VII

THE INDIAN SAGAS

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

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

It is said that in Greece the poetry of Homer and Euripides is known amongst the poorer classes to this day; and certain it is that the Catholic Church has
done a great and little-understood service in bringing the lives of the saints of all countries to bear upon the development of each. Every man habitually measures himself against some model; therefore every addition to the range of available types is to be welcomed. A king feels himself to be one of a class of royal persons who must be not only authoritative but also picturesque in their behaviour. And, whether he likes it or not, by this standard he knows himself to stand or fall. His very rank forces his pattern upon him. Amongst those of smaller place and greater personal freedom, capacity more readily shows its own complexion. Some of us—were our commonplace faculties touched with divine fire—would find our destiny in the qualities of the ideal merchant and administrator. That peculiar form of integrity, dignity, and wisdom that belongs to such a function would prove to be ours, or attainable by us. But although this is probably the commonest logical issue in English national life at present, it does not follow that every Englishman is fitted to achieve it. Here and there, especially perhaps among the Celtic contingent, we find one born for the quite different goal of perfect knighthood. Loyalty to leader and comrade, sympathy for the oppressed, far-shining fearlessness and love of freedom, are traits characteristic of an age of chivalry; and persons who embody them represent such a period, it being neither more nor less admirable than that of merchant-prince and caravan-chief. The potentialities of one man lead towards sainthood, of another to poetry, of a third to science or mechanics. One gravitates into leadership, another as naturally
becomes disciple. One enjoys knowledge, another ignorance.

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

We have to notice, moreover, that in European life only the born idealist is deeply influenced by any of the miscellaneous characters of history and literature. Religion alone amongst us can exercise this compelling power on a large scale. And this is related to the fact that only religion gives ideals themselves as motives. Circumstances have in many cases offered such a setting that a life has been forced into brilliance and distinction, but the self-born intention of the saints could never be wholly fulfilled. Iphigenia could hardly have refused her sacrifice. Joan of Arc, on the contrary, must always have felt that the sword of Michael might have been held still more stainless and with a greater courage. It is this fact that gives to the ideals of religion their supreme power of individuation. We must remember also that they differ from others in making a universal appeal. The girl who aimed at becoming Portia would be guilty of vanity: she whose model is the Blessed Virgin receives the respect of all. To imitate Socrates would be a miserable affectation: to imitate the religious hero is regarded as a common duty.
It may seem impossible to dower the heroes and heroines of literature with this projective energy of the lives of saints; but in India, as to some extent in Iceland, the feat has been accomplished. For India is also one of the saga-lands. At every lull in her history we may hear the chanting of her bards, and the joy of her people in the story of their past. The long twilight of the North is no better adapted to the growth of such a literature than the deep and early night of the South. In verandahs and courtyards, with the women concealed behind screens at the back, it has been the Indian fashion for hundreds of years through the winter months to gather at dusk round the seat of the Wandering Teller, and listen hour after hour to his stirring theme. Surrounded by lights and flowers, gay carpets and burning incense, there is in his performance a mixture of reading, song, and story. It is something of opera, sermon, and literature all in one.

Ever since the commencement of our era the Hindu people have possessed in their present forms two great poems, the Mahâbhârata and the Râmâyana. The first of these is their Wars of Troy, their Heimskringla, their Morte d'Arthur. That is to say, it is the book of the Deeds and the Wars of the Heroes. Thanks to the long-established culture of the race, and the prestige which all literature enjoys as "sacred", the Mahabharata is to this day the strongest influence in the shaping of the lives and ambitions of Hindu boys.

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

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

On this plan, more than half the country-side tales of Northern India could be woven into the Mahabharata when it was first thrown into form by some unknown
hand, three or four centuries before Christ. It underwent its final recension not more than two or three hundred years later—a possible fifteen hundred years after the occurrence of the events which are its central theme. It is easy to see that this saga fulfils thus all the conditions of great epic poetry. The stories that it tells have been worked over by the imagination of singers and people for hundreds of years. They have become simple, direct, inevitable. They are spoken out of the inmost heart of a nation not yet dreaming of self-consciousness. They are nothing if not absolutely sincere.

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

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

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

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

It is more today than a completed work of art; it is still a means for the development of the popular imagination. Even amongst the written versions we find no two quite alike. All children are brought up on the story, yet those who can read the original Sanskrit are few in number. To meet this fact translations have been made into various vernaculars by great poets from time to time—into Bengali, for instance, by Krittibâs, and into Hindi by Tulsidâs. Special incidents again have been selected and worked up into great episodes in Sanskrit, by one and another, such as Bhavabhuti in his "Exile of Sita", or Datta in the "Epic of Ravana".

