and even wedded daughters watch, side by side with the older women, and with their brothers' wives, for the final change. To some few, death comes with a merciful swiftness. In work, or at play, alone or amongst friends, he plucks them by the sleeve, or touches them on the shoulder, and they look into his face, and, smiling, die. It is very great, say the wise, to laugh and die! But for most of us, there are long preliminary hours of disentanglement. It seems as if the door-ways of the senses had been closed, that the spirit might retreat to the inner solitude. And the man lies there, wrapt in that generalised subconscious thought that made the music of his lifetime, his body remaining passive and inert.

In that hour knows he the whole, but not the particular. He is like a traveller making ready to cross the threshold. Time wears on, till at last one of the mysterious rhythms is complete. Midnight or noon, sunset or dawn, draws near; and the fateful change is seen. The breathing grows hard, and the shadow falls. With gentle haste, the pallet is lifted and borne to a cleansed and consecrated spot in the verandah or open court—for it is thought cruel to the soul, that death should take place beneath a roof—and then, all but the dying man's nearest and dearest having withdrawn from his presence, the voice

of his eldest son, or may be a younger brother, rises alone, throwing wide the gates of the earth-life, and calling upon those of eternity to open, to the knocking of that pilgrim who stands, feet shod and staff in hand, before them.

Verily, blessed is he in whose last moments is heard no sound save the age-old Benediction of the Passing Soul:—

“Om! Ganga! Narayan!

Om! Ganga! Narayan! Brahman!”

A moment goes by, until, as the first of the unmistakable signs of death makes its appearance, the long wild wail of the watching women breaks forth, unrestrained and unrestrainable, and the hours of mourning begin. But some, whose distant kinship calls only for tenderness and respect, busy themselves silently to bring incense and flowers and Ganges water, that the memory of this death-hour may ever be associated in the minds of the living with thoughts of sanctity and worship. Thus, with perhaps a burning light or two, does the dead lie, in simple state, awaiting the coming of the bearers who will take him to the burning-ghat. And now and again, as one or another steals a look at the quiet face, the breath is sharply indrawn, to see the vexed record of the personal life erased, and the tortured lines smoothed out, while death establishes his throne securely, and writes, to end all things, his signature of peace. Now becomes plain the innermost secret, between himself and God, of this man's soul. Now weariness leaves him, and his main purpose, self-recorded on lips and brow, shines forth before us. Or we catch an ancestral likeness, or a broad humanity, hitherto unsuspected, even as we see the contour of some receding landscape, generalised and softened.

The women hush their sobs, and bow their heads under their white veils, crowding together, in drooping submission, in some far corner, as the bearers of the dead come in—kinsmen, or neighbours, or even hirelings, as it may be—to carry him forth. feet foremost, from the home

he will never enter more. And ere they return, there must be made ready against their coming, fire in an earthen pot, and leaves of the Neem or bitter olive. Only after touching these, may those who have served the dead re-enter their home. But all day long, thereafter, will the cup of half-burnt cinders stand in the lane beside the door-sill, as a sign to every passer-by that here today has death been and gone.

It has become the custom in modern times, when august leaders of the civic life are gathered to their rest, that processions of their townsmen should follow the funeral bier, with hymns and the recitation of prayers. The procession halts, moreover, at those doors with which the dead man was most familiar—his place of worship, or work, or assembly as it may be—and services of prayer and farewell are held over him there. Those waiting at the burning-ghat to offer the last rites, can judge by the nearing sound of the singing how long or how short will be the time before the mourners—bareheaded, barefooted, and clad in white—arrive. But in the whole of Hindu music, there is neither death-croon, nor dirge, nor sad eternal lullaby. The chanting here is all of prayers, and psalms, and hymns. To Hindu thinking, there is in fact no death, and as simple folk are carried to the burning-ghat the bearers cry only by the road, "Rama Nama Satya hai!" (The name of the Lord alone is real!), or "Hari bol! Hari bol!" (call on the Lord!), or "Harer Nama kebolom!" (Only the name of the Lord availeth!). One great measure of experience is finished. The personal, for the nonce, has found release into the Impersonal. Life has been resumed into the Ocean of Life. Our vision henceforth of the beloved dead must be subjective alone. But there is nothing here that is fatal or eternal. "Of that which is born, death is certain. Of that which is death, birth is certain." "The body comes and goes." "Never is the embodied soul destroyed."

Many are the ceremonies to be performed at the

burning-ghat. Amongst other things is the offering of the Viaticum, which, with Hindus, is given after death. A similar act of ministration will be repeated every time a requiem is performed for this man's soul; and the sight of the sacramental food will carry the mind back swiftly to the heart-piercing grief of these moments, before the funeral-pyre; so that prayers for the repose and benediction of the spirit may be uttered in all that concentration and exaltation possible only to great sorrow. Yet even now, before this Pinda, as it is called, can be given to the dead, one is first set apart and offered for the whole world, as it were, of departed souls, "on behalf of those who have none to offer the Pinda for them."

In this giving of the Viaticum after death, and its re-consecration at every Shraddha,* the Hindu doctrine is implicit that no act by itself is of saving efficacy, that no rite or ceremony is more than symbolic, and that all alike is to be determined and valued by its effect upon the mind. In concentration alone can we behold the truth. All that aids in the attainment of concentration is to be welcomed and practised.

One by one, at the burning-ghat, each who is present stands, to take leave of him, before the dead. In his heart, then, he calls him by his name, and silently asks his pardon for all wherein, consciously or unconsciously, he has offended him, and here it may be the priest intones the solemn farewell, "Thy friends have turned their faces away from thee, and thou art alone with thy good deeds."

The first brand is lighted and given to the eldest son, who goes round the pyre seven times, and then touches the lips of his father with fire, signifying the resuming into the soul of that energy heretofore made manifest in citizenship. And now is lighted the funeral fire, as the last act of personal service to be rendered by children to their dead father. As this blazes up, amidst the silence

* The *shraddha*, or requiem, is the periodic memorial of the dead, monthly or yearly, together with prayer and the distribution of charity.

of the kinsmen, the ministering priest will recite the Vedic prayer :—

“Om !

Take Thou this man from amongst us, O Agni !*
By the pathway of blessed souls,
And enable him to reap the harvest of his deeds !
To Thee, O Effulgent ! is known the past of all !
Cut off from this man all his transgressions !
To Thee, O Agni ! our salutation.

Om !”

Again, hours after, as the fire dies down, are said the final salutation :—

“Om !

Now has this Mortality been merged in Immortality,
This finite soul become one with the Infinite Being.
The body of this man is here reduced to ashes!
Now, O mind ! is the time
For thee to remember thy former deeds! †

This is several times repeated, before water is brought from the river in an earthen pot to quench the dying embers. The ashes are collected and scattered on the stream. And, last of all, on the spot where the fire has been extinguished, the pot is taken, now emptied of its water. A single blow is given; and it lies, there in the burning-ghat, broken into a thousand fragments.

Human hearts and the energy of sorrow must have their way. To them a time of stern abstinence, of going bare-footed and sleeping on straw, may be devoted. But wildness and bitterness of grief is waywardness at bottom. Sooner or later, sorrow must be accepted, and the duties of life resumed.

Gently and firmly, then, does the Mother-Church

* The devotional content of this name cannot be expressed as “O Fire!” “O God, who dost manifest Thyself here, in the energy of fire !” might be accepted perhaps.

† This probably signifies, “Now is left to us memory alone”.

deal with her children, bidding them face the world before them in a spirit of peace. Only a widow is not asked to end her weeping. To her, it is well understood, her mourning is for life. But even the daughters of the dead must go back, if they are married, to their husbands' homes. To these, three days of austerity are all that can be allowed. When this is ended, they bathe and worship. Then they make ready food for the poor, and distribute alms. Thus striving to make their loss the beginning of a new life—of deeper consecration and saddened memory, it may be, but of all the old serenity and calm—they must set forth to join the wedded kindred.

For those left behind, the remaining period of mourning is longer or shorter, according to the degree of the bereavement. It is expected, however, that self-control and the setting aside of "the grief that rises from illusion" will come soonest to those who are most saintly and scholarly. Hence amongst Brahmins, the severest mourning lasts for ten days only.

Then is held a service which involves the communal recognition of the new head of the family. But before the household can be made ready for this, its re-entrance into the civic life, there must be a formal end to the days of sorrow. Each soul must be led to step forth from the darkness of its grief. It must be soothed, purified, and reconciled to the world and to its own part in it. Such, at least, must have been the thought that led to the composing of one of the deepest and most significant benedictions in all the ancient liturgies of the world—the Hindu Prayer for the Re-sanctification of Labour after Mourning.

Says the Priest :

"When we consider that which is past,
And that which is about to come hereafter,
We see that mortals come to a ripe end,
Like the harvests of the field ;
And like the harvests of the field
They are born again once more."

And then, slowly and meditatively :—

“Om !

The winds are showering blessedness on us.
 The very oceans give forth blessedness.
 May our herbs and crops bring blessedness to us !
 Sweet unto us be the nights and dawns !
 May the dust of the earth be charged with blessing !
 May the Heaven-Father cover us with benediction !
 Full of blessing be the great trees,
 And full of blessedness the sun !
 May our herds of cattle be sanctified to us !”

Thus, on each of its children, wearied of sadness, does the Eternal Faith put forth the soothing hand of its own great wisdom and love. Indulging in no perversity of isolation is the soul called to fare forth into the great world, and tread there, manfully, the allotted path. Yet memory is not forbidden. Tender prayer has its own place. Again and again, as the set moons and the seasons go round, will the household reassemble to hear the Vedic salutations and offer rites of aid to the departed soul.

Then may arise the voice of the eldest son calling upon the spirit of his dead father, in words drawn from the Rig-Veda, and perhaps repeated on like occasions through thousands of years:—

“Go thou, and be thou joined unto the company of our
forefathers,

And meet thou also with the gods of yonder world !
 Ascending into the furthest heights of heaven,
 Do thou receive the fulfilment of thine heart's desire !
 Leaving behind thee all that has been blemished or

imperfect,

Return thou whence thou camest forth,
 And be united with thy shining self !

Be the gods in high heaven thy protectors !
 On that path whither thou art gone before us,
 Be the gods in high heaven thy protectors !
 In those abodes where dwell the doors of good deeds
 Mayst thou be set to dwell, by the Creator !
 Like unto a traveller well-driven by his chariotcer,
 Who arriveth daily at more distant lands.

So mayst thou increase in steadfastness and glory !

He verily, who hath departed from this life,
Doth attain unto that other
From which death has been cast out."

And again :—

"Go forth ! go forth ! by those same paths whereby have
gone the men of old !
By those same paths whereby must go all that are born of
woman, according to their deeds!
O spirit, that art departed afar off, to dwell amongst the
gods of yonder world,
We call upon thee—Do thou again return, and abide
with us!
Oh thou who hast withdrawn thyself from us, travelling by
the luminous roadways of the light,
We call upon thee again—Return and abide with us !
O spirit, who art resumed into the limitless universe,
We call upon thee—Return and abide with us !

Soul that today art departed into uttermost space,
We call upon thee—Return and abide with us!
O spirit, who art now become one with the infinite past
and the infinite future,
We call upon thee again, to return and abide with us !"

Thus far, when the voice of the mourner is that of the child. But when the positions are reversed, when it is the child who has gone, and the father who performs the service of commemoration, then I have heard of a variant to the last line, and this ancient prayer, with an infinite tenderness, may end:—

"Return into our riven hearts, and there abide !"

THE END

THE BELOVED

Let me ever remember that the thirst for God is the whole meaning of life. My beloved is *the* Beloved, only looking through this window. Only knocking at this door. The Beloved has no wants, yet He clothes Himself in human need, that I may serve Him. He has no hunger, yet He comes asking, that I may give. He calls upon me, that I may open and give Him shelter. He knows weariness, only that I may afford rest. He comes in the fashion of a beggar, that I may bestow. Beloved, O Beloved, all mine is thine. Yea, I am all Thine. Destroy Thou me utterly, and stand thou in my stead!

PLAY

How many of us have thought for a moment of the essentials of *play*, that we might understand how profound was the thought of the ancestors that made the Universe *the play of God*?

We may have watched the play of animals, or the play of babies. What is it in these, that so attracts us, that makes so deep and delightful an appeal to the grown-up heart? Birds, kittens, young goats, and little children, all these cross our path in their aimless, purposeless activity, going hither and thither, they themselves care not where, pursuing after this and that, they themselves know not what, and every time we see them, some reflection falls upon us, of their own inexplicable delight. We are swept, as it were, into the vortex of their bliss. Their divine carelessness of care, their gurgling laughter, for the nonce is ours. Our tired hearts forget themselves. For an instant again, even the oldest of us—nay, the oldest the easiest—becomes a child, and *we play*. What, then, are the essentials of play? Said Schopenhauer,—exercise of the will, in complete freedom from self-interest. But in truth, it must not only be a selfless, it must also be a joyous exercise. The Anandam of play is of its very essence. And this smile of a child at play, this overflow of bliss, without motive or purpose, our philosophers have thought of, as the thing most comparable to that dream of God that we call the Universe!

Play, in this, its spiritual essence, play as it expresses the individual soul, is a conception more than any other characteristic of the Indian people. It is expressed in their poetry, and in their drama; it dominates their humour: it interprets for them the whole of animal life: and above all, it sweetens and enlightens the life of the home. Where an unloving ear might hear querulous complaint, or sore-

ness of spirit, the Indian mother, the Indian child, hears the cry for love. Where another might see naughtiness or self-will, they recognise only fun.

This unwillingness to take life seriously, is, in the eyes of more serious peoples, a bar to discipline. But would it not be worth while to enquire whether play has or has not a discipline of its own? The play of birds and of kittens, is, as we know, simply a schooling. So is the restlessness of the baby, still in its mother's arms. How many are the lessons that we can remember learning, never to be taught again, in our own childhood's play! How many are the secrets, in this kind, that only mothers know!

But rising to a higher grade of play—the socialised game—such organised play as may be seen in European cricket or football, in tennis, or badminton, or even in croquet, what are the elements of discipline that we may find here?

In the very highest forms of play, the energy of the individual is completely subordinated to a communal end. One plays, not for oneself, but for one's "side". Remotely, one plays for all, since any overwhelming exhibition of skill, on one side or the other, would end the game, and put a premature term to all delight. Emulation is indeed the great motive, in a game of skill; but it is benevolent, not malevolent, emulation; and it is emulation of a standard of excellence, not of person against person. All sorts of qualities of co-operation, mutual aid, presence of mind, regard for the interests of others, are called for, and developed by good play. It is by no means dependent on selfish ambition.

If we watch a family or a group at play, we shall see that the playing-place is holy ground, governed by rigorous, though it may be only semi-conscious, conventions of its own. The first of its conventions is equality. Son may play against father, sovereign against subject, but as long as the game lasts, only skill determines the difference of their ranks. The distinctions of the world are upset.

abolished for the nonce by a convention that over-rides them. Fearless and frank avowal of skill, play to the height of one's own ability, for the benefit of all who fight under the same banner,—this is the law of the player in the socialised game.

The second law of the play-ground is gaiety and cheer. Here, there is to be no grim and sordid grasping at gain. Victory and defeat must actually be the same, for the sake of sheer good manners. The man who seizes his own advantage too greedily, or shows the slightest scowl at his own loss, is labelled "cad" inevitably, in all the play of all the civilisations of the world. Play must never be taken seriously, as we say, though a man must put into it his utmost of high endeavour. The player must maintain an attitude of light-heartedness, of detachment. He must always be ready, in the name of courtesy, to forego a great advantage. And never must there be caught, on his face, or in his air, the slightest trace of personal exultation.

The ideals of the playground overflow into life itself. 'No gain but honour' becomes everywhere the watchword of the noblest lives. And the ideal itself crystallises to its own soul and essence: honour is conceived of, not as fame, or social comprehension and sympathy, but as innermost honour, something that is to mantle us secretly, in the hour of prayer,—a light burning within the oratory, and lighting up the image,—a secret between ourselves and God.

The ideal of the playground is the ideal of the knight, the Kshatriya. Only he who has caught the spirit of play knows how to live. He alone has true courtesy. He alone has true courage. He alone has freedom from self-interest. For the love of honour and the delight of contest are not selfish motives. And when old age calls the perfect knight to surrender the weapon or the tool that has been the plaything of a life-time full of joyousness, it is he, the Bhishma without fear and without reproach, who can lie back upon the bed of arrows, and smile like a tired child into the eyes of Death.

DEATH

I thought last night that interfused with all this world of matter, penetrating it through and through, there may be another, call it meditation, or mind, or what one will, and perhaps *that* is what death means. Not to change one's place—for since this is not matter, it can have no place—but to sink deeper and deeper into that condition of being more and more divested of the *imagination* of body. So that our dead are close to us physically, if it comforts us to think so of them, and yet one with all vastness, one with uttermost freedom and bliss.

And so I thought of the universal as mingled in this way with the finite, and we standing here on the borderline between the two, commanded to win for ourselves the franchise of both—the Infinite in the Finite. I am thinking more and more that Death means just a withdrawl into meditation, the sinking of the stone into the well of its own being. There is the beginning before death, in the long hours of quiescence, when the mind hangs suspended in the characteristic thought of its life, in that thought which is the residuum of all its thoughts and acts and experiences. Already in these hours the soul is discarnating, and the new life has commenced.

I wonder if it would be possible so to resolve one's whole life into love and blessing, without one single ripple of a contrary impulse that one might be wrapt away in that last hour and for evermore into one great thought; so that in eternity at least one might be delivered from thought of self, and know oneself only as a brooding presence of peace and benediction for all the need and suffering of the world.

**STUDIES FROM
AN
EASTERN HOME**

STUDIES FROM AN EASTERN HOME

LIFE IN THE HINDU QUARTER OF CALCUTTA

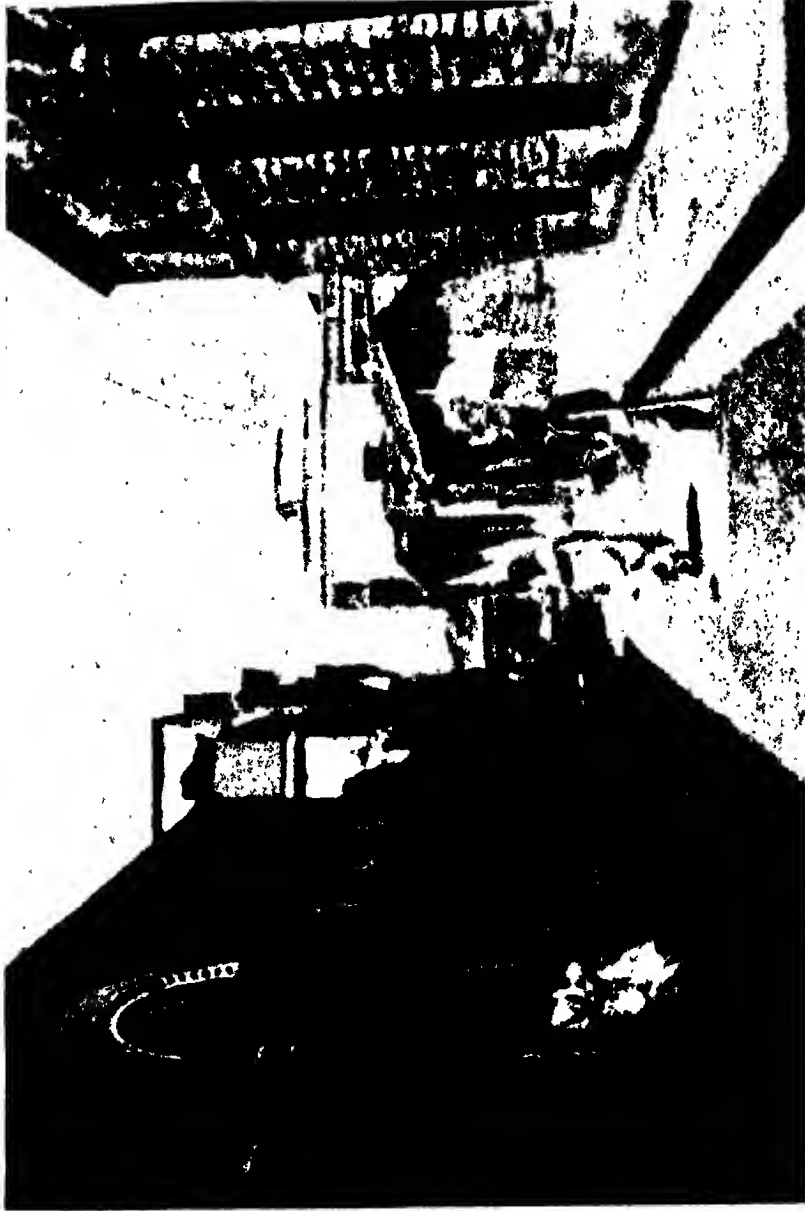
WHEN I first discovered that my work would mean living in the Hindu quarter of Calcutta, the usual protests were forthcoming on all sides. One would have supposed that the chances of immediate death from cholera or typhoid were to chances of safety as fifty to one. I have not seen this alarm justified, however. I have been here now for some months without finding any reason for a day's illness.

My home is, in my eyes, charming. With its two courtyards, its limited second story, and its quaintly-terraced roofs, built at five different levels, it is a rambling specimen of the true old Hindu style of building. In the whole place there is not an inch of glass ; the lower casements are protected by iron, and the upper by wooden bars, and so, while the sunlight outside my little study is softened by mats made of dark green splints, my bedroom is always open to the stars. Here some large family has lived in days gone by, and here maybe at least one generation has died off, and then, when the last of the older members was

gone, those remaining would break up into smaller groups, again to become the nuclei of fresh communities. Crowded with memories the old house seems, of such lives as are passing continually beneath my windows, in the lane and the villages without—ignorant and unsophisticated doubtless, but full of human tenderness and simple worship.

The lane is quite clean and so charmingly irregular. First on one side and then on the other it gives a twist, and wherever there is a space between the larger houses little villages have grown up. Here is one, a cluster of mud huts, with their rich brown walls and their red-tiled roofs, nestling at the foot of a cluster of cocoanut palms. High up against the blue these wave their plumes, and below their long shadows lie across a tiny tank and the roof of the cowhouse and protect a few green things under the wall. To another village the pump-like hydrant is the entrance, almost always surrounded by its veiled women, carrying their beautiful waterpots of brass or earthenware. Everywhere the happy laughter of children in the sunlight, everywhere the flutter of newly-washed drapery hung out to dry, every here and there a cow or two.

Here, at my writing-table, surrounded by the books and pictures and the simple refinements of modern life, I look out on a world of many centuries ago. Nay, it is with me here within my doors. I can never forget the day when my old waiting-woman came to consult me about the purchase of a cooking-stove—to cost six farthings. Armed with this mighty sum she purchased three small iron bars, a large thin tile, and a little heap of Ganges mud, out of which she proceeded to construct a modest hearthplace of her own. On top of this she used, for cooking, a round earthen pot with a groove in the neck, and some days later she very diffidently requested another six farthings to buy something like a pair of tongs with which to clasp this when hot. It was a slight and curious-looking utensil, and I suppose no man could say how long her ancestors have regarded its exact fellows as harmless luxuries of house-



THE LANE

(On the left is house No. 16 where Sister Nivedita lived in 1899)



ON THE ROOF

keeping. The whole thing was eloquent of poverty, bravely met and decently borne through many generations. Still more significant was it, however, to hear her crying gently when she found her earthen pot, not unnaturally, cracked over the fire. Its value was just one farthing! This old woman is over seventy, and I, less than half her age, call her "Jhee" or "daughter." Even tiny children of higher rank call her, however, by this name, according to the beautiful custom of Hindu households, where to the women-servants the master and mistress are "father" and "mother," and the daughters "jewel sisters." Nothing is commoner than for these old attendants to attach themselves to a family as grandmother, claiming the privilege of scolding their employers and spoiling those employers' children to the end of their days. In such cases the social inferiority of this member of the family group would not be easily perceived by a stranger. The mistress prepares her servant's food and gives it with her own hand (a curious inversion of our notions), and when the servant dies, in the fulness of time, she is mourned by these kindred of her adoption as one of their own blood.

The number of services that Jhee could not perform made my early days interesting. On my second afternoon, when I turned to her for hot water for my tea-tray, I was amused to see her suddenly disappear. It was only for a moment, and she came back dripping, having found it necessary to take a bath before touching what I was about to eat. Exaggerations of this sort gradually disappeared of their own accord, and now, strange to say, she condescends to wash my cups and saucers, though when another *mem-sahib* visits me I find I must do this for my friend myself. These Indian superstitions about food would surely repay elaborate study. But why has the notion of purification always been overladen with so many inconveniences and restrictions in Asiatic countries, while in old Greece it was apparently passed over with such lightness and grace?

My house has a courtyard. Why do we English carry

the domestic architecture that is appropriate to the British Isles into this Eastern land of sun and shine? Would it not be wise to take up the style of the country? The Hindu certainly contrives to keep himself cooler than we do, and the great marble courts that we see in rich men's houses, with plants grouped against their steps and pillars, must be as beautiful as anything in Athens or Pompeii. Mine is no floor of pure white marble, yet it was long before I discovered the secret of the pleasure that I took in opening my front door on my return in the evening. Then I found that it was the meeting again with the sky and stars within. A great well of coolness and shadow in the daytime, and a temple of eternity at night, a playground of merry breezes, and an open sundial—who would not love a house with a courtyard?

The other architectural beauty of my home is its roof. Up there one pictures oneself in Syria. Away in all directions stretch similar housetops, broken by the green of trees and gardens, and diversified by colonnades, and balustrades, and steep stone staircases. The rich crowded beauty of Lahore is not here on the great flats of Bengal. The impression is rather of breadth and solitude, roofs and palm tufts, and the vast dome above. Here, at dawn or sunset or in the moonlight, one can feel alone with the whole universe. Down below, with the smoke rising from little fires of cooking as the evening meal is cooked within each court, how different from the cosy rural scene one would see in England! But then how different, too, above! And this although in both it is that glimpse of fire that makes the glow of home-coming. For we must not forget the radiant purity of this upper air and the large luminousness of moon and stars.

To the Hindu woman, cooped up for the most part in her zenana, how much it means to possess such a roof. Here is her whole outlook on life—life in the abstract, life on the impersonal scale. Here is the neighbourhood of other women, for the roof of one zenana is often accessible

to another ; here are coolness and merry talk in the long hours of summer nights, when all the girls of the family steal away to sleep where it is also possible to breathe ; and here also is that glimpse of the Ganges that is the lightener of toil and bringer of refreshment as of worship. Beautiful Ganges! How she is loved of her children, and how quaintly delicate is that salutation to the river when, ere stepping into her and so soiling her with their feet, they stoop and place a little of the water on their heads.

“But hark, hark! the dogs do bark! The beggars are coming to town.” A very practical question to the Indian house-mother is that of beggars. In a perfect troop they come down the lane, though fortunately not every day: numbers of well-dressed, good-humoured-looking men and women, clad in white for the most part, with large rosaries, tramping along, staff in one hand and begging-bowl in the other. Such complete social recognition do they receive that the city is actually mapped out in wards for their peregrinations, according to the day of the week. It is the solitary mendicant, however, who interests me most. Theoretically, in the great majority of cases, he is a bare-footed friar, so to speak, wearing the yellow robes that Buddha wore and appealing for alms in the strength of the Sacred Name. Perhaps he was already within the doors when one heard it first, and there he stands repeating the sonorous *Haribol!* or the *Sita Ram!* which constitutes a prayer. This Indian feeling about the Name of God is very striking. To repeat it is the whole of supplication, and they argue that, if putting the hand into a fire burns, whether we feel it or not, shall not the cry to the Almighty do good whether we know it or not? But maybe our friend remains still to sing a song, and this is worth marking, for a whole literary form of great sweetness and power is devoted to the service of these beggars ; and not many years ago all that now remains of the exquisite ballad-songs of Ram Prasad, the Robert Burns of Bengal, had to be collected from just such sources as this. The author is

always supposed to include his own name in the last couplet, and it will be seen at once how useful this quaint canon would prove to the collector of the works of a particular song-maker. Very little, a tiny pinch of rice or a few fruits or the smallest of coin, will content our friend, but more could hardly be given when the claims are so many. There is no stigma in the mind of the giver, however, attaching to the man who had to say, "Mother, give me food." The dictum that the "starving man has a natural right to his neighbour's bread" would rouse no responsive thrill in India, where something very like it is taken as a fundamental social axiom.

Full of unlooked-for interests is the life here—amongst "new men, strange faces, other minds." A few inches off my table as I write are the constant flutter of wings and the sounds of the voices of birds; yet a little further the waving of trees—the Neem, and the bo-tree, and the palms—and underneath and all about a life throbbing with newness yet aglow with the secrets of the past. I look at my Whitman and Wordsworth and the exquisite beauty of the "Beata Beatrix," and I long to be able to pass from the one psychic atmosphere to the other at will, a transition without which the mere accident of physical presence is worth little. Yet as I utter the wish it is already to some small extent answered, and I have perceived a larger existence than I had conceived before—a certain immense life of Humanity, in which time and distance are alike merged, and where the Eastern and the Western Aryan have become one in their noblest manifestations, as Walt Whitman saw it:—

"Sail, sail thy best ship, O Democracy,
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee;
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the Western
Continent alone,
Earth's résumé entire floats on thy keel, O ship, is steadied by
thy spars,

With thee time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or
swim with thee,
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics, wars, thou
bear'st the other continents,
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination port triumphant.
Steer then with good strong hand and wary eye, O helmsman!
Thou carriest great companions,
Venerable, priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal Feudal Europe sails with thee."

OUR ZENANA TERRACE

THOSE learned and artistic persons who now and then find their way to us in the midst of the Hindu quarter here in Calcutta, to spend an hour or two, will sometimes break off from their preoccupation with mediæval art and modern monstrosity to assure us that the lane outside our door is a genuine bit of Early Italian loveliness. We like to hear this stated, though we had not needed to be told that our home was beautiful. In the mists of November evenings, when a couple of street lamps, swung from wall brackets at long distances, serve to light up the irregular house-fronts—that stand side by side as if treading on each other's toes in subdued and solemn eagerness—we could not have doubted that our lane was very lovely. Here a small verandah carries the front backwards; there a wall crowds forward, as if to see. The handsome old mouldings round some doorway, again, are half obscured under successive coats of plaster. And everywhere their dress of whitewash gives these substantial Indian buildings a look as of tall persons, decorously wrapped from head to foot in the white and unsewn garments of the East, or, mayhap, at the clear black midnight, thrills one with a suggestion of the pale and sheeted dead.

But if those strangers, who have beauty in their hearts can be so affected by our Indian lane, what would they say could they see with our eyes our zenana terrace? Has the reader, in his Western home, some favourite window, with view of lawn and trees, and fringed in early spring with bursting bulbs, or some specially beloved ingle-nook, where fire and picture and low seat make cosy welcome, filling him with the sense of light and peace? In that case he can understand what our terrace is to us. Third of our four courtyards, it opens on the level of the second story. Rooms with higher roofs surround it on three sides, and

on the fourth it is enclosed by a high wall, part of which is pierced, to form a screen. In the centre, perfect in its simplicity, a light wooden railing, with four stone corner-posts, protects us from the danger of a fall into the court below. And from the south-east angle of the terrace a narrow staircase, ending in a square and solid tower, climbs steeply up to the roofs and terraces above. Oh, that staircase! By it Crivelli's Angel of Annunciation might fittingly descend, as Herald of God, to seek below her who was blessed amongst all women. Of one thing at least we may be sure; between Crivelli's Angel and his staircase there would in that case be no disparity.

Or we turn in the opposite direction, and, overtopping the western wall, rise the gnarled boughs and fern-like leafage of a Neem tree. Planted according to old Calcutta custom beside a neighbour's house, to ward off the malaria that comes with the east winds, this tree of healing is our perpetual joy. Constant breath and motion does it give. In, out, and about it play the sparrows, safe in its hiding from all their foes, while human creatures talk, or gravely sit and watch, below. Nor are the sparrows all its guests. On its outmost branches perch the crows—so full of humour though they cannot laugh! We take but little notice of these aggressive gentlemen, though we are well aware that our mode of life is to them a subject of perpetual curiosity and they frequently warn and advise us as to the ways of their own kind, with the friendliest intentions. A crow's manner makes one feel that his information of today would, if possible, be his instructions of tomorrow. And the pigeons come—the pigeons who live downstairs, in the front courtyard, and sometimes talk the whole night long. Or a single kingfisher will arrive, and for a couple of weeks together will give his loud clear call from the same spot at the same hour, every day, and then fly away. But what we love best are the little birds, and there are many—the tiny Tun-tun, so much smaller than the sparrow, and an occasional Maina, and now and

then a down-swooping swallow, with other kinds whose names we do not even know. Yes, and as in the early morning or late afternoon we watch the birds that fly in flocks, away and away to the north, with the sunlight shining on their white breasts and underwings, we know that if to these our dwelling-place offer any landmark we owe it all to the Neem tree that lives by our side. By its graciousness and beauty alone are won what place we may enjoy in the lives and counsels of the birds.

And something, however little, there surely is. In India all the small birds and beasts that seek the shelter of the house are holy. They come in the train of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune, and show that her presence is about us. And it was a yellow-clad Fakir who, seated with us one day in silent watching of the loves and quarrels, the faithfulness and mutual forgiveness of the sparrows, suddenly broke his musing with the words, "How wonderful that they can live thus without a scripture!"

But our terrace wall, with the bed of flowers and creeper that runs along it, turns a corner. From west it bends some short way to the north. The way is very short, for here begin the dwelling-rooms again. But in this end is the perforated curtain-like screen through which the women-folk may take a furtive look at as much of the gay world as can be seen in the neighbouring quarter. And above it, but at some distance beyond, rise, to the sight of a watcher within the house, the tall green-turbaned heads of a line of cocoanut palms. One behind the other they stand, a procession that faces the light as it rises in the east. An hour passes, and it strikes level against the underside of their upright fronds, and then, for ten minutes or so, an anthem, of light thrown back, is chanted to the ascending sun. Then all again grows grey, veiled in the excessive radiance of the tropics, and day wears on. But the morning glory of the palm-trees is not all. The afternoon has come, and at an hour before sunset the eastward-shining beams once more strike level with the great

green crowns. This time, however, the sun-rays are caught on the upper surface of low-hanging down-curved leaves, and so twice every day the palm-trees worship God ; and Hindu eyes, trained to seek and respond to the cosmic spectacle, look out from secluded dwellings behind enclosing walls to note this, the matins and evensong of light.

Earlier and later float down to us, on the terrace, the sound of bells rung in the prayer-room of each neighbouring household at the hour of worship. Or again, in the moment of twilight, ere yet the young moon is clear above the Neem, there come as is fit great thoughts, wide renderings of the veil that hides the Infinite. For this terrace of ours, this hearth of the soul, is silent and hidden and distant from the world, and whether at midnight in the starlight, or seated in the daytime within the shadow of the wall, or even lingering in the sun about the doorways, it is impossible there to forget Crivelli's Angel, or to do aught but await, passive and half-expectant, the inflow of the Divine upon the heart of man.

THE HINDU WIDOW AND THE ZENANA

THE great distinction of Hindu life in English eyes is its vast antiquity. Even its trifles are hoary with age. In the glimpses we catch of the heroic lovers, Sita and Rama, wandering the forest, Sita wears the Sari, and follows behind her husband, as she might today. No one, I suppose, can tell how old the Sari may be. We see it in Egyptian pictures of the goddesses, and if we remember that it is essentially a strip of cloth, unsewn, we shall find it also, I think, in Greek sculpture.

The notion, current for centuries amongst the orthodox, that to wear anything stitched was utterly unholy, has kept this garment in its primitive simplicity. Like many perfect things, it withholds its complete loveliness at first from even the most enthusiastic eye. It takes months of familiarity to enable the ordinary observer to appreciate to the full the long curves of the veil, the dainty poses of the head, and the exquisite adjustment of every movement to the drapery.

At first, perhaps, we feel that the Sari is narrow at the ankles, and that the ovoid form, therefore, verges on the "bundle." Then it dawns on us that even this is beautiful, and that there is, moreover, a variety that at first escaped us. It is not drawn so tight, except for some special emergency or effort, and in times of leisure it gives to the feet all the freedom of the skirt. Now and then a breeze catches the veil, and we get—down here in common human life—a moment's glimpse of the Sistine Madonna.

Aubrey Beardsley and Phil May, and the delightful artists of the French poster, have not been wrong in their rapturous interpretation of tennis-blouses and picture-hats and the modiste's fashion-plate. But if we want some soul to gain the vision of the spiritual depths of mere living, to

know how one life is tense with agony and another light with the ease of a summer day, to realise for himself the hair's-breadth difference that puts eternal separation between the curves of the Mother of Sorrows and the Mother Crowned,—if we desire this revelation, we may find it in the Hindu zenana. For there we come upon a dignity and grace, with a superb indifference to great or little, that lifts the meanest drudgery, and puts it in the matter of beautiful doing on a level with the harvesting of corn or the facing of death. Only Millet in modern Europe has known this potentiality of common things. He stands alone, for that brooding presence of the Eternal with which *The Angelus* is charged is as different from our nineteenth-century realism as the stories of Nausicaa and Penelope from *A Window in Thrums*. But Millet never came to India, and even if he had come, he alas, would have found himself mere man.

And then the colour of the Sari! My own experience has been that when a thing was just right I have often failed at first to recognise it. I have had to grow to it. I used to long for Saris without borders. That little line, meandering up and down the figure, seemed a useless interruption of the composition, a jarring element in the picture; today it is like the brush-line of a great master, defining and emphasizing the whole.

But it is not the border only. Whoever knew a Hindu make a mistake in colour? Dark blue is never blue, but purple. Green is like grass lying in sunlight, or shot with rose. Grey is not altogether silver; there is a suggestion of the blue rock-pigeon in it too. A check, or a dazzling combination of black and white, is an outrage impossible to perpetrate.

And yet, and yet, is there anything like the radiant purity of the widow's plain white cloth? Silk for worship, cotton for daily service—but always white, without a touch of colour. Perhaps its charm lies in its associations. The austere simplicity speaks of the highest only. A heart

free to embrace the world, a life all consecrated, a past whose sorrow makes the present full of giving—these are the secrets that the widow's Sari tells.

For it must be understood that this bereavement is regarded in India as a direct call to the religious life. It is the only way in which what is known in Catholic countries as "a vocation" can come to the Hindu woman. Her life henceforth is to be given to God, not to man; and this idea, coupled with an exaggerated respect for celibacy, gives to the widow, and especially to her who has been a child-widow, a unique position of influence in the household. This feeling of reverence persists long after the sentiments of orthodoxy—admiration for long hours spent in worship and for severe asceticism—have disappeared. Hence it was a modern Hindu, of the school calling itself Reformed, who said to me, "The most stately garment in India is the white Sari of the widow."

