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 naive 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 traveller she tells of Benaras and the mountain snows, and legends of Shiva the Great God, and Umâ Haimavati, mother of all womanhood. Or she brings memories of the Indian Christ and His youth among the shepherds in the forests of Vrindaban on her tributary Jumna. 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; Phoebus 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 (palanquin) 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 Pujâ, 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 congrega-
tion, 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 even-
ing 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 moonlight 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 ashenclad 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 reapplied 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 on-looker 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 sunset 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 Durgā-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 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 everywhere 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 emprise 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 English-woman; 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 freshwater 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 Kâli!" 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 Bysantines 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 re-make 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 she 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 nur-seling 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 ex-
pressed 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 intu-
tion. 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 death-bed, 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 occa-
sion 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 bed-side 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 bed-side 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 Sāri to wipe them away, she tried
to stifle the sobs she could not altogether repress. At that moment the words reached me from the door-way. "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, "Mâ! Mâ! Mâtâji!—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 chiepest 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 instinctively 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 Nirvâna, 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, Umâ 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 sunny and the petulant, the obedient and the wilful, are only seeking so many different ways to express a selfsame 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 content 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 supersocial life—"As the blazing sun 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 granddam, 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 man-
hood 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 vermillion, 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 pin-prick 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: Sitâ,
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 Umâ, realising that her love was given in vain, yet pursuing the more eagerly the chosen path. "Be like Sâvitri," 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 any one, 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. Lifelong 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.\footnote{This verse is actually in old Bengali, of the sixteenth century.} The Persian language, however, has only touched India through the Court of Delhi and through letters. It has 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 generosity 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 became 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 appreciation 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 lowclass 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 a woman 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 un-
failing 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 newcomers as "my children's mother," thus reflecting upon her his worship 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. "Are 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 mediaeval 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 gaiety, 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 ashen 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 mediaeval 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 Sâri, 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 Bhaskarâchârya, the mathematician, that he had but one child, the maiden Lilâvati.
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-mâ 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 more 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 neighbourhood 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 Maratha Queen of Indore, Ahalyâ 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 Râni 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 bareheaded 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 what she leans 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 therein 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, it is 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 Kavirâj, and pays fantastic sums for their medicines if they come from Banaras 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 reflection 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 dissipations 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 selfsame meekness, clothed in selfsame 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.¹ Thus the

¹It is a fundamental law of Indian economics, but one little known to present administrators, that for every acre
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. Banaras, 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 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

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.
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.¹

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,

¹I 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."
with fruit and honey, to be fit nourishment for the saints. But fuel and medicine 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 cowdust, 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”¹ is loved for the fact that, though the daughter of the Prophet,

¹Our Lady of the Moslems—Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and Khadijah. The Prophet loved her more than any other created being.
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 Mussulmans" as the dowry she would claim of God on the Day of Judgement.

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 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 regines 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 Ghulams 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 any one 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 door-way, 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 farm-houses 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 Āmalaki 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 Sitā.

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 folk-lore 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 Brahmans 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 Rajputni 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 polestar, 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 Gujerat 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, some times clad in the Sari, sometimes in the short Turkish jacket, but always the selfsame gentle and beautiful wifehood 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 Chând Bibi,\(^1\) or the wonderful Queen

\(^1\)Chand Bibi—The heroic princess, who defended Ahmednagar against the armies of Akbar. Killed by mutineers, 1599.
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 strain-ing every muscle, the whizz of the charge so unex-pected 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 have given to rule or to his wife. Her life had been, in fact, as solitary as that of a mediaeval 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, Sivaji 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 Râdhâ the shepherdess, singing to Krishna: and it is interesting to note ho.7 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 of retreat the Mussulmannin ranks first, the Rajputni 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 ascendency. This curious country, of woman 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 Kālidāsa, and in old Sanskrit literature generally, there is abundant evidence that is 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 Hindus-than 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 cowrie 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 con-
vey 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, Sâris 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 Sannyâsin 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 time. 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: poor 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 Mâyâ, not seldom bewildering to the Western savant, has no difficulty for them. They understand to a hair the meaning of the word Nirvâna. 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 where-with 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\(^1\) is becoming a necessity. European utensils for cleaning, for cooking, and even for 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

\(^1\) 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.
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 craftsmen 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 cooperation 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 con-
querrors and Hindu conquered: no gap in taste, or
morals, or style of thought and education. The new-
comer 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 con-
fraternity. 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 Avatârs
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. Every one 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 Averroes 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 Sivaji, 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. Shitalâ, the Small-pox 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—that 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 formulae. "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 con-
flicting 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 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 Kâyastha families\(^1\) 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.

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 Râmânuja, the great

\(^1\) Kayastha families—The Kayasthas are the second caste of Bengal. They claim descent from the old Kshatriya, or military caste, but the authenticity of this genealogy is disputed
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 Nānak in the North,¹ and Ramanuja in the South,² 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

¹Guru 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.
²Ramanuja in the South—A saint and teacher of marvellous love and mercy. He lived in the twelfth century.
her own children for 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 Asoka'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 baulked 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?