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

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

Without the recognition of this working of the communal consciousness on the theme, there can be no complete criticism of the Ramayana, for of this are all new transcribings of the story born. It is more or less in this fashion that the old tale is told:

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

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

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

It is the close of day in the forest, and Sita is alone. Lakshman—one of the most "perfect gentle knights" in the whole range of fiction—has left her, at her earnest entreaty that he should go to seek for Rama, but he has first drawn three circles about her with the end of his bow, and warned her not to step outside. The sun is not yet set, however, when a Brahmin appears, ashenclad, with matted locks, and begs for charity. Sita pleads that it is late and she is alone, imploring him to go. And this he promises to do if only first she will step outside and give him a little food. She is full of dim forebodings of evil, but pity at last gains the upper hand of fear; she steps out of her enchanted circles to bestow alms on him; he throws off the disguise of the Brahmin, appears as Ravana himself, and carries her off to his kingdom in his chariot. It is during the first terrible moment of the journey that Sita drops her jewels stealthily behind her, in order that those coming after may be able to trace her flight.

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

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

It is now time for the return to the kingdom, and Sita and Rama go back to Oudh, reigning there in perfect happiness close upon a year. Then comes the great crisis of their parting, in deference to the people's doubt of Sita. She retires to a distant forest, to live the life of a nun, under the care of Vâlmiki, the old hermit; and Rama sits alone on the throne of Oudh for the rest of his life. Once only does he speak of his loss. His subjects desire him to take a new queen, for the performance of a state sacrifice that he cannot make alone. But here the wrath of the king blazes forth. No woman shall ever be put in Sita's place. But a golden image of her is made, and fills her part in the appointed ceremonies.

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

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

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

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

One story is typical. The young princes are taking a lesson in shooting, and a clay bird has been set up as target. One by one they are asked by their master what they see. They reply, "A bird", "A branch supporting a bird", and so on. Till at last he puts the question to Arjuna, one of the youngest, and receives the answer, "A bird's head, and in that head only the eye". The moment of the telling of this story to an Indian child is tense with feeling. For it embodies the culminating ideal of the nation, inasmuch as "Concentration of Mind" stands among Hindus for the supreme expression of that greatness which we may recognise in honour or courage or any kind of heroism.
The central character of the Mahabharata fulfils a very subtle demand. Bhishma is intended for the type of king and knight. Now, knighthood implies the striking of many blows, and kinghood the protecting of manifold and diverse interests, but perfection requires that nothing shall be done from the motive of self-interest. In order, therefore, that he may display all the greatness of character that is possible to man in these relations, Bhishma is made, as heir to the throne, to renounce all rights of succession and even of marriage, at the beginning of his life, by way of setting his father free to marry a fisher-girl whom he loves, and make her son his heir.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The character of Bhishma in the Mahabharata as that of Sita in the Ramayana is a proof that Indian philosophy was completed before the Epics. But that philosophy itself, we must remember, was directly related to the common life of common folk. Only this fact can explain the recognition and welcome of such conceptions by the whole nation. Let us look at the love story of Sita. Her feeling is consecrated by the long years of poverty filled with worship, in the forest. When it is thus established, she undergoes the dreary persecution and imprisonment at the hands of Ravana. Every moment finds her repeating the name of Rama, her faith unshaken in her ultimate rescue. At the end she herself suggests the fiery ordeal, and goes through it with dauntless courage.
Then for one short year, as wife, and queen, and future mother, she tastes of entire earthly happiness, only to be swept away from her home again in the sternness of her husband's will for his people's good. Through twenty years of acquiescent silence she keeps now, in all its fulness, that love that sent her first to share Rama's exile in the forest, and yet the perfection of her pride of womanhood is shown when she dies of the insult conveyed in a spoken doubt.

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

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

What philosophy by itself could never have done for the humble, what the laws of Manu have done only in some small measure for the few, that the Epics have done through unnumbered ages and are doing still for all classes alike. They are the perpetual Hinduisers, for they are the ideal embodiments of that form of life, that conception of conduct, of which laws and theories can give but the briefest abstract, yet towards which the hope and effort of every Hindu child must be directed.

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

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

NOBLESSE OBLIGE: A STUDY OF INDIAN CASTE

A graver intellectual confusion than that caused by the non-translation of the word *Caste*¹ there has seldom been. The assumed impossibility of finding an equivalent for the idea in English has led to the belief that there is something mysterious and unprecedented in the institution. People become bewildered as to whether it is a religious or a social obligation. Every one demands of the reformer a conflict with it. The whole question grows obscure and irritating.

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

Our conduct is commonly governed far more by social habit than by considerations of right and wrong. When the tide of the ethical struggle has once set in over some matter, we may regard ourselves, as already half-lost. Why are my friend's open letters absolutely

¹ The word "*Caste*" is of Portuguese Origin.
safe in my presence, though I am longing for the information they convey? Why can money given for one purpose not be used for another, when all the canons of common sense and expediency urge that it should? Who will confess to an effort in speaking the truth at any cost whatever? Why, when I am annoyed, do I not express myself in the language of Billingsgate? To each of which questions one would reply, somewhat haughtily, that the point was one of honour, or, that such happened to be the custom of one's class.