Of course all ordeals are hard on some members of the community, and there is little to choose between the injustice of one set of institutions and another. I do not know that the Indian woman of the upper classes, doomed to live from childhood without the closest companionship, is more than conventionally conscious of special hardship. Her vocation is none of her own choosing, but she often throws her whole heart into it for all that, and that wealth of devotion, amounting to absorption, which she would have bestowed upon her husband, goes into the discipline of her own character. And what a character that often is! The most ideal woman I have ever known is the orthodox Brahmin widow. And she does not stand alone. In her I have learned to understand the feeling of the Hindu who, having been received in distinguished society in England, turns from all the elegance and high breeding of European womanhood to find something that surpasses these in that simple unlettered dignity and sweetness of her who was his mother.

The feeling of the Indian family for the little sister

who comes home to it a nun is often very tender. Just that grieved acquiescence in a higher consecration than common, which we might show to one dear to ourselves, is theirs. In the past it was no unusual thing for the parents and brothers and sisters, under these circumstances, to take up all her obligations and share them with her. I know one man in whose childhood this went on until the young widow noticed that only vegetable food was being eaten around her, and herself bought fish and cooked it, thus insisting on freeing the others from their self-imposed privation.

The Ekadashi, or one day of fasting, which falls in every fifteen, is indeed a hardship, and especially so in the hot weather; for not only may no food be taken for twenty-four hours, but not even a drop of water may pass the lips. Yet even this is not a torture invented to make the wretched still more wretched. It was once binding on every good Hindu, and is still retained by astonishingly many. I know one Indian prince who keeps it to the letter; and the most conservative class of all—the high-caste widow, the very type of piety—naturally clings to it more persistently than others. I have never known a man who did not honestly try to mitigate the force of the observance; and I hear that the strictness with which it is kept in Calcutta is unknown elsewhere.

I once met a violent agnostic who was friendly to a single text in the Bible: "He that will be chief among you, let him be your servant." "That," my friend was fond of saying, "comes true every time." But since I have been in India I have seen it in a new light. It reads now like a picture from Oriental domesticity. Here, among women at least, administration is apt to pass directly into service. Of course in large community-houses, with their forty or fifty persons paying allegiance to one head of the family, the mere giving out of stores by the mother-in-law is a serious matter, leaving little time for regular housework. But even this lady, in the course of the day, may

pass into the kitchen to cook the food of her husband and herself.

We shall never understand until we realise that passionate self-abnegation is the root of most things. Custom, it is true, petrifies everything till this impulse may sometimes be hardly conscious. But it is often intensely so. I was feasting late one evening with a rich Hindu family, and noticing that even the gentlemen were waiting till I had dined, I made some playful remark to the daughter of the house—whose guest especially I was—about the hardship of *her* part in eating last of all. "Oh," she said, drawing back hurriedly, as if touched on a tender point, "but we like it best so." For this reason, when asked to breakfast, one should never, I think, be late. Whatever the hour of one's arrival and departure, one may be sure that the hostess will not taste food till it is past.

Old prejudices, however, are passing away, and it is now no uncommon thing for a man to begin the day with a cup of tea, while almost all the children of those who can afford it have a sweetmeat and a glass of milk on waking up. But it is rare indeed for the mother to permit herself the luxuries that she dispenses to those around her. And even to this extent many families would refuse to go.

The first duty of the day is the cleaning of one's own room and the zenana department generally. No doubt very rich persons have this done by women servants, but in most houses it is the work of the owner of the room and of her young daughters-in-law. And almost every lady, however rich, does something, either her husband's room or the family chapel, with her own hands. This happens at somewhere near four o'clock. I have never succeeded in rising so early that the rest of the house was still uncleaned.

The next proceeding is that kind of devotion known as meditation. This lasts for at least an hour, and while it is in progress the dawn comes. Then there is the visit to the Ganges for one of the many daily baths, with per-

haps the reading of some sacred book till it is time to go. Next, the worship, with all its ritual, that comes nearest to our family prayers, and after all this a meal. It may be necessary to cook this meal with one's own hands before eating. Or beggars may come at the last minute, and then the whole of the food will be given to them, and the lady of the house will go on waiting till her share is once more ready. In this way it is often two o'clock, and I have heard of its being eleven at night, before the head of a large household will breakfast, and this would not count as an austerity.

It is after this meal, about half-past twelve or one o'clock, that the pleasures of life begin for the zenana lady. First, she has a couple of hours' sleep. She sadly needs it. Then she sits up, reads, talks, possibly sews a little (though this is rare), and enjoys life. Towards the end of the afternoon one notices that every right hand is covered with a little bag, out of which the first finger protrudes, and the ladies round one have a preoccupied air. They are telling their beads, which are covered up, inside the little bags. This habit of covering the rosary interests me much, for I am told that the Buddhists of Ceylon, who wear their beads on the right wrist, hide them under a strip of cloth, like the maniple of Christian ritual. No one appears to attach any meaning to the custom.

Some hundreds of the names of God have thus been said—or, as we should put it, the Name has been said some hundreds of times—when dusk falls, and a servant passes the door bearing a lamp. At once all rise and prostrate themselves before some sacred picture in the room, and once more the whole household passes, with various beautiful preliminaries of salutation to the Ganges, to the Tulsi plant, and so on, to worship, again in the form of meditation. It is the time called candle-light or the hour of peace.

It is quite late before the ladies eat for the second time, and in the pleasant hour or two between, friends and neighbours, attended by female servants bearing

lanterns, may slip in for a chat. By half-past nine all have gone, and at ten or shortly after, bathing and supper are alike finished, and everyone retires for the night.

Such is an ideal day for a woman of the upper classes. Where there are no servants, labour has to be carried to its remotest subdivision. One daughter-in-law has charge of all the bread-making ; another boils the rice and looks after the potatoes ; and so on. And if, in addition to this, there are children, endless ablutions "by drowning in a tank" (to quote a friend's picturesque expression) add to their mother's cares. From early dawn till late at night there is not an idle moment. What a comfort that for us all, the world over—

"Be the day weary, be the day long,
At last it ringeth to evensong!"

THE SACRED YEAR

WHETHER or not it is true, as some have held, that all sacred years are built out of the wreckage of more ancient civil years, it is certain beyond any possibility of cavil or question that behind the Hindu sacred year lies another, a weather-year, full of the most loving and delicate observation of nature. Each great day as it comes round is marked by its own particular glinting of sunlight on the leaves, its own rare bite of the morning air, or its own dancing of the blood at noon. When, in the early autumn, the tiny, jonquil-like flowers are found fallen at dawn from the Shephalika bushes, and the children pick them up blossom by blossom for worship, men say with something of the gladsomeness of childhood itself, "Mother is coming! Mother is coming!" for they remind them of the festival of Durga, by this sign near at hand. In springtime, when the Ashoka tree begins to adorn itself with its bunches of red flowers, that are said never to bud till the tree has heard the footsteps of a beautiful woman, and the long slender buds of the leaf-almond begin to appear, the low castes are glad, for now is coming Holi, the Easter of the primitive peoples. On the birthday of Krishna, late in the summer, it *must* rain, in memory of the night so long ago when the Lord of All was carried as a babe, by Vasudeva, through wind and storm. The Kali Puja, with its myriads of tiny open lamps, seems always to happen on the night of some marriage-flight amongst the insects, and always the little winged creatures suffer death by fire on these altars of the Mother.

But there is no nature-festival to be compared with that of Ras. All through the growing moon of the beautiful month of Kartika, the women have gone to the Gangeside at evening, night after night, with flowers and lamps to offer vows. Now has come the full moon. It is the

first of the cold weather. The winter flowers are beginning to bloom. The world is full of relief from the lessening of the long heat. The very trees seem to rejoice in the unwonted coolness, and this was the moment at which Krishna went with the cowherds to the forest. Throughout the rains the cattle have been kept in the villages, and now they are taken to the distant pastures. Oh, the joy of the forests: the long moonlight nights, the whispering trees, the enfolding dark, the presence of the Cowherd, who is in truth the Lord Himself! In those temples which have the necessary buildings the image of Krishna is taken at evening out of its sanctuary, and conveyed in procession to a little Chapel of the Exposition, there to be worshipped publicly until the morning. Here for three days in the small hours of the night, when the moon has scarcely yet begun to wane, come the women to sit and worship, or to go round and round the altar in a circle, silently praying. And choirs of priests chant the while. And the image-sellers drive a brisk though almost silent trade, and the precincts of the temple are thronged with life, imagining itself out in the forest amongst the cowherds, playing with the Lord.

Every full moon has its own special morsel of lore. Tonight, at some hour or other, the sweet goddess Lakshmi will enter the room, and we must on no account sleep lest we miss her visit. Again, it is unlucky this month for the heads of the family to see the moon. Therefore they must not look out of the window, and this is well, for tonight is the orchard-robbing festival, when the boys of the village have right to enter the garden and carry off ripe fruit. What wonderful coincidence fixed it to fall when the harvest of the jack-trees is ready for gathering?

The whole of Hinduism is one long sanctification of the common life, one long heart and relating of soul to the world about it; and the love of pilgrimage and the quest of sacred shrines speak of that same desire to commune with nature as the village feasts. The holiness of

nature is the fundamental thought of Hindu civilisation. The hardships of life in camp and forest are called austerity ; the sight of grass and trees is called worship. And the soothing and peace that come of a glimpse of a great river is held a step on the road to salvation and the freeing of the soul.

How did this passion for nature become fixed and ritualised, in the series of the year's fasts and feasts? Here opens out a field of most fruitful study. A fixed system of universal consent always presupposes some central authority, which persisted long enough not only to pronounce authentically of disputable matters, but also to radiate as custom what had been thus determined. This central authority exists in India as the empire whose seat for nearly a thousand years was Pataliputra.* By its rulings was Hinduism, in so far as it is universal throughout the country, shaped and determined, and in order to know exactly what this was in its daily working, it would be necessary to study in detail the worships of Madras and the South. For here we have, more or less in its purity, the Hinduism which grew up, antithetically to Buddhism, during the Buddhist period. It differs in many ways from that of Bengal, since there the faith went through a much longer period of elaboration. Pataliputra was succeeded by Gour, the Guptas by the Sens, and in the year A.D. 728 Adisur Sen, Emperor of the five Gours, as was his title, brought to his capital, and established there for the good of his people in matters of faith and scholarship, the celebrated five Brahmins of Kanauj. And they made the face of Bengal to shine—which is a brief way of saying, probably, that this king established an ecclesiastical college of reference at Gour, which went on impressing its influence on the life of Bengal, long after the original five, and their king, had been gathered to their fathers. Even after the

* Pataliputra, on the site of the modern Patna, in Behar ; capital of the ancient kingdom of Magadha, described by Megasthenes ; in the third century B.C., the metropolis of the Emperor Ashoka.

Hindu sovereigns had fallen altogether, and the Moham-
medan rulers had taken their place, this Brahminical in-
fluence went on living and working. It was in fact the
Bengali form of Papacy, and before we rebel against it
too much, before we asperse it too bitterly for the cerecloths
of orthodoxy which it bound upon the people, we ought to
know what were the problems that it had to solve. It
gave continuity to the social development of the community,
in the face of the most appalling revolutions. It made the
faith a strong ground of taste and manners and gave it
consciousness of its strength. It made the village into a
true civic unit, in spite of complexity of caste and origins.
It maintained the growth of literature and the epic-making
faculty. And above all—the supreme gift of Hinduism—it
went on deepening and widening the education of the
people by that form of mind-cultivation which is peculiar
to India, the form that she knows not as secular schooling
but as devotional meditation, the power to which she will
one day owe her recovery, should it be given to her to
recover her footing at all, in the world of nations.

The power of the Brahmin was never broken in Bengal
till modern education brought new tests to try men by.
Mohammedanism had never touched it. The new religion
of Chaitanya was not even defiant of it. Automatically it
had gone on working and growing. The world is always
ready to call any overthrow of the old by the name of
reformation, because in anything long established there is
always much that needs overthrow. Pruning and weeding
are a parable of necessary processes in thought and society
also. But how can we call this a reformation unless we
know what new ideals are to be substituted for the old?
That destruction has taken place is indisputable, but does
destruction alone constitute reformation? In any case,
Bengal owes her own solidarity, her unity in complexity,
her Hinduistic culture and the completeness of her national
assimilation, more perhaps to Adisur and the Brahminical
college that he established than to any other single fact of

these many centuries.

If this theory be correct, if the wider Hinduistic formalism was the work of the Guptas of Pataliputra, and the orthodoxy of Bengal more especially that of the Sen kings of Gour, a wonderful amount of history lies in the study of the differences between the two. We shall in that case expect to find more ancient and less homogeneous fragments of the faith lying outside of Bengal. We shall look, moreover, to study the development of the popular faith in parallelism with Buddhism outside. For here a long obscuring process has been superposed upon the other. Those elements of Hinduism in which it has marked affinities with the classical and pre-classical religions of Europe must, for the most part, be sought outside, in distant provinces, and at the conservative centres of the great pilgrimage shrines. But for the potentialities of Hinduism, for its power to bind and unite, for its civilising and liberalising effect, we cannot do better than go to Bengal. Here we may disentangle gradually the long story of the influences that have made it what it is. Did the first image-makers come from China? And when? In what order were the main worships introduced? What was the original place of the planetary deities, of snakes and of trees, in the scheme of things? Who were Satya-Pir and Satya-Narayan? These questions, and a thousand like them, have to be answered before we can understand and assign time and source to all the elements that have gone to the making of the Sanatana Dharma in Bengal. Yet wherever we go—north, east, or west—we shall always find that India herself has been the inspiration of Hinduism, and that the faith without the land is a name without a person, a face without a soul.

DOL-JATRA

It was dawn of the beautiful morning that ends the full-moon night of the month of Phalgun. In the sick room the light in the small earthen cup flickered and went out, and the cool wind that comes with the first light entered the chamber and fanned with its wings both the watcher and the sick. It was then, in those first rapt moments of sunrise, that there came, from far off by the Ganges side, the sound of the Indian flute, incredibly mysterious and remote, rising and falling in gentle cadences, pausing in sweetness, lingering in tenderness, dominated ever by its own pathos. The music was a hymn of worship, and the night just ended was the birthnight of Chaitanya—Chaitanya, the saint of Nuddea, the poet and emancipator of Bengal. Oh wonderful birth at Nuddea, of the Lover of the People, on the People's Feast! For this full-moon day of Phalgun is not only the birthday of Gauranga, but also the Holi Puja of the low castes and the Dol-jatra of the Hindu calendar.

Whatever else we do not know of the ancient countries, of one thing we may be sure, that in every case they must have had a yearly feast of Eros. We may gather, moreover, from the climatic and geographical associations of each land, the very moon of the festival in every case. It must always have taken place in the spring-time. The memory of this left behind, here a carnival, there a battle of flowers, and somewhere else a May Day frolic, to tell a future age the path it went. Here in India, where all ages persist, like geological strata piled one upon another, it is kept to-day as it may have been in Assyria or Egypt, in early Greece or in the empire of the Hittities.

On full-moon of the beautiful month of Phalgun—that month when the Ashoka tree and the mango are in bloom, when the foliage buds of the leaf-almond are long

and slender against the blue, and when the scarlet plumes of the Palash stand out on its naked branches—occurs the Holi festival, or Dol-jatra of some long pre-Hindu people. Pre-Hindu they certainly were, although Hinduism has done its best to absorb and assimilate the poetry they brought to it. For the Ashoka tree they say, only blooms when the footfall is heard by it of a beautiful woman, and the fragrance of mango-blossoms is one of the five arrows of Madan's bow—two morsels of the folk-lore that clearly belong to the spring and nature festival. Madan, the Indian Love, is always depicted as a young man, not as a child, who once upon a time went clad in flowers—nay, his very weapon was made of them. And as he wore it loose and unstrung beside his quiver, the eager bees hanging above it gave it its proper form of the bow. So at least we are told in Kalidas's immortal fragment. Wherever Madan is mentioned amongst the educated, Kalidas must needs be remembered, for his was the brain that gave the beautiful young archer his life-myth, and to his poem must all go who would learn of the impious faring forth together of Love and his comrade Spring, to shoot at the heart of the Great God, and of the fate that befell their enterprise in the sacred grove of meditation. All the love of the Indian soil and Indian nature that must have spoken in the wild poetic souls of the earliest aborigines is here poured, together with his own thought and learning, into the crucible of a great Hindu poet, to form the poem of the birth of Kartika the War-Lord. But long before Kalidas took up his lute, the Indian feast of Eros had been Indianized, being interpreted as an incident in the idyll of the sporting of the child Krishna in the meadows of Brindavana. Nothing is so exquisite as this—the tale of the divine childhood as a cowherd amongst the herd-boys and herd-girls beside the Jamuna. At the age of eleven Krishna passes off the peasant stage for ever, but years after, when his forest-friends visit him in his palace, they refuse to recognise their old playmate whom they now see

in kingly robes, and will not be satisfied till he has donned once more for them his childhood's crown of a peacock's feather, with flute and simple village garments, thus revealing himself again to their adoring love as the same Gopala they knew of old.

Everyone who knows anything of the village customs of the North-West has seen the place that swinging holds in the Indian peasant's conception of a festival. Boys and girls, young men and young women, like English rustics at a fair swing and shout, applaud and deride each other, with never a suggestion of that dignity which we commonly associate with Oriental humanity. It is wonderful how easily, with a rope and a few bamboos and a wooden seat, a swing can be made for a frolic. But in the Himalayas, near every temple, we find swing-posts of deodar and stout iron chains. Clearly there was a time when the festival was celebrated everywhere, and since Brindavana must so obviously have known the giddy delight, it followed that a swinging ceremony became part of the religious ritual of the altar on the day of the Spring Feast. In other words, Hinduism, by means of the Krishna legend, had absorbed into itself, and in doing so, lent a greater dignity of interpretation to, the Festival of Love of the country folk.

Hinduism absorbed, Hinduism reinterpreted, but she never criticised or discountenanced the gaiety of the child races. And still the lower castes maintained the old practices of the season. There are perhaps two essential elements characteristic of the festivals of Madan. One is the free mixing of men and women, with probably a certain element of rough buffoonery, something like the old St. Valentine's Day of Europe; and the other, the drawing together of all the classes, ignoring social differences of higher civilisations of later ages. These two characteristics have persisted to the present day in the Holi Puja observances of the Hindu lower classes, and Hindu gentlefolk of mature age will tell how in their childhood their mothers would bend the head to receive the red-powder Tilaka at

the hands of their Hindustani servants.

Out in the streets meanwhile the boys are at war with passing pedestrians, all of whom are bound on this privileged day to submit to being pelted with red powder. Yellow powders are sometimes used, but this, say the best judges, is a mistake. The red alone is correct, symbolising the sand of the Jamuna, all stained with the blood of the demons, whom Krishna slew. The wild and boisterous, impatient of the priest's slow blessing, buy the powder straight from shops and throw it. But gentler spirits wait, playing only with that which is duly offered and sanctified in worship. And great is the reward of their patience, for such is the virtue of the blest powder that it confers immunity, it is said, from all diseases of the season!

Here then in India to this day is played out every year the old-time drama of the peasant in the spring; played, too, in a fashion of which, however it may annoy the Philistine, neither the scholar nor the poet could bear to sacrifice a single point. The joy of simple peoples in the bridal of nature, and the festival of the great democracy of caste and sex—these are two impulses that have given birth to all carnivals and Holi Pujas that the world has ever known. And behind, watching over them, suggesting a thought of poetry here, a touch of sanctity there, and working to moderate possible excess only by her own benign presence and her kindly tolerance, stands the ancient Mother-Church of Hinduism. There was a wonderful dramatic fitness in the fact that in the fulness of time it was on the full-moon of Phalgun, the day of the Holi festival, that Chaitanya, apostle of rapture, lover of the poor and lowly, the national saint and the preacher of democracy, was born here in Bengal.

JANMASHTAMI: THE DAY OF THE GREAT BIRTH

A SUDDEN chime of bells, a blaze of lights waved before an altar—while without, the watching stars and purple blackness of the midnight sky look down—such is the solemn moment of the Birth of Krishna.

Surely it is only in this country, where a temple perforce takes the form of a verandah, that Nature wholly mingles herself with worship, to bring the sense of the Divine to man. The Western monk chants his Hours—Lauds and Prime and Matins, and Terce and Sext and Vespers and Nones—but those footfalls of the Sun that he commemorates were trodden long ago in the deserts of the Thebaid, and he sings within closed doors, holding himself snug against the chill winds without. Here in India, however, we practise the Faith in the very land, and every day we realise afresh the cosmic events that gave it birth. Who has felt the stillness that falls on lawn and river at the moment of noon? Who, watching through long hours, has heard the distant music of the flute arise by the Ganges side with the first ray of dawn? Who has wandered in field and forest at the time of cowdust, and known the sudden touch of twilight on the soul, without understanding why the village bells ring and prayers are enjoined at the stated hours? For that which in one man's eyes is superstition, another may know to be but an added firmness of sensation. But surely of all the worships in the Hindu cycle, none has the power and force of those celebrated at midnight. When slumber has fallen on men, gathered together in the great hive of Night; when even the wild creatures are still, each in his place on hillside or bough; when all that is trivial and personal has been blotted out with the passing of the sunlight, till, in the sound of the river, we can almost hear that of the far-off sea—

then the lamps of the altar shine as though they were in truth the heart of the universe ; then the worshipper feels himself to be but one of an innumerable host of stars and worlds, all of which wait with him for the dawn in the darkness of Light Ineffable. And most of all this is true of the midnight service of the Birth of Krishna.

Among the higher castes in Bengal it is customary that each house shall contain a private chapel of its own, and only the poor and the lowly betake themselves to temples for the observance of the great festivals ; but to my own household, perhaps as a proof of our perversity of disposition, this is rather a reason for frequenting them than otherwise. We love to see the band of simple worshippers, for the most part women, who arrive now and again and seat themselves to watch the ceremony in the outer court, while an elderly priest gives informal religious instruction during the preliminary stages of the function. We like, too, to listen to that religious instruction itself, and to the questions which now and again it has to meet. And so one night we sat on the steps of a certain temple of Kali, which stands at a corner hard by and looks far across the Ganges with the hay boats drawn up in line beneath the bank, on and on to the edge of the world in the distant North-West. The temple is old, and the corner rounded off with the wisdom and beauty peculiar to the old Indian method of laying out a town, and the image that dwells there, under a sheltering bo-tree, is known as "the Kali of the Hay-merchants." Only a few years ago the spot was at the extreme end of Calcutta, but today this can no longer be said, though there is still a large open space opposite, where a great tree stands, and now and then gives a long shivering cry, as if to warn the neighbourhood of coming storm.

All the evening through the street had been full of passers up and down. And sudden bursts of singing and sounding of *Shankha* and gongs had disturbed the ordinary quiet in all directions. For we are early old-fashioned folk

in the Hindu quarter of Calcutta. Lights are out and noises hushed, as a rule, before ten o'clock ; and by eleven o'clock, even on the Janmashtami, everything was closed except the temples. Here, by the light of his own altar, an Oriya priest still sat chanting the tale of the Holy Birth from a palm-leaf book. There, a few Brahmins chatted late round the foot of an image at which presently they would be offering worship. But the bamboo mats were all up and padlocked in front of the shops, and only the lamplights from the open shrines streamed across the curb.

It was thus that we waited for the moment of the Birth. The temple had disappeared. The tones of the kindly old priest sounded dim and far away. Centuries had rolled back. The walls of a prison closed about us, and we waited once more with the royal victims, Devaki the mother and Vasudava the father, for the coming of the Holy Child. Once more, as on the first Day of the Birth, the rains seemed to fall and the winds to blow, and the only sound that reached us besides the violence of the storm was the heavy breathing of the guards, smitten into slumber by spirits, carrying to the prison of Kamsa the commission of the Most High. Surely never was the anguish of motherhood so great as on that night! Seven times had Devaki given life, and seven times had it been snatched away by the cruel king her brother, as soon as given—for had it not been told that one of her babes should be his enemy and take his life? And now at the coming of the eighth child, especially named in the prophecy, and looked for with concentrated passion of fierceness and jealousy—how, in that seven-times wounded heart, could there be room for joy?

Heavy moments are these, full of bitterest anguish of expectancy and dread ; full of the agony of love that longs to save, but finds no means for protection of the Beloved, and yet at the same time moments in which is mingled a sense of lofty faith, a growing awe, an intuition of infinite tenderness and triumph.

It was over at last. Before them lay the Babe Himself, all laughter, all radiance. One more had been added to the "wretched births" of the Avataras, and even in a prison the mystery of Incarnation made itself felt.

The books say that it was the new-born child who instructed Vasudeva to wrap him in his cloak, and pass out of the prison to the village on the far side of the Jamuna, and then substitute him for the new-born girl of Nanda the cowherd and return. Was it so, indeed? Or was it over-whelming clearness of vision that came with the presence of the Divine and seemed like speech?

However that be, it met with prompt and eager obedience from the royal prisoners. No mother's weakness of Devaki, no masculine scepticism of Vasudeva, was put forward to check for one moment the course of events. Concealing under his mantle the shining Child, the father turned to make his way through darkness and storm. The guards slept soundly; the prison doors opened silently of their own accord. And none had ever seen the Lord of the Worlds save him who carried Him. Terrible was the storm, and full of terror the flood of the Jamuna when the moment came for crossing it. Here and there Vasudeva tried, but it was impossible to find means, when suddenly a jackal passed in before him, and he, guided by this lowliest of beasts, forded the stream in safety and reached the hut of Nanda the cowherd. Here, too, sound sleep had fallen upon all, and Yashoda herself, when she awoke in the morning, did not know that the Boy in her arms was a changeling, nor dreamed that he was in truth of the royal house.

In the prison, however, a terrible scene had been enacted. The infuriated sovereign, Kamsa, informed of the occurrence at last of the long-expected birth, had come in person to visit the prisoners. Suspecting foul play when he saw a female child, but unable to substantiate his suspicions, he seized the infant by the feet to dash it to pieces against the wall. But the girl was an incarnation of

Yogamaya, and the king suddenly found his clenched fingers empty, while over above him, illuminating the chamber with her glow, stood the great Goddess. "Your enemy is even now growing to manhood," she said, "in the village of the cowherds," and then the vision faded out and there was none with them.

Poor fate-maddened king—doomed by each act only to fill deeper the cup of his iniquities till the destined champion should appear, and in single combat avenge the wrongs of his people and his blood—how sad and yet how necessary was the part that he played in the story of Brindavana and the wondrous childhood! How strange—but at this point a movement among the priests interrupted our memories and recalled us to the present. The mystical moment of midnight had come. The Holy Child was born once more among men, and here, not in a prison but in a temple, and amidst the music of bells, with flowers, and lights, and incense, we were to celebrate that old-time coming of the Lord of Worlds. Many minutes passed in silence and prostration, and then we slipped away through the chime-broken hush of the quiet street to our own door.

But as we reached it we lingered for a moment regretfully on the threshold. "Ah surely," said we, "this is no accustomed scene. For in truth we have come through wind and storm across the Jamuna, and, bearing the Holy Babe beneath our cloak, we are but now arrived at the hut of Nanda the cowherd in the village of Gokul."

THE SARASWATI PUJA

WE realise too little that the world's greatest images and temples are but as mountain-peaks, in which culminate the private adorations of the soul and of the home. Out of the spoils of Marathon, Athene Promachos was set to watch, from the rocky summit of the Acropolis, over the city of violets, only because, beside the hearths of Athens, for more than two centuries before the time of Pheidias, her name had been a household word. But if we would know something of that long anterior thought and dreaming that made her and the Goddess of the Parthenon what they have become to us and to our children, we cannot do better than study the question here in Bengal, in the simple worships of the months as they go by. For Greece in her golden age, though politically emancipated, was intellectually but a province of Asia, and in Hindu India today that same Asia is still alive and in full vigour. Pater's Roman study of Marius the Epicurean, laying his violets and cake with the fragment of honeycomb on the votive shelf before the tablets of his ancestors and of the gods, would apply with precision to the Bengali woman of this present year of grace, offering Prasadam and flowers, with grass and water, before the household deity in her Thakur-ghar. The Thakur-ghar, or private oratory, is sufficient for the needs of the daily worship of the family. But when the great Pujas come round the image is erected downstairs, in the hall that runs along the side of the front court—the noblest apartment in the house—and the whole dwelling falls into subordination as a temple of the gods.*

Man has had many dreams of the Divine Wisdom,

* *In the margin of the article a note is added by Nivedita which reads:—*
But these three days ago, it was even so with us, for were we not this week in the full swing of the Saraswati Puja?

but surely few so touching as this of Saraswati in Bengal. A simple woman, ascetic and poor, standing on the white lotus, surrounded by flowers, not jewels, suggestive of all things white and colourless and simple, and carrying the mystic Vina, from which the touch of her hand is bringing a secret music—this is she who has been our guest. In the Deccan and in Maharashtra, they picture her riding on the peacock, and Mhattre's beautiful statute, with its decorative draperies and crown-like hair, carries not a little splendour with it. But in Bengal the goddess is somewhat widowlike—not actually a widow, for among her offerings is the iron bracelet of the wife—true daughter of the ascetics and patron of poor students, impossible to confound with Lakshmi, her sister of Good Fortune.

Seeing it for the first time at sunset or at dawn, one learns to appreciate the dainty curves of the image: the gleaming white, the light and springing attitude, as of one scarcely touching the flower on which she stands. But it is not even necessary to have an image in order to worship Saraswati. It is quite sufficient, instead, to set one's ink-stand and pens in her hallowed place, and offer to *them* our salutation and affection. For Saraswati dwells and is found in these, the humble creatures of learning; and in token thereof—in full accord with the Hindu horror of confounding *use and worship*—her worshippers are forbidden to open a book or touch their writing materials throughout her festival.

A world of childish associations and tender joys lies hidden beneath the observance of the Saraswati Puja. Kind uncles and fathers stay at home today, and prove the value of leisured masculinity by their readiness to ascend step-ladders and nail the auspicious strings of mango-leaves above the entrance, or carry pots of water and place them, covered with cocoanuts, and embowered beneath tall plantain-stems, against portals and pillars every-where. And the children themselves are all hilarity. To hold hammer and nails, or carry flowers and mats, seems the

height of glory. In the kitchen the ladies of the house are busy preparing food and dressing many-coloured fruits. The happy bustle of an English Christmas pervades the household, all to culminate in the solemn worship, about noon, when the Austere Spirit of Learning will be invoked, and implored to make this hospice of her two-days' visitation her home and abode throughout the coming year.

In the making of the altar-place itself, how much to do! First must the place be cleansed and sanctified. Then, on a wooden stand, the image is set up and all the necessary appurtenances of Saraswati's manifestation arranged about her in due order. Reed pens of an ancient make, curious earthen ink-wells, of no modern pattern, a quaint toilet-basket, with combs and scented oils, a small round mirror, and powders and earthen-ware vessels innumerable, are all *de rigueur* on this occasion. Let priests and theologians explain the mirror how they will, as symbolising the reflection of the Divinity in the unclouded mind, or Buddhi—it strikes the new comer very forcibly that, in sentiment at least, the goddess is to some extent a lady visitant, to whom the privileges and courtesies of womanhood must be extended; for whom, indeed, her sister-women will think many luxuries necessary that they could by no means afford for themselves. Last, and most striking, perhaps, of the preliminary ceremonies is the enclosing of the sacred space. Balls of mud are set at the four corners. In these are placed arrows with the points downwards, and then—in the case of Saraswati white, in that of other images red—thread is passed from corner to corner, a palisade of cord and arrows. Under what conditions of forest and hunt were the Hindu images first set up for worship?

The name Saraswati occurs in the Vedas themselves, and we can gather its primitive significance from the fact that it was applied to that river on whose banks were performed all the holiest sacrifices. The word is a synonym also for Savitri, which is one of the names of the Gayatri, or national prayer. So that in a very special sense it is

said by Hindus of this, their Divine Wisdom, that she is the eternal consort of the Creator, and sprang, full-grown, from the countenance of Narayana, the Lord of the Worlds. "O Thou without Whom the Creator Himself abideth not, abide with us!" runs one of the prayers, and the enumeration that follows of the eight-fold desirable attributes of the mind is curiously subtle. A distinction is drawn, for instance, between memory and the power to call up the thing remembered at the right time and place.

There is, humanly speaking, understood to be a silent unyielding grudge between Saraswati and her sister Lakshmi, the Mistress of Fortune. To be entirely abandoned by Lakshmi is a terrible curse. It means to become devoid of all beauty and charm of every kind: to be, in the world of men, as an owl hooting in the wilderness. Even Saraswati, too, must have recourse to the good offices of Lakshmi for that measure of oats and midnight oil which is the essential wealth of the poor student. But it would be foolish to look, in the case of either sister, for the bestowal of the fulness of her benediction on the ardent adorer of the other. Each is very jealous, and gives herself completely only to a whole heart and an undivided affection. Especially is it true of this plainly-garbed Mother, throned on the white lotus, that she stands in right queenly strength on her own simplicity and grants but the crumbs of her feast to him who has a squinting regard for the good things of life's banquet. How quietly thus, in a half-sarcastic myth, has India foretold the disaster to learning that would come of modern commercialism! The lore of Saraswati has other points of significance. All books and manuscripts—Persian and English to the full as much as classic Sanskrit—are sacred to her. We find plenty of science and geography among the school-books that the boys place on her altar shyly, to be blessed by the touch of her feet. There is no suspicion in India of divorce between faith and knowledge, between the Divine Creator and the Divine Wisdom. The thing sounds foolish. Is

not religion the highest knowledge, knowledge itself the highest faith?

Thus we gather that there is in Hinduism full sanction for the difficult intellectual transition through which the present generations are passing. The Mother blesses that absorption in intellectual problems that forgets her name. She accepts such oblivion as the most precious form of worship. But it must be the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, not for that of its loaves and fishes. Those of us who have learned to regard the present Indian crisis as one almost entirely of mind and thought will realise the dynamic power of these conceptions. For on no other terms than those of a complete appropriation of new forms of disinterested culture can the nation hope to take its true place in the modern world. And to such an excursion of the intellect its ancient sources of authority offer full encouragement and benediction. Without any break with her own past, India might learn to stand in the very van of modern progress. Some understanding of such facts, more or less dim, penetrates even the humblest household in which the image of Saraswati is set up. What is lacking is a sense of contrast, the knowledge that in such a breadth of view there is anything startling or extraordinary.

Saraswati in modern India is the favourite goddess of every home, even as Athene must have been in almost prehistoric Athens. But the altar of Athene was the cradle of a great civic life and organisation, and the throne of Saraswati has up to the present inculcated only an invisible culture—medæval in its intensity—of heart and soul. Treasures of Indian psychology, treasures of Indian thought, lie scattered by the roadside for him who cares to follow out with attention the winding paths of Hindu worship. Yet none who has watched the procession of the image to the river can doubt that the Indian Pujas of today, like the Greek of old, contain within themselves great civic possibilities.

For the two days, with their constant succession of sacred offices, are gone. All night long the lights burned about the shrine, and long after evenfall an occasional passer-by, noting the garland of leaves above the entrance, would push open the door and enter the courtyard to spend a few moments in the presence of the altar. Ever since the consecration of the image we have gone about on tiptoe and spoken almost in whispers, feeling that the house was not our own, but the dwelling-place of gods. And now the second evensong is come, and after the pathetic ceremony of the Farewell Charge is done among the women, the goddess goes forth, amidst attendant drums and heralds, to disappear from the eyes of mortals in that flood wherein all that is is holy. Crowded streets and river-bank await her coming, and even as the one procession goes out it meets another coming in, bearing the pots of Ganges water from which in the growing dusk the "water of peace" will be sprinkled on kneeling worshippers, while the last blessings are pronounced in the chamber where for two days she had stood. How exquisite is this moment of "the water of peace"; how full of devotion are prayers and prostrations! And among the lengthening shadows there steals about us the sense of something more real than physical presence, and we wonder if to us also has come some of the fruit of the ancient prayer to the Divine Wisdom, "O Thou without whom the Creator Himself abideth not, abide with us!"

THE DURGA PUJA

“AND there was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the Dragon; and the Dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in Heaven.” Archaic sentences here and there in the world’s scriptures tell us of the wars that were waged in Heaven before the beginning of time, and of the heritage—dim, prehistoric, supernatural in the natural—that was left from them to men and gods.

What is it that makes this element of mythology so clear, what force has raised it in this one case to the significance when it attains in the *Chandi* portion of the *Markandeya Purana*? This is, above all others, the *Purana* of Bengal. But here the central figure of the drama is no archangel, mighty in power and beauty, but the Mother herself, personification of the creative energy, focus and centre of the visible Universe. Back and forth amidst the applause of Heaven does She pursue the ever-changing demons, and at the moment of her triumph, when, ten-armed, pedestaled on the living lion and sword in hand, She subjugates her foe for ever, She is portrayed as the image of Durga. Such is the story told by the scripture—half-epic, half-liturgy—from which are taken the texts that are recited over and over again from one end of Bengal to the other, with worship and fasting, throughout the great nine days, from the new moon of Ashwin, until Dussera or tenth day. Here and there are those—monks in their monasteries, perhaps, or Brahmins in their homes—who recite the whole of the *Chandi* again and again. But for all alike, whether they do this or not, there is but one object of contemplation—the wars that were in Heaven; one hope, and one alone—the conquest of the demons by the gods.

Everywhere in India the feast that corresponds to the

Durga Puja is military in character. Perhaps fundamentally in consequence of the fact that, in the North at least, the rains are just over, the first seven days are spent in the cleaning and display of weapons ; and on the tenth occurs the prostration and exhibition of skill in arms. Very curious is it at Nagpur on this day to see the last scion of the Bhonsles set out on the stately promenade that was, to his fathers, the beginning of a freebooting expedition, and long long before that, a hunting party.

But domestically, in Bengal, it is a very different element in the festival that determines the feeling of the home with regard to it. The child to whose after life each flash of a waterfall is to carry its reminder, more or less vivid, of Durga with crown and sword, does not in its childhood itself conceive of Her as the cosmic energy, appearing from amidst the ten points of the compass. For the Mother of the Universe shines forth in the life of humanity as a woman, as family life, and as country. Here She is the maiden, perfect in beauty, nun-like in holiness, whose past and future are a glorified wifehood, on whose rapture of devotion the eye of the Great God Himself has fallen, and who enters the Indian household, goddess and queen notwithstanding, as, after all, the little wedded daughter, returning for a ten-days' visit to her father's house.

True, as the lad draws nearer to manhood, he must realise that the father of the guest is no less than Himalaya, and his daughter, therefore, the spouse of God—according to the legend, Mother India herself. But this only gives continuity and ductility to his idea of the myth. First Durga, the ten-days' visitant ; secondly, India, as Uma Haimavati ; and lastly, Maha-Shakti, the Infinite Force ; but always and increasingly as his power of recognition grows, that ceaseless energy which works without and around him towards the due subordination, by the forces of life and nature, of all that is vicious and unjust and out of place.