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

There is another point about our Western conception of noblesse oblige. Few as the persons may be who could formulate their sentiment, the fact pervades the whole of the social area. Each class has its own honour. If honourable employers feel compelled to think of the comfort of their workers, honourable servants feel equally compelled to keep their lips shut on their masters' affairs, and either responds to an appeal in the name of his ideal. The priest may find the honour of his profession in conflict with that of the detective, but all the world will uphold the faithfulness of both. The efficient realisation of his ideals by the schoolmaster will involve an occasional pardon, even of a grave offence, if he conceives forgiveness to be the best formative influence which at the moment he can command. The very same effort in the merchant will require a distribution of punishment that is rigorous and just, since order, integrity, and unfailing promptitude—not the development of human character—are his ends. Thus every man, in every critical act of his life, calls silently for the judgement of his peers and refuses all other.
The weaknesses of caste everywhere are manifold. For society, like the individual, is always apt to insist upon the tithing of mint and rue, and to neglect the weightier matters of the law. But it is not usually the martyr who marks its worst failure. He is the white dove cast forth by crows, that is, a member of a higher tried by consensus of the lower castes. We have here a case of government usurping the functions of society, much as if the head master should exercise authority in a dispute among boys. For it is essential to the very idea of honour that every caste should be autonomous. The true failure of caste occurs whenever it establishes such an ascendancy of social opinion over the individual's conscience that his power of advance is impeded and he becomes less of a man, or less really beneficent socially, by remaining more of a gentleman—a state of things which is not uncommon among ourselves. For we may postulate that all ideals are helpful only in so far as they subserve a man's manhood and freedom, and destructive the instant they render him less able to express his own inmost will. It is he, therefore, who ought to have been a martyr and chose ease who is the true caste victim, not the hero of an _auto-da-fe_.

That this is a real danger we all know. What Protestant has never exalted the creed of his sect over freedom of thought? What Catholic has never put comfort above spirituality? What politician has not preferred party above principle? What student of science has never been prejudiced against new truth? And if we look without, where do we not see the mere breaker of conventionality treated as outside
brotherhood? Where do we not find persons conforming to usages that displease them, merely because they would be inconvenient to dispute?

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

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

The feeling must have grown up when the Vedas alone required conserving, and the families entrusted with various portions were encouraged to become in all ways dependent on the community, that every
energy might be devoted to the task in hand. This is the real meaning of prostration at the feet of Brahmins, of the great merit acquired by feeding them, and of the terror of the crime of killing one. It is not the man, it is race-culture that is destroyed by such an act.

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

If we ask how it happened that the Aryan folk became so early conscious of their responsibility in the matter of Sanskrit letters, there can be only one answer. They found themselves in the presence of other and unlearned races. This point brings us to the question of the origin of strongly differentiated castes in general. In its nature caste is, as we have seen, honour; that is to say, an ideal sentiment by whose means society spontaneously protects itself from some danger against which it is otherwise defenceless. For instance, life in Texas having been for many years dependent on the possession of horses, and safeguards against the horse-thief being few and difficult, he came to be the object of unprecedented social abhorrence.
Horse-stealing was the last crime a lost soul would stoop to. In a similar way, as some think, may have grown up the Indian feeling about cow-killing. If the cattle, in time of stress, were killed for food, agriculture would be unable to take a new start, and so a people accustomed to eat beef grasped the situation perhaps, and renounced the practice. But since these two sentiments pervade whole nations, they are not exactly what we are accustomed to think of as caste, inasmuch as in the latter there is a distinct gradation of rank connected with the sentiment. In the term "blackleg" applied by trade unionists to competing forms of labour, we have an instance of the kind we want. Here we have an occupational group giving birth immediately to the ideal which is necessary to its safety. Throughout the worlds of love, of war, and of work, indeed, honour is an instinct of the very greatest potency. How few men, after all, desert to an enemy as spies! How strong is the feeling of class-obligation amongst servants and working men! This element is very evident in the Indian industrial castes, which are often simply hereditary trade-unions. No Englishman is so powerful, nor is any Hindu so hungry, that one man could be bribed to take up the trade of another. Nothing would induce the dairyman, for instance, to take charge of a horse, or a laundryman to assist the household.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fire and the processes of cooking and eating food are easily distinguished as the core of the personal life and establishment in a climate where habits can at any time be made so simple as in India. It is these that can never be dispensed with, though they may be arranged for tonight in a palace, and tomorrow in the jungle under a tree.

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

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

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

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

From such a comprehension of the situation sprang the long and still growing graduation of non-Aryan castes, some of which have established themselves in the course of ages within the Aryan pale. Marriage, for instance, is an elaborate and expensive social
function in the highest classes. But as we descend it becomes easier, till amongst the Baghdis, Bauris, and other aboriginal castes, almost any connection is ratified by the recognition of women and children. This is a point in which Eastern scores over Western development; for in Europe the Church has caused to be reckoned as immoral what might, with more philosophy, have been treated as the lingering customs of sub-organised race-strata.

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

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

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

(4) The working people, or Shudras, in all their divisions.
(Of the second group only the Rajput branch remains now stable. For the military caste, finding itself leaderless under the Maurya dynasty, is said to
have become literary, and is certainly now absorbed in the *bourgeoisie*.)

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

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

The fact is, if a man’s mode of life be acceptable to his own caste-fellows, the rest of Indian society has no quarrel with it. And this autonomy of castes it is which is the real essential for social flexibility and fundamental equality. As bearing on this point, few utterances have ever been so misquoted as the great dictum of Buddha, that “he who attains to God is the true Brahmin”. For this is misquoted whenever it is made to imply that the Brahmin holds in any sense a monopoly in religion. No possible statement could be more foreign to the genius of Hinduism. When we read that shortest and greatest of India’s gospels, the “Bhagavad-Gita” (a poem composed by Brahmins,
preserved by Brahmins, and distributed through the length and breadth of the country, always by Brahmins), we find ourselves in the presence of the most comprehensive mind that ever contemplated Hindu life. The compassion of Buddha, perhaps, looms greater across the centuries, but in dealing with social problems his very tenderness and spiritual fire make him second to Krishna, who was always calm, broad, and consistently national in his outlook. We must accept the Gita as an authoritative pronouncement on Hindu society. And the Gita rings with the constantly reiterated implication that "he who attains to God is the true man," while it interprets all life and responsibility as a means to this end. Thus, "Better one's own duty, though imperfect, than the duty of another well discharged. Better death in one's own duty; the duty of another brings on danger." We have to remember, too, that the Gita is made up of the very best of the Vedas and Upanishads, and was specially written for the benefit of women and the working classes, who, as destitute of classical learning, had little chance of studying these great scriptures. But its contents were to depend upon Brahmin effort for promulgation. Another witness to the fact that spirituality has always been regarded in India as the common human possession lies in the Hindu word for religion itself—Dharma, or the manness of man. This is very striking. The whole weight of the conception is shifted away from creed, much more from caste or race, to that which is universal and permanent in each and every human being. And, last of all, we may remember that the greatest historical
teachers of Hinduism—Rama, Krishna, and Buddha, besides many of the Upanishadic period—were men of the second, or military, caste.

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

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

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

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

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

One of the most interesting points in all this to a Western mind is the difference implied and established between the caste of priests or chaplains on the one hand, and the fact of spiritual realisation, outside all caste, on the other. Nothing in the Indian thought about life can be more striking than this. The family chaplain in Bengal may be the official teacher, but were raised in consideration and self-respect by the instant they find some soul (in the world or out of it; it may be husband or child, or the holy man living in his garden; usually it is an ascetic), with a quickening spiritual touch upon their own. He or she then becomes the Guru, or teacher, and this relationship is made the central fact of life.

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

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

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

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

Neither, amongst a people familiar with the process of self-organisation, would it prove any barrier to efficient co-operation. For the one essential to this power is an established habit of ignoring all points of mutual difference not germane to the matter in hand. What we call good-breeding, or what India calls caste, ought to make this easier. For any group of men met together for a common purpose find their individual rights secured to them in this way, and are free, by age-long acceptance, from any suspicion of another's desire to interfere with them. This is a basis of strength and not of weakness; so that it seems, if Indian men and women are not at present capable of combined action to any great degree, it is a matter of their own neglect of the habit, and not a necessary consequence of their institutions. We need not too readily accept the statement of such weakness, either, as infallible. My own observation has been that the Hindu people are capable enough of vigorous co-operation along the lines natural to them, those of
the undivided family, the village community, and others. That inability which Europeans would show to face these tests, they may be expected to display before ours.

To be absolutely just, however, we must admit that the observance of caste law has entailed many foolish and irritating losses upon society during the last fifty years. We have seen that there are definite reasons, not wanting in cogency, why a man of good birth should not eat in all companies, or of food cooked by hands supposed less cleanly. Such rules, however, cannot be kept by those who, for any reason, cross the seas to Europe. This fact, more than any other detail, makes it a matter of outcasting to take the journey, and persecutions have sometimes ensued which are shocking to contemplate. A man may care little about the loss of station for his own sake, but the shoe pinches when he finds himself unable to make worthy marriages for his daughters; hence he will often submit to a heavy fine in order to buy back his position. This rouses the cupidity of ignorant and conventional persons who happen to have authority with the stay-at-home community, and such are apt to be unscrupulous in bringing about the ruin or recantation of any who resist their power. This is a series of events which does occur occasionally; but it need not be supposed that every Europe-returning Hindu who is kept at arm's length is a martyr. There is an element of distrust for the moral results of a visit to the West in the situation; and this is not altogether unreasonable. It is chiefly with regard to possibilities of political, practical, or
technical education that caste deterrence is to be regretted, and it is obvious that as communities progress in the power of estimating modern conditions, they must recognise the suicidal nature of such an attitude. Yet it is curious to note here how caste may become thus a very real instrument of equality, for the power of the individual to advance is by this means kept strictly in ratio to the thinking of the society in which he lives. This fact is characteristic. The good of caste, of race, of family stands first, and only second that of the individual man or woman in India. To take another plane. Let a man of the lower castes become wealthy, and he is compelled to educate men of his own rank to marry his daughters. Thus the group to which he owes birth, vigour, and development receives from him again the benefits of his life's work. This is the exact opposite of the European device, where the upper class absorbs money, talent, and beauty from the lower, while that is continually recruited by the failures from above.