With what tenderness and intimacy, then, does the

Bengali child learn to conceive of his country and of God! It is a tenderness and intimacy which, beginning with the use of images, may become inherent in a language and characteristic of old races. The Mohammedan boatman of Eastern Bengal is not in his own person a worshipper of Durga, and yet the words "With folded hands before the Mother" may carry as much to him as to the Hindu heart. Beyond a doubt, however, it is its higher theological meaning which lends to the Durga Puja its overwhelming elements of civic pageantry and national comprehensiveness. Those who have studied religions as factors in social and political development must be conscious of the great variety of threads that are united in any single religious practice. What was it that made the Semitic races worshippers of God the Father, and India the land of the worship of the Mother? Can these vast tangles of social and geographical conditions ever be completely unravelled? And even so, does India stand alone in her personification, or is it not more or less common to the whole of Eastern Asia? Regarding this last point, it is perhaps the fact that what exists elsewhere in fragments and survivals has been preserved and developed in India as a coherent whole. And within India itself, customs and doctrines bearing on this worship, in more or less of mutual un-relation, in many provinces, are in Bengal gathered together and woven into a single perfect piece. Who shall say how old was the *Chandi* in this region when it was fitted into and accounted for, by the *Markandeya Purana*? And where can we go, outside the province, that some echo of the old-time Mother-worship does not fall upon our ear?

Aman, the Mother, guards every village of the South. It was Bhowani, the terrible Mother, who led the Mahrattas to victory. The Mother, again, was worshipped by the Sikh, using his sword as her image. Kali was the patron goddess of Chitore. To this day the great birthday is marked, in the Punjab and throughout the North-West Provinces, by the Ram-Lila, or miracle play of the

Ramayana. To this day, in Mysore and all over the Deccan, Dussera Puja is the chief festival of the year. To this day, in every part of India, the nine-days fast is performed by some member of every high-caste household. To this day, in Madras, in Behar, and among families of military tradition everywhere, is Virashtami, the solemn eighth day, the occasion of the worship and the tribute of the sword.

In Bengal, however, all these elements—social, military, and theological—are combined and rationalised in the characteristic conception of the Divine Mother as Durga-Kali-Jagadhattri: Durga, the divine energy, making and destroying, defeated and again conquering, impersonal and indifferent to personal desires; Kali, mother of darkness, wielder of destruction, receiver of sacrifice, whose benediction is death; and, finally, Jagadhattri, the tenderness of the heart of God, who shines in good women, and from whom came forth the Madonnas of the world. It is in Bengal, too, when the image of the Mother has left her children for a space, when the nine days of worship and of charity are ended; it is in Bengal that the great tenth day is kept as that of the reknitting of human ties, and the Vijaya greetings of the family reunion go out throughout the length and breadth of the land. For are not all bonds of kindred indeed sanctified and renewed year by year at the feet of the Divine Visitant? Is not the whole of the country at one in the presence of the Mother?

It is more than thirty years since Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the great Bengali romancer, sang the vision of the ended Durga Puja as the hour of the Motherland's need as he saw the image plunge beneath the waves. That the poet spoke the innermost thought of his countrymen, interpreting the yearly drama that belongs to each one in a national sense, however distant he may be in the sectarian; that he voiced in his poem what each household and each individual had known already in the heart, is proved by the history that has gathered round his song. Every

year that goes by, the images of the Mother become more and more deeply, each in its turn, entwined with the thought of India to the Indian heart. Mother and Motherland—where ends the one and where begins the other? Before which does a man stand with folded hands, when he bows his head still lower, and says with a new awe: “My Salutation to the Mother!”

THE FESTIVAL OF RAS

HIGH to the south shone Orion, as, a couple of hours before dawn, on the second day after the full moon of November, we opened the great doors of the house and went forth into the silent lane. About us was the quiet of midnight. The moon, so little waned, made the black sky seem blacker and the bright stars brighter, and in the air was a touch of wintry cold. Now and then, as we pressed onward to the temple, a couple of women, veiled and muffled, would pass us hurriedly, their bare feet as they struck the earth making still less sound than our own. The path was narrow by which, at last, we must tread our way into the temple-precincts. The court formed a parallelogram, giving, through an arch at its further end, upon the street. To right and left its sides were formed of long rows of buildings. The entrance to the temple itself, the hall of worship, was at some distance in the wall upon our right. And here, at the approach, the near end was almost closed by a small circular building, a sort of domed arcade, lifted high above the level of the ground and surrounded by a procession path, with stairs to the right and left.

This was in fact the chapel of the exposition, standing open, silent, and empty, the year round. This morning, however, it was not empty: for on the altar beneath its dome stood the images, throned on flowers, of Radha and Krishna, brought there in procession from the sanctuary, some time after midnight. And without, on the stairs and terrace of the ambulatory, a line of quiet women circulated, their bowed heads and wrapt faces, or the beads half-hidden beneath their veils, telling of the worship in which they were absorbed. Even in the distance, outside the narrow precincts, the sight of these women doing Pradakshina gave a feeling of unwonted stir. But nothing could have

prepared us for the sight that greeted us as we actually entered. The whole court was ablaze with light. Inside square enclosures made of rope two separate choirs were seated on the ground, chanting the litanies to the accompaniment of stringed instruments. The walls right and left were lined with scores of little booths, where small religious images, household utensils, and a great assortment of baskets, were being bought and sold. And between the two, between devotees and traffickers, were coming and going hundreds of women. Here and there, in some corner in the shadow, would be found one seated alone and lost in prayer; and high on the plinth, on a level with our heads, the quiet procession of worshippers went on, ascending to join the line by one stair, and leaving it to mingle with the crowd by the other. But down here, on the floor of the court, one met widows and family parties—mothers and their daughters, girls and their companions, threading their way, their worship done, from point to point; staying here and there to chat a moment with some friend, or pausing at the stalls to chaffer over their wares, and perhaps to buy a toy or a gift for someone at home. The crowd was constantly growing by the addition of newcomers, and as constantly being depleted by the loss of those who were drifting off for bathing to the Ganges side, or turning to go home. Within half an hour of dawn the precincts would be deserted. By night the images would be reinstalled amidst the shadows of their sanctuaries. For the present, however, all was piety and gentle gaiety. Outside, the fading moon smiled down upon the sleeping city. Nothing seemed to be moving beneath the folds of darkness. Yet here, within the little space of brilliant lamp-light, buzzed the crowd of graceful well-born women. Here was day before daylight, in a world apart—a woman's world, whose very existence one sleeping a stone's throw off might never have suspected.

How well has Hinduism understood how to provide opportunities, that each of her children, even her cloistered

secluded womanhood, may feast on the changing circling beauties of the year! In all the round of months, no other full moon is held so beautiful as this, the first of the winter season. The rains are over; the festival of Durga, the Mother, is past; and now begins the out-of-doors life of forest and pasture. This was the time at which the Lord Krishna—living among the cowherds on the bank of the Jamuna—went forth, with the herdsmen and herdswomen of Gokul, taking their cattle to the meadows of Brindavana. At this time of year began that wondrous life—of play and conquest, of constant self-sacrifice and easy victory—that is, in fact, the idyll of the Indian peasant, the *epos* of the Indian Herakles. In every woodland, at this time of year may be heard, by the inner ear, the music of the Divine Flute-player. Out of any bush might peep the laughing face of the Holy Child, beneath its crown of peacocks' feathers. Mothers and maids have a reverence for all play: for He, the Lord, plays through these winter months in the forests round Gokul!

Three evenings ago, when the moon was full, the images were carried from temple to tabernacle at the hour of sunset with all the men of the village in procession behind them. Thus was dramatised the idea of the cowherds going forth. All night long the priests watched and served, and at midnight began the women's worship. The Divine Cowherd was dwelling now in the pasture-lands, and they came, as it were, to visit and adore. The next night the exposition began at two, and today it was opened at four. All these three dawns have been sacred to the women, and at eight o'clock this morning the festival will be over. But in rich mens' gardens along the Ganges banks a special devotion may prolong it to a week, a fortnight, or a month. Each day, long before sunrise, the images will be carried to their throne of flowers, and there, beneath the sky, their visitors will worship them and spend hours of prayer that is more like play, with the Herdsmen of Souls, tending his cows as in the forest at Brindavana.

A little while and our feast will have vanished, for this year, into the past. But in truth a note has been sounded for pious souls in whose key the winter will be pitched. To mother and wife, will not the thought of any one of her beloved be as a glimpse caught of the Divine Cowherd—now spouse of the soul, and again the laughing, playing human babe? Is there any impulse or memory of sweetness that is not like the sound of his flute, calling suddenly across the meadows? Oh, when that note is heard, how eager should be the feet that haste to answer, along the forest paths in the secret places of the heart!

“When his flute calls,” says a song of the people, “I must be ready! Early or late, easy or hard; no matter, I must go; and go, let the way through the forest be thorny when it sounds. I spread thorns every day on the courtyard floor, that on them I may learn to walk. And lest in the rains I should hear his call, I throw water where I am to step. For when He calls me I must hasten, and on the way I must not slip.”

How foolish are those who dream that Ras Mela comes but once a year, and ends! To the eyes of the wise man life itself is that forest on the banks of the Jamuna in which ever dwells the Lord, filling sweet days with mirthful labour, and calling the soul from height to height of hidden joy.

THE PLAGUE

"I HAVE a case for you, Sister." It was the doctor's voice in the doorway, and I knew at once what he meant. My first case of plague. A few minutes later we entered the cottage where, the patient lay. It was an ordinary mud hut, with its tiny unlighted compartments opening on a central court. In one room lay a quantity of clean linen, for the people were Dhobies : in another division was the family cow ; and at the moment of our entrance the matter in hand was the lifting of the invalid out of a confined room to a small wooden bed on the veranda. Utterly lethargic he lay there, poor child, a bright promising boy of twelve or fourteen. He had been ill since the previous evening ; it was now nine o'clock in the morning ; the bubo was slightly developed ; and with the gravest predictions and repeated instructions the doctor hurried off to attend just such another.

It was so little that could be done. Food, medicine, and a bath—all these could be given. Yes, and the head could be shaved, ice applied, and a fan kept going ; but when all was said and done, one was sitting there to watch a human being die—to watch, without hope of saving. For no one who knew the awful intensity of the struggle into which he would presently have to enter, who knew too the overgrown and underfed condition of the child himself, could have a doubt as to the way the battle would end. The evening would come, and he would die. So the doctor had said. Not that I realised this. If I had, I doubt whether I could have driven the mother off at once, as, to my bitter regret, I did, possessed by the notion that isolation and disinfection, the only services I could render, should be thoroughly performed. She was busy near her boy, fanning him perhaps, and constantly inhaling the air that he was breathing out. Did I know she was his mother? I should

like to think not. I should like to make any excuse for the fact that I pointed out to her that it would be wise if she sat some distance away. Poor mother! She went at once, crushed and broken-spirited, without a word. But quietly, the tears began to flow down her poor thin face, and she broke into stifled sobs. That was too much. I found something that she must do, and with careful advice brought her back to do it. And there she sat, thenceforward, curled up beside the pillow with the boy's head at her feet.

He was violent now, and the great effort was to keep him quiet, for one unlucky movement might be fatal. But even in his delirium I had this always before me—the sight of perfect love between a mother and her son. Once, indeed, mistaking me for her, he snatched at my hand, and carried his own to his lips, and often, not catching his mother's eyes, he would smile at me—always with that same debonair and tender look of the good comrade, given to carrying the burdens and bringing his mother cheer. I was reminded of that moment earlier in the morning, when he had caught the announcement that no barber could be got for him under two or three pice, and struggling to rise from his bed had cried that he would bring him for one.

He was evidently a good boy, in more senses than one—a devotee and a dreamer of dreams. For every now and then, as a gleam of consciousness would displace the awful look of alienation in the great brown eyes—every now and then he would call loudly upon *Shiva, Kali!* or repeat words of worship; and nothing soothed and quieted him like the incessant repetition of *Haribol*, or the hymn that was commonly sung about the streets at that time:

“Call on the Lord,
Call on the Lord,
Call on the Lord, my brother,
Than this name of the Lord,
For mortal man,
There is no other way.”

"There is no other way," the weak voice would murmur in snatches after me, and then the invisible hand would again, as it were, draw the curtain, and the soul would be seen no more at the windows whence for a moment it had looked forth.

And so the end came. All day long the family had watched in the courtyard, his mother and myself on the little veranda. All day long they had been eager to serve in every way that was possible, and when I had to go away for an hour or two my place was taken by a young man from the neighbourhood, whose quiet dignity and firmness in dealing with the patient roused my hearty admiration. At five in the afternoon the doctor returned. "He is getting very low," he said ; "another hour or two at most and the outburst will end in a collapse of the heart."

How long the minutes seemed! For the last outbreak of violence was very short-lived, and ended in a wild attempt to repeat the *Haribol* for a length of time. I took up the words, and stood saying them over and over to the movements of the fan, while with a look of relief the lad's head sank back on the pillow. He lay quiet, the breath came in shorter and shorter gasps, and he died.

"Give me twelve instead of one," said the doctor, "and I can try steam baths."

It was evident that one could hope to do nothing alone. All the medical men held that a man once down with plague was doomed. It was a great thing to know that there was a field for work ; that the disease, though so deadly, was neither repulsive nor specially infectious ; that assistance was wanted in order to try finer methods of treatment ; and above all, that, as I had ample opportunity of verifying later, no prejudice of caste or religion would stand in the way of our help being accepted. But in order to act upon all this knowledge, religious orders like those Franciscans of the Middle Ages who put an end to the same disease in Europe would be required, so for the moment we gave up the idea.

Then persons with influence were consulted, and offers of help came from zenana ladies, if we should turn a house of our own into a women's hospital. At this point our difficulties began to be amusing. The nurses were to be zenana ladies, and so were the patients. This sounded simple enough. But the latter would insist on being accompanied to the hospital by their husbands, brothers, or sons, who would watch by their bed-side day and night. And in that case, how could the nurses attend to them?

"Besides," said the kindly official who was advising us, "to turn your house into a hospital would involve some little expense, and do you know what would be your chance of receiving patients, after all?"

I shook my head.

"There are more than six hundred hospitals in Calcutta,"* he said, "and they contain an aggregate of something like four patients."

So our dream of a hospital for Bengali women, managed by Bengali ladies, also came to an end, and we also realised the wisdom of the Government in deciding that its duty lay not in grappling with the disease itself, but rather with the conditions that had led to its development.

The conditions which are immediately preventible appear to be twofold: (1) insanitation, and (2) ignorance; and if solid work is done towards the removal of these evils, it cannot but be that the plague shall prove a friend to mankind in the long run.

One of its first and greatest services has lain in the humanising of the lower castes. Their labour is at this moment in high demand. Bright little sweeper-boys command the wages of full-grown men, with short hours and plenty of encouragement and stimulus to work. How proud

* Six hundred hospitals was a computation that included all family hospitals and single rooms licensed and set apart as wards under the Plague Regulations. Even of these many were allowed to lapse, so that the actual number came to be much below six hundred while still unnecessarily large. [This refers to the outbreak of 1899.]

of themselves the conservancy gangs look, spades in their hands and buckets on their shoulders! Strange how all things work in together to further the great purpose of an epoch, and even a catastrophe like the present is really to hasten that supreme function of the English in India, the giving of democracy to the Indian people. For the immediate outcome of good work and good wages is sure to be the establishment of schools in sweeper-villages, and with that first step taken towards the mountain-peaks of knowledge it is not too early to look forward to the day when they shall be received as men in the councils of their nation.

One thing that has struck me daily, as I have gone about the Bustees to note progress and conditions, is the fine physique of these "untouchables," compared with higher-caste boys of their own age. Though small-built, they are lithe, active, and well-kint. One never sees among them those physical deformities of bad feeding and ill-health that are so common among the children of the very poor.

But, except for this superiority, I must confess that I find no marked difference of type. They seem to me to have, like other Hindus, the same faces that I have been accustomed to all my life, under slightly darker skins. If I had not known the country, I should have believed that this so-called Negritoid Pariah was as good an Aryan as myself; that he was no aboriginal, set to the hewing of wood and drawing of water for the race's sake, but one who had simply lost rank by that same process of trade-differentiation that certainly accounts for so many of the castes. These men are very dark, it is true—quite a chocolate-brown in some cases; but they are by no means uniformly so, and I have seen this particular colour sometimes in the highest classes, especially, as I fancy, where there is much exposure to the weather. Perhaps, however, there is greater irregularity of features amongst these pariahs than higher up in the social scale; but the question remains, whether this is due to race-inferiority, or to that freedom for

individuality which must result from laxity of conventions. No one who has seen how the children of converted Jews lose the physiognomy of their forefathers will despise the influence of ideas on national types.

Anyway, whatever may be the future of our boys, for the present they are full of fun and enthusiasm. A really bad drain is quite a find to them all, and they work with patience and ardour, under supervision. For the real inferiority of the lower castes is that they require so much organisation and superintendence from their more fortunate countrymen. In the case of the one gang in which I am interested, three different people devote time and attention to overlooking the labour, and under these, again, there is the foreman of the gang ; and every bit of this is absolutely necessary.

One of the most intolerable evils is the arrangement of bamboo "sanitary structures" in large clusters in the very centre and in close contact with dwelling-huts. These and the tanks—which continually receive sewage and other contaminations from the Bustees—constitute the great permanent nuisances of the town. Nothing short of complete effacement could be efficient sanitation ; but it should be added that the present state of things is of very long standing, and not an outgrowth of recent years.

In the pursuit of difficulties there is, I find, a limit at which toil becomes more or less sullen and despairing. Such toil for a scavenger can be found in one of the outlying districts of the Calcutta municipal area, where our workers discovered drains which would bid a fair defiance to Herakles himself. And there dwelt a Mussalman population, consisting of poultry, goats, and human beings in inextricable confusion.

There are open spaces with green grass in these villages, and visions of how it might be tantalising to one as one explores—a well-flushed and repaired ditch ; a pleasant village-green ; a tree or a flowering shrub here and there. Given the land, these things ought not to be impossible

for two thousand people paying municipal rates in one of the richest cities of the world. But we have had to keep twenty men digging for a week to get even a tiny stream of water to trickle feebly out of that terrible ditch. It had not been touched, they say, for fifteen years. And though we have swept the village-green, we have had no means for turning it into a garden, nor would we if we could, since we could not thereafter provide the wherewithal to keep it sweet and beautiful.

In the heart of this sordid quarter we come upon a little Moslem burying-ground. A low wall, pierced with a simple pattern, bounds it in restful curving lines. It is entirely without monuments or memorials, but in one corner a blasted tree of some sort—not unlike those grudging-leaved elders of the English Black Country—seems to stand for a landmark. And here, as they tell us, a holy man lies buried, and they, too poor to erect a stone, and too faithful to forget, have made shift with this old stump to keep green the memory of one who, poor like themselves, helped them years ago to live a fuller life.

A curious thing about a neighbourhood like this is that now and then one finds in it some old house and garden of great respectability. Is it a law of the growth of population that the poor inhabit always what the rich have left? How else can one explain the traces of past grandeur that one meets everywhere? In another Bustee, surely one of the most hopeless of its sort, we find on the great central tank a ruined Ghat that was once superb. The whole thing, with the reflection of the water in the sky, and the old tree that to this day bears its yearly load of glorious flame-coloured blossoms, is uncommonly like the picturesque and ruined villages of Kashmir.

One has to go down under the surface to see that the plague is here at all. When we hear in Europe that a place is "declared" stricken, we conjure up pictures of mortality in all its forms: grass growing on deserted pavements, houses marked with crosses, and the weird voice

at midnight crying "Bring out your dead!" How different it really is! I first heard of the ravages of the disease at a European dinner party, and I came home and discovered that seven deaths had occurred in one week in my own lane.

Not a sound had betrayed the fact. The accustomed wailing had all been hushed. The dead had been buried or burned at night. Not one word to the outside world had betrayed the agony of the watchers by the beloved. Not one token told that men had dropped out of the ranks of the living. This was, of course, at the beginning of the outbreak. As time went on, the people realised, I think, that no outrage on their privacy was intended, and one began to meet the bearers more often about the streets, chanting *Rama Nama Satya hai* (The Name of the Lord alone is real) to their swinging pace, as they carried silent forms to the last rites; or one encountered one of those mournful Moslem processions by torchlight to the sound of the solemn *Allah illa, 'ill, 'ill Allah!* in the hour of dusk.

THE MEDIÆVAL UNIVERSITY OF INDIA

OF all the creations of a people—their art, their science, their customs, their building, and the like—the highest and most spiritual is their language. In this is expressed the soul of nations. In it is left the impress of their love and hope, their ideals of achievement and their criticism of the world.

Next to their country, there is no other single factor which does so much to determine the nature and destiny of a people as their own speech. Races and faiths come and go, children are born, grow old, and die. Each contributes as it can to the common tongue, but it remains superior to them all. As its language holds the soul of the nation, so in like fashion its literature holds the soul of the language. Each of the national factors wins recognition and immortality from the whole by its power to contribute ideas, characters, and forms of beauty to this, the dream-world of the race.

As one studies an Indian vernacular, the vastness and distinctiveness of the Indian dream-world continually grows on one. First there are the philosophical ideas which give its tone to the dream. Then there is the great gallery of ideal characters of which every Indian child by his birth is made a freeman, that gallery in which a man may wander all his life without one excursion into formal history: the dramatic background, as it were, of each generation of the national struggle. Then there are proverbs and fables innumerable, village-legends, quaint stories and metaphors, beggars' songs, ancestral hero-tales, cherished memories of saints and leaders, and all the floating literature that makes 'so large a part of the spiritual home of man without even incarnating itself in letters.

Gradually it dawns upon one that behind all this

there is some central source of thought and strength, a fountain of authority, a standard of correctness that gives dignity and assurance. This academic authority lies in Sanskrit. Each of the Indian vernaculars throughout its long history has followed steadfastly in the wake of the classical tongue. All its higher literature has consisted of translations, and even where it has not been direct translation the *motif* has always claimed a Sanskrit source. In that language all the great culture of the nation has been preserved. Through it anyone might come in contact with the highest ideas of the race.

But Sanskrit is in itself a learned tongue ; to acquire it takes many years of a man's life. The question arises : How has it been maintained in its purity and power from age to age? Each treasure is guarded and developed by its own social formation. What was the society, and what the education, that kept this living? Here we come upon the schools of the Brahmins. It is impossible to realise without some personal experience the definiteness and coherence of the old Hindu culture. Even to this day those who live near a family of ministering priests will hear father and son chanting the sacred texts, hour after hour, day after day, from morn onwards. To the Brahmin even his house is a school. But still more formal and absorbing was the organisation of the *Tols* or schools of Sanskrit. With these India was netted from end to end, and men would come from the most distant parts to sit at the feet of some renowned teacher. The New Learning takes little note of university centres whose names are entered in no register, whose students are contented to work year after year for pure love of knowledge, without examination and without degree ; where there is so little self-consciousness that no man ever thought of making a list of their names. Yet if disinterested love of truth and inheritance of deep and complex knowledge be the distinction of a university, the New Learning with its great colleges and their immense revenues may well bow its head

before the seats of learning of the Indian past. Benares and Nasik, Ujjain, Conjeeveram, and the ancient Taxila—to name only a few of the larger and more important of these seats—what pictures they call up to the mind's eye! Not all the provinces are famous for one thing. The South has kept the memory of the Vedas; Ujjain has held the palm in astronomy and mathematics, Benares in grammar, and Bengal in logic.

To any one of these, from the most distant parts of India, young students will travel, on foot for the most part, and beg, penniless, to be accepted by the chosen teacher. One in the days of Buddha desiring to learn medicine went all the way from Rajgir to Taxila, where Peshawar now stands. He was taken as a pupil by the great master of healing at whose door he knocked, and years passed happily by while he worked on, absorbed in the quest of knowledge. Then came the day when his master set him the final test, or as we should say, called for his doctor's thesis. He was to go out into the fields and bring in all the medicinal plants he knew. He went, but after long search he came back in great trouble of mind. He could not bring in all the healing herbs, he said, for all plants were of some use in medicine. And he demonstrated before his master the value to the physician of each one separately. Long afterwards, it is told, when he had returned as a great scholar to Magadha, this youth was allowed to heal Lord Buddha himself when he lay ill of a fever.

Such a glimpse of the ancient university remained as true in the days of Chaitanya of Nuddea, in the fifteenth century, as it was in the time from which it comes down to us. Nay, I have heard from an older generation how it was in their own boyhood, only the other day. It is a marvellously intense and earnest life that is revealed to us in the routine of the old Tols. A household of some fifty or sixty students, distributed over a number of mud cottages arranged round a central tank,

made up the college of a single teacher. They arrive at the age of twenty, perhaps, having broken the first ground of the subject of themselves, and would often remain unmarried till thirty-five. In at least one Tol that I have heard of, at Vikramapore in Bengal, there were three students admitted from Maharashtra, for the fame of Bengal logic went far and wide, and all India knew the names of its best teachers. Here in such Tols as this was lived out the great ideal of Brahmacharya—the celibate student dwelling as a son in his master's house.

AN OLD COLLEGIATE VILLAGE

WE were a small and very cheerful party that set out to visit the village of Khardah. It was here that Nityananda—ordered by Chaitanya to take up the life of the householder—had dwelt year after year, organising and instructing the then rudimentary society of Vaishnavism. One day, about A.D. 1520, two thousand and five hundred men and women, “all Mussalmans,” hearing of the great teacher of love and mercy, had come to him there to receive discipleship, and been admitted by him into Hinduism, as the order of Nera-Neris, or the Shaven-hes and the Shaven-shes. The records called them Mussalmans because to the writers they were not recognisable as Hindus, and it had been long ago forgotten that there could be any other category outside orthodox society to which they could belong. But they were in fact Buddhists, and that memorable day in the life of Nityananda definitely marked the death of Buddhism in Bengal.

Could a more fascinating question have been opened up? Within an hour or two we were on our way to examine what traces of such events were left in the place of their occurrence. The Ganges was full, and our little boat could not always keep us water-tight against the occasional downpour of rain that varied the monotony which uniformly fine weather would have caused. Near Baranagore began the long succession of temples and sacred spots that marked that part of the Ganges side which was always sacrosanct. As far as this, said someone, Chaitanya came, for is it not true that at Baranagore a house that Chaitanya visited still stands? From this point on we noticed every now and then a finer than ordinary bathing-ghat, distinguishing some old centre of importance; at Panihaty the evidences of a Moghul fort; again, the temple of the White Shiva, where in seasons of drought the peasants pray for rain,

and so on. Still the question haunted us: would there at Khardah be any lingering sense of what the town had stood for in the past? Would the memory of Nityananda be alive in any real sense? Above all, could there possibly be any surviving tradition of the great event, of the incorporation of the Nera-Neris into Hinduism?

It seemed a wonderful story, this of Chaitanya and Nityananda, in the early sixteenth century. Surely there is no other country where the waking of genius is so welcomed as in India! The love that was to spread to all mankind began to sweep Chaitanya of Nuddea into its whirlpools and torrents of ecstasy when he was eighteen only; and for three years more the foster-brother of his childhood shared with him every thought and enterprise. Then the inner call became imperious. Chaitanya could no longer brook the ways of the world, and saying farewell to all about him he wandered off, alone and free. But before he went, with strange prevision for one so planless of the work to be done for the world he was leaving, he begged Nityananda to enter the householder's life; and this behest was loyally carried out, his adopted brother living for the rest of his life here on the Ganges bank at Khardah. "And so," pursued the scholar, bent on expounding his own view, "it is really Nityananda to whom is due the formation of the Vaishnava community, and the working out of its rules for the admission of the lowly and the fallen into orthodox society. It was no fall from a higher life that led to the parting from Chaitanya. It was stern obedience and a sense of work to be done. This was that Nityananda who walked in the city without anger, without restlessness, and without pride. As for Chaitanya, he spent the next twenty-six years of his life, first in wandering, then at Brindavana, and then in the temple at Puri. He lived there for eighteen years, and there is not a village in Orissa where he is not worshipped. We of Bengal know him as a poor Brahmin. We have his pedigree, and can tell you of his family. But they in

Orissa know him as God!"

In a deep quiet we came gradually to a fine old Ghat made of tile-like bricks, with ornamental buildings at the top on each side. Near it stood a curious form of temple, made for the Exposition of the Image at the Ras Mela. And further in the town, though hidden from us here at the river bank, we knew that we should find the famous temple of Shyam Sundar, built by Nityananda himself.

It was the rainy season, most beautiful of all times for visiting the Ganges bank. The brimful river and the fresh green foliage gave an air of opulence and unusual beauty. But the great feature of the place one found as soon as landed to be the fine old buildings of the Gossain houses. Unplastered walls of brick displayed the exquisite work of the bricklayers, whose construction was of a quality to need no ornament. The houses in the quiet lanes of Khardah were like eighteenth-century colleges in some university city of the West: such was their air of perfect craftsmanship and conscious dignity. We reminded ourselves, looking thus at the abodes of Nityananda's spiritual descendants, how probably the people living here had long forgotten the traditions of their home. Undoubtedly they must have shrunk by this time into the tightest shell of orthodoxy. One must not be too disappointed if they should prove the very reverse of what their ancestors would have had them. One could not expect that a great idea should persist, in its vigour, for four hundred years together in the same spot. Thinking thus, I came to the paved brick pathway that led to the temple of Shyam Sundar. Fascinated by the beauty of the paved way, I followed it and came to the precincts of the temple itself. As much as I could see from the entrance I saw, and after some moments was turning away, when an old Brahmin entered. "Oh no!" he cried; "come to this place in the Nat-Mandir. You can see better here." Considerably cheered by the warmth of the invitation, I followed his suggestion, while he went about his business in the temple. A few minutes

later we found the place of the Nera-Neris. Sure enough, there it is to this day, kept in gracious memory by this very name, the lawn before the cottage-home of Nityananda, where the Nera-Neris were reabsorbed into their Mother-Church. The site of the house that once stood on the grass is now covered with an open veranda-floor, and the room in which Birbhadra, the son of Nityananda, was born is marked by a couple of Tulsi plants. Here one can imagine Nityananda standing, in his doorway, when the whole twenty-five hundred camped before him to state their cases and accept his ruling. Beggar-men and women from all the countryside, they must have been only too conscious, many of them, that they were fallen and unworthy, in this way or that, and totally unaware of the great name they may once have borne. For many a generation, nay many a century, they had been constantly recruited by the failures of society, who shaved their heads and donned a copper-wire above the elbow, and with this mark of humility and religion, wearing the ochre-coloured cloth, sallied forth to beg their bread and impose on no one. Their name had long been held as a term of contempt, for were they not monks and nuns who wandered in pairs? Away with such mummery! said Bengal in effect. The crumbs from the richer tables were carelessly thrown to them, for the Indian people condemn none to starve, but their want of order and decency had made them a byword amongst men. Their very name was hurled carelessly at a new offender as a term of reproach. How strange that behind the courting of such a fate there is human suffering! The sinner continued to shave his head and adopt the garment of the order, and to sally forth with begging bowl in hand, and yet was keenly aware the while of the ignominy of his situation, would have given much, perhaps even complete self-reformation, to have met with a little respect from other human beings. Such was the sorry crowd that had camped on the lawn in those days at Khardah. Nay, as the villagers were presently telling us, even now there are

Nera-Neris, and until lately it was the custom to give them a Mela here once a year. Increasing poverty is making this impossible, and some of the older men among the local Gossains spoke of the fact in a broken-hearted fashion, as of an ancestral trust betrayed. But until a year or two ago the custom was maintained, and even now they are hoping to revive it. Nay, they were taking us presently to another temple—not of Shyam Sundar—built at a later date for the express purposes of the Mela, and still used by the Nera-Neris as a Dharmshala. This temple has never been finished, and consequently was never consecrated, but it is, curiously enough, built in the old-time fashion of Buddhist monasteries, as we see them at Mahavallipore; and this is fitting, since it has to afford sleeping quarters for so many who in name at least are of the religious.

The spirit of Nityananda, then, had not died out of Khardah. Nay, one can imagine the beggars—whose feet, in the European Middle Ages, some king was wont to wash with his own hands before sitting himself at the banqueting board—we can imagine these acquiring in the royal household a semi-symbolic character, as if within the palace beggars and kings were specially to be revered. And something of this spirit, I imagine, I detected at Khardah. The fact that we were strangers, and one of us a foreign woman, seemed to strike the good burghers as the very reason why we should be given civic entertainment, and presently we found ourselves once more on the way to the temple. They have heard the story of our tastes and predilections with attention and sympathy, and now they would show us something that would please us. They had a copy of Bhagavat, written by Nityananda with his own hand. Oh, that book! They held it before us and every word was a picture. Written with the old pens, on the old paper, with the old unfading ink, there was not a letter, not a space, not a word, that was not perfect. The very heart of Nityananda—free, sweet, rejoicing in beauty

—seemed to be displayed before us. But what of the other relic? Of that one would speak, if one could, in whispers only. When Chaitanya commanded his brother to go back to the world, and take up there the life of householder and citizen, Nityananda broke his Sannyasin's staff. And there is the head of it to this day in the temple at Khardah. They brought it out and held it up for us to see—the staff that was held in the hand of Nityananda, during those three wonderful years when he wandered side by side with Chaitanya through the villages and towns of Bengal, preaching love. We look in a dream at the simple broken piece of wood—only the head of the broken staff. But if we could see what you have seen, if we could touch what you have touched!

But Khardah does not retain merely the memory, or the relics, of its great happenings. It represents a community entrusted with a mission. For hundreds of years it has stood charged with the duty of teaching the inclusiveness of Hinduism. And were there not three strangers here, who on this account should be accorded the franchise of the place? Hence we could not depart from the temple till we had eaten Prasad. All must gather together and eat it with us. Hurriedly it was sent for, and quickly consecrated, but already the twilight was falling when we tasted the communion, standing in the transept below the altar in the temple of Shyam Sundar. All Khardah, gentle and simple, Brahmin and lay folk, ate it with us; for all, it seems, come to make salutation at the evening Arati. To one there it came with a sense of being "eaten in haste, with loins girt and staff in hand, for it was the Lord's Passover": and as, with many expressions of courtesy and respect, we turned away from the hurried feast, the bells rang out and the blaze of the light began for evening worship.

And so we dropped down the river in the starlight, thinking much of the making of history here in our close neighbourhood, and feeling all the wonder of a place that had not forgotten its mission in four hundred years.

THE HOLY CITY

THERE is a picture lately purchased by the committee of the Calcutta Art Gallery, which for those who know anything of the art of Mediæval Italy is full of significance.

Throughout the growth of the Mediterranean civilisations the student is constantly impressed by the vigour of the civic rather than the national ideal. We think clearly and continuously—not of Egypt, Judæa, Syria, Greece, Italy, Spain and Africa—but of Memphis, Thebes, Jerusalem, Tyre, Damascus, Ephesus, Athens, Rome, Carthage, and it may be a score or two of others. The state appears in our minds as merely a vague hinter-landlike appanage of the city thus conceived. Nor can we fail to see the influence which the pursuit of civic ideals has had upon the religious conceptions both of Judaism and of the Christianity which succeeds it.

It strikes upon an Indian ear as somewhat strange that the Jew should be able, in such good faith, to denote so much as he does simply by the use of the name of a municipality. "Send thee help from the sanctuary and strengthen thee out of Zion." We should find it difficult to say: "Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of—Indraprastha," for instance. And yet why? But so deep was the habit of thought with the Jew that he has been able, through his incomparable literature, to stamp with a like vividness the names of many cities even outside Palestine proper, so that Babylon, Nineveh, and Damascus call up to this day certain larger than civic attributes which he, more or less justly, associated with them. It was natural enough, then, that a Judaic apostle should delineate Heaven as the New Jerusalem, that beloved city of his race. And it was in accordance with the ancestry of the Faith that the dreamers of the European Middle Ages should constantly present us with a Paradise that resembles a city

or township much more closely than a country or a fatherland. Even Dante and Giotto, in spite of the enormous grasp of their minds, were both civic dreamers, and it seemed natural to them that Beatrice should shine as fair in Heaven as she shone in Florence.

The cursory reader might regard it as a foregone conclusion that such civic passion as this was never known in India. For even Benares—which resembles Jerusalem in being a sacred city of no less than three religions—even Benares is more strictly national than civic in its character. Every state in India had built a palace within the sacred area. Every religion possesses there a cathedral, and its charities from the municipal point of view are apt to fail. Colleges of Sanskrit learning, almonries of daily doles for pilgrims and poor students; monasteries filled with devotees—all these do not suffice for the needs of the city from that purely territorial point of view which is the civic spirit proper, and the evolution of charities having this aim has been left for modern times. And yet, there have in all ages been great and resonant names in India that should give us pause ere we venture to arrive at the sweeping conclusion that civic passion is foreign to the Indian spirit. What about Chitore, that rock-built crown of the Rajput deserts? What about Delhi, Amritsar, Poona, Conjeeveram, and a hundred others? Yes, and one more, one which stands revealed in this picture newly brought to Calcutta—what about Ayodhya?

It is a small picture, measuring not many inches either way. The colours are rich and mellow, in the old missal-like style of Indian painting. The foreground is filled with a scarf-like band of figures, painted for the most part in ginger-shades of orange and yellow. Behind rise the white marble walls and towers of Ayodhya, and beyond only a narrow strip of sky is seen above the horizon.

To those familiar with the Madonna and Child of Italian painters the figures in the front are easy to understand. Under the umbrella of state—which, by the way,

is decorated with real pearls, and suggests the *baldachino* of Roman churches—sit Sita and Rama on a double throne. In Rama's hand is an exquisitely decorative white lotus, reminiscent of the Annunciation lily of the angelic messenger. On the right of the king stand his brothers, on the left of the queen her ladies of honour, and Hanuman kneels at the feet of the royal pair. The scene is laid in the gardens of Ayodhya. In the moat behind, bathers and a couple of elephants are seen, swimming and sporting in the water, and the royal barge is shown in all its glory.

But it is on the snow-white buildings of Ayodhya that stretch from beyond the moat into the blue that the artist has spent all his powers. Intending perhaps to delineate a palace, he has actually given us a city, filled with life and motion and happiness. But it is the city of Paradise. No human scene, alas, was ever poised so dream-like between earth and heaven. No human scene was ever so perfect, growing more and more distinct as we examine it closer and in greater detail.

CHITORE

It was almost midnight, as the moon grew near the full, when we looked for the first time on the fortress of Chitore. The lights in the village at its foot had been extinguished, and the hill with its great length stood dark and isolated against the sky. Almost directly above the black cleft of the Cow's Mouth stood the Tower of Victory of Kumbha Rana, like a finger pointing upwards in witness of past glory. And even in the darkness we could see the gentle curving lines of the walls following the contour of hillside, with its three miles of length and one of breadth. Silently we sat on a low stone a mile off and drank in the scene. Even thus, on the first or last night of his journey, may some Rajput of old have gazed hour after hour on this beloved home. Even thus may Padmini have caught her first glimpse of this city of her fate!

It is not a connected story, this for which Chitore is famous. The wild romance of which her annals are so full is a series of gleams and flashes, lasting through hundreds of years. Like watching from the plain the escalade of some rocky summit is the effort of one who strives to picture the past of Chitore. Again and again do the banners of the clansmen appear amidst trees and crags, only again and again to be lost to sight. Wherever the mists of history lift, there are revealed the old-time ideals of the courage and pride of woman and the glory of man. Chitore is no mere chronological record; she is an eternal symbol, the heart's heart of one phase of the Indian genius.

Architecturally the splendour of the city justifies her pride. The rock on which she stands slopes inwards from all sides, with the result that there are innumerable tanks and a water supply practically unlimited. Within the walls are the remains of what has been virtually two cities, one to the north-east, the ancient capital of the time before

Bappa Raoul, and one more modern which grew up between his accession in A.D. 728 and the evacuation under Akbar in 1568.

The old manor-grange, on whose veranda Bappa Raoul, in the eighth century, administered justice, scarcely comports with our modern notions of a palace. In front of it, not far away, is a Tower of Victory, now crumbling to pieces, and everywhere the living rock of the original foundation is close at hand. The life of the garrison within this fortress must have been strangely like that of a camp.

Long and narrow, like some lean grey lion crouching for the spring, lies walled Chitore on its craggy hill. And the newly-arrived traveller watching it may see it tonight, as the returning escort may have seen it when Padmini's marriage procession halted for the last time on the homeward way, more than seven centuries ago. Then, as now, the long heavy walls curved lovingly, like the canvas of a tent, about the city. Little can the "lotus fair" Padmini have slept that night, the last of the long journey from her father's distant strong-hold. Rather must she have gazed on through hour after hour of waking dreamfulness, counting the tale of the turrets and bastions of the fortress that tomorrow she would enter as bride and queen. Within her was the confidence of the Indian wife, who thinks of herself as beginning what is only a new chapter in an old story, as recovering a thread that was held but a while ago, and dropped at death. Not for the first time were they to take up tomorrow the tale of life together—it was an ancient comradeship of the soul. Did no vision of the future cast its shadow across the path before her to make Padmini shrink and pause, in the glory of this her great home-coming? Had the bard whispered no word above her cradle of the tragedy of greatness that lay before her? Did she know that as long as winds should wail over Chitore they would sing her name, that with her would every stone and every building be associated in the world's memory till the end of time? To her, what would be was but the

following of the path of Rajput honour. Was it not always said that, in the hour of birth, the eyes of a boy were set upon a knife and those of a girl upon a lamp—for the man must leave life by way of the sword and woman by that of fire?

AN INDIAN AMULET

It lies beside me as I write, a heavy heart-shaped ornament, in pale old bronze. On it, in low relief, is a quaint design of peacocks, pecking their mutual beaks into a conventional-looking pot of basil that stands between them. Its worth, in money, is some few farthings. For little more it was bought · sold, doubtless, for something less ; and it is worn only by such as can at no time in their frugal lives afford the few shillings necessary to buy its like in silver.

And yet, poor as it is, this Indian amulet may have been an heirloom in its time. Generation after generation of mothers may have worn it daily, as they went forth at dawn, and came back at sunset ; worn it alike at toil and at rest. Time after time may it have been handed on to the little daughter on her marriage, or to the daughter-in-law when welcomed for the first time to the peasant-home. Or the chain, or string of coins, on which it hung, has been unclasped for ever maybe by the wearer in the bitter hours of widowhood, or reverently lifted by a sorrowful son or daughter ere the dead form of the mother was borne forth to the village burning-ghat. For it belongs, this simple rustic ornament, to another order than the present. It comes of the time when no hard-and-fast line divided art from industry ; when, every need being met by manual toil, the enthusiasm of the creator limited his work, and possessions could not be quickly changed but must be made strong to accumulate from age to age. The farmhouse kitchen of a century ago in Europe, shining with oak and brass ; the border of the Kashmir shawl in India, transferred by skilful fingers from one web to another ; and this amulet of mine, are not modern in kind and origin, but mediæval.

If only it could utter all the secrets it may remember, what might we not hope to hear ! For according to the

customs of Silão, whence it came, the place of this amulet is over the heart of the village maid. Thus it has lain year in year out ; and of the things that tell themselves in silence, by the catching of a breath or the quickening of a pulse ; of the long sweet tale of wifely happiness and motherly cares ; of the struggle with poverty and the achievement of prosperity ; of moments of rapture and insight, kneeling before some image in a temple, or watching the cows wend home at time of cowdust—of all these things how much it has heard ! How much, could it but speak, it might reveal !

And yet the story, told in such fashion and from such a viewpoint, might after all seem strangely familiar. For it is open to question whether there be much distance between the humanity of any two villages, though one be Indian and the other English or Italian. In externals, of course, their characteristics are strongly marked—there is no mistaking one for another. I cannot forget the first time I saw that ancient market-town in Behar, which is known as Silão. How interesting a province is Behar itself ! The traveller in Brittany has heard the peasants talk of “going into France,” and similarly in Behar, though it is an integral part of Bengal, one drops instinctively into the Breton attitude, and thinks of the Gangetic Plain as of a foreign country. And Silão is really ancient, in the Eastern sense. It is only a tiny township, built of mud, yet it is quite possible that its popped rice was as famous in the countryside thirty-five centuries ago as it is to-day. So long since, at least, was probably the first appearance of the neighbourhood on the stage of history. The very dust is fraught with memories. On the time-worn high-road, between Baragaon, the old university of Nalanda, and Rajgir, the pre-Ashokan capital of the kings of Bengal, stands the village, in the midst of the far-stretching green of its fields of rice. And through it Buddha must have passed, ere he overtook the great multitude of goats going up to the sacrifice, and, according to the legend, lifted the lame

kid and carried it on his neck, that it might keep pace with the herds. Often and often, even now, one may meet with such good shepherds on the roads about Silão, and still better, a few miles farther on, outside the modern village of Rajgir. Daily there, from dawn almost till noon, the constant patter of hoofs large and small betokens the passing of hundreds of cows, buffaloes, sheep, and goats out of the village, through the mountain-defile, with its hot springs, into the pastures that cover to-day the hillsides and the ruins of Old Rajgir. And here again, as afternoon draws on to dusk, one may witness the return homeward of the flocks, or, later, watch while a missing cow or two comes crashing through the brushwood, in answer to the call of the herdsman from the outstanding rocks by the stream-side. It is then that one may be happy enough to meet a belated goat-herd, his form looming larger than common through the quickly-passing twilight, who could not but have lingered, because, while he bears some foot-sore little one, he also leads perhaps a weary mother, tenderly, along the darkening road.

There are women-tenders of the herds, as well as men. Tall they are, and free of gait, very gentle, and very very proud, these Hindu women of the old rustic world. Their costumes alone would be sufficient to mark them out as beautiful and distinguished, though they are mere peasant folk ; for it is rarely that one meets here even a widow wearing the stainless white of the higher classes of Bengal. Crimson and green and scarlet are, in Behar, the favourite colours for the sari—that long broad scarf, which forms the main garment as well as the veil of the Indian woman. The coarse clinging cotton, covering the head and falling thence to the waist to form the skirt, is embroidered all over, in a bold effective stitch, with the little curling pine-cone, or palmetto, that is so characteristic an element in Indian decoration. Long long ago these women have forgotten its why and wherefore. They would not dream of connecting their adoption of the admired design with

the emblematic jewel on a royal turban ; and yet it is not unlikely that their constant use of the pattern perpetuates the fact that six hundred years, or perhaps a thousand, before Christ, Rajgir was a King's burgh.

Quite as beautiful as the sari, in its own way, is the little bodice—oftenest of dark blue, outlined with scarlet—that covers the bust and falls severely from the throat to conceal the head of the skirt. It is cut back at the neck leaving the head free, and the tight sleeves go only half-way to the elbow. Its greatest beauty, however, lies in its straightness: there is very little cutting-out in ancient costume. In the Greek *chiton*, the Japanese *kimono*, the Himalayan *choga*, and in this *jama* and *sari* of Northern India there is too much respect for the lines of material to suffer the figure-modelling that we call dress-making. So this Behari blouse or *jama* is made only of four pieces—two breadths back and front and a half-breadth added under each arm, as *modistes* might say—and they are all straight. But oh, how lissom and willowy is the figure within! And how commandingly beautiful is often the dark face, with its large brown eyes shadowed by the rich colours of the veil!

It was our first visit to Silão, and we were in the very middle of the bazaar, where three roads meet. We had clattered in our noisy vehicles up the village street ; past the old brass-shop, where an Indian girl-friend, who had come like myself from the city, would one day find and bring to me my amulet ; past the village school, where twelve or fifteen tousle-headed urchins were learning the three R's with the mud floor for writing-surface ; past the confectioners' shops, with the fishes and peacocks cut in brass swinging in a row along the front for sign-boards. We had reached the very thickest part of the modest traffic, and had swung recklessly round the corner to the right, when, a few paces down the street we were leaving on one side, we caught sight of a girl standing—tall, starry-eyed, and queenly. Her age may have been eighteen or twenty.

She was dressed in green, and stood there—sky and temple in the background—with the frank look of a child, entirely unconscious of observation. But her arms held the long stems, while the white buds slept against each shoulder, of two great sheaves of water-lilies.

So buying and selling and eating and clothing are not the whole life of Silão. It was another proof, could one have been so foolish as to need more, that no poet from the city can ever gaze so deep as the farm and forest folk themselves into the beauty of Nature. For these blossoms had been gathered but an hour before, from the ponds among the rice-fields. They are the commonest wild things of that peasant world, where they are known as “the lovers of the moon,” because they open at nightfall—unlike the lordly lotus, who watches open-eyed the footsteps of the sun. And here they were offered for sale by one who had looked into their golden hearts and known their loveliness, to any who might be fain to lay flowers and prayers at the feet of God in the temple beyond. The green-clad woman with her lilies stood in the busy market-place, as the silent incarnation of the call to morning worship.

O sane and simple life of the Indian villages, firm-poised betwixt the Unseen and the Seen! is it of this my amulet would speak to me? Coming from some other peasant woman, in all likelihood dead and gone, is the message that her lips too would utter through it if they could, this same, of priest and chant and worshipper, and of some tiny tabernacle, shadowed and lily-strewn and cool, that stands in an Indian village as the place of morning-prayer?

GOPALER-MA: THE MOTHER OF THE CHRIST-CHILD

INDIAN languages are curiously rich in tender diminutives, the use of which so much depends on association that they are incapable of translation. It is clear, for instance, that if we address a little girl of three as Ma, or a boy of the same age as Bap, that delicate mingling of gravity and laughter which we intend to convey is a matter entirely of the colour of the voice, and will defy any attempt to render it in a foreign tongue. One of the most striking words of this class is Gopala. Literally, it means the Cowherd, referring to Krishna—the Krishna of Brindavana. But it has been so appropriated in this regard that its actual significance can only be rendered in English as “Christ-Child,” and the woman who folds her baby-boy closer, calling him Gopala, is paralleled amongst English mothers only by one who thinks of her child as the Christ-Child, come to her out of night and storm seeking to find His Own. In this sense the name is often on the lips of all our household. For in one of the rooms of our zenana lives an old woman, who is known as Gopaler-Ma, the Christ-Child’s Mother.

* * * *

All night long we had been watching the slow hard breathing of the dying. In, in, in, it would go, growing ever more and more still, till one thought that never again could any movement occur in the aged frame, and then freedom once more and a succession of quick deep inbreathings. Such breathing, they said, was seen but seldom, and was the result of long years of Pranayama, practised unconsciously over the beads, as night and day the old woman had counted them, saying the name of her Ishtam, “Gopala, Gopala, Gopala!”

For she beside whom we sat and watched was Gopalema, that saint whom Sri Ramakrishna Himself had treated as His mother.

Without a single want she lay there, as she had lived, the mind suspended in the thought that had made its life, the face full of the last sweetness and peace. A day and a night already had she lain thus by the Ganges side. For at the moment of the rising of the full moon, we had stepped with her over the threshold of the door, and had felt the silent soaring of her spirit, as it cast off triumphantly the first of its outer wrappings, the shell of home. But when she had reached the Ghats, and lain awhile in the play of cool breezes and the brightness of the moon, she had shown, as the dying are wont to do, some signs of revival. And the candle of life for many an hour thereafter had burnt up in its worn socket, before it was finally to be put out.

It was not, perhaps, entire unconsciousness in which she lay. For to one and another it would seem, now and again, as if she gave a look of recognition, following them with her eyes. And on that last morning, when a Brahmin came and chanted above her Shlokas from the Upanishads, she had responded visibly, with what would almost represent excitement. All her life long she had worshipped the idea of the Holy Child, and now there seemed a fitness in the fact that at the last, dying of old age at over ninety years, the worn-out frame had gone back to babyhood again, and the twitching of the limbs or the turning of the head was the only sign of volition she could give.

But even this had been sometime past, for now that night was with us once again, she had lain still for many hours, with all the consciousness turned inward, and the peace of one who asked nothing of the world about her.

We, the waiting women, could hear from without the long low lapping of the Ganges against the foot of the bathing-stairs, and the moaning whisper of the rain-winds as now and again they swept down and caught the surface



GOPALER-MA AND SISTER NIVEDITA



A PENCIL SKETCH OF SISTER NIVEDITA

of the waters. And once, was it at midnight, or was it an hour or so later?—once in the midst of the silence there came a rushing and swirling of the river beneath the cloud-veiled moon, and the little boats lying at anchor on the Ganges knocked against each other, and the word went round, "The tide is coming in!" But some, to whom the passing soul had been friend and Guru, sighed, for with the turn of that tide had we not been warned that she would go forth, and her place and people know her no more?

Hour upon hour had gone and still no change. Some who had rested rose, and plied little offices of tenderness beside the sick, and another lay down to snatch a spell of sleep. Suddenly there was a stir, and a light hand touched the sleeper. "Call the bearers," said one, "for the end is come!" Out on the terrace above the river-steps they sat, as they had sat all night, holding deep talk of the past, and of the Lives with which this life outgoing here had been a link, and easy enough were they to call. A moment more and the dying form was lifted to the cot, and then, on the shoulders of yellow and white clad bearers together, it was borne swiftly out of the room to the north, and then down the few steps that it needed to take Gopaler-Ma where she could lie with feet touching the sacred waters, and so go forth.

There she lay, the last changed breaths coming at easy intervals, while one of the monks, whom she had known as boys, bent over her and with his brow to hers, half spoke, half whispered the words that the Hindu loves to hear in his last hour—*Om Ganga Narayana! Om Ganga Narayana Brahma!* A moment more, and then with one voice from the circle of watchers came the shout of *Haribol!* for the last breath had gone. The spirit of Gopaler-Ma had taken flight, and only the garment of flesh was left behind.

Then one at the head of the bier, looking up at the brightening of the sky behind the clouds asked, "Is this the dawn?" And from the foot came back the answer, "Yes

it is the dawn!" And then, looking down, we saw that the waters that had bathed the feet of the dying were already receding—were already sunken some inches below us. Gopaler-Ma had died indeed at the moment of dawn, on the very turn of the outgoing tide.

THE INDIAN ASH, OR TREE OF HEALING

How full of a mystic antiquity are the names of the lotus, the olive, and the ash! Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Scandinavia spring to our minds as the words are heard. The syllables seem haunted to this day by the dryads that the Greek mind saw in every tree. They carry us back to the age of the nymphs who made their home in pools and seas. There was a time when nature seemed to man but as the garment of some large sweet presence that lived and breathed within it. Alas, that age is gone. Irish elder and quicken still point to the neighbourhood of the Neolithic doorsill, but no longer are they held to guard the village with their mysterious benedictions. The olive yields, as of old, the sacred berries and the oil, but Athene has fled from the hearts where she made her home. Only in India the ancient thought lives on. Here, still, the women hush their voices and bow their heads as they pass before the tree of healing called the Neem. Here, still, the earth at its foot forms a rude altar, and a protruding fragment of pointed stone, unchiselled, stands as the symbol of that great mother of all, whose golden-green home is the sunny spot beneath the boughs.

If we take as our standard, not the rigid classifications that appeal to the botanist, but those visible affinities that stir popular recognition, we shall probably feel that the Neem—with its fern-like leaves, its feathery branches of small golden-green fruits, its wide-spreading roots, and gnarled and slender growth—is but the tropical equivalent for the ash of Northern Europe, or the olive of the Mediterranean. Some of us may have been puzzled to account for the prominence of the ash in Celtic, and still more in Norse mythology. Why should the Scandinavian Yggdrasil, tree of eternity, have been an ash, with its roots in the past, its stem in the present, and its crown of leafage

in the future? Why should the first man Askr, have been born of it? The ash is not so plentiful as to account for this. It forms no forests in the lands where it is sacred, like the beech or oak. Just as we know that the men who taught to their children 'the dream of Asgard' had come to the north, along the old trade-routes from the beautiful cities of Asia, Nineveh, and Babylon, with all their wealth, luxury, and refinement, so also we cannot resist the conclusion that the ash derived its importance from their recognition of it as a tree with which, elsewhere, they had been familiar. This argument cannot, of course, be complete until some intermediate tree is discovered in Persia, and its folk-lore noted and studied. For the ash was especially associated in Europe with the Age of Bronze, bringing in the horse and his sacrifice, and the key to this as a state ceremonial can only be sought in Mesopotamia—with the crossings of the highways that made Nineveh and Babylon—and in neighbouring districts of Persia and Asia Minor. If Mohammedanism in those countries is anything like what it is in India, or if its action has been at all like that of Buddhism in the farther East, it must have preserved a great deal amongst the lower orders of society that could never claim recognition from the higher; and much still remains to be discovered regarding the connection between the worship of the sun, to whom the horse was always sacrificed, and some particular sacred tree. A trace of this connection lingers still amongst the Kayasthas* of Bengal, who will not gather the leaves or twigs of the Neem on Sunday, because it and the cow, they say, had their birth on the sun's day; and there are people who, though they worship the great Mother, do not associate her presence particularly with the Neem except in her specialised form of Shitala Devi.

* Kayasthas, the second or sub-Brahmin caste of Bengali Hindus. Some people, with great probability, derive them from the Kshatriyas, and regard the name as a corruption. They represent all the occupations requiring vernacular scholarship. Query, what was their actual origin? Was it Persian?

Wonderful properties of nourishment and healing belong to this, the Indian ash. Its leaves are used for medicine and for food. A man may actually live on a handful of them eaten daily, and with milk they make an abundant and satisfying diet. The acrid berries, like tiny olives, provide lamp-oil and unguents for the very poor. Even the winds that blow through it are laden with soothing and with health, so that an old custom in Calcutta plants a Neem tree on the east of the house, that the fever-breeze may be robbed of its poison ere it reaches the homestead and touches the beloved. And on both sides of the old Mahratta Ditch that once enclosed the city, the Circular Road as it is now, we may still trace an old avenue of Neem trees—for is not the city the home of its children? And last of all, when the tree of healing grows old there sometimes breaks from its heart, it is said, the silver-white stream of the Neem milk. This gushes out, intermittently, for months together, and people flock from all over the countryside to see the sight. Every drop of the precious fluid is gathered up and preserved for the healing of disease, and whole generations after talk of the miraculous spring.

Out of the very night of time, from long before the dawn of history, come some of these most familiar associations of the Indian folk. There are two or three sacred trees, all of them undoubtedly very ancient. Low-caste Mohammedan women make offerings to the spirit of healing that dwells in the Bo, or Ashwattha, the sacred tree of Buddhist times. This may be a remnant of long pre-Buddhist worship, or it may be only another exemplification of the universal law that Islam in India followed directly in the footsteps of Buddhism. In Orissa again, and Chota Nagpur, and some districts north of Benares, a like worship is paid by certain strictly aboriginal castes to the Palash tree—*Butea frondosa*—with its scarlet plume-like flowers, borne on naked boughs. Under this tree, it is said, there used to be offered the dread agricultural rite of human sacrifice to Miri-Amma, the Earth-Mother. It

gave its name, again, to the people who dwelt, in the days of Buddha, to the east of Pataliputra, against whom Ajatashatru built the fortress that was afterwards to become the seat of empire. The castes that still pay reverence to the Palash, associating with it the name of Miri, represent doubtless this ancient people, the Palasii of Megasthenes.

Still vaster is the antiquity that stands revealed in the universal association of these trees with feminine divinities. It is true enough, as some have maintained,* that the drama of nature is the subject-matter of all mythology, and that therefore, by tracing out the unity of myths, we ought to be able to disentangle the great primitive spectacle fundamental to all. But into his interpretation of this drama man could not fail to import conceptions derived from the social forms about him and from the problems that seemed to him the most important. Hence, by studying the differentiation of myths we may hope to discover something of the periods and races in which they were evolved. When Egypt had scarcely begun to make bricks, and Babylon as yet was but a village, already, it may be, the Dravidian hamlets of the south of India had received their consecration from the neighbourhood of the chosen block of unhewn stone outside their boundary, that remains to this day as the altar-place of Amma, the Infinite Mother. And only a palæolithic age, one imagines, could have suggested, as the ideal symbol, the low sharp-pointed cone of unchiselled rock that is worshipped still beneath the Neem. But if this is so, we have in that very fact some indication of the earliest of human sociological developments. In the present age we instinctively ascribe to deity the aspect of masculinity. This is because our society is patriarchal and man dominant. There was an age, however, when woman alone was the steadfast unit; when marriage was an affair of an hour, and the child belonged to his mother's village; when all the men of that village

* See *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, by the Rev. Sir George Cox.

were her brothers, the Mamas, and natural defenders of her children ; when marriage was only lawful between men and women of different villages ; and when woman was the obvious head and governor of the whole. On such a society, raised to the highest point of organisation and efficiency, were based the origins of the ancient Egyptian monarchy, the government of Babylon, and the present royal family of Travancore in Southern India. In such a society, moreover, it was as natural to call God *She*, as it seems now to us to do the very opposite. Grey-haired women, full of strange lore about beasts and herbs, with deep wise eyes and gentle sovereignty of manners, were its ideal. Such were the Norns, the three grey Fates, who watered the ash-tree Yggdrasil night and morning with water drawn from the Ocean of Memory, turning all that it touched to snowy whiteness. Yet Yggdrasil was of a later age than the Indian Neem, for one of its mighty roots was fixed in heaven, beneath the throne of Æsir, the Great God, where he and the Norns held court and judged the world. We have here the myth of a day when man has made himself king, and woman already stand subordinated.

The worship of the Neem has its centre in Oudh and Behar, the ancient Kosala and Magadha. From this it spreads north and south, to the deserts of Sind and the Deccan. I have even seen it in the extreme south, in a beautiful glen near Salem. There the tree stood, in a sacred enclosure, shut in by a massive wall of grey stone some five or six feet in height. Under it a pot was buried, bottom upwards, making a dome-shaped object, and here and there around the little court were tiny boat-shaped lamps for ceremonial lighting. In Sind they go to great trouble and expense, it is said, to obtain the blessed tree, and plant it beside some well in the desert country, there to become the nucleus of a small artificial oasis. Only in East Bengal can I find no trace of its worship except as the home of Shitala Devi. The Ashwattha there surpasses it in sanctity, and servants from that country have a notion

that it is haunted ; and to see the spirit that dwells in it they hold a sign of approaching death.

Another proof of the great age of the Neem as a sacred tree lies in the manner of the worship that is offered by women. It is common, in later Hinduism, to perform the ceremony of Pradakshina, or circumambulation, as an act of reverence, and this is what we might have expected to find in the worship of a tree. But it is not what happens. Before the Neem stands its fragment of rude stone, and in parts of the country where this vividly suggests the presence of the All-Mother, high-caste women go in bands, on certain moon-light nights, to offer the lights and sandal-paste, the sweetmeats and libations of milk, that constitute the necessary offerings. When this has been done they make themselves into a ring, and go round and round—not the stone, and not the tree, but—a handful of fire, on which incense is thrown, standing in front of the sacred stone. As they go they sing marriage-songs, mentally praying, probably, for the birth of children, and finally the party breaks into groups for the enjoyment of the games, romping and singing. We have here a trace of those primitive seasonal dances that were the communal form of marriage. We have also a hint of how early the witness of the fire was invoked as essential to marriage. How far may we trust this suggestion as to the order of emergence of the great religious motives, such as fire, planets, earth, and the rest?

The Neem may be worshipped at any time, by a woman who has first served the community to the extent of feeding ten beggars. But its greatest festivals occur on the moonlight nights of Shravan and Bhadra, August and September. The ceremony of Tij takes place on the third night of the new moon of Shravan, or August. On this day, it is considered extremely auspicious that young married women should receive gifts of clothes, jewels, or sweetmeats from their husband's mothers. When the presents arrive, the girl calls her friends and companions,

and they go out into the moonlight, to bathe, put on the new possessions, worship at the feet of the Neem, and then spend hours in free and boisterous merriment. On these occasions it is strictly correct to be accompanied by the boys and young men of their own village, and to be joined by them in the games which follow. Nor is this difficult to understand, for the night represents a return to the old festivities of the communal wedding, when the men of a girl's own village were regarded as her brothers and the idea of marriage with one of them could not occur. Here we have the equivalent of the May-Day games of Europe, and even the idea, spread by the Church, that May is an unlucky month for marriage, stands accounted for in the desire to extinguish heathen rites.

It was, as Hewitt has pointed out, this same age that gave to the position of the Mama, or mother's brother, the strength which it still holds in Hindu society. He is essential at weddings, and it is he who must give the baby its first rice when six months old, thus accepting it as lawfully born of his own kindred. But the millenniums that have rolled by since the communal marriages of the matriarchate are shown in the fact that to perform this ceremony the mother's brother must now come to the house of the child's father.

In the memory of communal marriages, then, before the tree of the Great Mother, may lie the explanation of the Norse belief that Ask, the first man, was born of the ash. The choice of the months for these marriages was obviously dictated by the Indian climate, requiring that children should be born in the heat of the year, when the granaries would be full and the need of labour least. Even now, it is doubtless for the birth of sons that wives and mothers pray before the Neem. For how many thousands of years have they sanctified their own brooding love in such spots, beneath the growing moon, ere the All-Mother has sent to the house a new man-child!

To the threshold of history we are carried back by

this worship of the Neem. It is night, the time that to primitive man was fraught with coolness and joy and formed the basis of all time-reckoning. About us sleep the southern forests. Long ago, if it was ever set there, the dim light has burned out before the stone at the foot of the sacred tree. Man is still a hunting animal, contending with hairier beasts for his simple home. A few rude stone implements, a little sun-dried pottery, and the struggling crops of half-wild rice, are all his possessions. Has he yet found fire? If so, for lamp-oil, as well as for medicine, he must still come to the sacred tree. Even his marriage is not yet his own: he knows only his sisters' children. Yet already here, in India, human society has been born. Already the lawful and lawless have been distinguished. Already the thought of enfolding Power has emerged. Already the sweetness of motherhood has been named. Already, in the sanctification of boundaries, the civic thought is born. Already the stone before the holy tree indicates a Presence the touch of whose feet makes sanctuary. Ages will go by, and man will long dream that the world is unchanging, ere these great movements will begin—north, east, and west—by which in the future nations and civilisations are to be made. Strange, that even now thoughts should have been conceived and expressed which will never be forgotten so long as man endures. Athene with her olive, and the Norns of the ash tree Yggdrasil are even now predestined to their place in human history, already in the forests of the Deccan, in this the Palæolithic Age.

THE DREAD SEVEN

BENEATH the Neem they sit, as did the Norns of old beneath *Yggdrasil*—those seven dread sisters, of whom Shitala, goddess of Smallpox, is the first. All the rashes and eruptions they share amongst them, and the youngest of the seven is the old friend of our childhood, no less a personage than Measles herself. It is strange, we feel, this element of fear that seems so often associated in ancient mythology with the idea of femininity. Head of the Fates is she who cuts the thread of life, and all the three are womenkind. Ate, the sleepless doom that pursues after the shedder of blood, is a woman. The Harpies and avenging Erinyes are daughters, not sons, of the gods and of Night. And here in India the power that is seen in the burning of fever and the wasting of disease is conceived as the presence within a man of the Mother Herself.

The fact is an added token of the antiquity of the association. When the administration of justice took the form of a curse or a vendetta, pronounced by the grey-haired women of the village; when all power was as yet in the hands of the Mothers, and men were at best but their fierce and courageous children; when rulership could not be conceived of apart from the feminine—thus early awoke the idea of the divinity that is seen in the terrible and the irrevocable. Among peoples whose geographical compactness and comparative density hastened their political differentiation, the terror was more apt to take the form of a reflection of the fear of man and his just wrath. Righteous punishment was a thing to be looked for. The avenger of blood was most to be dreaded of all foes. But in India, that land of vast spaces and extended populations, the ideal of malign power remained mysterious, incalculable, and supernatural. From the beginning there was something inexplicable in the exercise of omnipotence.

Could any sign of divine presence be more convincing, because more incomprehensible, than the spells of fever, or the anger of a rash? Naturally, then, the practice of worship developed the opposite power, that of healing.

Very quaint are the descriptions given by the faithful of the Seven Fearsome Sisters. That Smallpox makes affrighted goes without saying. Her power is open and irrepressible, afflicting men at noonday. But each one, even the youngest, has a potency of her own. Being the youngest, indeed, gives to Measles, it is said, a peculiar ability to do mischief. Her very age makes her the pet of her father and mother. She is therefore much indulged. She lives suppressed: that is to say, she is apt to exercise her powers in secret, and to leave behind her, when she goes, some terrible memento of her visit, in a permanent blindness, deafness, lameness. It is evident here that a good deal of fine medical observation has been put into the curious old myth of the Seven Sisters.

It would be strange, however, if so careful an index of diagnosis were entirely dissociated from all consideration of methods of treatment. As we might have expected, the priests of Shitala come from a peculiar caste, being known as Dom Brahmins, and are, in fact, doctors of a very ancient order. The oldest worships are connected with libations, the pouring-out of water before God; but in the worship of Shitala the idea of a sanative cleanliness is very prominently brought forward. One will sometimes, in the by-ways of some busy city, see women after nightfall pouring out water in the road before a temple and sweeping the place with a broom. They are praying to Shitala, the guide will tell us. For those who know have laid down the law that this goddess demands salutation with water and a broom. Indeed she clasps these in her own arms as represented in her images; and she comes to us, they say, riding on the washerman's donkey, an unclean beast. In this last point, though undeniably forcible, public opinion is probably wrong. Shitala is represented, it is true,

as riding on an ass, but in all likelihood this is because, in that remote past out of which she rose, the ass was the fleet courser, the splendid and romantic steed, hero of all the poetry that now centres in the horse. He may, in an age of degeneration, be relegated to the use of the laundryman's caste, daily parading the town with his load of soiled linen for the wash. But he is most emphatically one of those who have seen better days. Once upon a time he held a ruling position amongst animals, and in the Semitic races his appearance in a procession would seem to have indicated semi-royal state, as late as the opening of the Christian era. Wild in the deserts of Arabia, he appears in the liturgy of ancient Egypt as the Sun-god, and scholars hold that traces of this identification may still be found in the Rig-Veda itself. Even now there is a breed in Persia which is famous and honoured, transcending even the horse in swiftness, and making it seem in no wise ludicrous that a goddess should be seated on an ass.

Many students will feel that the assignment of one whole divinity to the province of a single disease argues a state of society in which there was a very elaborate division of labour. Nor can we help connecting this advance in social organisation with that sudden accession of medical science of which the worship of Shitala constitutes a remnant. The whole idea is a rare mixture of piety and wisdom. When the patient first succumbs to the malady, there is many a village-wife whose diagnosis is as valuable as the physician's or the priest's. The one anxiety is that the eruption should have free way. Should it remain suppressed, the case is regarded as grave. But if this is not so, and matters appear promising, the next step is to feed with a sufficient quantity of milk. The amount of this food that can be digested by a smallpox patient of robust constitution is said to be quiet incredible. If the case is bad, however, there is nothing to be done but call for the special attendance of a priest of Shitala. In this case the sick man will be laid on the floor on cool banana

leaves. He is also given medicine brought by the priest. A twig of Neem is supplied to him, and except with it he is not allowed to touch his own skin. To tickle it with the sacred twig is an invocation of blessing. At the same time devotions are going on. At first, when the fell visitant was announced, the women of the household repaired in the evening to temple or tree, to offer their worship. Part of this consisted in placing flowers on top of an inverted pot, at the feet of the goddess. If the flowers fall, she is pleased, and grants the prayer of her suppliants. But if they remain where they were placed, she is obdurate, and the end can hardly be bright. I have been told of one case in which the women had placed their flowers, and sat in the attitude of prayer to see what was to be their fate. The blossoms did not fall, and in agony of mind the whole party bent still lower in prayer, imploring with clasped hands that the Devi might take pity, and grant a life much loved. At this second prayer, as they watched and waited, the flowers fluttered down, slowly, slowly, and each one felt that an invisible hand had taken them, and the prayer would be fulfilled.

Only half the necessary offering is thus made, however. The idea, in Bengal at least, is that the Mother has been asked to visit the abode of her children and bless them with a healing touch. This is the element in the myth to which prominence is given, though it is not quite clear that there is not mixed with it an older notion that it is the presence of the goddess that has brought disaster, and that she is being begged to withdraw. Outside Bengal this last seems to be frankly the thought. But here we are mainly in the attitude of entreating the Mother to enter the house and bear away its misfortune. The more archaic fear may be traced in the fact that, while the illness remains, none in the house will venture to call it by any name but "the mercy." And the visitors who generally throng to see an invalid remain here, it is true, on the threshold; but still they come, saying they are

adoring the divine Mother, present in the sick. So the conception of the healing divinity of sweetness has not yet wholly emancipated itself from an older and less noble worship of fear ; but it is on the way to do so, for when the recovery has taken place it is always unhesitatingly attributed to a visit of benediction, and many are the household tales of special experiences illustrating this. From the moment of the announcement, then, when the worship is offered, the house and everyone in it has to be kept in a state of such exceptional purity as is meet for those who expect a divine advent. No meat or fish may be cooked within the walls. Only after bathing, and wearing the cleanest of garments, may the sick be attended. Fresh flowers and incense are to be offered daily. Water and the broom must do even more than their ordinary work in constant cleansing. And finally, when the last remnant of his illness is well past, the patient marks his own recovery by a delightful bath, for which he has been prepared by massage, being rubbed with sandal-paste and turmeric, ancient luxuries of the toilet, full of coolness and fragrance.

The sons of Askr, or the ash, carried into Europe, it is said, the use of bronze, the domesticated horse, and also the knowledge of massage and of healing drugs and oils. We have seen that the horse must have been subjugated by man and have reached the world's great trade-routes at Babylon and Nineveh, only after the ass had been long familiar. We know also that it must have come from Central Asia, and the probability is that it had been tamed long enough before the memorising of the present Rig-Veda for its predecessor to be even then, amongst the Aryans, only a dim and half-conscious tradition. That Shitala and her sisters should number seven in all shows that they were the creation of some race in whom astronomic studies and planetary lore had already made the number seven peculiarly sacred and impressive, as it was among the singers of the Vedas. They appear also, on comparing their characters with those of the corresponding fear-

creating goddesses of Europe, to belong to a civilisation in which political and military ideas were slower of growth and personal culture a larger factor. Bronze is held by some scholars to have been the result of the exchange of copper at Tamralipti or Tamluk, with the tin of Malacca, in the ages of the Asiatic merchant-civilisation, which preceded the rise of nationalities. In Asia, as also among the nomads of North America, there seems to have been a short Copper Age preceding the Bronze. Copper razors and copper axes have been found in India, and copper knives on the site of ancient Troy. After this came bronze, and with bronze, as far as Europe was concerned, the knowledge of medicine and the use of the horse. Older, far older than any of these, was that worship of the rude stone beneath the Neem tree, as the throne of the Mother, and those seasonal dances that may have given rise to the tradition of the birth of Askr, the first man, from the ash. Holy indeed is the ground beneath the olive and the Neem. Sacred homes of the Oil-Mother, from them and their long past has come every notion of priestly anointing that a younger world has seen. The chrism of baptism, the oil of coronation, and the last sad rite of unction and benediction to the forth-going soul—here, in the cool breeze that blows through our Indian tree of healing, may have been the birth of all these, and of how much more throughout the ages of aid and fellowship between man and man.

THE KASHMIR SHAWL

THE glory has departed from Srinagar, for it is now some eighteen centuries since the city, under a Buddhist sovereign, was capital of the greater part of India. But if the ancient glory has vanished, a new and greater has come in its stead. The quaint old town is today the centre of some of the chief art industries of the world, and among other things, it is the home of the Kashmir Shawl. The Tartars brought the art of shawl-weaving into the country about four or five centuries ago ; then it came under the stimulating influence of Indian taste, and developed rapidly from a domestic handicraft into a fine art. To this day the goats' wool which it requires is brought from Yarkand to Srinagar, and only the young fleece of the first year is considered fine enough for use.

Three brains combine to produce this work of art. First comes the designer, who receives a couple of shillings for his trouble ; next the copier, who prepares the pattern for use in the workshop, and last of all the weaver. Of these, the second is regarded as most skilled and receives five times the remuneration bestowed on the original artist. To us this seems a pity. That a genius should be regarded as a mere workman, lost in the crowd of mediocrity, is shocking to us. Besides, we lose thereby all that charm of personality that clings to a toy-book by Hokusai, for instance, or a bit of modelling by the Della Robbias. But there is much to be said on behalf of a certain custom that withdraws all the degrading if stimulating influence of Fame, and leaves to the worker only that highest compelling power of the artistic conscience. Such conditions pass all too quickly. They belong to the great age of Faith all over the earth, and with their decay comes loss of purity and tension to all save the noblest souls. Besides, as a matter of skill the gradation is not so absurd after all, for

the taste is not mere transference of line and tint, but the translation of those into musical score.

The weaver actually possesses no copy of the design except in this notation. The manuscript of a melody lies in front of him, and from this he weaves the pattern that we see. A Kashmiri loom is really a little orchestra, and each shawl a symphony of colours, the men as they work chanting the stitches in monotonous plain-song. The connection between colour and sound is fundamental in Indian art-fabrics—though the point has never been investigated so far as we know—and furnishes the key to that power of combining and harmonising in which they are supreme.

It is to these copyists that experts must look for the restoration of the old patterns which cannot at present be repeated. It is by them, too, that the material will be produced which must eventually be brought together to form a national museum. At present there are no records kept of these marvellous decorative schemes, and no collections save those made by dealers in the interest of their trade. Even then, however, there is abundant opportunity for studying the progress of the art, and no chance of escaping its spell.

Comparing the shawls of two hundred years ago with those of today, we find in the modern specimens a greater boldness and freedom of outline, with a growing power of colour-combination. From purely geometrical means there is distinct movement towards conventionalising vegetal forms—the monotonous curves (a local variation of the Indian pine-pattern) and circles giving place in great measure to trailing tendrils and spiral ornaments. The Moslem faith forbids any imitation of animal forms: hence we find none of the beautiful birds of Kashmir, the hoopoe, the bulbul, or the blue kingfisher, amongst the flowers. With regard to colour, the development of power has been extraordinary. A few of the old shawls are incomparably fine, but on the whole the number of shades used in masterpieces was far smaller than those commonly mani-

pulated now. The achievements of William Morris in this line give some idea to the English mind of the kind of text employed. But the cretonnes and tapestries of Merton are coarse and almost clumsy compared with these exquisite stuffs.

Indian taste demands three things of the decorator: fineness of detail, brilliance of effect, and profuseness. This is natural in a climate which produces the beautiful in splendid masses without relief or pause. It is the flower-jewelled valleys of Kashmir that are reflected in the national industries, just as it was the luxuriance of the jungle that trained hands and eyes to built the Taj and perforate the marbel at Ahmedabad.