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

And it cannot be denied that great benefits as well as great evils have accrued from caste. It is an institution that makes Hindu society the most eclectic with regard to ideas in the world. In India all religions have taken refuge—the Parsi before the tide of Mussulman conquest; the Christians of Syria; the Jews. And they have received more than shelter—they have had the hospitality of a world that had nothing to fear from the foreigner who came in the name of freedom of conscience. Caste made this possible, for in one sense it is the social formulation of defence minus all elements of aggression. Again, surely it is something that, in a country conquered for a thousand years, the door-keeper of a viceroy's palace would feel his race too good to share a cup of water with the ruler of all India. We do not easily measure the moral strength that is here involved, for the habit of guarding the treasure of his birth for an unborn posterity feeds a deep, undying faith in destiny in the Hindu heart. "Today here, tomorrow gone," says the most ignorant sotto voce as he looks at the foreigner, and the unspoken refrain of his thought is, "I and mine abide for ever." Caste is race-continuity; it is the historic sense; it is the dignity of tradition and of purpose for the future. It is even more: it is

1 Parsi, Jew, Christian—The Parsis took refuge in India a thousand years ago, fleeing before the Mohammedan conquest of Persia. There are ancient communities of Jews and Christians also from Asia Minor and Syria.
the familiarity of a whole people in all its grades with the one supreme human motive—the notion of noblesse oblige. For though it is true that all men are influenced by this principle, it is all probably true that only the privileged are very conscious of the fact. Is caste, then, simply a burden, to be thrown off lightly, as a thing irksome and of little moment?

And yet, if India is ever to regain national efficiency, this old device of the forefathers must be modified in the process—exactly how, the Indian people themselves can alone determine. For India today has lost national efficiency. This fact there is no gainsaying. Her needs now are not what they were yesterday. The Brahmins lose distinctiveness in these days of cheap printing and wide-spread literacy. But this only means that the country requires multiplied methods of self-expression as the goal and summit of her national endeavour. She wants a greater flexibility, perhaps, a readier power of self-adjustment than she has ever had. But it ought to come in an influx of consciousness of those great spiritual tides on whose surface all questions of caste and non-caste can be lifted into new and higher interrelations. Chief among all her needs is that of a passionate drawing together amongst her people themselves. The cry of home, of country, of place is yet to be heard by the soul of every Indian man and woman in Hindusthan, and following hard upon it must sound the overtones of labour and of race.

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

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

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

THE SYNTHESIS OF INDIAN THOUGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is clear that such a conception is very inadequately rendered by the English word "religion". It is clear also that to dissect out and set in order the distinctively religious elements in an idea so definite at its centre, and so nebulous at its edges—claiming thereby to have defined the religion of the Indian peoples—would be a task of extreme difficulty. It must have been in the face of just such problems that Max Muller exclaimed, "Ancient words are round, and modern square!"

As the forest grows spontaneously, of many kinds, each like all the others only in the common fact of the quest of light, and every plant having a complete right to regard its own as the chosen seed, so amongst the Hindu people, up to the twentieth century of this Christian era, grew faiths and creeds. Islam itself was scarcely an exception to this rule. For the spirit that makes a township, after learning English, differentiate itself sharply into Hindu and Mohammedan social cliques, is of modern growth. It appears to be a result of that false interpretation which reads the history of India as an account of the struggle between the two ideas. In the life of the villages there is no such strong distinction. In Bengal and Behar, the sons of Hindu and Mohammedan gentlemen grow up in the closest fraternity and fellowship. In the North-West Provinces they mingle their names. In the Moslem zenanas of the same districts the Hindu babies of the village are privileged guests.
Every Hindu Guru accepts Mohammedan as well as Hindu disciples. Every Mohammedan fakir is sought by Hindu as well as Mohammedan devotees. In the South, narrowly orthodox as the South is counted, the proudest feature of Trivandrum is the shrine dedicated to a Mohammedan princess, who forsook courts and palaces for the worship of Trivandrum's local god. Over and over again, in the political world, have the armies of Delhi and the Nawabs been led to victory by Hindu generals; and in every Native State to this day will be found positions of responsibility and power assigned to men whose creed is that which the sovereign's is not. A more beautiful tribute was never surely paid than that spoken of the Mahratta queen. "She was peculiarly kind and considerate to such of her subjects as differed from her in faith." But indeed the intolerance of Mohammedanism itself has been grossly exaggerated by Christian observers, who seem curiously incompetent to grasp the secret of an Eastern attitude. This intolerance could never, for instance, be compared with that of the Roman Church. The necessity of making a strong and competent nation out of a few warring tribes led to the enunciation of a brief and simple religious thesis; but the Prophet did not fail, in true Asiatic fashion, to remind his people that "God is the God of all creatures, not of one section only," and to exempt especially from condemnation all the alien religions definitely known to him, namely, Christianity and Judaism, "the peoples of the Book". Truly the quarrel of that stern spirit of righteousness was with unfaithfulness, not with other faiths, however strongly, under unforeseen
military and political exigencies, it might seem to lend itself to the contrary interpretation. The fact that Mohammedans have sometimes held another opinion is no argument as to the teaching of their religion in its purity, and it must be remembered that "dog of an infidel" is an expression hurled as freely against Spaniard and Crusader, as ever against what Christians called a Pagan. No. The feud between Delhi and Ghazni was no more a battle between Din and Dharma than was that so long existing between France and England, the combat of the Catholic against the Protestant Churches. Even Sikh and Mahratta risings were only the psychological transfer of regional power-centres. The famous jewelled shawl of the Hindu State of Baroda was made quite naturally under the old regime, to be sent to the tomb of Mohammed at Medina!

Some air of the deserts, some tradition of the pastoral habit, some strong memory of Persia and Arabia, must indeed have come with the successful invader to make the stay-at-home invaded resenting and distrustful. But the talk about cow-killing can hardly be taken as sincere, since in that case the arms of chivalrous Hindus would today be turned against a newer power. It must be understood as purely symbolic of the strained relations naturally existing between industrialised agricultural communities on the one hand, and on the other the militant sons of the desert accustomed to live by keeping and killing flocks and herds. But the same process that tamed the nomad into a member of a peasant community, and converted boatmen and tillers of the soil into Mussul-
mans, minimised in course of time even these differences of association. The familiar sight of the Mohammedan Bhisti, holding his goatskin below the hydrant-mouth for water, and the Hindu water-carrier with his earthen pot coming in his turn, is an instance of the contrast as it now exists. Two different civilisations stand side by side, but they are friendly castes, not rival nationalities.

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

Hence it would appear that the important points at issue between Hindus and Mussulmans are rather details of purification and domestic practice, than religious or doctrinal. This fact becomes increasingly evident as the higher phases of the two faiths are reached. For the more completely either is realised, the more perfectly is it fused in the other. Sufism\(^1\) leads the soul by love, and the Vedanta leads it by knowledge, love, or emancipated motive, as the case may be; but for both alike the theme is of a common goal, where all sense of difference shall cease, and the small Self be swallowed up in the universal. Of each of the two faiths, then, it may be said, that it has nothing to lose and everything to gain by the more complete development of the other. Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, Shankarâchârya,\(^2\) are not so many deplorable obstacles in each other's paths, but rather widely separated examples of a common type—the radiant Asiatic personage, whose conception of nationality lies in a national righteousness, and whose

\(^1\)Sufism—A mystic sect of Mohammedans. It rose in Persia, and at first suffered persecution, because the doctrine of the oneness of the soul with the Divine sounded to the orthodox Mohammedan like a suggestion that a creature could be "partner with God". The Sufis now maintain secrecy as to their experiences and convictions. Their doctrines and those of Hindu Vedantism are practically identical.

\(^2\)Shankaracharya—"The father of modern Hinduism", often foolishly referred to as "a persecutor of Buddhism". A great saint and scholar. Born in Malabar, Southern India, 788 A.D. Wrote several famous commentaries, notably that on the Vedanta-Sutras, in which he formulated what is known as the philosophic doctrine of "Advaita". He is said to have died at the age of thirty-two.
right to be a leader of men rests on the fact that he has seen God face to face. Such souls cannot fail to recognise each other, and the Prophet was not slow to salute Moses and the Christ, the only examples of his own order whose names he knew.

Thus it is easy to realise that as long as Hinduism remained nameless and vague, the sense of difference between itself and Islam was also obscure, subject to all the mitigating influences of a common Orientalism, intensified here and there doubtless by political ideas, but tempered again by manifold social and economic bonds. And if, with definition, the Indian religions are to take on a more sectarian character, is it not clear that this is only in order to be joined again with the faith of Arabia, in a new and deeper consciousness of that which is their actual ground of union—the Asiatic synthesis of life?

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

All through the Old Testament, and throughout the story of the rise of Mohammedanism, we hear of “stones” as objects of worship. It is the black and mystic Kaaba, that is to this day the symbol of their unity to all the peoples of Islam. And throughout India still there are races of working folk who ask no better symbol of divinity than rude stones, selected with some care possibly, and then set up, singly or in a row, perhaps in an enclosure, perhaps not, to be regarded henceforth as objects of reverence. The people who use these emblems—for they cannot be regarded as images—may be anything, from Shudras, or peasants, as I have seen them in the South, to Bhutias, or gipsy-like wanderers, as one meets with them in the Himalayas.
Everywhere in common life the miraculous elements are fire and light. And perhaps it is natural that oil, with its mystic power of leaping into flame, should be the characteristic offering in the worship of these stones. A Bhutia shrine will sometimes contain nothing but lamps. These are small and made of iron, like round-bowled dessert-spoons at right angles to the handle, which is a spike struck into the ground, and I have seen as many as sixteen or seventeen in one tiny temple. There was here neither image nor symbol other than the lamps themselves, and the pilgrim on leaving would tear off a shred of his garment, and tie it to a bush or a tree close by, there joining hundreds of tokens like itself of the wayfaring congregation whose spirits had met unseen in a common act of adoration. But the place, as is always the case with these peasant oratories, was where the view was finest, and the cry of the soul to commune with Nature most intense. Sometimes the sacred stones themselves are smeared with oil, for the very touch of the wondrous fluid that nourishes light seems to be holy.