It is worth while to remember that the selfsame cause which gives its dazzling beauty to Oriental ornament makes Western art a fine vehicle for the impression of ideas. Our walls are ugly, yet we have fine sculptures, a Raphael, and a Rossetti. We have no gorgeous palaces maybe, but what of our grey cathedrals? The world would be as much poorer for the loss of an old English village church as by the further destruction of the rose-red walls of Delhi; but on the other hand we must not forget that the porcelains of China and the mosaics of Agra are just as essential to the whole as the ruined cloisters of Europe or the regal architecture of Westminster and Versailles. The great rhythm of Time and Space in which the Indian mind so delights finds once more an illustration here. Not in the Good alone, but also in the Evil, in Death as well as Life, in the West and in the East, infact in diversity of all kinds, is to be read the revelation of Unity. From all points do the paths converge by which the One comes to the vision of man.

Shawl-making, then, is today a living industry in this Central Asian valley of its birth, but we cannot deny that the modern craftsman works under corrupting influences unknown to his fore-fathers. The last twenty years have opened up the beautiful vale to European intercourse, and

the disastrous effects of fashion and semi-education are as apparent here as in the ancient arts of wood-carving and *papier-maché*. If the Kashmir weaver is to be saved at all from denationalised vulgarity, it can only be by a close and sympathetic study of the old masterpieces, and by the careful enlightenment of Western taste.

The fall of the last French Empire dealt a death-blow to the use of the shawl, from which it will probably never recover ; but the recognition of these exquisite garments as tapestries and furniture draperies is inevitable with the advance of knowledge and discrimination amongst us. This is bound to supersede the square outline by the panel and other forms, and may, it is much to be feared, have many less salutary consequences. Hence it is important that such losses should be balanced by still greater gains of freedom, originality, and bewildering loveliness—and, as all will agree, these must be in the spirit of the old work, to the exclusion of incongruous elements, if they are to signify development and not deterioration.

This fine industry has a primitive air all through. The pedlar is the great agent of dissemination, and in dealing with him the process of bartering needs to be treated as a science. In his own fastnesses, down in the bazaar, the unwary buyer is at a grave disadvantage, for tea is served in dainty old china, and all the honeyed resources of Oriental courtesy are exhausted to make the obligation more complete. So in Cairo, sitting in the shop still drinking coffee out of egg cups, it costs the whole afternoon to spend ten shillings.

But if the ramifications of the trade strike us as quaint in their simplicity, what shall we think of those little factories in which the manufacture is carried on?

In a tiny mud-built cottage, baked silver-grey by the sun's heat—one of a number surrounding the irregular farmyard-square that to the Indian mind represents the slum—in an upper room which also contains a bed, we may find three looms, set at right angles to the windows,

and giving space altogether to nine workers. Their monotonous weavers' chant ceases as we enter and fingers fall idle, that we may be free to examine the machines at our pleasure. These long low frames are comparatively small, and stretched across from back to front lie the close tight strands of the warp. Such a warp as it is! Long delicate threads of creamy white or glistening grey, or some wonderful shade of green or rose or blue. It is the hair of young goats, in its first downy softness, spun almost to the thinness of spider silk.

Equally fine are more coloured wools—wound on little spindles instead of reels—which the men take up and with incredible swiftness (reading the manuscript before them with their voices and *listening* to the pattern with their fingers, as it were) pass in and out, over and under, through the back-ground, counting as they work. And so without gleam of shuttles or noise of machinery, line upon line, stitch after stitch, by the patient labour of human fingers grows the web of the Kashmir shawl. Overhead hangs a row of brilliantly-dyed skeins of yarn. It is the gamut of colours in which the design is pitched and deepens the analogy to the symphony in music. Now, as the men yield once more to that abstracting power which all needle-work, and specially all darning, possesses, breaking out into a louder strain, we realise afresh that this relationship of sound which the ear appreciates so easily is identical with that which appeals only to the eye. We are reading our pattern through two senses at once.

Truly this is a craft of olden times. Witness the fact that every one of the processes may be carried on under the same roof. Down yonder in the courtyard, in the shadow of the thick wall, sit three women who, in their statuesque Kashmiri beauty, might be the Greek Fates—in the middle the grandmother, with her spinning-wheel, and beside her two daughters-in-law, pulling and twisting the yet untinted fleece. The quiet dignity of age surrounds the old Moslem woman. The face under the veil and

coronet is as of one who has loved and suffered and triumphed like a queen. Ask her her faith, and note the ring in her voice as she answers prodly: "Praise be to God! Thanks to the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussalman!" "The mercy of the Lord" and the banner that we associate with sword and slaughter!

But the children play on unheeding in the sun-shine, the wheel turns merrily, and through the open window above us floats the song of the men at their weaving. It is indeed a note from a far past age, and as we stand, looking and listening, we think we hear those words from an Eastern book, "Man's days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

But yesterday, the Tartars entered Srinagar, today the English are here, and tomorrow they will be gone, leaving an old race to dream once more the sweet dreams of labour and poetry and beauty, till—as they themselves would phrase their hope—the net of Maya shall be broken and they be lost in the ocean of the Beatific Vision.

THE SHIP OF FLOWERS

It is empty now, the place on my desk where the little ship of flowers has stood all day. But out on the chill edge of the Ganges, as darkness comes on, the tiny bark lies drifting, hither and thither, scarcely determined betwixt ebb and flow, as we with a few of the children launched it an hour ago. It was early still when we went down to the riverside, and as we turned away only one worshipper had arrived besides ourselves—a solitary girl of eleven or twelve—to send her offering out to the Great Unknown. We stayed awhile then and watched her, as she carefully removed the sacramental food from the birch-bark vessel, set in the stern the little light, and then floated it boldly out upon the waters. And after that, what could we do but stay and watch and watch, with breathless interest, as long as ever the star shone clear in the fragile craft which, we knew, with the turn of the tide, would reach the main current and be carried far out to sea? O! innumerable fleet of little nameless boats, floating on ponds and rivers, in all the villages of Bengal to-night, each bearing its twinkling lamp into the all-enshrouding dark, how like ye are to life, how like to death!

For this is the last day of the Bengali month of Paush. It is the old-time day for pilgrimage to Ganga-Sagar—that island where the river meets the sea. And more than this, it is the day of prayers for all travellers, all wanderers from their homes, for all whose footsteps at nightfall shall not lead to their own door. It was in a crowded street this morning, as I passed the end of a small bazaar, that I noticed the eager faces and hurrying feet of men and women, hastening to carry to those at home the ships of flowers. They were rude enough, these little ships, that I too bought, to load with spoil of loving thought. Roughly pinned together they were, made of the shining white core

of the plantain-stalk, and masted and arched from stem to stern with splinters of bamboo, run through the hearts of yellow marigolds. Here and there the dealers had made feint to imitate more closely, with coloured paper flag and string, the sails and cordage of the old country boats. But for the most part they were mere suggestions, glistening vessel and burning-hearted flowers.

Mere suggestions, truly—but of what! Can we not see the quiet women, sitting absorbed before the symbol at their feet, loading it with offerings—Bel-leaves, flowers, the consecrated fruits and grain, and praying with each fresh gift for some beloved life, that through the coming year it might go safe amidst whatever tide, that even now, if peril somewhere threaten it, it may be led safe home? Have we not here today the perfect picture of Humanity—Man battling on the distant frontier-line of toilsome life; and Woman—for love's sake, not for gold's—holding fast to prayer?

One thinks of the cry of the Jew, sonorous through the ages—the Jew, who loved not the sea, but lifted his eyes to the hills, to find his help, and lost himself, between “I” and “thee,” in an inflood of blessedness: “The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.” One thinks of the churches of Brittany, and the small model of a ship, *barque de ma vie*, that hangs before every altar and in every private oratory. And there comes back the echo of the sailor's cry, amid surf and storm, *Sainte Anne! Sainte Anne!*

Here too, in Bengal, we have a maritime people, once great among the world's seafarers, and here, on the last day of *Paus*, we celebrate the opening of the annual commercial season, the old-time going forth of merchant enterprise and exploration. It was a traffic cut off from that of Phœnicia, and all the well-omened peoples of the Middle Sea, but unmistakably great in the East. China and Japan, Cambodia and Burma, have welcomed the coming of the

Bengal mariners to their ports, being glad to win honour and wealth thereby. Fa Hian, Hiouen-Tsang, and I-Ching are but three names, out of countless hosts to whom they belonged, who sought the shores of India, or left them, in the name of the knowledge and impulse that she had power to send to other and less favoured peoples. But why cast our memory so far back? It is little more than a hundred years since Indian shipbuilding was famous through the world. Even now the wooden shipping that still plies between the small countries of north-western Europe is in great part discarded craft of Indian building and of Indian teak. And how should these eastern vessels have won renown if the merchants and sailors of India had not been great to man and use?

All day long, from the altar-shelf above my desk, the marigolds, like an arch of sanctuary-lamps, have shone down upon me, and stirred a maze, a multitude, of dreams and memories in heart and brain. "The Lord bless—the Lord bless—going out—coming in—even for evermore!" Do we not stand, even as here, on the river shores of life, and watch the going forth of beloved souls into the perils of the world's high seas, yea, into the far space and mystery of death? Yet hold we by that very light, so like a star, they carry at their prow, that how distant soever be the journey set, they shall not pass beyond the reach of this our love and prayer, nor break outside the encircling barriers of the heart of God.

LECTURES AND ARTICLES.

VEDANTA MISSIONARY WORK

WIMBLEDON (LONDON)

I*

VERY little formal teaching has been done in Wimbledon since the departure of Swami Vivekananda in December last. It is true that Swami Abhedananda has come down and held several classes, at different private houses, which have been followed by animated discussions. Mr. Sturdy has always presided at these gatherings, and has done much to elucidate points raised. But during the summer we have ceased to meet in this way, and shall probably not resume the custom till October.

It does not follow however that Vedanta is dead or even asleep amongst us. Some of us regard these breathing periods the most valuable influence of all, in extending the sphere of conviction. The thoughts that Vedantic teaching brings, to a mind hearing it for the first time, are too vast and too new in kind for speedy assimilation. There must be rest and solitude, and fate has ordained that instead of our going away into the wilderness to find these, our interpreters shall go away from us and leave us to fight with our ignorance alone! To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us had been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality in our Faith. To these, the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical

* Reproduced from *The Brahmavadin*, September 15, 1897.

expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. "The peoples that walked in darkness have seen a great light." So that, if it had done no more, merely by enlargement of our religious culture, this system of thought would have been of incalculable benefit to us. But it has done much more.

We have not all shared that spirit of doubt and negation which is certainly the characteristic thought mood of cultured Europe today. Many gentle souls are able to adapt the religious instruction of childhood to their own mental growth, and these, without any anguished sense of rupture from truths and associations, gain a generous outlook, and a readiness to get truth from whatever quarter of the horizon it may hail. To these (the two classes are not of course entirely distinct), it has not been the intellectual basis of Belief as a whole, but special ideas, that have come as great inspirations, throwing light upon all previous experience, and opening the door to the acceptance of Vedantic doctrine as a whole. To one, the very conception of a religion which preached universal tolerance—which held that *we proceed from truth to truth, and not from error to truth*—was enough. He had been brought to the instant recognition of this by years of toil amongst the many factions of political partisanship. To another, deeply versed in our modern literature,—and especially in Poetry, with its ever-recurring flashes of supreme intuition—it was the Swami's *I am God* that came as something always known, only never said before. Others there were who had been vaguely troubled by the anthropomorphism of our Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, and these found in Bhakti Yoga that such a conception was not final, but only one of a series passing by degrees into that sense of Divine Union of which we have, in the *Imitation*, a standing witness. Yet again, it was the Unity of Man that was the touch needed to rationalise all previous experiences and give logical sanction to the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one

gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage, and we know it. Of course there are cases in which the name of a given formula rouses a certain repugnance, which it takes time to overcome. *Reincarnation* is an idea so foreign to our habits of thought that it remains an outstanding rock to this day with very many. That sin is Ignorance is another alien notion. On the whole it may be observed that the last point to be taken quite seriously is the opposition between the Real and the Apparent. But is it not true that complete apprehension of this truth always so changes the current of life that the will henceforth must needs be god mighty wrestling? If this is so, surely it is well for a man that he be a loyal subject ere he become an enlisted soldier. At any rate, to times of rest, like the present, when the mind works subconsciously upon great ideas, we look for the consolidation of impressions, and the real growth of the good seed. And thinking thus, we recall that great moment of Emerson's when he said:—"God screens us evermore from premature ideas. Our eyes are holden that we cannot see things that stare us in the face, until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened; then we behold them, and the time when we saw them not is like a dream."

II*

Owing to the departure of Swami Abhedananda for America, the London Centre is temporarily disbanded, and the same fact has interfered with the organisation of our Winter's work in Wimbledon. We shall not let the matter rest there, however. New houses have been offered to us for meetings, and various London members have promised to come down to read papers and start discussions for us, so that we are by no means at a standstill.

* Reproduced from *The Brahmavadin*, October 1, 1897.

One feature which will be of vast interest to our first gathering is a report of the Math Brotherhood and its work, which has been sent to us from Baranagore by the Swami Brahmananda. This document will also be printed and distributed amongst all friends known to us in this country and America, and anyone else who desires to see it has only to send for a copy. In this interesting and exhaustive statement all who have read it feel that we take an important step towards true realisation of our solidarity with our Indian brethren. The Ramakrishna Mission is an idea that appeals to us particularly, not only for the honour of the Saint after whom it is named,—and whom many of us in England have learned to love,—but also because its aims and methods are congenial to our own. This and the Alambazar Famine Relief are a splendid vindication of the spiritual life from the charge of passivity so often preferred against it by the materialistic West.

In Protestant countries we have long lost the tradition of career which shall express to the uttermost the striving after selflessness. A life like Mazzini's flashes across our sky like a meteor, without seeming cause or relation, and without doing anything to people from its own high solitudes. We altogether ignore the fact that Joan of Arc, St. Catherine of Siena, and S. Francis of Assissi, with hosts of others, could only become effective in a society that included the religious life, amongst its possible openings. And forgetting the value of this form, we are given also to the ridicule and disparagement of it: practical work and the service of Humanity are the only passports to our admiration, and he who would speak to us must use this language. This the Brotherhood of the Math has done, and some of us hope to extend the organisation—which is in our eyes co-operation—in the form of a society ramifying through England and America, and endeavouring to realise the maxim of our socialist friends—"From each according to his means, to all according to their needs."

III*

On Monday evening, October the 4th, a few of the class met at Mr. Paston Browne's to hear a paper by a member of the London Group, and to be made officially acquainted with the movements and work of the Swami Vivekananda since reaching India. Mr. Eric Hammond took the chair.

Great interest was expressed in the work of famine relief and in the Ramakrishna Mission. These are developments which appeal to the West in a peculiar way, and it may be hoped that eventually the English centres will do their share towards sending out those secular and spiritual educators who shall carry on Hindu work on Hindu lines as some slight acknowledgement of the great benefits conferred on themselves by the awakening missionary zeal of India.

It is very difficult to some who have never dreamt of the genuine character of Christianity, to conceive of the Vedanta as a friendly and not a rival system. It says worlds for the power of the Swami Vivekananda's teaching that it drew many such to listen to him, and left thoughts with them which they have since unconsciously assimilated and used instead of rejecting.

Quiet and tasteful reference was made by the lecturer on Monday evening to that drawing-together of East and West which Christianity—ever noble in feeling, however mistaken occasionally in method—had initiated.

In religious questions it is often difficult to find arguments which shall appeal to the reason satisfactorily on behalf of a new conception. It is thus with an English audience of advanced type, on the question of immortality. To the Vedantic student, of course, this question has long ago been merged in a view of life so extended that it is almost impossible to him to recall his own old position of doubt inclining to negation.

* Reproduced from *The Brahmavadin*, November 1, 1897.

Reincarnation was a word that annoyed him in its time as much as anyone, yet he finds that he accepts it now as part and parcel of that other thought that has gradually become his, that the dip into matter is a transitory dimming of the brightness of real existence. But how to communicate this conviction? It is self-evident to him, as the Law of Gravitation was self-evident to Sir Isaac Newton after long pondering. Alas, Sir Isaac Newton could prove the truth of his theory by the moon's distance from the Earth, and on this plane no proof as such is possible!

Difficulties like this are common in dealing with English audiences, and on this particular question there is a frequent longing for more light.

The next gathering of Vedanta-students will be much more limited in size than the last, and after that we shall hope to institute a regular series here. There is hunger enough, God knows amongst common men and women, to justify us in this attempt to share the small crust of our knowledge with others who have less.

IV*

We continue to meet in small groups, and do our utmost to help each other and ourselves, over afternoon tea, or evening coffee.

It is wonderful how much elucidation is done by mere comparison of difficulties, and each little gathering seems to win more complete adherence from someone who has hitherto thought his own conversion on points of doctrine quite impossible.

The Viveka Library will be re-opened in a few weeks under the care of Mrs. Ashton Jonson, a lady whose influence has probably been stronger than any other single person's for the cause in England.

It is of course a blow to the work that Mr. Sturdy should be about to spend the winter abroad.

* Reproduced from *The Brahmavadin*, December 16, 1897.

We all look to Mr. Sturdy, and his exertions and generosity have been unremitting. We trust that he will receive all kinds of strength and enrichment from a journey which is to include Japan, and to involve, as all Mr. Sturdy's visits must, earnest research in new fields of religious thought and speculation.

Expressions of sympathy with the Indian work have reached us on all hands of late, in connection with our distribution of the Brotherhood's report.

Amongst us there is no doubt amazing ignorance of the Indian point of view, but there can be very little conception in India of the sympathy and interest with which the mass of our people regard that country.

Renan points out in one of his last essays the great effect of the philological discoveries of this century on the imaginations of Indo-European peoples. There can be no doubt that he is right at this moment here in our little Northern Island where a few later roses linger to greet the cold blasts and footsteps of the coming winter, as there in your sun-steeped continents of the south, there are the first stirrings of a consciousness which shall not long be that of ruler and ruled,—a consciousness in which memory of war and conquest and aggression and violence shall be utterly swallowed up and lost, giving place to that sense of nationality which is the local expression of the burning Love and thirst-for-the-service of humanity.

To English minds—ever translating, as the Swami Vivekananda pointed out, the Freedom of the Soul into the Freedom of the State,—some such consummation seems to foreshadow itself in India's gracious gift of age-long thought to the West.

With those who think thus there is a great desire to manifest in turn this Love and Fellowship.

And has not the Vedanta itself taught us that spirit conquers in the end, and where Brotherhood is longed for on both sides mutual acceptance of Brotherhood is at last inevitable?

INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS OF INDIA IN ENGLAND

I am here to night to sound a note of no doubt, no fear, no weakness, no failure, and no hesitation whatever. I am here tonight to sound a note of infinite joy and victory.

The name of the Inaugural Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission is wrongly applied to this assembly. That Mission held its true inaugural meeting, I think, one day long years ago, in the shadowy gardens up there at Dakshineswar, when the Master sent His disciples forth to all the world, as the greatest teachers have always done, to preach the gospel to every creature. And perhaps some of you may consider that the inaugural meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission took place on that other day, not long ago, when his friends went to say Godspeed to a wandering Sannyasin, going friendless and ill-provided, to a rich and powerful country in the West. This mission is, to the national life of India, as a great symphony of many movements. One movement is already over, and the first chord of the second is struck. In the passage that is ended, there have been discords, there have been moments of great anxiety and doubt, perhaps even of fear and sadness. But all that is gone, and at this moment, I say with all sincerity, there is no doubt, no fear, and no discord : it is all hope and strength. We know that we will win and shall not fail. I am not afraid of over-estimating or exaggerating the importance of this movement to Indian national life ; it would be easier, I think, to make too little of it than too much. Great are these doings we are living through, and great is the Ramakrishna Mission, and I say that this Mission is bound to be a success after all.

Lecture delivered on Friday, the 11th March, 1898, at the Star Theatre, Calcutta.

I am here to tell you something definite about the work done in England about a year-and-a-half ago in spreading your spiritual thoughts among us. I am not here to give you the details that newspapers have given you. I am not here to lavish personal praise upon one who is present with us here on this platform. But I am here to try in a few words to tell you something of the significance to us in England of the message you sent to us through him. You in India have deep and subtle and profound views on destiny. You know that no success like that of Swami Vivekananda is ever achieved unless there are souls waiting whose destiny it is to hear the message and to use it. These waiting souls in the West number thousands and tens of thousands. Some few have heard, but many have not yet heard the message. I may just try for one moment to say some of the reasons why this message of India to the world is so really needed by us. For the last fifty years, in the West of Europe, we have been religiously and spiritually the most intellectual men and women of the day. For some years, however, it has been the position indeed of overwhelming and complete despair. I do not mean to tell you in India how there comes a moment in the life of any man who has been brought up according to the method of mythology, when that man will find his life a life of complete rupture from all the associations of his childhood, when his intellect is growing and expanding day by day as he progresses towards the higher life of wisdom. That moment comes to every man. In that moment a terrible struggle begins within the soul. Doubt and negation take possession of the soul with all their peculiar consequences. What a terrible moment it is indeed! The reason why such a moment is universally visible in the lives of Western peoples is, of course, in the scientific movement. You all know Darwin's *Origin of Species* came to England only to enforce scientific precision in connection with things known to philosophers centuries and centuries ago. It did more. It made the idea

of evolution popular. People had carelessly accepted the inspired sayings of our Bible, 'God is love'; here was nature 'red in tooth and claw', and how can the two things be true? So doubt and agnosticism became common property. At the same time, there was growing over the religious life of England a great wave of longing for that old personal, picturesque, and symbolical worship which was known to our forefathers and to yours. That was a great movement which preceded the agnostic one, and they have borne combined fruit in the fact that man today stands longing for catholic reality, yet unable to find his message in dogmas by reason of his passion for, and faculty of judging of, the truth. The scientific movement has done that. It has given us a power of discrimination and tremendous passion for the truth. But in the last ten years or so, a change seems to have been manifested. You all know the names of Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall as the exponents of agnosticism. Perhaps some of you also remember an essay that appeared in some of the Reviews after the death of Professor Huxley, shewing that his latest conviction was that Humanity was unlike the rest of the animal kingdom in being *dominated* by something higher than mere physical evolution. Long before this, Herbert Spencer had abandoned the position of complete negation and had devoted four chapters of his well-known "First Principles" to the theorem that a first cause existed, and of it we can know nothing intellectually. And so, gentlemen, you see that there has been a turn in the tide. For those who have once left the narrow channels of belief in a personal God who controls the weather, no re-ascent of the river bed is easily possible. They are out in the great ocean of truth, battling with stony waves; yet as in orthodoxy they begin to suspect that their view is but partial after all and not complete and perfect. It may be that some great personal emotion strikes its note of Love and Sacrifice across their lives by means of words like, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose

mind is stayed on Thee ;” or that great utterance that stayed the giant soul of Martin Luther, “A strong mountain is our God.” At such a juncture the gospel of your great truth, “God is One without a Second,” brings infinite enlightenment to the soul of man.

We in Europe have known for a hundred years that India’s name is bound up for you with the doctrine of the Real and the Apparent. But to realize all that this means, the voice of the living preacher was needed. “God is One without a Second.” If this is so, then misery and sin, evil and fear, are mere illusions. The truth had only to be put clearly and vigorously before us by your great Swami Vivekananda to be grasped at once by some, and sooner or later by many. But the great aim of the Ramakrishna Mission is to preach the true relation of all the religions of the world to each other. And this is a doctrine which no doubt commends itself with peculiar strength to some of those who have come under the influence of your thought. It formulates and harmonizes what we already know of the doctrine of development, and let me, gentlemen, tell you that when a principle finds experience ready, it takes far deeper root than if it had come as a mere theory to be proved. I cannot tell you in detail of the personal energy that has been shown by people, whom I could name, in consequence of their intense realization of the world as the manifestation of God, and of themselves as identical with God ; and for whom, therefore, errors, sins, and impossibilities cannot exist.

It is indeed a new light. It is a new light to the mother in dealing with her children. Because, if sin does not exist, if sin is only ignorance, how changed, how different is our position towards wrong and towards weakness and towards fear, instead of the old position of condemnation! The old notion, the old conception of any sort, which has at the bottom hatred, goes away, and instead there is love—*all love*. But I think there is one thing that we in the West did possess. That was the great passion

for service. Twenty years ago, when the doctrine of agnosticism was the burden of all teachings, you find that one reservation was purposely made. There is one thing left for us, and that is "service" and "fellowship." The more the minds of men were driven back from orthodoxy, the more positively and the more intensely they grasped the thought of mutual Brotherhood. Even here your Eastern wisdom brought the light of non-attachment.

We had yet to realize that the love of self, the love of friends and relations, the love of country are nothing at all, if that love did not simply mean love of the whole world. That if it is a matter of the least consequence to us, whom we serve, then, our service is as nothing. But all society is reflexible society ; as our friend Swami Vivekananda said, there is a great power of progress and expansion in it. In India it would be a great drawback, indeed, to introduce any such theory of national exhaustion, because in India flexibility and easy expansion are impossible. You have the ingenuity of six thousand years of conservatism. But yours is the conservatism of a people who have through that long period been able to preserve the greatest spiritual treasures for the World, and it is for this that I have come to India to serve here with our burning passion for service. In coming to serve India, one must know the innumerable difficulties, the needs, the failures, and the defects of India. I need not trouble you any more as our chairman will no doubt address you with greater knowledge and greater wisdom than I am in a position to do. Before I sit down allow me to utter those three words which are in your own language—

"Sri Sri Ramakrishna Jayati."

THE BIRTHDAY FESTIVAL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Even at Howrah Bridge as we drove up on Sunday morning to take a boat, there was a feeling of subdued excitement. A crimson scroll, bearing the honoured name in white Bengali characters, fluttered gaily above the little shrine of Shiva that humble worshippers kiss so lovingly as they leave the Ghat after the morning purification, and rowing up stream, afterwards against the tide, we found ourselves every now and then involuntary eavesdroppers to conversations amongst the bathers, in which the word "Belur" was frequent and distinct.

These things gave an air of festivity to the very water ; and the great vessels lying out in the river, ready for the holiday throngs. Not to speak of the red canopy and streamers flying over the site of the future college further up the bank on our left, seemed to speak answer and corroboration to this glee of the Ganges.

But our parts are marked, and none stays to see the play through. Here on this Sunday morning, under tropical sunshine, and the chime of some free Church bells, dried leaves were dropping from the great tree above, on Shiva's shrine, and the air was sweet with the smell of saffron. It may be that in years to come men will contend that the Birthday is but one of many festivals dedicated to the spring, its joy being part of the rapture of the people in all lands, when birds build and sap rises in the branches.

However that be, great saint to whose name the day is consecrate, grant it never to cease its gift to this land, so old, so weary and so well beloved, of just such a smile!

* * *

We on this occasion included two of those seven

western disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who were privileged this year to celebrate his birthday in India, and a Hindu friend of ample Vedic scholarship.

Our little party had planned a visit to the temple-garden at Dakshineswar—where the Master himself lived, served, and prayed—before appearing at the Festival. The place lies on the North bank, opposite the present monastery about half a mile higher up. It has a flight of steps to the water's edge, and at the top of these on each side stands a row of six small thatched domes (the peculiar form of the Hindu temple) which separately roof the oratories of the several deities. Set further back from the middle of the line, a more ambitious structure raises slender spires and cupolas skywards. In one of these temple-huts Sri Ramakrishna waited on Kali's altar, but of the interior I cannot speak. My companion wore the Hindu sacred colour, yet to her as to me entrance was forbidden by a notice which included all 'Christians and Mussalmans' in its prohibition.

So we took the path to the left along the terrace, past the Master's dwelling house, and one or two buildings on, through the shady ways to the great Tree of Realisation.

There we sat down on the bank of brickwork about the brink. Below us, at a little distance, a couple of wandering Sannyasins were lighting a fire and sweeping a space for their noonday meal. Their trident staff and a bundle of clothing, lay against fallen tree, and their faces reflected the glow of the flames they were tending. They looked like wild men of the woods with their black unkempt hair and beards. In front to the left the river came sweeping down in a great curve. All round, palm trees and birds and squirrels added their voices to the murmur of the water. And we sat and drank in the beauty of the spot where the Master Himself had prayed and meditated.

An hour later, a long argument—between our Hindu friend and a small crowd who had gathered round us, as to an English woman's right to wear their robe of renunciation

—had ended, and entirely unasked they were opening the door of Ramakrishna's house, and begging us to enter. Fancy a crowd in England being reasoned out of a point of prejudice by copious quotations from learned authorities! Though after all, it is not clear that it was the learned quotations,—it may have been the intuition of a common love and sympathy that unlocked the door!

Be that as it may, we were admitted. Reverent hands had adorned beds and portraits with fresh strings of mari-gold, and in the scrupulously clean room not the tiniest trifle had been disarranged. Slippers, charcoal, razier, a garment or two, all were as he had left them when he last occupied the place,—amongst the pictures being Mary Magdalene praying at the feet of the crucified, on a lonely and desolate shore.

For one of us indeed these things did not exist: it was a holy place: and the bond between us and the kind faces in the doorways was strengthened by the tender sympathy they accorded to the tears of affectionate devotion.

* * *

We could hear the noise of the multitudes, and the sound of religious singing, long before we landed at the garden and Thakur-Bari of Babu Purna Chandra Daw, at Bally, where the festival, by kind permission of his heirs was being held. So dense were the crowds that it was a matter of considerable difficulty to pilot our way through them to the garden-house, where we could add our congratulations to the Swami Vivekananda's letters and telegrams, and be presented also to the host of the day.

Outside, only that it was roofed in with canvas, and that everything had a religious character, the scene was not unlike a much thronged English fair. Instead of merry-go-rounds and swinging-boats were great musical centres, where a number of men danced, or sat cross legged to sing strange old chants and songs of devotion, to the accompaniment of primitive musical instruments.

[All this was intensely earnest, and was eagerly watched by hundreds of young Bengalees who only desisted on the appearance of the Swami to follow him round the assembly with cries of "Lecture! Lecture!"]

In another part of the grounds, the monks attended by their Brahmin cook, were busily engaged in feeding the people. It was like the picture which the New Testament miracle of refreshment makes familiar to us Christians. Hundreds of poor recipients sat on the ground in rows to enjoy the simple fare—consisting of curried rice, some vegetable, and a couple of sweetmeats, served on dried leaves—which was being distributed.

Upstairs in the garden-room we English and Americans had shared their meal, but not in greater order and decorum than prevailed down here. Something like 20,000 people, including children, were fed in the course of the day, and the quietness and regularity of the feast were marvellous.

Later in the day we saw poor women going home carrying large chattiesful of the rice and sweets. In spite of caste there was no difficulty about these viands. They had been offered, and were therefore blessed, or as they call it, Prasad.

But the great attraction was a shrine on a little height where a sort of altar had been erected before the portion of Sri Ramakrishna. The pillars and arches were a mass of marigold; under the roof hung a canopy made of jessamine buds threaded in a net, and wherever a flower could be offered there were roses.

Here, amongst the crowds that came and went, there was one constant worshipper, a poorly clad old woman who called herself "Gopal's mother". "Gopal" is a name common to boys here as babies, and this old lady had known and loved Ramakrishna as a baby, and always alluded to herself as His mother, in their words.

A sweet American lady was the first of us to discover Gopal's mother and I was taken by her to be blessed and

kissed. The "kiss" consists of two fingers placed gently under one's chin, and Gopal's mother has a touch as light as down!

Though we had not a word in common, her wealth of beautiful feeling put us in touch at once, and without an effort at enquiry she took our hands in hers, and led us away into a screened building where the high caste women from the neighbouring village had taken up a post of observation.

Friendliness and pleasure greeted us here once more, and no language was necessary to express the readiness of these Eastern women to meet love lovingly and trustfully half-way.

Only, I fancy, in some such fashion as this, can the real genius of the Indian people be gauged.

Let the occasion be religious, and all barriers are broken down. High and low, men and women, kindred and alien, all are one, because all realise so intensely, like Gopal's mother, the common devotion that has drawn them together.

SRI SRI GURU DEVA
SRI RAMAKRISHNABHARASHA
SRI RAMAKRISHNA JAYATI.

AMARNATH

I

High amongst the Western Himalayas, close to the borders of Ladakh, lies the long glacial gorge in which is the famous Cave of Amarnath.

The journey thither, that brings the worshipper to make his Darshana on the day of the first full moon in August, is now one of the best known and holiest pilgrimages in India.

It was on Tuesday, the second of August of this year, that some two or three thousand persons,—including Sadhus of all orders from the length and breadth of the country, reached the shrine, to pay the accustomed worship.

Starting from Islamabad, eight days before, the procession passes through some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Asia is the cradle of nomad races, but the ease with which a canvas town springs up, bazaar and all, in the course of half-an-hour at each resting-place, is always somewhat astonishing to Western eyes. We look at the gay sight,—tents of yellow cloth, and tents of white, tents of all shapes and sizes, every kind of costume and turban, the glow of countless cooking-fires, scarlet palanquin-tops, and groups of Sannyasins and Yogis in their various garbs,—and we please ourselves with the fancy that this is a recurring memorial of a long-past age, that once more the Aryan hosts are on the march, and that through all the centuries, as now, religion has been the overmastering passion of the race. Perhaps the most impressive moment however is at night-fall, when torches strive to illumine the blackness, or in the moon-light, or best of all, at two or three in the morning, when sleepers stir, and tents are struck, and the great caravan finds itself once more on the move.

At Bawan, the first stopping-place, there are sacred springs, and the reflection of light in the water is very fine.

At Sismukcum, the next halt is made, and on the third day of the pilgrimage, Pahlgam is reached. Here, at the foot of an arrow-shaped ravine, beside the roaring torrent of the Lidar, and under the solemn shadow of the mountain-firs, the party spends the eleventh day of the lunar month. The spot is superb in its wild loveliness, and same grandeur of water and pine-trees is present at Chandanwara, the fourth stage.

After this come two tremendous ascents, and the pilgrims are out of the region of plentiful fuel, and in the cold of the greater altitudes, once for all. Last winter has been unusually mild in Kashmir, and the journey is easier in consequence. It is said that ice and snow generally extend as low as Chandanwara, and make travelling very difficult.

The pilgrims go steadily upwards, the whole of the fifth morning, till at last the source of the Lidar lies, in the half melted waters of the Sheshnag, five hundred feet below them. The scene is cold, and bleak, and stormy: mountain peaks of snow, in two or three directions, are visible; on a ridge behind, the tent-coolies stand out like a company of spearmen against the sky; and the terrible barren beauty of the place sends a shiver through the soul.

That night for the first time silence is made perfect. No more the rushing torrent casts a veil of music over the whispers of the pines. Here is indeed a river, but hushed in an icy cradle at our feet. Trees with their murmurs, are far below. High behind us rises the moon, almost at the full, and the scarred peaks become pure white as they reflect her radiance. Nowhere is the blue of the midnight sky so deep. Night utters her voice on the mountain-tops, and her words are the ineffable silence of the stars speaking with the snows.

On amongst frost-bound peaks and glaciers winds the procession next day, stopping after some eight miles' march,

at Panchatarani, the Place of the Five Streams. Here, in ancient times, the action of ice left a pebbly beach across the floor of the valley: now, the ice ceases higher up, but the river which issues from it, gives off four smaller rivulets, which meander over the shingle, and join the main flood again at the lower end.

There are then five ablutions to be performed in crossing this small space, and in spite of the intense cold, men, women, and children go faithfully through the ceremony, passing from stream to stream with wet garments clinging to their shivering forms. But already on the high bank, tents are being pitched, fires of juniper are blazing, and preparations are in full swing for the midday meal.

We are today some hundreds of feet below Sheshnag: to get here many a chill torrent has had to be forded, and once at least we have risen to the height, where the snow-peaks hold awful festival amongst themselves, not pausing even to notice this sudden irruption into their midst of the bumptious insect, man.

The road for the last three stages has been little more than a sheep-track, a certain danger has attended each step forward, but so far, the absence of ice has been in our favour, and only one serious accident has occurred. In the remaining division of the journey, the mildness of the year adds to its hardships.

There are usually three roads from Panchatarani to Amarnath: of these, one is rendered impassable by the disappearance of ice bridges: the difficulty of another is enhanced indefinitely from the same cause: and the third is so steep and arduous, that only those anxious to throw away their lives, would be consistent in attempting it. The second is the way that we must take.

And now the great morning has not yet dawned indeed, for it wants an hour or so to the full moon; but midnight is past, calls sound from tent to tent in the darkness, the pilgrims set out one by one from the camp,—today we shall reach Amarnath.

Down the valley we go, and the road is dangerous enough. The cold is bitter, but dry and exhilarating, and between sunrise and moon-setting, the procession winds on, fathers carrying babies, men and women, old as well as young, Sadhus of both sexes in the thinnest garments, Yogis clad only in ashes, and others without even that protection, but all in breathless anxiety to reach the goal.

There is a terrible hour or two,—first of climbing and then of descent—in which one false step would mean instant death, and then we are on the glacier: the snow gives firm foothold, and in the distance yonder, the sun pours down on tumultuous crowds of pilgrims, some bathing in the river, some shouting for joy, as they enter the sacred precincts of the cave, while far away to the head of the gorge, a single peak, covered with newly-fallen snow, watches over the whole in awful consciousness of purity.

II

Some party of wandering shepherds, driving their cattle down the glacier at its foot, in those long summer days when time and distance matter little, must have been the first to light on the great Cave of Amarnath.

Or perhaps—for the spot is far indeed from the habitations of men, and no tradition lingers about the countryside, to tell the tale of the wondrous finding,—perhaps it was some solitary herdsman who found himself and his flocks in the gorge in the heat of the noonday, and turning into the cavern for coolness and refreshment, was startled by the presence of the Lord Himself. For there, in a central niche within the vast cathedral, the roof itself dropping offerings of water over It, and the very walls crusted with white powder for Its worship, stood the Shiva-Lingam in clear white ice. Stood, as It must have stood for centuries, all unseen of mortal eyes, as It stands today, here, at the very heart of the Himalayas, in this, the secret place of the Most High.

How did he act, we wonder, this simple peasant of our fancy? Had he the gift of vision to know Him, white like camphor. Who sits lost in eternal meditation, while the Ganges struggles to free herself from the coils of His matted hair, and all the needy and despised of earth find refuge at His feet?

Or was his, perchance, that other rapture, to look down the long vista of the years, and hear the many voices of the pilgrims singing, as in the travel-song of another Eastern people:—

“Lo! now thou that art builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Pray for the peace of God’s dwelling-place: they shall prosper, that love thee?”

Some one at least with eyes to see must have knelt there, ere the legend was whispered amongst the cowherds in the valley, and they began the custom that has grown to such mighty proportion since, of making Darshana at the shrine of Amarnath.

The “Shiva Om”! now sounds there from far and near, and this year the white doves of Shiva flew over the heads of at least one worshipper from Cape Comorin, and another from the distant islands of the sea.

All that is strong, all that is noble, in the heart of man finds acceptance and response in that austere vision of God that is worshipped here. Surely no race ever conceived for itself a myth grander than this of Shiva and Uma.