To richer races in India only clarified butter is good enough for use in the service of the altar, and we of Europe require the great wax tapers. But can we not trace through all these a single common process of the sanctification of labour by the products of labour? "We worship the Ganges with the water of the Ganges, but we must worship," said a Hindu. Similarly does the peasant dream of the sacred oil, and the pastoral Toda\(^1\) worship his cow-bells. Is it not true that if all could be blotted out in a moment

\(^1\) Toda—An aboriginal tribe in the Nilgiris.
from the human memory, the Eucharist and the sanctuary-lamp from Christianity, flickering light and fragrant flowers from the Mussulman grave, oils and fruits and incense from the Eastern worshipper, it would only be to spring forth fresh again tomorrow—corn, wine, and oil to the peasant, scented gums to the lover of gardens; the Good Shepherd, the ideal of the herdsman; the ship of salvation, the hope of fisher-folk? What are mythologies after all but the jewel-casket of humanity, by means of which its wealth of dreams and loves and sighs in every generation becomes unperishing and imperishable treasure of the after comers? The mystery of the birth of faith is about us always.

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

II

As the basis of Indian thought rests deep in the very foundation of human evolution, so it has not failed, at each new point in the historic development,
to add something to the great superstructure. The whole story of India may be read in a philosophic idea. The constitutional ceremonies of the kingdom of Travancore contain clear indications of the transition from the matriarchate which was probably characteristic of the old Dravidian\textsuperscript{1} civilisation, to the patriarchate, which was Aryan. In the yearly village-worship of the heroic figures of the Mahabharata which is common throughout the South, we have what may be the effort of distant peoples to include themselves in the "Great India" of Bhishma, Yudhisthira, and the national Epics.\textsuperscript{2} The charge of country gunpowder which is fired off in the temples of the Southern Deccan on festival days is sufficient evidence that orthodoxy was once aggressive, eager, absorbent of things new, fearful of nothing, and friendly to advance. It is a popular superstition that the East stands still. Children observe no motion of the stars. But the fact is that one generation is no more like another at Banaras than in Paris. Every saint, every poet, adds something to the mighty pile which is unlike all that went before. And this is quite as true of the thought expressed in the vernaculars, as of the all-dominating culture contained in the classic Sanskrit. Chaitanya

\textsuperscript{1}Dravidian civilisation—The country of Dravida is that in the south of the Indian Peninsula, and includes Malabar. The languages of this region are non-Sanskritic, and the architecture peculiar and imposing. Some scholars are inclined to suppose a common origin for the Dravidian, Babylonian, and ancient Egyptian civilisations.

\textsuperscript{2}In Southern India, rude figures of men and horses, of heroic size, are made of clay, hard-baked, and kept in enclosures outside the villages for annual worship. The illiterate worshipper explains these figures as likenesses of the characters in the Mahabharata.
in Bengal, the Ten Gurus of the Sikhs, Râm Dâs and Tukârâm in Mahârâshtra, and Râmânuja in the South—each of these was to his own time as the very personification of the national philosophy, relating it again in its wholeness to the common life. Each such great saint appears to the people as the incarnation, the revelation, of themselves and their own powers, and the church founded by him becomes a nation. Thus arose the Mahratta Confederacy. Thus arose the kingdom of Lahore. And far away in Arabia, Islam formed itself in the same fashion. For the law that we are considering is not peculiar to India; it is common to the whole of Asiatic life.

The Hindu world in its entirety, then, is one with the highest philosophy of Hinduism. The much-talked of Vedanta is only the theoretic aspect of that synthesis whose elements make up the common life. The most unlettered, idolatrous-seeming peasant will talk, if questioned, of the immanence of God. He recognises that Christianity is fundamentally true, because the missionaries are clear that there is but one Supreme. The question, What would happen could the nation be divorced for a single generation from knowledge of Sanskrit? is only another way of asking, What is the actual dynamic force existing at a given moment in the Hindu people? What are the characteristic ideas that are now an inbred habit, past the reach of authority to substantiate, or disaster to shake? It is given only to great events and to the imagination of genius to find the answer to such questions. Yet some indications there are, of what that answer might be.
Buddhism was the name given to the Hinduism of the first few centuries of the Christian era, when precipitated in a foreign consciousness. What authority did it claim? What explanations did it give of the existence of the physical universe? Of the soul? Of evil? What did it offer to humanity as the goal of the ethical struggle? The answer to these questions will certainly have to be given in terms of ideas, or variants of ideas, derived from the pre-existent stock of Hinduism. And so, though the particular formulation may be regarded as heresy, the significance of its testimony on the point we are considering cannot be disputed. It must be remembered that there never was, in India, a religion known as Buddhism, with temples and priests of its own order. There was a tendency towards popularising truths that had previously been regarded as fit only for the learned, and there was an immense unofficial enthusiasm for a towering personality, doubtless, and for the interpretations which were identified with him, even as there is in Bengal today for Chaitanya. There came also to be a vast imperial organisation, highly centralised, coherent in all its parts, full of the geographical consciousness, uttering itself in similar architectural forms in the East, and west of India, passionately eager to unify and elevate the people and to adorn the land. This Indian Empire was in full and living communication with China, Japan, Syria, and Egypt. It had traffic and commerce by land and sea. It sent abroad ambassadors, merchants, and missionaries. And within its own territories it made roads, planted trees and orchards, dug wells, established hospitals,
and insisted on the cessation of violence even towards dumb creatures.¹