The sweet memories of childhood speaking this name of God can waken in the heart of His worshipper no note that is not of the highest. Brooding ever in eternal silence amongst snow-clad Himalayas, there is in Him no trace of wrath, or of the meaner passions of humanity. The asceticism of the pilgrim, the heroism of the hero, the self-sacrifice of the willing victim,—these are the roads by which men draw near to Him, and such only the praise that they may utter in His Presence.

And they do praise. This people, silent in all else, is expressive in devotion. The surging throng, fills the cave with song and movement. But through it all and over it all, amidst the multitude of voices, and the strangeness of the tongues, there rings that daily prayer of His devotees, that most beautiful of all the world's cries to the Eternal:—

“From the Unreal lead us to the Real,
From Darkness lead us unto Light,
From Death lead us to Immortality.
Reach us through and through ourself,
And, Oh! Thou terrible One, protect us ever
From Ignorance, with Thy sweet compassionate Face.’”

THE SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT OF THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

I

One of the arguments most commonly advanced against the Vedanta is that, if universally accepted, it would have the effect of disintegrating society, by giving a certain mode of renunciation the position of an end in itself, as well by convincing men of the hopelessness of any attempt at the permanent amelioration of external conditions.

As a great spiritual impulse, Vedantism can afford to laugh at all such objections, since the spiritual is simply that activity which takes precedence of all others in man as we all, consciously or unconsciously, acknowledge. But the waters of religious life become available on a large scale only when they flow through well-hollowed channels of appropriate intellectual concepts, and as from this point of view the Vedanta takes rank simply as a philosophy, it becomes important to examine carefully into objections urged against it, and to determine in what direction it is really calculated to impel society.

It is a characteristic inaccuracy of the West to confound religious ideas and social institutions. We have no idea of imparting Christian teaching to a community, without at the same time begging it to adopt our national customs ; and this reacts, in the case of civilisations which may be more or less repugnant to us, so as to make us resist the thoughts that come to us in association with them. Complexity of life and constant readjustment of conditions are the great marks of advancement with us. It is difficult for people to whom these are dear to see anything good in a world whose distinctive traits seem simplicity and social rigidity.

Yet some of the greatest thinkers, for years past in America, England, and on the continent, have been uttering the cry for simplification of life, and have made it evident enough that to all true progress this process is a necessary complement, and not antagonistic.

If this be true, the great want of our day is some intellectual common multiple, capable of resolving itself readily into groups of either factor, and the very test by which the sociological value of Vedantic Philosophy must stand or fall must be its power to include these two ideals—of increasing civilisation, and increasing simplicity*—or not, as the case may be.

It would be useless to attempt the solution of this problem by asking which, of all the doctrines constituting the Vedantic System, are the most important. Such a question may be propounded of any religion at any period, and the answer will always vary, according to the temperament of the critic and the exigencies of the hour. The only enquiry that will throw light on our quest must be,—what is the root-principle, involving or necessitating all its other propositions, which are together connoted by the word Vedanta?

Some main intention may always be discovered in any well-knit system of thought. No one would hesitate to assign to the Unity of God this place in the Semitic Faiths, or to name the “taking of manhood unto God” as the all-embracing motive of Christianity. Is not the same rank in the Vedanta held by the great doctrine of the Real and the Apparent? From the knowledge of “that Imperishable Goal, which the knowers of the Vedas declare, which the self-controlled and the passion-free enter”, all the other truths of Indian Metaphysics may easily be derived. That the pairs of opposites are within Maya ; that evil, therefore, is merely the optical delusion incidental to the human angle of vision ; that man proceeds from Truth to Truth,

* It is obvious that increasing simplicity which is *not* an outcome of increasing civilisation must represent a loss of some kind.

and not from Error to Truth ; the essential unity of things ; the need for non-attachment as a means to realisation ;— these principles, diverse and startling as they may appear to the Western mind receiving them for the first time, are already implied in that first great thesis of the permanent and real as distinct from the mutable evanescent.

We may take this doctrine, then, as covering the whole area of Vedantic Philosophy, and the question forthwith stands,—how would it and its consequents affect the social organisation of a people who accepted it?

And we may as well begin by facing two misconceptions boldly. The first is that any detailed forecast of a Vedantic community may be gathered from the philosophy itself, or from any contemplation of already existing societies.

It is true that the religion of any people always represents the great formative energy of that people, but the stuff on which this has to work is usually a far more determinative factor in the result ; and this is a matter of race, climate, history, conditions of living, and a host of other considerations. We only require to contrast Norway with Italy, or Spain with Russia, to see the truth of this statement. Latins, Teutons, and Slavs have been the manifesting medium, during almost equal periods, of our original body of thought,—how then are we to account for the divergence of their social development?

The other fallacy which we cannot disavow too completely is that any society was ever guided, in its assimilation of ideals, by the real nature of those ideals, instead of by its own impression of them. The grown plant rarely resembles the seed sown. "If thou wilt not to fight this lawful battle", said Sri Krishna to Arjuna, "abandoning thy own duty and fame, thou shalt incur sin." The Gita is blood of India's blood, and bone of her bone. Yet what grasp has she displayed of the truth of this text? Christianity, if it is anything, is the teaching of an Asiatic Sannyasin who desired to see Love triumph over Justice,

Renunciation over Proprietorship, the unity of man over ties of birth. How many of the Christian nations would convey the *a priori* impression that they were rooted and grounded in such ideals?

It is obvious that no exact estimate can be made of the social effect of any spiritual or ethical doctrine, the other elements which contribute to that effect being obscure as well as complex.

It is enough if we limit our discussion of the present problem to a few very general considerations regarding the possible direction-giving influence of Vedantic thought in a previously Christianised country.

II

Ideals never die. The new is always superimposed upon the old, not substituted for it. For this reason, it is vain for masculine women to demand that men should cease to pay chivalrous homage to their sex. The grand new notion of a treaty between equal powers can never drive out the old conception that man's title to gentleness was won by the protection of the weak. For, the ideals of manliness and womanliness once formed, their equality may be asserted or disputed: the contention cannot besmirch either reality. Men,—simply because they are manly,—will continue to open doors, bear burdens, and use the names of women reverently, to the end of time.

In the same way the virtues of an industrial epoch,—and none are greater than those good qualities of integrity, and co-operation, and skilled enterprise,—never kill the demand for honour, and loyalty, and physical courage, indispensable to the military age that went before.

Each normal historical period represents an advance in the apprehension of those great ideals of which society is the manifestation.

It is therefore foolish to fear that activities and impulses which are the outcome of eighteen centuries of Christianity may be destroyed by the incorporation with them

of a new truth. That new motives may be introduced, or old arduours intensified are both possible, but the destruction of anything that is good and true can never take place thus.

The Vedanta claims, we must remember, to be the Science of Religion, the Christian religion being only one of many faiths to which its canons of criticism apply, and which fall within the scope of its theory.

There can be no doubt that to races, as to individuals, many advantages accrue with the primary limitation of the religious area.

The idea that "Faith without work is dead," however mistakenly interpreted, has borne noble and vigorous fruit in various approximately democratic civilisations ; and the words, "Inasmuch as ye did unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me," have actually been helped (at least in Protestant countries) by ignorance of deeper spiritual truths, to produce that passion for the service of man, which is pre-eminently the Christian's strength. Thus it may be beneficial that truth should be received piecemeal, as it were, if so the combined efforts of society can be concentrated on projecting the moral significance of each fragment in those ideals and symbols which become wellsprings of refreshment to a world that is spirituality athirst.

But if we labour thus to find some compensation for our defect, we admit in that very fact that it entails likewise grave drawbacks.

They are such drawbacks as are common to all forms of provincialism. They lie in the assumption that one's own is the only possible plan of salvation, in the consequent contempt for what other races may have won through toilsome centuries, and in that exaltation of orthodoxy over truth which is little short of vicious.

These are sad blemishes on the white robe of the Christian Faith, but they indicate the lines on which Vedantic conceptions would act unopposed. It is true that

the doctrine of illusion has created in India that indifference to external conditions which reacts on the majority by closing to them the great avenues of Realisation: but, on the other hand, the exuberant strength of Western nations, in grappling efficiently with these conditions, creates the far worse errors of gross materialism and self-interest. Who that knows anything of Western thought, will dispute this? Here, therefore, there must be a movement towards equilibrium on both sides.

But, in its definition of all religions as related to each other just as languages are related, the Vedanta brings an absolutely new conception into the Christian field.

Not universal toleration merely, this is the doctrine of universal inspiration! Nor need we think that the instinct of helpfulness would be in anywise diminished by it. Rather would the method of help become clearly defined: we should learn that all we can give to another is a share of our light by which he may pick his own steps. We should waste less effort, and perhaps love in a heightened degree.

These we may imagine to be some of the direct effects of the adoption of Indian philosophy by Western populations. Indirectly, it would tend to diversify society in a curious way.

With the increase of reverence for other systems, each member of the community would be likely to choose his own religious ideal, and this must bear fruit in the development of individuality, the increase of religious culture, and the indefinite extension of the sense of Human Brotherhood.

Wherever this sense of Humanity deepens, brutality and the struggle for selfish ends must decrease, and since today the greatest exertions are made and the greatest sacrifices incurred for heroic and non-material ends, it is impossible to suppose that the conscious service of the all would prove a less powerful civilising motive than the pursuit of private wealth or power. Indeed analogy would

lead us to conclude that the rapidity of the process would increase in direct ratio to the subtlety of the force, and in that case even material conditions would benefit the world over, more quickly than has hitherto been the case in any corner of the globe under the limitations of one creed.

The deepest instinct of human nature bids it face truth at all costs. In the sphere of religion this is the final imperative: in the sphere of religion it costs most of all. To face truth here and carry the vision through may be like tearing the heart out of the living body. Yet it must be done.

And the personal ordeal once over, the soul made conscious that the ways of God's Footsteps are infinite in number, may shrink from proclaiming its discovery, and thereby entering on a wider struggle. 'Is it not enough to know?' it asks 'will not larger efforts prove indeed but another mission of destruction?'

It is a question that every priesthood in the world has asked and answered in its own fashion. Let us who are of no priesthood acknowledge at the outset that the highest knowledge we have is the world's meed from us, the more so since today it is only by means of some formula as wide as the Vedanta that the good things of spirit, mind and body may find exchange between the East and the West.

KALI, AND HER WORSHIP

I am aware that I have little right to stand here, and offer myself as a lecturer on Kali-worship. I am not qualified by a knowledge of Sanskrit or of Indian history to judge between rival theories as to the archaeology of the matter. I have been in India only one year, and as I am often reminded, that which seems incontestable to me now, may seem as unsupported in another year's time.

In the meantime, certain rights are mine. *First, I have been hearing of Kali-worship all my life*, in terms not flattering to Kali or Her worshippers, and now that I am in contact with the thing itself, I have a right to stand up and say that if the things I heard as a child were true, at least they were not the whole truth, and it is the whole truth that we should insist on having; and, secondly, I have the right of an Englishwoman to express public regret for the part which countrymen and women of my own have played in vilifying a religious idea, dear to men and women as good as they, and to utter a public hope that such vilification may soon end by the growth amongst us all of sheer good-will and sympathy. *And, last of all, I have the right of all first impressions to be heard.* We often forget that what produces this, is just as real a part of the whole as the last. This is true of all goodness and beauty. Of anything so complex and extended as an area of religious consciousness, it is still more true. *A religious idea ought to be judged by all the states* which it produces. We must not ignore either the lowest or the highest apprehension of the symbol. Certainly, we remember that a common acknowledgment of that symbol binds the man, who now appreciates it in a very rudimentary way, to the Yogi who finds in it the higher manifestation of God. So

that we should be careful how we meddle with, or pass judgment on, that lower form of worship, save to open out to it the natural path of development, by which the saint has gone to his far-reaching vision.

Again, it often happens that certain freshness of view is absolutely necessary to us. How it is here, I cannot judge ; but with us I know that nothing is so fatal as to hear the story of Christianity often from babyhood. That wonderful life by the Sea of Galilee and among the Hills of Judæ loses all its poignancy, and comes to mean nothing at all. But let it come perfectly new into the grown-up life of a man or woman, and it stands out the most vivid thing in the whole world.

And so the impact of our own religion upon a fresh consciousness is often a helpful thing to ourselves. There are two other things that help in the same way—(1) the study of another faith, giving a basis of comparison and induction, and, (2) a sect of people or a period in one's own life, denying the truth of the whole thing. This causes us to examine the grounds of our own creed and the meaning of it, and its demands on us. I see nothing in Calcutta today, which is more calculated, if we accept it thankfully, to strengthen and purify our thought of God as the Mother than the presence of a section who deny and distrust our worship. Let us not forget that they seek truth as we do—and let us weigh carefully all that they urge, knowing that the Mother Herself speaks to us through their lips, for the perfecting of their love and ours.

Those of us who feel that the search after God is the be-all-and-end-all of human life—that the wise man, the man of fullest living, is he who cries out, with his whole soul in the cry, "Like as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God," we who believe this will see in national customs, in national history, in national ways of viewing things, only one or other mantle in which to clothe the apprehension of the Divine.

It was so that the Semite, dreaming of God in the moment of highest rapture, called him "Our Father," and the European, striving to add the true complement to God as the Child, saw bending over Him that Glorified Maiden whom he knew as "Our Lady."

But in India, the conception of woman is simpler, more personal, more complete. For India, there is one relationship that makes the home—that makes sanctity—that enters into every fibre of the being, and it is not Fatherhood. What wonder that in India God's tenderest name is that of Mother?

This idea of the Motherhood of God has about it all that mysterious fascination that clings to the name of India for those who know it as students of history or philosophy.

In the old days, long before the birth of Buddhism, she was the land of treasures, to which men must go for precious stones, and sandal-wood and ivory. Then came the time when she meant much to the Western day that was dawning in Greece. The days of Buddhism, when her Gymnosophists taught the Greek philosopher her ancient wisdom, even then, perhaps, ancient. Again came our Middle Ages, when the countries round the Mediterranean had somewhat recovered breath, and when the Crusades began. The Crusades—which were the meeting ground between East and West—Eastern tendencies and interests all streaming towards Baghdad, and thence being thrown on the Syrian deserts by the Saracen.

Here in the Crusades, and afterwards in the Moorish occupation of Spain, and always in the streets and by-ways of those fascinating old ports of Venice and Genoa, must have been born the true mystery of the name of India.

The wonderful tales of travellers and pilgrims, the magnificence of Indian escorts and palaces, the feats of jugglers, and the extraordinary powers of endurance, shown by Indian ascetics, all these associations are called up by the name of India, for those who have never walked under the palm trees, nor seen the wild peacocks of the Motherland.

And those are the associations of mediæval Europe.

Not contemporary with these surely, but belonging to the earlier days of the English occupation, is the glamour round the names of Indian doctrines. Such a delusive sheen tinges the popular reading of the word *Maya*, and such a spirit arises when we hear that in India you talk of this—the Motherhood of God.

Not but that this is a conception that must occur in all religions that are to satisfy the soul. The Galilaean Teacher did not forget it, when he took a little child, and set him in the midst, and said "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Paul wrote to his disciples as a mother greatly anguished till Christ be formed in them. Every true and tender word of help and counsel has added to the Semitic idea, "Like as a *father* pitieth his children," that sweeter notion of the Aryans, "Like as a mother pitieth her children."

But in Christianity it has been implied—not overtly expressed, and the curious divergence between India and European ideals of women comes in here, further to thwart the birth of the thought of Motherhood in worship.

One of the most beautiful fragments of devotion that have come down to us from our Middle Ages is a little old French manuscript called "Our Lady's Tumbler." Here it might be thought, we had lighted on real Mother-worship. But this is not so—for the characteristic utterance is "Lady, you are the *mon-joie* (my-joy) that lightens all the world,—that is, worship is not being offered to a mother, but to a queen. In India, this is never so. Behind palace walls or within her mud hut woman lives much the same simple and beautiful life of the old Aryan villages. Exquisite cleanliness and simplicity, infinite purification, and always the same intimate motherhood.

The notion of the lady is foreign to India, and those who love the country cannot be too thankful that it is so. Not that Indian woman should be deprived of anything

that would make life noble and sweet and strong, but that their conception of existence is already more beautiful because more noble than any exotic notion. It must be through the intensifying of the Indian ideal of selflessness and wisdom and social power that emancipation shall come.

And this absence of luxury and self-indulgence from the ideal conception of Indian womanhood is fitly imaged in this symbol that you make to yourselves of God, the most precious religious symbol in the world, perhaps God the Mother,—and the Queen,—the Mother.

And of this symbol, you have made three forms—Durga, Jagaddhatri, and Kali.

In Durga, we have, indeed, an element of queenhood, but it is the power of the Queen, not her privilege.

Emerging from amidst the ten points of the compass, one foot on the lion, and one on the Asura, striking with the serpent and holding instruments of worship and weapons of destruction, there is, in Durga, a wonderful quality of literary interpretation. She is a wonderful symbol of the Power that manifests itself as Nature—the living energy at the centre of this whirlpool.

Dim overhead is that series of picture of the Giving of the Gods, that brings home to us the relation of God, of our own soul, to this great Energy.

Below, all movement and turmoil, above the calm of eternal meditation. The Soul inert, and Nature the great awakener. Behind both That Which manifests as both—Brahman.

Look at it how you will, could there be a finer picture than this of the complete duality? But Durga is the Mother of the Universe. The Divine and resistless Energy that kills almost as many as it brings to the birth, that fosters by the terrible process of the destruction of the unfit.

Are God and Nature then at strife?

That Nature sends such evil dreams?

So careful of the type she seems,
 So careless of the single life?
 That I, considering everywhere
 Her secret meaning in her deeds
 And finding that of fifty seeds
 She often brings but one to bear.
 I falter where I firmly trod,
 And falling with my weight of cares
 Upon the great world's altar stairs
 That slope through darkness up to God.
 I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
 And gather dust and chaff and call
 To what I feel is Lord of all,
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

Quivering human nerves know something that is called pain. How does Durga stand to that?

For the Gods that men make to themselves will not all utter the same voice of the Universal Life, but unless they have been so realised as to feed their worshipper's hunger, some faculty of his will be starved and stunted. We must remember that all *this* is but one way of seeing God—that every act and feeling is unconscious worship. God is its real soul, and if we hunger for love or for sympathy or for some word of encouragement and comfort, it is not in man that we shall find it—though it may be through man for the moment that our cry is stilled. And so in the symbol that we make of God, we need do no violence at all to this hungry human heart. We may and *must* satisfy it. Does Durga do this?

If not—the great World Force, indifferent to pain as to pleasure, is clearly not the mother of the soul.

In Jagaddhatri, we have some development of the notion of protection. But it is before Kali—the terrible one,—Kali the tongue of flame—Kali—the face seen in a fire—Kali, surrounded by forms of death and destruction, that the soul hushes itself at last, and utters that one word

“Mother.”

To the children she is “Mother” simply after their childhood’s need. The mother who protects, with whom we take refuge—who says to the soul, as God says to all of us sometimes: “My little child—you need not know much in order to please me. Only love me dearly.”

And if in all that surrounds Her, there is anything to our grown-up vision terrible, their eyes are sealed that they do not know it, and they find in her—as is the case with all emblems—only what their own life and experience leads them to understand.

And to the grown man, she is “mother” after *his* need—the mother who does not protect but makes strong to overcome, who demands the very best that we can give, and will be content with nothing less.

Not, you see that in Kali there is balm for every wound—not that for the pain she gives the sweet—not that the truth of things is to be blinked and protection to be given to one, that means the desertion of another. We shall see that as long as we need that, as long as we in life are glad to take a place in the cool that leaves another to bear the burden and heat of the day, as long as we are thankful to possess, as long as we are cowards, even for those we love, so long we shall look for a coward’s satisfaction in our God. And we shall find it.

But when we have grown past this, we shall find the right hand uplifted in blessing, *while* the left destroys. We shall see the moment of destruction of the Universe as the moment of realisation. Life will be a song of ecstasy and thanks-giving that the last sacrifice has been demanded from us.

KALI THE MOTHER

The stars are blotted out
 The clouds are covering clouds,
 It is darkness vibrant, sonant,
 In the roaring, whirling wind,

Are the souls of a million lunatics,
 Just loosed from the prison house,
 Wrenching trees by the roots
 Sweeping all from the path.
 The sea has joined the fray,
 And swirls up mountain-waves,
 To reach the pitchy sky—
 The flash of lurid light
 Reveals on every side
 A thousand, thousand shades
 Of Death begrimed and black—
 Scattering plagues and sorrows,
 Dancing mad with joy,
 (Come, Mother, Come.)
 For Terror is Thy name,
 Death is in Thy breath,
 And every shaking step
 Destroys a world for e'er.
 Thou Time, the All-Destroyer!
 (Come, O Mother, come!)
 Who dares misery love,
 And hug the form of Death,
 Dance in Destruction's dance,
 To him the Mother comes.

Religion, it appears, is not something made for gentleness. Religion is for the heart of the people. To refine is to emasculate it. Every man must be able there to find the bread. I must always illustrate from Christianity. I know that we have to thank God for certain elements of crudity and superstition that Christianity contains, that carry it to places that without these it could never reach.

The man who derives brutal satisfaction from life, or who sees no further than the surface of things, this man has a right to find these satisfactions, and to make for himself a worship which shall express these instincts. The man who is violent in his modes of thought, and vivid in

his apprehension of life, the man who appreciates the struggle of Nature, and is strong enough to plunge into it fearlessly that man has a right to offer to God that which he hourly demands from life. He who with precisely the same instincts as these, is full of the pity of life and of creation, will see in God the Refuge of All, the Divine Mother—pitiful and compassionate. He will echo Her cry to the world: "Humanity, Humanity, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not!"

But consciousness will not be arrested here. After all, what is the meaning of death—of destruction of the visible—of all these forms of horror and fear? Is it not the manifestation of that Divine Energy that carries through fire and slaughter and blind cruelty the message of love and deliverance home to us? And the man to whom once the great word of religion was "My child, you need not know much in order to please Me. Only love Me dearly. Talk to Me as you would talk to your mother, if she had taken you on her knee,"—that same man will now be able to say through every word and act and thought, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee."

And at some infinitely distant time, perhaps, when duality is gone, and not even God is any longer God, may that other experience come of which the Master spoke when he said—"It is always on the bosom of dead Divinity that the blissful Mother dances Her dance celestial."

As the child is occupied solely with the counting of some few objects, and the grown man with the truths of the higher mathematics, and as even those truths are transcended in reality by the faculty which they have developed, so here—the first symbols are as necessary as the last, if we are to reach the end. There was no ultimate importance in those early operations of counting, yet the mathematics could not have existed without them. So

worship must have its feet in the clay, if with its head it is to reach to Heaven. At every stage, however, we realise something that is to remain with us. *To the children of the Mother, all men must be brothers.* Separation is not. Difference is not. There is the common Motherhood. Men speak Her words to us, supplicate with Her hands, love with Her eyes, and our part to them is infinite service. What does personal salvation matter, if God, the infinite God, calls for love and service?

And we realise the *greatness of fact*. No betrayal of truth is so terrible as that of choosing what is beautiful and easy and soft, to be believed and worshipped. Let us face also and just as willingly, the terrible—the ugly—the hard.

God gave life—true. But He also kills.

God is Eternity, but with that idea does there not rise the black shadow of time, beginning and ending in obscurity?

I have been born in happy circumstances. He gave them. How dare I say that, when to another He gave hardship and pain and care? Shall I not worship Him in this manifestation of destruction, nay is this not the very place where I shall kneel and call Him Mother?

But linked with this sincerity is that other which leads us to it and beyond it. "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee—cut it off, and cast it from thee. Better is it to enter into life halt or maimed than having two hands or two feet to be cast out into ignorance." The God of Truth must needs be the God of Sacrifice. And, last of all, the great glory of this Mother-worship lies in its bestowal of *Manhood*. Time after time Kali has given men to India. In the history of Pratap Singh, of Shivaji, and of the Sikhs stand the men She gave. If Bengal, the cradle of Her worship, the home of Her saints, parts with Her worship, she will part at the same time with her manhood. It is her part to renew that ancient worship with ten times greater devotion, for the loss would be to her lasting peril

and disgrace.

I have not dealt in so many words, yet I have I think, covered in passing, the three main accusations, that are brought against Kali-worship—

1. That it is worship of an image ;
2. That it is worship of a horrible image ; and
3. That it is a worship that demands animal sacrifice.

But I think it more fair to leave these points to be brought up in the discussion with all the force that individual conviction can give.

It is well to remember, that we seek truth, not the triumph of a party. And it is also well to remember, that where the question of authority comes in, the only authoritative fault-finder would be that man who had realized all that Kali-worship has to give.

And He* found no fault. Rather, He uttered a message in the name of the Divine Mother that is today going out into all the world, and calling the nations to Her Feet.

* * *

The infinite and absolute superconsciousness of which mind and matter are the *illusory* aspects, is, as is well-known, called Brahman in the Vedanta, and the energy which expresses itself as mind and matter is called Maya. This is no place to enter into an examination of it, but it is necessary to state here the theory of Maya. The infinite and absolute cannot by definition be limited and related, be differentiated and split up into parts. If a thing looks like that which it cannot be, if a rope is seen like a snake, we call it an optical illusion. In place of the secondless Brahman we find this infinitely variegated interplay of mind and matter. If Brahman is not to die, the universe of phenomena must be regarded as a show, as an illusion or Maya.

* Sri Ramakrishna.

The ancient Rishis sought to symbolise this Maya-idea, express it in concrete form, by the image of Kali.

It is beyond our purpose to enter here into the question of the so-called idolatry of the Hindus. It will suffice for our present purpose to say, that in addition to word-pictures, which all worshippers use, the Hindu Rishis thought it wise to have concrete material images to help the understanding, and hence is the system of image-worship among them.

Let us now try to read the image of Kali.

The most prominent feature about her is her horridness. She is naked and dances on the bosom of her husband. She has a garland of decapitated heads round her neck and her tongue is outstretched to drink the warm blood of her victims. Weapons and terrible agents of Death adorn and surround her. She is dark like an ominous rain-cloud and her dishevelled flowing masses of hair fall down to her feet. Her laugh beats the thunder-clap all hollow. She is all terror.

Is that the picture of a young Hindu woman? She that has no individual existence apart from her husband, she that is so graceful, unobtrusive, retiring, always covered from head to foot, always the gentle, the soft, the loving mother! If anything, Kali is the exact reverse of the Hindu woman.

And that was exactly what the Rishis wanted to draw her and we must say their success was perfect. Nothing could be more unwomanly—more unlike a Hindu woman, than the picture of Kali they painted.

Maya has no individual existence apart from Brahman, like the snake apart from the rope, or the bubble apart from the water. So the Hindu woman who is but a type of the Original Woman has no individual existence apart from her husband. But what does Maya *show*? Instead of keeping in the background always, instead of playing her true role, she has grabbed Brahman, put him out of sight and shows *herself* in innumerable, terrible,

unwomanly, unmotherly ways. In place of the one limitless, taintless surging ocean of bliss, we have this infinitely variegated relative world of phenomena, and the one cry of misery and death, the inevitable product of the struggle for existence which dominates and shapes it, ringing through every plane of existence from the nebulous to the human. Unless we are prepared to blind and cheat ourselves deliberately we can no longer ignore *the one law* of life and progress which runs through all states of matter and mind. This is *struggle for existence*. And not one feature of Kali will be found overdrawn or exaggerated if she is looked upon as the concretised image of this fundamental law of relative life.

The first impulse which is apt to rise in the mind after this explanation of Kali is known, is,—If Kali is such, why worship her? She should be the last thing to adore!

A little reflection will show that this impulse is a reflex action of the ignorance of the true meaning of worship. Worship, as we Hindus understand it, is *constant remembrance*, always keeping before the mind's eye. And what is there, what can be there in the universe more important and vital for Moksha than to constantly live in the idea that the universe of phenomena which frightens us with its innumerable terrific faces is in reality but a *show*, a false appearance, the one truth being Satchidananda which is back of it all?

Maya is false, Kali is its symbol. If Kali were painted as the ideal Hindu woman, she would have been real. To convey her unreality—as she shows herself, she is painted as the ideal *non-woman*.

She hides Shiva under her feet, she dances over his bosom and successfully draws and rivets all attention to herself, as the mirage which shines over the desert cheats, and holds back the vision of the onlooker from the true state of affairs.

She has to be seen through, she has to be crossed over. What else should be thought of or worshipped—if not she?

Does one pore over a blank sheet, if one has to commit to memory a book?

Thus the true worshipper who knows her, who has seen through her, coolly ignores her existence, refuses to see her as she shows herself and succeeds to see her as *she is*. Her real existence is in Brahman, as the identity of a dream-ego is the ego which sleeps. The dream, however real and potent it may be for the time being, is nothing to the waking-consciousness. The seer tells Kali, that she is not what she seems, she is really Brahman and in no other light would he see her. She is Tara (the way to Moksha) and Brahmamayi (pervaded, interpenetrated, overlapped and full of Brahman).

No other child of hers has expressed and interpreted her better and more fully than the divine Ram Prasad. His songs stand unequalled for force, simplicity and depth of expression of the divine Motherhood. We have only room here for the translation of a few of them dealing with the point under consideration.

“Who knows what Kali is? The six Darshanas (systems of philosophy) have not obtained Her Darshana (sight). Kali as a Swan, plays with the Swan in the lotus forest. The Yogi always meditates on her in the Mula-dhara (the plexus underneath the spinal chord) and in the Sahasrara (that in the brain). Kali is the Atman (self) of the Atmarama (enjoyer in the self); innumerable are the wonderful evidences and administrations of her. Tara resides in all forms, just as she pleases. The universe is the Mother’s womb—you know what size it is. The Mahakala understands her properly, who else knows her like Him? The world laughs at Prasad’s words,—“Crossing the ocean by swimming!” My mind has grasped it—but not the Prana. This dwarf wants to touch the Moon!”

“My mind, don’t be intolerant. I have looked and searched through the Veda Agama and Purana; Kali, Krishna, Shiva, Rama—my Elokeshi (she with the dishevelled hair) is all these. She holds the horn as Shiva and

plays on the flute as Krishna. O Mother! You have a bow as Rama and a sword as Kali. Prasad says the attempt to demonstrate Brahman is like the smile of the person who has got big rows of teeth always projecting out! My Brahmamayi is in all forms and at her feet are the Ganges, Gaya and Kashi."

"Would, O Tara! such a day come, when streams will flow down my eyes with my repeating Tara Tara?—The lotus inside the breast will blossom and raise up its head and the darkness of the mind shall vanish, and I shall fall down on the earth, and be beside myself with the name of Tara. Then shall I be able to give up all the questions of distinction and non-distinction (or duality and non-duality), all wants of the mind will vanish—O! the Veda is true a hundred times. My Tara is formless! With the greatest happiness Ram Prasad proclaims to the world that the Mother resides in all forms—Look O blind eyes! at the Mother, she is the dispeller of darkness!"

We are aware of the many beastly and corrupt rites which have come to be associated with Kali-worship. While our regret for them is boundless, we do not see the wisdom of inveighing against Kali-worship in the wholesale manner as is often done by some sisters and brothers. Destroy the weeds, but save the garden!

KALI-WORSHIP

Sister Nivedita was invited to speak on Kali-worship on Sunday, the 28th May, 1899, at the Kali Temple, Kali-ghat, Calcutta. She said by way of introducing the subject:—

The spot where we are met this evening is the most sacred of all the shrines of Kali. For long ages it has been the refuge of pious souls in need, sorrow and thanksgiving, and their last thought in the hour of death, and who shall say to how many of the saints the Mother has revealed Herself just here? One she has called child, and another hero. One has been Her devotee simply, mad with the wine of Her Benediction and Her Beauty, and yet another has felt Her as his innermost self. For as the souls are numberless, so also are their powers, and innumerable are the wants that She can satisfy.

From this place Her voice goes out through the whole world sounding gently at the hour of evening and the time of dawn,—“My children, my children, I, even I, am your mother!”

The calls of the world may drown that voice in the glare of daylight, but with the return of the Hours of Peace, men sit alone with their own hearts, and then no matter how they misinterpret, come the still small tones of that communion,—so small, so distant, that we scarcely hear them, though some day we shall realise that everything in the universe—every experience in life—is but a note in the organ music of the voice of Kali.

The associations of the place are sacred, the time is sacred, this very blood and dust of the shrine are holy. Let us realise that we are gathered here, where so many millions of the dead have come to pray, not to hear a lecture but to worship.

The lecture being the same in substance as the foregoing one is not reproduced here. In the end she answered some objections and doubts that she had heard expressed at the Albert Hall meeting by several gentlemen as to the worship of Kali.

1. It was surely impossible to worship the Infinite God as an image.

Ans.—The Hindu practice was not that of addressing worship to the image. In strictness this was only used as a suggestion on which to concentrate the mind. The worship was really localised in a jar of water standing in front, and symbolising the infilling power of God in nature.

Everything as we see it is a way of seeing God. Why are we here at all, if it was not because at this stage of being we saw God under images, and could not see Him otherwise? We ourselves were the image of God, every motion of our lives was worship of Him under one of these forms, our own or another's and since we were on this plane was it not obvious that our devotion would do well to accept the fact, in order that we might the sooner rise from it by natural evolution?

2. The nature of the Kali-symbol itself was such that the sense of motherhood must quail before it.

Ans.—This was to be met by a three-fold argument. In the first place, while it was true that throughout a certain period in Europe art-development and the religious idea had gone hand in hand, with the result that the external attractiveness of the latter was vastly enhanced, yet they were not to suppose that the image of the Madonna and Child had always been beautiful. To the outsider unconscious of the glow of feeling which belongs to the devotee, those early Byzantine paintings and carvings seem as lifeless and ugly, perhaps, as the Kali image to the Europeanised critic.

Secondly this state of things was no deterrent to progress in art and sculpture. For down to the days of her greatest sculpture and perhaps later, all Greece went on pilgrimage to the shrine of an almost shapeless idol at Delphi and the same generation that knelt there in reverence had produced Phridios.

And third, as a matter of fact these considerations did not touch the point at issue. To Her worshippers the image of the Mother was not ugly. How could that form that you had loved and venerated from your babyhood be a thing apart from you, at which you could stand quietly looking with criticism in your heart? Violence and ugliness and unrealism were epithets that could be applied only by the alien. It was always so with religious symbols. Men see in them only what their own life and experience and thought enable them to see. Does the Christian ever picture what he means when he sings—"There is a fountain filled with blood"?

Many of the purest and holiest of religious associations lay for some people in such utterances as that ; needless to say they were never examined critically. This fact was of the essence of symbolism. But even to the eyes of the European art and critic the Kali image had a remarkably dramatic character, which could not be lost sight of. All early art struggled with thought and feeling, for the adequate expression of which it had no means, but the intensity of significance in this case was obvious and startling to even the most accustomed eye.

3. European sculpture was superior.

Ans.—With regard to their own mythology, and their own works, the Indian people ought to take their eyes off the West and cease to compare. Let them go on putting more and more idealism and reverence in their own way into the portrayal of the Mother ; and they would at last produce something national and great. Otherwise they would be misled by the mere superficial prettiness of foreign execution without understanding its deep inspirations and ideals, and so would still further vulgarise and degrade their own by Europeanising it.

4. Objection can be raised on the point of sacrifice.

Ans.—This question had already been dealt with. There was a certain insincerity in the proposition that one might sacrifice to oneself but not to Divinity. There was no blinking of the facts in this Kali worship. What we levied by, that we must give. Yet it was not the sacrifice of others but of ourselves that was the ultimate offering laid down in the Kali-ritual. This was why Shakti worship gave so much power; strength comes only of Renunciation,—and Kali could not be worshipped without Renunciation and increasing Renunciation too. That thought of life lived in union with a sacrifice which was such a strong motive in Christianity was born once more amongst the Indian people in this system. No other motive could be so strong and so enduring. I am not content merely to apologise for Kali-worship but am eager with all my strength to drive home its claims.

5. Idolatry should be given up. The temples for pilgrims—the shrines of India—were scenes of licence and debauchery. The weakness of the country was the result of image worship simply, and Kali had occasioned human sacrifice.

Ans.—I could by no means grant that the premises stated by my friend were true. Each count in the indictment is in my eyes non-proven.

The history of human sacrifices had especially been written by the enemies of Kali. But if it were true what did it add to the fact that men occasionally committed murder? Simply nothing, one way or another. If every thing is Divine and every act worship, then murder is also an act of worship being evidently the way in which certain natures approach God. Therefore human sacrifice is simply a special form of crime.

But the argument that a religious idea otherwise granted to be noble and true was to be held accountable for the vagaries of its followers was in itself

ridiculous. What religion had burnt most human beings in the name of its Master? Christianity: Did any one dream of holding *Jesus* responsible for this? Would they be right if they did? Certainly not. It was the same with regard to the terrible charges of debauchery that were brought up. If the religious truth enunciated is allowed to be sound and noble no more was to be said. It can not be called to account for its oppisite. It was probably true that the same *Satanites* and *diabalistes* societies existed in Paris, in London and in America, veiling similar practices under the cloak of another religion ; it was probable that no principle was ever propounded in this world without provoking some one to rise up and contradict it more or less violently. But we could not therefore cease to proclaim moral principles. Nor in the same way could we denounce Indian religion as the cause of Indian crime.

I had not a word to say against religious doubt. At bottom doubt of a religion was faith in the supremacy of Truth—it was our duty to stand by our doubts, listen to them, investigate for them and only lay them in a decent grave if they took to death of their own accord. The mind that doubted—earnestly doubted—was the mind that lived. But let us doubt enough. Do not let us accept the easiest or the pleasantest explanation as sufficient. It was so easy to say that God is Love, and to think that our own private happiness proves it. God is Love—but when do we learn that? How do we know it? Is it not in moments of anguish in our own lives that the Great Reality is borne in upon us as all Love, all Beauty, all Bliss? This was the paradox so boldly stated in the Kali-image—this great paradox of Nature and of the Universe and of the Soul of Man—that She who stands there surrounded by all that is terrible to Humanity is nevertheless the Mother and all we Her babes.

NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF LIFE IN INDIA

Have any of us thought how much our work has gained from being done in a place where we were thoroughly at home?

Do we know what it is to escape from the hour, or the day, or the week, of patient toil to the edge of some lake or the heart of some wood? Have we stood and listened to the wind amongst the winter branches, or rustling the dead leaves, calling and calling to us with the voices of our childhood, stirring dim depths in us, lifting us to the innermost heights of our own being, filling us with an infinite love, an infinite courage, an immeasurable hope?

Have we ever realised how intimate is the connection between the great interests of our life—whatever they be, house-keeping, teaching, collecting wild flowers, deep intellectual research,—and the love of our country?—the feeling of being at home, amongst our own people? No matter whether our life be comedy or tragedy—always our own. I remember last Good Friday standing in a church in the extreme West, listening to the Reproaches. The day was cold and dark, and the words fell like sobs. “My people, My people, what have I done unto Thee? Wherein have I wearied thee?” In that supreme pathos it was “My people”, there was no breaking of the bond.

I would say that there is no possibility of true work, no shadow of a possibility of a great life, where there is not this sense of union, with the place and the people amongst whom we find ourselves. If you answer that the great majority of men at least, in England today, are working at tasks which they hate and despise, I can only say that there is no surer sign of the fatal danger which assails our national life, and if you will give me the opportunity

Lecture delivered on the 22nd October, 1900, at the Sesame Club, London.

I think I shall easily make good that statement.

But all this does not mean that we must stay in the place where we were born. What happens when the call comes to the individual, to leave the old group and go out and found a new family or a new house? The indispensable condition of adding harmonious natures, well-developed and proportioned individuals, to the world, is that two people shall conceive such an affection for each other that it cancels all difference of association. The time when they had not met must seem a blank to them, or only significant because that meeting throws light upon it. Probably both see qualities in the other that none else can see in either. That matters nothing. It may be all illusion. Only, the illusion must be there. And in some extraordinary way we find that if it is not there, and if it is not perfect, we can read the fact that, of two people, one was bondsman to the other, and not the free and joyous comrade, not only in their lives today, and in a home that misses the note of perfect joy, but long long hence, in the character of some old man or woman whose nature has always carried an inheritance of war within itself.

If this emotion is so necessary in order to preserve the unity of life through the alliance of a bride and bridegroom who were born in the same street, if its absence be fraught with such danger to more than the two people themselves, let us think how much more imperative it must be to the man who is called from England to India to do his work.

What a little thing it would be to any of us to die for one whom we really loved! Perhaps indeed we do not really love, to our deepest, till we have learnt that to be called to do so would be supreme beatitude. It is such love as this that makes it possible to live and do great service. It is such a falling-in-love that India demands of English men and women who go to her to work. It matters little what the conscious explanation may be,—a civil service appointment, a place in the army, the cause of religion, of education, of the people. Call it what we may,

if we go with contempt, with hatred, with rebellion, we become degraded, as well as ridiculous ; if we go with love, with the love that greets the brown of a cottage-roof against the sky, the curve of a palm, the sight of a cooking-pot, the tinkle of an anklet with a thrill of recognition, that desires the good of India as we desire the good of our own children, to transcend our own, that India be stimulated into self-activity by us, if we go with this love, then we build up the English Empire by sure ways, and along main lines, whether we imagine ourselves to be serving England or India or Humanity. For the love of England and India are one, but no love ever seeks its own.

Throughout what I say tonight I am speaking in the interests of England, as an English woman ; more, what I say would be endorsed by all those highest officials who are faithful to the trust of their country's interest committed to them.

For the man who regards the Queen's cause is he who will impoverish himself to distribute bread in time of famine, and the man who hates and despises is the man who will selfishly exploit a subject people. I believe I am right in saying that the supreme government is well aware that under the name of race-prestige much may be included which does anything but add to the prestige of our race.

The fact is, under the terrible over-organisation and over-centralisation of modern life, there lurks an appalling danger of vulgarity. We are succumbing to a horrible scepticism. How are mothers who have never seen the inside of anything but beautiful English homes, or luxurious travelling-resorts, how are these to know that there was no noble possibility before the knight-errant of old that is not doubled and trebled for their own boys? How are they to guess that the English race has to struggle with problems of doing and undoing today, that no race has ever faced in the history of the world? How can they lay upon their sons that charge of reverence and love and belief in the spiritual possibilities of life, that is necessary

to make the name of our country stand in history as Shakespeare dreamt of it . . .

This happy breed of men, this little world,
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
 This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
 Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
 As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
 Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son,
 This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
 Dear for her reputation through the world.

And yet, though we know it not, the voices of the gods are all about the world today. The calls to self-sacrifice are greater, the ways of self-sacrifice are a thousandfold more, and many thousandfold deeper, than ever before. We are mistaken when we think that the clarion of war is the only sound that calls us to the right of struggling and dying for our country. The churchbells of the British peace ring a far surer summons. There was no greatness, no courage, no divine self-effacement, open to our fathers, of which infinitely more is not the right of their sons today. The words "British Empire" mean neither more nor less than the British opportunity to choose the noblest part ever played in the great drama of the world, or refusing, to fail utterly, and miserably, and brutally, as no nation ever failed before.

It has been a long preamble, and I am anxious to do justice to the difficulties that may present themselves to an untrained boy, sincerely desirous of doing the right thing, landing in India, to fulfil the duties of an appointment, without either a store of culture, or a disciplined imagination, or a wealth of rightly directed feeling.

I quite see how impossible it will look to him that people who live with a startling simplicity, who sit on bare floors, and use in eating neither knives nor forks nor

table-linen, are really persons of a deeper and more developed civilisation than his own.

The same difficulty, begin to say the scholars, faced the officers of Marcus Aurelius when they battled, on the frontiers of the Empire, against the merchant-peoples of the North.

It is no credit of mine that I have been so fortunate as to escape this difficulty. I went out to India nearly three years ago, and was there some eighteen months. I went at the call of an English woman, who felt that no sufficiently national attempt had yet been made, for the education of Indian girls. After spending sometime with her, I was to be free to take my own way of studying my problem. When I tell you what were my preconceptions of how I was to do this, I fear you will be much amused. I was not going for the sake of "the Higher" or literary, but for what we here have always called the *new* Education, beginning with the manual and practical aspects of development, and passing on to the question of definite technical and scientific training, but always regarded as subordinate to the development of character. I knew that one must live with the people, and take their point of view, if one were ever to establish any sound educational process amongst them, using to the utmost the elements that their life might provide, and keeping the scheme in organic relation with these.

This study I pictured to myself as taking place in mud huts, on journeys barefooted across the country, amongst people who would be completely hostile to my research. But I owed a great intellectual debt to Sanskrit culture and an educational task was a delightful means for the expression of my gratitude.

So you see that I was indeed more fortunate than most, in the attitude and means of my entrance into Indian life.

What did I find there? Instead of hostility, I found a warmth of welcome. Instead of suspicion, friends.

Instead of hardships and fatigue, a charming home, and abundance of the finest associations.

For eight months I lived alone with one servant in a real Indian house in a Calcutta lane. There I kept a small experimental school. About forty little girls belonged to it and I took them in relays—four classes of two hours each. My knowledge of Bengali being limited, I was particularly glad to fall back on kindergarten occupations for the greater part of our class-work, and I was thus enabled to arrive at a clear knowledge of the practical difficulties and practical potentialities of a useful school.

But this was work. The playtime of the day I was allowed to spend in a neighbouring zenana, amongst a group of widow ladies with whom I had much in common, and Saturday and Sunday I reserved as holidays. This was a custom that I fear my children never approved. I remember how the first Saturday morning a crowd of uproarious little people had gathered outside the door at six o'clock, evidently determined to gain admission. A workman who could speak a little English was inside and he came to me, "The baby people, the baby people, Miss Sahib! Let me open!"

No Hindu of any class or sect or party ever put a hindrance in my way. When they heard of any difficulty, they always did something towards removing it, the women just as much as the men. In the same way, they felt a curious sense of responsibility, as if I were the guest of the whole of our lane. They were constantly sending me food. If they had fruit, they would share it with me. If I expected guests, they would provide the repast, and I rarely knew even the name of the giver.

I need not tell you that in deeds like these a very sweet relationship is created. I need not tell you that I am proud as well as grateful to have eaten the bread of a charity so sweet.

And I think if we go deeper into the reason of this hospitality, we shall be struck by the culture that it

displays. *They thought of me as a student.* It was something like the university of the middle ages, where the poor scholar naturally came upon the good-wives of the town for maintenance. But there was I think this difference, that the university established such a custom mainly in a given centre here and there, while in India the idea of this function is familiar to every person and every family and the obligations of the university arise wherever there is one enquiring mind. Through and through the life I found these evidences of an ancient culture permeating every section of society, my only difficulty in recounting it all to you is in determining where to begin.

The pleasures of the people are such fine pleasures! It was my custom to save money by avoiding the use of cabs, and travelling in trams as much as possible. This, of course, always left a certain amount of a local journey to be made on foot. So at all hours of the day and night I would come up and down our narrow little lanes and streets, as various errands might lead me. In the sunlight they would be crowded with people, and the traffic of the bullockcarts. In the evening, men would be seated chatting about their doorways or in the shops, or inside open windows, and no one even looked my way; but at night, when one had once turned out of the European streets, everything was sunk in stillness and peace, so that it took me some time on the journey home to recover from the shock of seeing a drunken Englishman. In eight months of living in the poorest quarter of Hindu Calcutta, such a sight had been impossible. As one lay in bed however, the chanting of prayers would occasionally break the silence of the midnight, and one knew that somewhere in the distant streets a night beggar, lamp in hand, was going his rounds.

I think if one must pick out some feature of Indian life which more than any other compels this high morality and decorum to grow and spread, it must be the study of the national epics. There are two great poems, the

Mahabharata and the Ramayana, which take a place to Hindus something like that of Shakespeare to ourselves. Only this is a Shakespeare that every one knows, and a Shakespeare with the sacredness of the New Testament thrown about it.

A picture comes to me of a night-scene in the Himalayas. At a turn in the road the great trees sweep aside a little to make room for a tiny hamlet at their foot. Here in the open shop of the grain dealer, round a little lamp, sits a group of men, and amongst them is a boy reading earnestly from a book.

It is the Ramayana,—the tale of the wanderings of the heroic lovers, Sita and Rama. The men listen breathlessly, though the story is familiar enough, and every now and then as the boy ends a verse, they chant the refrain "To dear Sita's bridegroom, great Rama, all hail!" Sita is the ideal woman. A divine incarnation to the world of perfect wifehood and perfect stainlessness. She is the woman of renunciation, not of action; the saint, not the heroine. Every Indian woman spends some part of the day in the contemplation of this character. Probably no one passes a whole day without taking her name. Every woman desires to be like her. Every man desires to see in her the picture of his mother or his wife. I do not know if you will see with me the tremendous influence that it must have on the character and development of a nation, to spend a definite time daily in this intense brooding over the ideal.

It is here that I come to my great point, and I must make it clear from misapprehension. I shall not mean that the lot of the Hindu woman in her perpetual struggle with poverty, in her social and industrial inefficiency, is perfect, or perfectly adapted to the modern world. Far from that.

But I remember that some of the greatest men and women that ever lived have been born in India. I remember that from India emanated the only religion that ever

put the missionary-question on a true educational basis ; I remember that amongst military leaders two thousand years ago India produced her Napoleon Bonaparte, in Chandragupta, the Shudra who unified a continent ; that amongst statesmen she bore Ashoka and Akbar ; that in science we owe mathematics and astronomy and geometry to her ; that in philosophy and in literature she has achieved the highest rank.

I remember too that this greatness is not dead in the country. No longer ago than 1750 Raja Jai Singh concluded that European astronomical tables contained an error which he was able to correct. Subsequent science, it is said, stood by the Indian astronomer. Within the century that is leaving us Ram Chandra has solved, by intuitive methods, problems of maxima and minima hitherto unfinished, and India has given proof that she can yet add to her scientific laurels.

Seeing all this, I read a message of great hope for humanity. What may be the truth about the military careers of nations, I do not know. It may be that in rude activities there are periods of growth and flourishing and decay. But if a people fix their hope upon their own humanisation, it is not so. The curve of civilisation is infinite and spiral. The dominion of the human mind and spirit has yet to be exhausted.

But still—where—why—is this humanising process the essential life of India, more than of other countries? What differentiates the Indian training from others? I find one answer which outweighs all others in my estimate. It is this. The special greatness of Indian life and character depends more than on any other feature, on the place that is given to Woman in the social scheme. What? you will say, what about child-marriage and child-widowhood, and the grievances of woman? I am not going to speak of woman as the wife. There must be unhappy marriages in India as elsewhere, though I have seen none but the happy, and they have seemed to me to represent a tie more

tender and intimate than I have often witnessed. But wifehood in India is not woman's central function. That is motherhood. As mother, an Indian woman is supreme. The honour that a man does here by the simple words "my wife", he does better there by saying "the mother of my children." Sons worship their mothers as the ideal. Motherhood is the ideal relation to the world. Let us free ourselves from self-seeking as the mother does. Let us be incapable of jealousy as is a mother to her child. Let us give to the uttermost. Let us love most those who need most. Let us be indiscriminating in our service. Such is the Indian woman's conception of a perfect life. Such is the moral culture with which she surrounds her children. Can you ask what is its effect? I sat one day hour after hour beside a boy of twelve who was dying of plague. The home was of the poorest, a mud hut with a thatched roof. The difficulty lay in keeping the patient isolated from his family. There was one woman who came and went about the bedside perpetually, in an utter recklessness of her own safety, and at last I ventured to remonstrate, pointing out that my presence was of no use, if I could not save her this exposure. She obeyed me instantly, without a word, but as she went, hid her face in her veil crying softly. It was the lad's mother. Of course I found a place where she could sit with his head on her feet, curled up behind him in comparative security, fanning him, and then, through all the hours of that hot day, till sunset came, I had a picture before me of perfect love. "Mataji! Mataji! Adored Mother!" was the name he called her by. Now and then, mistaking me for her, he smiled his perfect contentment into my eyes, and once he snatched at my hand and carried his own to his lips. And this was a child of the Calcutta slums!

But it is not the child only. The word *mother* is the endless shore on which all Indian souls find harbour. In moments of great agony it is not with them. "My God!" but "Oh Mother!"

A woman in the neighbourhood was wailing loudly in the dark, and the sound disturbed one who was lying ill. An attendant on the sick came down into the woman's hut to find her, and, guided by her cries, came up to her quietly and put an arm about her. The wailing ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and she fell back with long sobs; "You are my *mother!*" was all that she could say.

If the word "God" meant as much to us as "Mother" to this bereaved soul, what might we not reach? And to many in India it is so. The two ideas are one. Life with all its inexplicable torture and its passing gleams of joy is but the play of the Divine Motherhood of the Universe, with Her children. If we can understand this, all happenings will become alike fortunate. We must cease to discriminate. And so in every temple dedicated to this idea, the visitor enters with the prayer:

Thou,—the Giver of all blessings,
 Thou,—the Giver of all desires,
 Thou,—the Giver of all good,
 To *Thee* our salutation,
 Thee we salute, Thee we salute, Thee we salute.
 Thou terrible dark Night!
 Thou, the Night of delusion!
 Thou, the Night of Death!
 To *Thee* our salutation,
 Thee we salute, Thee we salute, Thee we salute.

And this rises up daily from end to end of the country together with that other prayer to the Soul of the Universe which to me seems the most beautiful in any language.

From the unreal lead us to the Real,
 From darkness lead us unto Light,
 From death lead us to Immortality,
 Reach us through and through ourselves,
 And ever more protect us—O Thou Terrible!
 From ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate face.

INDIA HAS NO APOLOGY TO MAKE

How far you of Madras may be willing to endorse the generous words of Mr. Dutt,* and admit me as one of your own blood and nationality, I do not know. And the question is not at this moment of importance.

I had, before my departure for Europe, the great privilege of living in a simple Indian home, making Indian friends, and being taught in some measure to act and think and feel like an Indian woman. I lay stress upon the fact that it was not amongst the rich and great that my lines were cast. For the life that I was thus allowed to share was that of the common Indian world. Bengali in its details, it was in its main features that of the masses of the people the country over. And this I know because in the Himalayas, being allowed to join in a great pilgrimage, I saw, amongst people from all the provinces of India, that same quiet simple life, that same passionate reverence for purity, that same sense of the sacramental significance of food, the same depth of thought and feeling that formed the characteristic elements of the daily routine in my Calcutta home.

It was this memory, then, of a household of orthodox Hindu women that I carried with me during my recent wanderings amidst the luxury and splendour of the West. It is this memory that I bring back to you today undimmed, and that prompts me to say to you what I have found to be the truth.

Just as it has been realised already that in religion you have a great deal to give, and nothing to learn from the West, so also in social matters it will be well to understand that what changes are necessary you are fully

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* Romesh Chandra Dutt.

competent to make for yourselves, and no outsider has the right to advise or interfere. Changes no doubt there will be. Change is probably inseparable from the process of life. But these changes must be original, self-determined, self-wrought. What! does the civilisation of three thousand years mean nothing that the young nations of the West should be in a position to *lead* the peoples of the East?

They tell us that India wants civilising, that Indian life is barbarous. Nay, we answer, it is simple, but this simplicity resembles the religious thought of India in being itself not only a special form of civilisation of a very high order, but in also providing the solution of the abstract and universal problem of all civilisations. For, you have devised a scheme of life which leaves the refinement of the individual intact, though all wealth be taken from him. Under all other forms known to me, good breeding diminishes with loss of means. The rich man is distinctly more civilised than the poor can ever be. The aristocrat who drops into the lower ranks loses his self-respect more miserably than any. Here these things are not so. And why not so? Because before Europe was born, India had grasped the essential fact that the end of civilisation lies in the making of men—not wealth, not power, not organisation.

When we have said that a country contains twenty millions, and twenty million employees, we have said a terrible thing, no matter what the glory and wealth of that country may seem to be. When we have said that in another country the beggar is worshipped, we have not yet said anything of importance. But when one is able to state that the civilisation of a people is a great ladder by which every man and woman of that people is striving to mount to a higher self-development, a greater culture, a broader outlook, one has reached the utmost that can be said of any nation.

I am far from desiring to flatter my audience. I am anxious to leave individuals entirely on one side. But I must be allowed to confess that as I look at the inner trend

of Indian life, as I realise on the one hand the fact that Gautama Buddha is the national type according to which all individuals must be measured, and on the other hand your readiness to translate and reapply the great vision of the Bo-tree into any form of learning—saying for instance—“Perfect music is Samadhi”—I am puzzled as to whether Christianity is to be regarded as *par excellence* the Asiatic Mission in the West, or whether we must not add the University to the Church, in order to complete the statement.

For the problems on which India was engaged when she was overtaken by what we may call the modern epoch, were not lower, but higher than the problems proper to that epoch. She succumbed because the student absorbed in his mathematics may be less fit to deal with the outside world than some far lower type of man in the street, and may succumb.

They say that Indian women are ignorant and oppressed. To all who make this statement we may answer that Indian women are certainly not oppressed. The crime of ill-treating women is at once less common and less brutal in form here than in younger countries. And the happiness, the social importance, and may I say, the lofty character of Indian women are amongst the grandest possessions of the national life.

When we come to the charge that Indian women are ignorant, we meet with a far deeper fallacy. They are ignorant in the modern form, that is to say, few can write, and not very many can read. Are they then illiterate? If so, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the Puranas and stories every mother and every grand-mother tells to the babies, are not Literature. But European novels and the *Strand Magazine* by the same token are? Can any of us accept this paradox?

The fact is, writing is not culture though it is an occasional result of culture. The greatest literature occurs at the beginning of a literary age and so, to those who know

Indian life, it is easy to see that an Indian woman who has the education of the Indian home, the dignity, the gentleness, the cleanliness, the thrift, the religious training, the culture of mind and heart, which that homelife entails, though she cannot perhaps read a word of her own language, much less sign her name, may be infinitely better educated in every true sense, and in the literary sense also, than her glib critic.

The remaining charge that seems to me of a grave enough nature to require reply is that out yonder on the quays and in your streets are your pariahs, your outcasts, and that to touch these people seems to be such defilement that you have deliberately added to their degradation and unhappiness through unnumbered ages.

My friends, if this statement was true, that you had really lived amongst these poor aborigines in this fashion, then I could only say, that you had been guilty of living in the country like foreigners, with the feeling of foreigners. And from India herself I have learnt that to feel as a foreigner is always vulgar. But in this case again, whatever the faults of individuals may have been, and it is possible because they are men, the inner trend of the great civilisation that has grown up on this different soil is something very different.

There is nothing that Hinduism has recognised so clearly as the need to Hinduism of the lowest castes, and the world owes eternal gratitude to the race that has held out a system of life in which rank was a sign, a synonym for cleanliness and care about food, and in which these luxurious purities were made subordinate to the conscious aim of increasing brain power, and emotional power and self-control. We must never forget that to make every man and woman into a Rama or a Sita or a Gautama Buddha is the strenuous purpose of Indian culture, and the very pariah who recognises this standard as the supreme test, is higher by that fact than the man who imagines his possession of wealth or beauty or a throne to be any-

thing in itself. So much for the past. Now for the present and for the future.

It has been my unspeakable privilege to know some of the greatest men that modern India has produced. Of one,* well-known to you, it is not my place to speak, since a daughter cannot be permitted to offer praise before the world to her own father. Her whole life is in that case, her best offering. Or of him, again, whom you see before you, it would be impertinent to talk in his presence.† We must leave in silence that admiration and reverence that his work and his character cannot fail to inspire. Let us speak then, of a faithful son of the motherland, who is working in distance and isolation for his cause, and who ought to be remembered daily in the love and prayers of all country people—I allude to Professor Jagadish Chandra Bose.

As in the case with the others whom we have just mentioned, this man has come out of the very heart of your old life. He was a village boy in the most orthodox part of Bengal. His mother, a simple Hindu woman, seems to have been one of those who are the glory of your race—all sweetness, all tenderness, all self-sacrifice. Of his father, a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal wrote on one occasion in his diary, "Today I have met an Indian man whose like I never saw before." An English woman, the wife of a distinguished scientific man, who knew Dr. Bose when he was young, as a student of her husband's, told me how his father, when his boy was leaving for England, blessed him and said "My son, I have gone as far as I can go; if you wish to go further, you have still my blessing."

He sent him out, you see, in perfect freedom. Remembering on the one hand the tremendous weight of association and affection that binds the Hindu to his past, to his custom, to his family, and seeing on the other hand the perfect release given, we feel that we are in the presence of the thought of Mukti—a conception of freedom

* Swami Vivekananda.

† Romesh Chandra Dutt.

before which most of all other nations grow pale. It is this ideal of Mukti, my friends, that reflects itself on all your thought and removes all that is provincial and limited and vulgar to such an infinite distance from the Hindu mind. Of Dr. Bose's scientific career, I do not need to speak in detail. You know probably something of his great recent discoveries leading up to the clear demonstration of the unity of phenomena. You know also something of the subordinate discoveries. You know that wireless signals were sent in a Calcutta verandah, and even on one occasion, through the person of a Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, before Marconi began to be heard of. You know that at the moment when the Rontgen rays were discovered, intellectual Europe was stirred by an Indian visitor who brought the news of an even more profound and comprehensive discovery in the same field. And recently you may have heard of your countryman's remarkable discoveries with regard to the mode of vision, the theory of a photography and other things. Wherever this man has gone, he has carried the flag of India, and he has invariably planted it at the very head of Scientific Assault.

Such things are not done easily, not done without infinite struggle. It is not sufficient to applaud results. The people must make it theirs to sustain courage and hope in these mighty servants, and by their constant love and appreciation give wings to their feet.

As we look at this particular life, and ask ourselves why it is so great, how it has happened that the first Indian man to appear in Western science should at one bound, as it were, leap to a towering position in that science—I think we shall find a threefold reason.

In the first place, that perfect freedom with which Dr. Bose went out as a student from his country. His father's blessing was a symbol of something that went far deeper. For he accepted the postulates of the West, in approaching the western form of thought. He determined to find Truth at any cost. There can be no doubt that he

honestly strove against all prejudice and prepossession. There can be no doubt that he began his work with a clean slate in the matter of opinion.

As far as the intellectual aspect of this freedom is concerned, I know well that any Hindu might have gone, that many a Hindu now here has gone, in his personal experience. It happened in this case that the lot of an Indian man was cast by circumstances in a place where his external conduct had to correspond to his mental honesty of purpose.

The second element which must have determined his career was the student's own hard work and thoroughness. Having selected science, the young man went in for all the sciences he could get. Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Electricity, Physiology. Nothing seemed to come amiss. Nothing seemed enough to daunt him. He carried into the realm of science what Prince Ranjit Singh carried to the cricket field—an invincible impulse to reach perfection. Having then laid the foundation of a breadth of culture almost unparalleled in this age of scientific specialisations, it was almost an accident that made him a specialist in Physics. Coming back to India, his tastes seem to have continued the process. At one time he took up photography, at another phonographic records, and made singularly fine collections. In everything this man took up, nothing short of perfection appeared to content him. The best photographs, the best phonographs, the best records. Is not this thirst after perfection the true Tapasya? Then there came some sneer at the incapacity of the Indian race for scientific discovery, and the answering flash of determination to give the lie to the taunt, and your great countryman was precipitated upon the task that has made him famous.

The crowning advantage in Professor Bose's destiny lay, however, in his Indian birth. Upto this point, we have been dealing more or less with the similarities between him and others. If he stood free, stripped of all impediment,

save the burning desire to work for his country, it was in order that he might be the better fitted to compete on equal terms with those who were necessarily unencumbered by foregone conclusions. If he worked hard and had genius, we must take it, that western man of Science have also worked hard and had genius. We must remember Lord Kelvin, taking his degree at fourteen, and so on. We come now upon the difference between Professor Bose and others,—upon the consideration of that enormous debt that every Indian owes to his country, and her past, to those simple forgotten good and true men who have made your Indian inheritance what it is.

Western science is continually baffled and thwarted by the determination of her students to demonstrate the manifoldness of the Universe. She is set upon the determination of differentia. What is it, then, that distinguishes the living from the non-living? she will ask again and again in her perplexity, never doubting, however, that some final distinction there must be.

But how is it on this head with the Indian man? Why, his very blood beats to the recognition of unity! He has no interest in keeping Chemistry and Physics, Biology and Electricity, each carefully confined within its own wire fence, as I heard your distinguished countryman point out wittily to the Friday evening audience of the Royal Institute of Great Britain—perhaps the most brilliant assembly of its kind in the whole world,—“In India there is but one Science—the Science of Nature.” When a Hindu, therefore, discovers a new link between two great and seemingly divergent series of phenomena, he is not made bitter and confused thereby: he has every reason to *welcome* the discovery. He is *glad* to behold the merging of area into area, line into line, mass into mass. It only affords him a new proof of that vision to which he was predisposed, the vision of the unity of all things. All his life he has been surrounded by this idea. Ignorant servants and cultivated friends, all have conspired to talk

to him of it from his cradle. He drank it in with his mother's milk. He looks upon Death as his return to it. It was this, ultimately, that set him free to run his race. How could an Indian mind be vexed by perceiving *unity*, where all the world hitherto imagined difference?

There is another point in the Indian inheritance that gives you an overwhelming advantage in the study of Science and that is what has been called so brilliant by "the Sannyasi mind." It is your mode of direct knowledge, that allows no fatigue of the body to deflect you from the point of concentration. You have never, in religion, asked people to *learn about* God. You have set them always to know God. The mind made one with the thing-in-itself. Knowledge reached in this way is utterly different from mere inference, mere induction, mere reasoning-about. It is the method of genius everywhere. All mathematical progress, for instance, the world over, has been made thus. Only, the Indian people having a clear understanding and analysis of the act, and a definite training for its achievement, having also a society and a civilisation which is saturated with the idea of mind,—direction and control,—all this being so, the power to know in this way is commoner in India than elsewhere, and you enjoy thereby a racial equipment, of untold value, for the pursuit of scientific enquiry.

For all these reasons, when I see this Indian man standing by his guns on behalf of his last great pronouncement, the absolute continuity between living and non-living, I feel that his success is his country's success, his struggle, India's struggle and that he himself, one alone in the century as he is, is nevertheless nothing save an invitation to the men and women of India to cease, as Prof. Geddes said, from taking mere snippets and parings of Western culture, and to enter the arena of modern thought and knowledge as masters, prepared to vindicate the intellectual-equality, by no means!—the intellectual supremacy of their country in honourable combat with the

world. On some such point I am indeed the bearer of a message from Professor Bose to you all, which I shall hope to have some more adequate opportunity of delivering to an Indian audience.

I come then, to the application of all that I have said. Your national customs require no apology. Stand by them.

Your great men yield in nothing to the great men of other countries. Glory in them, love them, encourage them to the top of your bent. They will *never* give you cause to be ashamed.

Set the standard high for the man who would be held worthy of his Indian birth. Ask, does he seek Truth for its own sake, not as a means to some selfish end? Is he large, generous and devoted? Has he been unwearied in his race? Insatiable in his hunger and thirst after knowledge and for the Right?

But if the answer to such questions as these be 'yes' then let us know that that man is twenty times more an Indian man, that the homeland may count him if there can be degrees in sonship—twenty times more her son than another who may never have broken a single custom of his caste.

The Indian people is a mightier people. It is for the nation to learn its strength, and for the individual to strive mightily therein, and nothing will be able to resist its progress. All difficulties will be broken before it like cobwebs.

Yet there will be no advance for India—however much the apparent benefit at the moment,—in any step that shall take you away from the realisation of those Supreme truths which it is your destiny to proclaim amongst all the nations of earth.

'They who behold the Real in the midst of this unreal,
 They who see Life in the midst of this death,
 They who know the One in all the changing manifoldness of this Universe,
 Unto them belongs Eternal Peace—unto none else'.

HOW AND WHY I ADOPTED THE HINDU RELIGION

I am a born and bred English woman and unto the age of eighteen, I was trained and educated as English girls are. Christian religious doctrines were of course early instilled into me. I was even from my girlhood inclined to venerate all religious teachings and I devotedly worshipped the child Jesus and loved Him with my whole heart for the self-sacrifices He always willingly underwent, while I felt I could not worship Him enough for His crucifying Himself to bestow salvation on the human race. But after the age of eighteen, I began to harbour doubts as to the truth of the Christian doctrines. Many of them began to seem to me false and incompatible with truth. These doubts grew stronger and stronger and at the same time my faith in Christianity tottered more and more. For seven years I was in this wavering state of mind, very unhappy, and yet, very very eager to seek the Truth. I shunned going to Church and yet sometimes my longing to bring restfulness to my spirit impelled me to rush into Church and be absorbed in the service to feel at peace within, as I had hitherto done, and as others around me were doing. But alas! no peace, no rest was there for my troubled soul all eager to know the truth.

During the seven years of wavering it occurred to me that in the study of natural science I should surely find the truth I was seeking. So, ardently I began to study how this world was created and all things in it and I discovered that in the laws of Nature at least there was consistency, but it made the doctrines of the Christian religion seem all the more inconsistent. Just then I happened to get a life of Buddha and in it I found that here, alas, also was

there a child who lived ever so many centuries before the child Christ, but whose sacrifices were no less self-abnegating than those of the other. This dear child Gautama took a strong hold on me and for three more years I plunged myself into the study of the religion of Buddha, and I became more and more convinced that the salvation he preached was decidedly more consistent with the truth than the preachings of the Christian religion.

And now came the turning point for my faith. A cousin of your great Viceroy Lord Ripon invited me to have tea with him and to meet there a great Swami from India who, he said, might perhaps help the search my soul was longing for. The Swami I met here was none other than Swami Vivekananda who afterwards became my Guru and whose teachings have given relief my doubting spirit had been longing for so long. Yet it was not during one visit or two that my doubts were dispelled. Oh no! I had several warm discussions with him and I pondered on his teachings for more than a year. Then he asked me to visit India, to see the Yogis and to study the subject in the very country of its birth, and I found, at last, a faith I could lean upon and obtain my Mukti through the uplifting of the spirit till it is merged into Ananda? Now I have told you how and why I have adopted this religion of yours. If you care to hear more, I would gladly go on.

I love India as the birth-place of the highest and best of all religions ; as the country that has the grandest mountains, the Himalayas ; as the place where the sublimest of mountains are located. The country where the homes are simple ; where domestic happiness is most to be found ; where the woman unselfishly, unobtrusively, ungrudgingly, serves the dear ones from early morn to dewy eve ; where the mother and the grandmother studies, foresees and contributes to the comfort of her belongings, regardless of her own happiness, and in the unselfishness raises womanhood to its highest eminence.

You, my sisters, each of whom I dearly love for being

the daughter of this lovely land of India, each of you I urge to study the grand literatures of your East in preference to the literatures of the West. Your literature will uplift you. Cling to it. Cling to the simplicity and sobriety of your domestic lives. Keep its purity as it was in the ancient times and as it is still existing in your simple homes.

Do not let modern fashions and extravagances of the West and its modern English education spoil your reverential humility, your lovable domestic ties consisting in the loving forethought the elders display for the beloved ones, depending on them, and the resulting respectful deference filially and dutifully accorded by the young to the aged. I make this appeal not to my Hindu sisters only but also to Mohammedan and other sisters of mine too. All are my sisters being the daughters of my land of adoption and where I hope to continue the work of my revered Guru Vivekananda.

INDIAN WOMEN AS THEY STRIKE AN ENGLISH WOMAN

The first thing to strike the European eyes in oriental life generally is its likeness to the scenes and incidents depicted in the Bible.

Unfortunately, most Europeans after being puzzled by this for a while 'give it up' and never think of it again. Had they pursued the subject they would have come upon interesting discoveries. The East is one, in a sense in which the West is not ; and these women for instance, so like Rebecca and Beth and Mary, are indeed their actual sisters. The whole aim of their education is un-European for we must not allow ourselves to suppose that the Eastern woman has no education. Far from it. That calm dignity in meeting strangers, that perfect poise in embarrassing situations, that gentle depth of eternity, that quiet skill in cooking and caring, all these things were not acquired haphazard. Neither were they imparted in classes given at definite hours by definite persons. Better than this, they are the warp of the web of national life, mind-stuff and taught-stuff of every household routine. No woman would find it easy to tell us where she has learned most, whether in her father's house, from her mother-in-law or by her own efforts in the inner recesses of her own heart. Our language teaches us much that we could never describe. The very story of Savitri is an education. It may be indeed that the two great educational factors in a Hindu woman's life are the influence of home and the atmosphere of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Every type, every ideal adds its quota, but these are probably the chief. The result diverges widely from the European product. It is the Western woman to enjoy, to possess, to dominate, yet one

sometimes thinks that the oriental woman enjoys more. Her happiness is quieter, but it is obviously independent of any alteration of her circumstance. And the gentle humour of Eastern people is a further witness to its depth. One is perhaps justified in saying that the strongest difference between the East and the West is this that the East has greater power of enjoyment. The scope of pleasure is more limited. It is confined more or less strictly to the family or the village. In this lies a contrast. But it is often at least as intellectual. It is true the intellectuality of the one deals with Vairagya and Mukti, while the other discusses Byron and Shelley. Which is the greater emancipation of the mind? It would not even be fair to say that the European woman has more common sense or business faculty than the Hindu. For Indian woman in this respect, can only in Europe be compared to the French. During the war of Napoleon, they developed a great capacity for the management of trade and agriculture, which they have never lost. The French woman has ever since been to some extent her husband's partner. And was it not of an Eastern woman that it was said "the heart of her husband may safely trust in her"? When we compare the Indian widow with the Western, we are struck by the fact of the difference of aim. It would appear that the Hindu woman's life seeks objects not within the sphere of things. Gravity, recollectedness, withdrawnness and a stern self-mastery—such qualities as these make up the whole that we know as religious. And for my own part I read in the demeanour of every Indian woman the secret that makes her country the mother of religion.

AN OPEN LETTER TO HINDU WOMEN

Dear and honoured ladies,

It is impossible for me to express my sorrow at the accident which has deprived me of the opportunity of seeing you this afternoon and has at the same time brought so many of you so far for nothing. I understand that it was your love and reverence for my great Guru that led you to gather in such large numbers at the Tondamandalam High School Hall. It would have been an unspeakable pleasure to me could I have seen you face to face and talked with you of all that his coming meant to us in the West and of all his burning hopes for the people of his own land.

It was his conviction that the future of India depended even more on *Indian women* than on Indian men. And his faith in us all was immense. It was Indian women who went gladly to the burning pyre, in days of old, to burn beside the dead bodies of their husbands, and no hand was strong enough to turn them back. Sita was an Indian woman. So was Savitri. Uma, performing austerities to draw Mahadeva to her side, was the picture of an Indian woman. Was there any task, he argued, to which women such as these could prove unequal? In all lands, holiness and strength are the treasures which the race places in the hands of the woman to preserve, rather than in those of the man. A few men here and there become great teachers, but most have to spend their days in toil for the winning of bread. It is in the home that these renew their inspiration and their faith and insight, and the greatness of the home lies in the Tapasya of the women. You, Indian wives and mothers, do not need to be reminded of how much Rama, Sri Krishna, and Shankaracharya owed to their mothers. The quiet, silent lives of women, living

in their homes like Tapaswinis, proud only to be faithful, ambitious only to be perfect, have done more to preserve the Dharma and cause it to flourish, than any battles that have been fought outside.

Today, our country and her Dharma are in a sore plight, and in a special manner he calls on her daughters at this moment to come forward, as those in the ages before, to aid her with a great Shraddha. How shall this be done? We are all asking. In the first place, let Hindu mothers renew in their sons the thirst for Brahmacharya. Without this our nation is shorn of her ancient strength. No country in the world has an ideal of the student's life so high as this, and if it be allowed to die out of India, where shall the world look to restore it? In Brahmacharya is the secret of all strength, all greatness. Let every mother determine that her sons shall be great. And secondly, can we not cultivate in our children and ourselves a vast *compassion*? This *compassion* will make us eager to know the sorrows of all men, the griefs of our land and the dangers to which in these modern days the religion is exposed; and this growing knowledge will produce strong workers, working for work's sake, ready to die, if only they may serve their country and fellow-men. Let us realise all that our country has done for us,—how she has given us birth and food and friends, our beloved ones, and our faith itself. Is she not indeed our *Mother*? Do we not long to see her once more *Mahabharata*?

Such are a few of the things, beloved mothers and sisters, that I think my Guruji would have said to you in so much better words than I have been able to find. I thank you once more for the reverence you have shown him in the honour done to me, so unworthy self.

I beg of you always,—for his sake, who made me his daughter and, therefore, your country-woman,—to think of me and pray for me as your little sister who loves this beautiful and holy land, and who longs only to be shown how to serve you more and more effectively. And may

I remind you also of him who stood behind the Swami Vivekananda, his Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and Kali, the Great Mother, whose power worked through both of these great souls, and will yet work doubtless in any of us who will but lend ourselves to Her influence.

In their name, and in the love of that Great Mother, I commend myself to you as, ladies,

Ever your most loving sister,

Nivedita

of

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda,
Castle Kernon, Triplicane.

December 23, 1902.

ISLAM IN ASIA

All civilisations so far as we know them had their root and origin in Asia. Europe had sent no missionaries of civilisation to Asia, for, not only in morals and religion, but in social organisation and scientific knowledge also, Europe was the child of Asia. There was no splendour in the history of the world like that of the Asiatic past, and the Mussalmans of India needed the preaching of the study of history as a religion in order that they might understand their own place in the world today and the place of their Faith in the history of time. No one could understand the place of Islam in the present or its destiny in the future unless he understood the idea which it had embodied in the centuries of its power. "That man," said one of the greatest of modern thinkers, "will completely dominate the future who has completely understood the past." The life of Asia had built itself up in its different centres round certain overmastering ideas; the fundamental difference between the two orders of civilisation was that the Asiatic was theocratic while the European was political. It was not until the Roman Empire had passed away or been transformed, that Europe in its turn had succumbed to the Asiatic conception of a theocracy in the Catholic Church. It was when the Roman Empire was in process of breaking up and the world was without the inspiration of any great unifying influence or idea, that there arose among the people of the nomad belt, between the sea-coasts of Europe and the wide pastoral tracts of the Asian plains, a great soul, who impelled by a conquering spiritual force, was revealed as the greatest nation-maker the world had ever known. The people of Arabia had always been united by the ties of race and custom, but

* Lecture delivered on Sunday, the 20th March, 1904, under the auspices of the Calcutta Madrassa, at the Corinthian Theatre, Calcutta.

before the time of the Prophet they were divided into mutually destructive units. Muhammad's achievement was the transformation of tribal feud into tribal union, of warring brothers into a united family, and the welding of these elements into a triumphant nation. And what was the power through which he accomplished this? Was it not the power of a burning spirituality, the power of personal character, the power of renunciation, of absolute self-forgetting, in a supreme Cause?

The Moslem of these days was not prepared to say that to no man outside the Faith could salvation come. But the Prophet and those who came after him had said this and believed it, and it was this which had carried the banner of the Prophet beyond the borders of Arabia, East and West. There was this to be said of the Saracenic conquest, that, however mistaken, however imperfect it might be, it was yet a conquest among the best of which history had record, carried out with an infinitely smaller amount of disorder and pain than had characterised the conquest of Mexico and South America by Catholic Europe. It was the duty of the Mussalman today to equip himself with the knowledge of his own people's past in order that he might give the lie to certain great accusations that had been brought against Islam by those who had written its story. It was not true that Islam had burned libraries or put fetters on the human spirit. Islam had always had its free theocratic development and its freedom of intellectual development, its belief in the sacredness of letter and the holiness of all knowledge. The Moslem, too, carried with him a great force of national cohesion, which made him a developing influence wherever he went, but in the centuries after the culmination of the conquest Islam had in a measure failed in the national sense. What, then, was the duty of the Indian Mussalman today? It was not to relate himself to Arabia. He had no need of that; his relation to Arabia was of his very life-blood; it had been accomplished for him by the faith

and patient labour of his forefathers. No ; his duty was to relate himself to India, to throw into the national idea of India—his home by blood or by adoption and hospitality—the mighty force that was theirs by reason of the heritage into which they had been born.

BEAUTIES OF ISLAM

I

The secret of Islam seems curiously slow to yield itself up to Christian eyes.

If it is not true that our common conception of the Prophet is of a bold bad man (to quote a distinguished Mohammedan the other day), at least most of us will acknowledge that the name calls to mind chiefly glimpses of flashing sword-blades, charging horsemen, and the sound of Moslem war-cries in one part of the world or another. That is to say, the boundaries and antagonisms of the Faith are well defined in our thought; but of all that makes it a religion, all that it gives of Living Waters to its people, all that it offers of tenderness and consolation to the human heart,—of all, in a word, that is positive in it, we have received no hint. Much as though our own creed should be associated only with its *autos-da-fé* or its witch-drownings, while its call to the weary and heavy-laden, its passion for service, and its mystic Gift of Bread and Wine were all forgotten!

Even the missionaries, who have laboured so long and earnestly among the Hindi-speaking peoples of India, have not yet come back to tell us the hopes and fears, the loves and hates, by which these live,—although the two religions are so allied that a Mohammedan mosque is simply a Christian Church, in a climate where the nave requires no roof! (The very sanctuary and baptistery are represented.) Yet one would suppose that if a knowledge of French is advantageous in teaching a Frenchman English, the corresponding equipment would be even more desirable in dealing with such delicate and complex adjustments as those of a national religion!

Not one of us, however, can have gone through the great cities of Northern India without fretful beating of our wings against the bars of our own ignorance. That magnificent rainbow of Indo-Saracenic architecture, whose ends touch earth as it were, at Lucknow and Lahore, speaks for itself of impulse as deep, of faith as noble and abiding, as any that ever lived in the soul of man.

Not alone in the vastness of a Jumma Masjid, nor in the solemnity of the lofty Chancel-screen at Kutub, but even in the tiny Oratory of the Emperors of Delhi, we have some of the world's supreme utterances of the religious sense.

Never can I forget my own visit to this last, surely in truth, the pearl of mosques. It was evening. While the light lasted, we had all examined the decorations—carving of acanthus patterns in low relief of half-transparent marble on the pillars, and the almost sob of awe with which we had entered into this presence of Purity-made-Visible, had been justified. But now the others had drifted on, and the sun had set. I sat alone on the steps of the mosque. Everywhere the same glistening grey-white marble surrounded me. Even the porch was but a space of it in deeper shadow. Not a sound came from the world without; not a stone of wall or tower obtruded on the eye. Perfect stillness. Utter remoteness. Overhead, the sky, a few stars, and one green bough could alone be seen. I stayed, and stayed, till twilight had deepened into night. In such a place one is alone with God.

It was, in fact, a little bit of the wilderness conquered and kept in the midst of the proudest palace in the world. Oh for that desert where the Prophet was called from amidst the sheep-folds on the hillsides! Only he, who has watched there knows the meaning of that word solitude. Only he who knows that, can even dimly guess at the meaning of the Unity of God.

But if the points of contact between Christianity and Islam are hard to come at, they do nevertheless exist.

this cry of passion and welcome, so like the old Norseman's ringing cheer.

And what of the faith of Islam in this regard?

Who that remembers the Mahdi's letter to the Queen can ask? Mad, ignorant outburst as it was, there was yet a wild poetry and a wondrous nobility about some parts of it. "Know, Madam," or words to the same effect, he wrote, "that the men of my nation are not as other men, for God has given to my people a strange love. As others for cool waters, so do they thirst for Death."

Surely, if the sense of manhood and victory with which one faces the King of Terrors be a proof of greatness at all, no creed of the world has more superbly met the test than this of the Arab Camel-driver. Only abject meanness and a hopeless ignorance of psychology could prompt the suggestion that it is the sense-gratifications of the after-state that the Moslem craves. For Heavens and Paradises, mansions and palm-branches, Angels and Peris, are all alike but the Kindergarten toys of imagination, whereby Humanity is brought to recognise its own inner feeling. And of what that deep need of the soul really is, we can learn from a voice that spoke the liquid Erse amongst the Irish mountains seven centuries ago. "What is the good of living?" cried this soul; "Our servants can do that for us! There is nothing worth possessing but the Infinite, and only the Dead possess that!" That is the secret. We all long for the Infinite. Death seems to be the gate, and so it happens that a man's bearing in face of it is a matter of final importance to us all, and the spirit it produces a supreme test of the nobility of any theory of Truth.

Again, those who study the Koran deeply are forced to the conclusion that what stands for the gospel of an army on the path of conquest was really born of an overwhelming emotion of love and pity for the world. Mohammed's constant synonym for God is "The Compassionate, the Merciful," and he is perpetually reiterating the message of forgiveness of sins and charity to all men.

That he himself was as much saint as conqueror, the account of his entry into Mecca proves:

“Mohammad forthwith marched upon Mekka with ten thousand men, and the city, despairing of defence, surrendered. The day of Mohammad’s greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Koreysh all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn in which they had afflicted him, and gave an amnesty to the whole population of Mekka. Four criminals whom justice condemned made up Mohammad’s proscription list when he entered as a conqueror to the city of his bitterest enemies. The army followed his example, and entered quietly and peaceably; no house was robbed, no women insulted. One thing alone suffered destruction. Going to the Kaaba, Mohammad stood before each of the three hundred and sixty idols, and pointed to it with his staff, saying, ‘Truth is come, and falsehood is fled away!’ and at these words his attendants hewed them down, and all the idols and household gods of Mekka and round about were destroyed. It was thus that Mohammad entered again his native city.”

Well indeed may our author add:

“Through all the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one.”

This is not the picture of one who lets loose a pandemonium on his fellows.

Further we must remember that if Ali is the great figure of its later history, and military splendour the great medium of its development, at least Arab Religion is no more anomalous than our own in this respect.

For Christianity was preached by a still gentler master, and its conquests—from Peru to Khartoum what record!—have been ten times fiercer and more sustained than those of Mohammed.

The fact is, a new religious teacher always stirs in men that sentiment of Humanity that we of this age are prone to call the sense of nationality, and in exact propor-

tion as that is strong and active, do its limitations become vividly defined. Within its own boundaries, Mohammedanism was the most tremendous assertion of the Rights of the People and of Woman that the world has ever seen: for that very reason, perhaps, it carried proselytism to the people of the land of ignorance with fire and sword.

II

At this point, however, we come upon a very grave objection that may be urged against the Faith.

Is it not true that its range of characters is somewhat narrow, and that its choice of ideals is therefore too exclusively heroic or chivalrous? Of that Strength-in-Meekness which the Christian reckons the height of human achievement, of the Divine Manifestation of Forgiveness, of the realised Ideal of Suffering Manhood, what trace is there in Islam?

The answer lies in those groups of mourners that one meets everywhere in Northern India throughout the days and nights of the Mohurram.

That the figures of Hasan and Husain stand alone in this respect may be due either to their lack of due immensity to attract disciples, or more probably, to the fact that the genius of Mussalman peoples has not lain in the way of producing the long succession of martyrs and ascetics by which Europe has witnessed to the Worship of Pain. But the ideal is acknowledged. "The Man of Sorrows" receives the passionate devotion of his kindred, in this as in every other system that is true to the heart of man.

It is a wonderful picture that they carry us back to—these huge processions, and these knots of wandering worshippers at May-time. "Hasan!" cries one, beating his breast with his clenched hands, and "Husain!" replies another, making the same gesture of despair. The emotion is real and absorbing. Beside it, our own intermittent observance of Holy Week and Good Friday is slack and

pale. The very children are broken-hearted, and some years back an aged prince who led the procession through Calcutta in the last stages of physical exhaustion from long fasting and fatigue, was seen to strike himself till the blood flowed. There is no pretence about this ; it, at least, is in dead earnest. But what is the motive from which it all proceeds?

Strange to say, there is, in the case of the Sunnis at any rate, an element in it of national penance. It is a public declaration that "We are of the people who slew the martyrs! We loaded them with sorrows and put them to the death We!—We!—We!—Oh Hasan! Oh Husain!" Is this not a generous offering to lay at the feet of Justice?*

How long the Mohurram has been observed in this fashion it would doubtless be difficult to say. What we do know is that it is more than twelve centuries now since Husain's little camp of thirty persons was pitched on the bank of the Euphrates, during nine weary days, bent on advancing at all costs to answer the call of Korfa to him whom it regarded as the rightful Khalif.

Hasan was already dead of poison, and his brother must have known that death was the only possible end of his own attitude.

Yet as long as the great camp of Yuzed's general barred the way, he could not proceed without swearing what he held to be false, that Yuzed was the true Khalif. And he would not swear.

Amongst all that is impressive in the scene and story, nothing is more so than the perfect absence from Husain of all personal ambition. Because it was false, he would not swear ; not for a moment because he desired the Khalifate for himself. And as day followed day, and the cloud of destiny settled down more darkly over the devoted

* It is only fair to say that this acknowledgement of complicity is entirely unconscious. The celebration of the Mohurram was originated by the Shias and copied by the Sunnis. Aurangzeb was so well aware of its penitential significance that he tried in vain to stop its observance by the latter.

little band, not one murmur of rebellion or impatience escaped the lips of the gentle captain. He could die, when the moment came, as an Arab noble should, but meantime he could neither be treacherous to the Prophet's last intention nor mean in his estimate of dignity and truth.

It was on that fateful tenth morning when the army of the mighty Yuzed came up and once more offered the old terms or instant annihilation, and when he, standing up, laid his statement before the troops,—it was then that was enacted one of the grandest proofs of honesty and courage that the world has even seen. For Hur, that very general who had so effectually cut off his progress during these past nine days, convinced at last of the truth of the chieftain's cause, threw himself at his feet and prayed his pardon, and then, in spite of Husain's entreaties that they should not court instant death, deserted to his standard with some forty followers!

Husain's force was now seventy, instead of thirty, against four thousand. Battle must be given at once, but Moslem chivalry forbidding the massacre of a handful, single combats became the order of the day.

Husain's, however, was the blood of great warriors, and so it happened that at last he stood, with all he loved, save one infant son, dead around him alone upon the field.

The mighty soldier seized the babe, and with it in his arms was once more about to address his foes, when some recreant's arrow was let loose and lodged in the heart of the child.

And then the hero's passion of wrath and sorrow broke all bounds. Throwing the dead baby from him, he plunged into the thick of the soldiery, and even the bravest, it is said, drew back from the sight of that strong right arm, ere he fell, pierced with many wounds.

Is it not a wonderful story? Chivalry raised to the white heat of Religion! Knighthood consecrated in Sainthood! The proud noble, impervious to insult and outrage, dying to avenge a little child! The great captain

who would stand by the right even to the death, though to do so stamped himself culprit to the end of time!

It does not strike the distinctive notes of ethical ideal that we find in Buddha, St. Francis of Assisi, or Ignatius Loyola. But of its own kind the Mohurrum stands supreme, and verily I think that amongst these heroes the angelic soul of Joan of Arc might have found its kin.

SYNTHESIS OF IDEALS

There are few illustrations of that 'interchange of the highest ideals'—which the Swami Vivekananda held to be our ideal under present conditions,—finer than the existence of Christianity, in the West, furnishes. There are, as a Christian preacher has pointed out, two types of virtue, the heroic and the passive, and the Christian gospels glorify the passive virtues from end to end. Christianity, as a faith, never holds up the heroic virtues to the emulation of the Church.

Heroic virtues, we may take it, are such as friendship, courage, patriotism, valour, and their kindred active qualities. Amongst the passive virtues we may enumerate endurance of suffering, patience under injuries and affronts, humility, submissiveness, and an unresisting and unresenting spirit. The hero is characterised by vigour, firmness, and resolution. He is daring and active, eager in his attachment, inflexible in his purposes, violent in his resentment. The man of passive virtue is meek, yielding, forgiving, willing to suffer, silent and gentle under rudeness and insult. He sues for reconciliation, where a man of the opposite type would demand satisfaction.

It would be a mistake to think that all virtue resided in either of these, and that its contrast represented lack of goodness. Instead of this, we have to think of the two as complementary types. Both are great, both are ideal. But they are different. Want of heroic virtue is rudeness, violence, meddlesomeness, dishonesty: want of passive virtue is cowardice, sluggishness, obstinacy, sulkiness. It is clear therefore that each is a type in itself. Neither is to be regarded as the defect of the other. Greatness and goodness are attainable by both paths, in both forms.

From the Hindu point of view, indeed, with our national tendency to synthetise ideals, we cannot help seeing that the passive virtues are those of woman, the heroic those of man ; the passive those of the domestic, the heroic those of the civic, or supra-domestic, life. And in the history of the world, it is easy enough to see that heroes belong to the nation, and saints to the church ; that is to say, that the one calls for masculine, and the other for feminine qualities, in their highest and noblest forms.

Christ represented the highest power of the passive type. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not." This was precisely the source of the thrill He gave to that world of Roman brutality and aggression, on which His name and personality first dawned. A realm of force and violence received a hint for the first time of a power that works in silence, a voice that speaks with intensity instead of fury, a strength that is moral rather than physical. Rome was not without thinkers and scholars, but she had never dreamt of organising thought and scholarship! Her primal instinct was for the organisation of force. In this form she threw a stone into the lake of time whose outmost ripples are seen today in America, in spontaneous eagerness to subdivide labour and thus organise every action, turning the single man into an unintelligent screw or cog-wheel in a vast human machine.

Christ, on the contrary, was the Asiatic man. His was the ideal of conquest by spirituality, of the shining-forth of strength, instead of its clash and struggle, of acceptance as a greater power than rejection, of knowledge as greater than deed.

Haughty captains of the Roman Empire, and rude barons of Europe's Middle Ages, caught the gleam of the great ideal ; and, out of the struggle between native instinct and genuine appreciation of the foreign ideal, Europe, in course of time, has wrought the history of the Church,

with all its long roll of martyrs, saints, and spiritual shepherds; with all its tale of religious orders and the tasks they carried out, in the advancement of civilisation; with its Love of the People, and its tendance of the lamp of spirituality. No mean achievement, in the record of man on the planet Earth.

Where would Europe have been, however, if she had abandoned her own nature, in order to appropriate the virtues of Christianity? If,—instead of violence and force slightly modified by the vision of divine patience and suffering,—she had practised asceticism and piety, slightly modified by an inborn turbulence and quarrelsomeness? We can see that the whole dignity of the story depends on the co-existence of two opposite forces, one of which is decidedly preponderant, while the other is strong enough to exert a very powerful curbing force upon it. The people who can easily abandon their own character in the name of a new ideal, are not worth capturing for that ideal. It is the man who is conscious of a hard struggle within, who does most in the world. The skill of the charioteer is nought, if the horses be without spirit and impulse.

Each age in the life of a nation reveals its own characteristic goal. The world-epochs are rooted in the interchange of world-ideals. But without the great basis of previously accumulated character to work upon, the welding and modifying influence of new thought would be of little account. When this exists, the new idea becomes in truth, even as the Founder of Christianity said of it, "as an handful of leaven, which a woman took and hid in three-measures of meal, *till the whole was leavened.*"

How high are the towers and spires of historical evolution, as they loom upon us through the morning mists of the future of man! In truth, great lives have been amongst us, great new thoughts have been cast into our midst. The life of the future may for the moment be hidden in our three measures of meal, but let us take courage! *The whole shall be leavened!*

ETIQUETTE, EASTERN AND WESTERN

I

When a people are about to group themselves into large and complex units, instead of small and simple, it is as necessary to them to have a well-defined etiquette of mutual intercourse, as to have a *lingua franca*. In Hindu India, where the civic life is today emerging from the more rudimentary organisation of the family and the caste, the civic ideal of mutual courtesy and of personal bearing has also to supersede the domestic. For instance, there may be good private reasons for going unbathed and in soiled raiment, till ten o'clock in the morning, but the moment we recognise those outside our own four walls, with a feeling of high-bred respect, we shall feel the necessity also, of remaining hidden from them, until all our personal appointments have been perfectly made. This consideration will eventually eliminate the period of unkemptness, which may be regarded as a public advertisement of the fact that we are not mixing with people whom we honour, or in society that we consider good. This is really what it means, though perhaps, when the habit is tracked down to its source and stated in words, it bears a very ugly look. A man who does not belong to good society, is a man whom others will not care to know. Yet whose fault is it if we infer this, when he himself announces it by his personal appearance as his own opinion? Instinctively, we try to look well, in entering a presence that we honour. Afterwards a time may come, when we consider an air of cleanness and refinement as *due to ourselves*. When this feeling arrives, we take pains with our own grooming, out of sheer self-respect—*noblesse oblige*. But this is at bottom, a reflection from an exalted and ennobled social consciousness. We see ourselves as honourable persons because we

move in a society of the honourable. Under all the complexities of etiquette, there lies this fact, our estimate of the greatness and importance of those about us. And exactly as we hold ourselves to them, shall we see ourselves mirrored in their consciousness. There is no such thing socially as a Gulliver amongst Lilliputians. The man who feels himself that, very quickly becomes degraded and belittled, in his exalted solitude. There is nothing so vulgar as social exultation, or snobbishness. It is the man who has infinite belief in the nobility of his fellows who feels himself also to be most truly noble. Petty vanity of birth or family may impress our fellow-villagers, but the more we dwell on it, the less fit are we for any larger society. In the great world, it is assumed that every man, would he speak of it, has an equal treasure to display. He who troubled to open that pack to public admiration would be shunned henceforth, as a rustic and a bore. Even the greatest of personages, as the badges of rank go, must sedulously avoid all 'swagger' about his own importance, or he will be laughed at, behind his back. We respect those about us, and we respect ourselves, as members of so fine a company. This is the attitude of which high courtesy is born.

The Mohammedans, owing to their fundamental inter-tribal organisation, are very rich in the conceptions characteristic of this kind of social decorum. The patriarch—or father-king—never forgets that the stranger, stopping a moment to chat at his tent-door, may, in his own home, be another patriarch, and he offers him the attentions due to that rank. But it is amongst the Mongolian races that etiquette has been developed to its highest intensity. Every Bhutia boy about Darjeeling receives a more or less laboured initiation into this culture of his race. And it is this factor, more than any other, that makes the Mongolian nations pre-eminent in Asia, in their power to deal with foreign nations. The rules of etiquette are like lines laid down for the wheels of

intercourse to run along. By guarding both parties against trivial friction, they enable social relationships to be developed to a height and stability otherwise impossible. Anyone who has lived much with foreigners, knows, whoever he be, that it is small differences about eating, about bathing, about greetings and the common exchange of consideration, that make such combinations difficult, far more than the weightier matters of character and personality. And it will generally happen—supposing the social rank to be fairly equal—that the man of one race or nation will be defective, in comparison with the other. Peoples are by no means on a level, in their recognition of this form of sensitiveness. Where there is a substantial equality of mutual consideration, mere differences of form will rarely be torturing and it is pretty certain that in proportion to the development of etiquette will be the national capacity for international activity.

There are really two elements in good manners. One is personal refinement, as seen in habits, and in the intimacies of the home-circle. And the other is formality as regards those whom we meet. The exquisite refinement and delicacy which result from good Hindu breeding are undoubtedly the factor that tends to compensate for deficiencies in life's little formalities, and make these less noticeable than they would otherwise be. This same refinement probably also creates a sensitiveness that makes the conduct of others a matter of keen pain and criticism, instead of serene indifference. As regards self-development, doubtless the Hindu emphasis is most desirable ; as regards civic and national possibilities, the cultivation of the social attitude is slightly more important. Individuals of genius, however, are apt to sing true, so to speak, in these things, even without any special training, because their emotions are so fine, and their intuitions so exquisite, that they leap spontaneously on every occasion, to the expression of some feeling that those looking on recognise as beautiful and adequate, however unexpected. A Ram Mohan Roy, or

a Vivekananda, creates systems of etiquette for himself. Even if they did not, moreover, the world might well overlook the fact, and strive to hold communication with spirits so rare, through any barrier, however thick. But the case is very different with us ordinary folk. And most of us are quite ordinary. A whole nation cannot expect to be composed of men of genius. If we are to have the opportunity of giving and taking as much as is possible, in modern intercourse, we must first give serious consideration to the toll that the world demands of us, in the recognition of what is due to others. The more weight and power our personality carries with it, the more necessary this is, for the more pain we can inflict, in default of pleasure.

Nothing is so despicable as an imitator of foreign manners. No one dislikes these more than the foreigner whose individuality is stolen from him! To speak the international language of a common etiquette, is not the same thing as to walk about in borrowed clothes, with a borrowed bearing, and a carefully-calculated way of telling a story, correct even to the giving of a slight laugh at the end of it. Self-consciousness is writ more plainly on every word and act of some, than on any player ever seen upon the stage. Indeed the actor ought to apprehend his part and forget himself in its interpretation, but here we have an actor whose one care is himself! The result cannot but be a vulgarism, as irritating as it is pitiful.

No, the international language of good manners implies a consciousness of certain common ideals of courtesy, and a clear intention, in one way or another, to give expression to this good feeling. The language itself matters very little. Who cares whether a man folds his own hands, or clasps yours, in friendly greeting, so long as salutations are exchanged? Who minds whether a friend's sympathy is shown by words or by silence, so long as, in one way or the other, it is conveyed? The slipping into, or away from, a social circle, without demonstration, may be

felt by the host as a positive expression of respect to some matter that is under discussion, or some person who is being entertained. And yet a careless entrance, and bursting into talk without formal greeting, might appear as an offence in itself. Vastly more important is the feeling indicated, than the method of expression. But the necessity of doing reverence, silently or otherwise, to the circle one is entering or leaving, is probably recognised explicitly by every civilisation in the world.

There is one relationship in which the need to understand the ideals that have been formulated in Western etiquette, is much felt by the Indian youth. It is when they find themselves in foreign lands as students. For the sake of those so placed, it may be well to attempt an exposition of Western etiquette, whose explicitness will be pardoned, in consideration of its purpose.

II

The Greeks dreaded any tampering with their native styles of music, for it had been noticed, they said, that no nation had ever changed its musical system, without presently losing its whole political integrity and independence. Similarly it often seems as if a point of etiquette carried so much with it that it must be embedded in the national character, like garnets in lava, not to be changed without destruction. For instance, it appears a simple matter on the face of it, whether we sit on the floor, or at a table, while we eat. The glistening floor, the freshly-washed leaves, the piled rice, and the gentle mother, with all her tender forethought as to the likes and dislikes of this one and that, moving from place to place, giving food with her own hands—what a picture! How holy to every Hindu heart! And in the West, similarly, the common board, with its loaf, its butter, and its milk; the mother at one end, the father at the other, and the children seated between them, in a bright, hungry circle, right and left.

"God bless the master of this house"; sing the carollers at Christmas, "God bless the mistress too; and all the little children, that round the table go." In the East, the dining-floor, and in the West, the table; each in its own place, forms the symbol of family love and unity. Each brings to mind the common life in which we were knit together as one.

And yet the difference is not nearly so simple as it seems. The Eastern child *receives* its food—the Western *takes*. The Eastern has a training, from the first, in submission, in cheerful acceptance and resignation. The Western is equally set to learn how to *choose*. In the East, the mother alone bears the burden of the common need. In the West, each one is more or less responsible for all the rest. One must offer food to others, first, and only when they are provided, take for oneself. Yet one must not exaggerate this attention, teasing those to right and left by inopportune cares on their behalf; but must wait for suitable moments, when conversation flags, or a need is felt. For it is real consideration for others, and not merely the formalities of a seeming considerateness, in which the child is to be trained.

It is a similar feeling for the comfort of those about one that determines Western rigidity about the manner of eating, itself. The man who opens his mouth during mastication, or makes a noise that can be heard, or drinks, while the mouth is full, causes unspeakable distress to those who sit at the same board. This was not felt, when the group took the form of an open semi-circle. But the instant it is unified and concentrated by the table, each man's physical habits become the concern of all his fellows. The mouth must never open, while there is food in it. And yet a man must not eat mincingly either, like some prim school-girl! This would be effeminate. There must not be a sound heard, that could be avoided. The munching of toast or the crunching of apples, if not perfectly soundless, should at least be kept as imperceptible as possible.

and should never be revolting. And any sound of drinking, or the sight of one taking water into the mouth while it is full, should be rigorously taboo. All this is to avoid revolting the senses of those about us.

Infinitely less imperative are the rules about the management of knives and forks, fish-bones, fruit-stones, and so on. By one mode or another, to avoid causing annoyance to others, is the one aim in all these matters. One tries to make and keep all connected with the meal, in as great order as may be. It is a poor thing for a Brahmin condescendingly to eat fruit in one's house, and leave the place where he sat, as if some wild animal had been there! Even the plate should be left neat, and food should not be conspicuously wasted. But the fact that in one country a knife and fork are held in one way, and elsewhere in another, is not difficult for anyone to realise, nor could it possibly be fatal as might these other points, to a good understanding.

Another point that is of importance, in the Western etiquette of the table, is the bearing of those who sit at it. Here there is probably little difference between East and West, at heart! We show respect to our elders by an upright demeanour before them, disrespect and low breeding by lounging or slouching. This is the case at all times; but a hundredfold more so, in sitting at the table. Here, it is an offence to put hands or elbows forward. One must hold oneself straight on one's chair. Ease must be sacrificed to propriety. Respect for others forbids any thought of personal comfort. And this respect must culminate in one's attitude to the hostess, the mother of the family, or the lady of the house.

In the West, just as in the East, the mother puts herself last. She gives food to all others first, and only when each has been served, she helps herself, and begins to eat. Quietly and unobtrusively, she thinks of the comfort and happiness of every guest, and, as if she did it for her own enjoyment, devotes herself to the least

attractive, who is apt to be neglected. But there is this difference between East and West. In the West, there is a part laid out for the hostess to fill, in which the guest has the reciprocal duty of putting her first. It is with her first, and only afterwards or in a secondary sense with one's fellow-guests, that one shakes hands, on entering and departing. Persons of high breeding always single out their hostess for these attentions first and foremost. She stands aside, in a doorway, for the guest to pass before her, and the guest's highest duty is immediate obedience. She lends her attention to such conversation as she can forward, whether she is really enjoying it or not. Or she uses her authority to secure private opportunities for such visitors as have something of importance to discuss *tête-à-tête*. She is the universal confidante, the kindly providence. It is true that in going in to dinner she reserves to herself the most important of the men-guests, while her husband takes in the principal woman. But this is an exercise of responsibility, the conferring of an honour. It is not to be understood as taking the best for herself. Infinite tact, unfailing sweetness, and a silent and hidden unselfishness are demanded of the hostess in Europe or America, as surely as of the mother, in India.

On the other hand, when she stands, no man must remain seated. Even when, at the end of dinner, with a look at the chief woman-guest, she rises and leads the way to the drawing-room, for the cosy moments of chat together, even then, all the men stand, and one or other goes to the door to open it, while she stands there, and waits for her guests to pass through it. Only when the women have left the room, may the men fall into attitudes of ease, over their dessert. In all this, we see the expression, in a different form, of ideas and feelings that are common to India and to France. The etiquette of Europe may be more stately, but that of India demands to the full as much refinement of the heart. On the other hand, it is probably necessary that our boys should learn always, in Western

society, to treat woman as queen, rather than as mother, while it is for her, the queen, to treat them, if she will, as if they were her sons. It is hard for an Indian youth to realise that no matter how kind some older woman's treatment of him may be, he must never permit himself to lounge or slouch before her, but must hold himself, whether sitting or standing, with military smartness, concealed by that air of unconsciousness which he will observe in the older men of breeding whom he may meet. It is difficult for an Indian boy to believe that when a woman rises, he must stand ; that when she wants to pass through a doorway, he must open and hold it for her ; that he must never smoke in the presence of a Western, any more than of an Eastern, woman ; that he must restrain his language before women, using only words of refinement and reserve ; and above all, that all this shows no lack of kindness or even intimacy, but is regarded as the self-respect that stamps the man himself. It is the manliness due to his own manhood.

In the West, the civic ideal dominates even the home. The words "She is my Mother! Why should I be polite?" are incomprehensible to the European mind. What? it replies. Do you desire to be *rude* to your mother? On the other hand, there is a sweetness in the East, and a closeness of intimacy, to which the West never attains. To this sweetness and closeness, words of formality seem a rupture. They hurt the souls that are at one, as if they made a distance between them. Between ideals so different, and both so true, who could be wise enough to choose? Perhaps our highest opportunity lies in apprehending both, and in passing from one to the other, without consciousness or thought.

HINDUISM AND THE MODERN TRANSITION

It may fairly be claimed that no nation in the world has the same opportunity for maintaining the continuity of its own character and development through the crisis of the Modern Transition as the Indian people possess in the Advaita philosophy.

Other countries have had to face the Transition. We are not peculiar in the nature of the ordeal which has been forced upon us. The machine in manufacture and the steam-engine in travel have forced upon the societies of the West as upon those of the East, the same problem of re-adjustment. "What is wanted in our time," said the great European philosopher Auguste Comte, "is an impulse . . . new." What is really wanted everywhere, as this saying indicates, is a moral sense so strong as to carry the nations over the bridge between the two eras, without any loss of the highest and finest results of civilisation. But the outbreak of imperialism in the higher classes of the European democracies and of hooliganism in the lower, would both go to indicate that the moral sense had not made its appearance. In other words, Christianity had proved inadequate to the strain put upon it by the opportunities of exploitation which the modern world affords to man, as an individual and in communities. For a religion is proved inadequate when it fails to restrain man from evil, by the unaided action of conscience and habit.

That Christianity should so fail was inevitable from its intellectual limitations. Its elements of history and mythology could not fail to be discredited so soon as their likeness to other religions, histories and mythologies assumed to be false, was discovered. And even its theology and philosophy were shaken, by the discoveries of modern science. And a religion which was itself on its trial could not hold over the minds and hearts of men and nations,

the required position of unassailable authority.

Christianity, accepted and elaborated under the Roman Empire, had done well in carrying the Teutonic invaders of that Empire through the long struggles that were to end in giving them national cohesion and status within the Roman circle. It had done well enough for the white man in Europe. How would it stand the test of the American, the African, the Asiatic environment?

Some chapters of that story are already completed in the Book of Doom. Many acts of the great tragedy are already played out to their lurid end. And some are yet to write.

Meanwhile, let it be said that to every people who possess the elements of a truly national existence, with the responsibility of facing the problems of a nation, this question, sooner or later, comes to be faced. Have we in the past dreamt dreams great enough, thought thoughts noble enough, willed with a will clear enough, to enable us to strike out new paths into the untried, without error and without defeat? And perhaps of all the peoples of the world only the Hindu people, to this searching enquiry, can answer 'yes.'

Christianity to the European in his own place, Islam to the Arab and to the African and to the Tartar in their home-lands. But Vedanta to all the peoples and all the faiths and all the developments of earth, extends its hand of steadiness, and stretches out cool waters of healing.

And this is because, in building up the philosophy no doubt was shirked, and each circumstance in turn became the starting-point of the realisation. The Hindu has no difficulty in understanding how "worshippers of the Devas go to the Devas. My own come to Me." He has no difficulty in understanding this distinction, even when "My Own worship Me" as Shiva or as Krishna, or as the Mother. "My own come to Me."

Aye, accordingly, Hinduism is fit to pass through the ordeals of the Modern Transition.

APPENDIX I

REPORTS OF LECTURES

THE EDUCATION OF HINDU WOMEN AND THEIR IDEALS

Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) in the course of her address, dissented from the view that education was a thing which could be completely bottled up in systematised schools and then given in prescribed doses to anybody. In the case of Hindu women, a vital part of their education was the influence exercised upon them by the ancient lore of their race. Before one could lay down plans for the education of a people it was necessary to make a reverent and patient study of their lives and condition. She devoted a little time—a year and a half—to such a study of Bengalee women. She was not merely in sympathy with what was noblest and best in Hinduism ; she was in sympathy with Hinduism as a whole, and took it with its faults and its virtues. She would, therefore, offer no criticisms on Hinduism. She thought that, taken it all in all, it was about the most magnificent system of civilization and supplied the finest educational instrument which the world had ever seen. The difference between the Eastern and the Western woman was great, and no English woman could hope to make herself useful in the matter of a Hindu girl's development unless she was first willing to Hindooise herself. In the West many great queens and women of action had been produced ; in the East great saints had appeared. The difference thus revealed was not confined to women, but ran through every department of the real, inner, primitive life of the Indian

Lecture delivered on Saturday, the 30th November, 1901, under the auspices of the Foreign Press Association at Adelphi, London.

people. Everything the Hindu touched became ethical. Of all the beautiful things in this world there was probably nothing so beautiful as the life of a Hindu household. The great ideal of Indian womanhood was not romance but renunciation. Without impairing this ideal she was anxious to give the Hindu woman modern practicality.

INDIAN WOMANHOOD

Monogamy was much more ancient in East than in the West according to the old Sanskrit literature. It was a fact that there had been civilization both in the East and the West, but it differed in the manners and the customs of the people of both the places. The Vedic forefathers of the East were struggling for civilization, and in their time woman occupied that social position which she occupied in Europe at present. The Oriental woman was shy, silent, secluded from the world, submissive and obedient. In Bengal was found the very extreme instance of the oriental woman. The case with the European woman was different. It was so to say a hybrid civilization in as much as the Aryan mind was filled with the Western thought. In Europe, after the crusades there awoke in the praise of Beatrice by Dante the idealisation of womanhood. In India, Sita and Savitri had been worshipped for a number of centuries. The lecturer then referring to the influence of the church on womanhood said that it was the effort to orientalize woman. It was the religious consciousness that made the ideal of woman so characteristic of the whole of Asia. The mode of production and fostering of genius in woman was better understood in Asia. There was the moral genius in the personal character in the Asiatic woman. In Asia the woman was worshipped. As to the future of the Indian woman education was necessary to be given. But what sort of education that was the question. It was not that she should learn to read and write English. She had to learn to be human, and the barriers from the possibilities of development had to be removed: there the Indian woman would become the actual depository of education.

Lecture delivered on Monday, the 6th October, 1902, at the Gaiety Theatre, Bombay.

FAMILY LIFE AND NATIONALITY IN INDIA

Sister Nivedita said in course of her lecture, that in order to realise the ideal embodied in the life of the Indian family we had to get back to the monasticism of the Middle Ages in Europe. Rightly considered, the Hindu home was a cloister, the Hindu woman a nun, giving to her wifely and maternal duties all the devotion which the nun bestowed, expressed in her worship of the Madonna. All the forms and tasks of the Indian home—the rising at dawn, bathing, preparation, and eating of food—were sacramental. It might be said of civilisation in the West that its finest and most characteristic product was the civic life ; in India, there was perhaps a deficiency of the civic sense. The family was looked upon as the permanent unit of society and Hindu life was its most perfect embodiment. The lecturer went on to explain that nothing was more mistaken than the ordinary British notion of India as a country alien from representative institutions. Such institutions were of the essence of Indian society. The affairs of the Hindu joint family, which might number 200 or 300 persons, were controlled by the family council and decided by the majority vote. It was so also with the affairs of the caste and the village.

Lecture delivered on the 5th January, 1908, before the London Positivist Society, at the Essex Hall, London.

APPENDIX II

1. *Condition of Indian Women* before the Board of Missionaries, Chicago.
2. *Religious Life in India* at Hull House, Chicago.
3. *Ancient Arts in India* at the Arts and Crafts Association, Hull House, Chicago.
4. *The Ideals of Hindu Women* at the Vedanta Society, New York.
5. *The Place of Indian Thought in Future of the World*, Pittsburgh, Pa.
6. *The Education of Oriental Women*, Pittsburgh, Pa.
7. *Ideals of Womanhood—East and West*, Boston.
8. *Our Obligation to the Orient*, Mass.
9. *Vedanta*, Mass.
10. *Vedanta*, Washington.
11. *New Interpretations of Life in India*, at the Sesame Club, London.
12. *Renaissance of India*, London.
13. *Has British Rule been Beneficial to India or not*, at Dr. Wylede's, Hyde Park, London.
14. *Order of Ramakrishna*, Earl's Court, London.
15. *Ideals of Indian Women*, at Tunbridge Wells, London.
16. *Spiritual Life in India*, at the Higher Thought Centre, London.
17. *Spiritual Unfoldment in India*, at the Higher Thought Centre.
18. *The Indian Problem*, London.
19. *Women of India*, London.
20. *Concentration*, at the Higher Thought Centre.
21. *The Kindergarten Method in Religious Education*, at the Higher Thought Centre.
22. *How England has failed in India*, at the Higher Thought Centre.
23. *Women of India*, at the Earl's Court.
24. *Application of Thought to Spiritual Growth*, at the Higher Thought Centre.
25. *Hindu Social Life*, at W.L.S. Lecture Hall, South London.

Lectures delivered by Sister Nivedita in the West.

26. *Europe and Asia*, Manchester.
27. *Family Life and Nationality in India*, at the London Positivist Society.
28. *The Education of Hindu Women and their Ideals*, Foreign Press Association, London.
29. *Indian Literature and Spirituality*, at the Lyceum Club, London.
30. *The Historic Background of Indian Society*, at the Lyceum Club.
31. *The Mahabharata*, at the Caxton Hall, London.
32. *The Ramayana*, at the Caxton Hall.
33. *The Vedas and the Vedic Impulse*, at the Caxton Hall.
34. *Life and Work of Swami Vivekananda*, at the Higher Thought Centre.
35. *The Indian Fabian*, at the Oxford Mi. Fabian Society.