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

¹ Asoka's inscriptions on the Dhauli rock, Orissa, and at Girnar in Gujrat.
religion of the powerful Empire of China? It was a
great age, and only those who have seen the colossal
fragments which remain of it to this day can form
any idea of its wealth and vigour.
And yet Asoka's conversion had not been to a new
religion, but only into the piety of his time. "I,
King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, obtained true
intelligence ten years after my anointing." Hence
the thing that we call Buddhism ends its career in
India very gradually. He who has first visited Ellora¹
is surprised, on entering Elephanta,² to find the
Buddha-like figure on his left to be Shiva, and the
Triumph of Durgâ on his right. At Ellora itself there
must be a gap of centuries between the cathedral-like
caves of Tin Tâl³ and of Kailâs⁴. Yet even there we
see the solitary figure of the teaching or the meditating
Buddha give place by degrees to a rich pantheon of
devas and guardian kings. But the hope and delight
that are expressed so freely in the architecture and
sculpture, and in the cosmopolitan intercourse of the
Buddhist period die away imperceptibly into the rich
imagery of the Purânic age,⁵ and the manifold social

¹Ellora—Buddhist cave-temples close to the north-western
frontier of the Nizam's dominions. The town of Rosa, con-
taining the tomb of Aurangzeb, is close by; and the whole is
a few miles from Daulatabad, the ancient Deogiri.
²Elephanta—A series of cave-temples on an island in the
Bay of Bombay, between the second and the seventh century.
³The Tin Tal—A cave-temple at Ellora which consists of
three tiers or storeys. Hence its name. The most perfect of
the non-Brahmanical structures.
⁴Kailas—The most ornate and modern of all the cave-
temples at Ellora. Cut with marvellous elaboration out of
solid rock.
⁵The Puranic age—The Puranas are the third class of Hindu
sacred literature, the first being the Vedas and Upanishads,
and political problems of Shankaracharya and the age of chivalry.

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

In the period of the Upanishads, the conception of Brahma—the one real appearing as many—had been reached. This implies the doctrine of Mâyâ, or the illusion of things, as popularised under Buddhism. It is clear that in this theory the whole question of the origin of evil is put aside. Evil and good are alike shadows on the wall, cast by our sense of personal convenience in magnified and distorted form. The

and the second the national Epics. They consist of a series of books of very mixed character, of which the representative specimens were written between the sixth and twelfth centuries. Hence this period is spoken of as "the Puranic Age".
saints recognise neither pain, insult, nor self-interest, being swallowed up in the joy of God.

The cyclic manifestation of the Cosmos—never created, but eternally self-existent, self-destroying, self-repeating—was another idea sown broadcast by Buddhist teachers. Here we have an interpretation that is significant of the immense scientific energy that has always gone hand in hand with Hindu religious speculation, making the spirit of research inherent in the spirit of devotion. Perhaps had orthodoxy offered the same resistance to science in the East that it did in the West, Indian investigation would have appeared more imposing today in the eyes of foreigners. But the only thing that the Indian priesthood has conceived itself set to guard has been the social system. It has opposed nothing save social aberrations. Knowledge has gone unhindered. And it will not be difficult to show that the much vaunted science of Moorish Spain was neither more nor less than the tapping of Indian culture for the modern world.

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

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

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

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

III

India is the heart of Asia. Hinduism is a convenient name for the nexus of Indian thought. It would appear that it takes some thousand to fifteen hundred years to work out a single rhythm of its great pulsation. For this is about the period that divides the war of the Mahabharata from Buddha, Buddha from Shankaracharya, and Shankaracharya from Ramakrishna, in whom the immense pile reaches the crowning self-consciousness. Of the long prehistoric evolution that went to the building up of Mahabharata, Great India, the heroic age, we can say little, for nothing is left to us, save the legend of Sita
and Rama, out of the night of time. Yet we know
that this period must have been long. Three thousand
years seems not too much, if enough, to allow. Be-
hind this again loom up the millennia spent on the
tableland of Central Asia, that head-water of world-
civilisation where Aryan man entered the patriarchate,
and closed the account of his first combat with Nature,
having tamed the beasts, learned the use of tools,
domesticated corn and fire, produced the fruit-trees,
and divided the week.\(^1\) Of the sublime dreams, the
poetry and song with which he consoled himself
during those ages of herculean struggle, the fragments
known as the Rig-Veda still remain. And we learn
therein how broad was his outlook upon Nature, even
as that of the mind that declared, “And the evening
and the morning were the first day.” How long did
it last? Was it ten thousand years? Were there
another five thousand before the war of Mahabharata.
... However this be, the enthusiasm of succeeding
periods strikes us as extraordinary.

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

\(^1\) That learned and fascinating book, “The Arctic Home in
the Vedas,” is destined to work a revolution in our ideas on
this subject. If the author’s theory be correct, it would appear
that Aryan culture was not acquired in Central Asia.
It is only with difficulty that we realise the sense of vastness to which the thinkers of this period strove to give expression. The Celt, it has been said, strives ever towards the infinite of emotion. The Hindu, in the same way, cannot rest content, short of the infinite of thought. We see this, even so early as the hymns of the Rig-Veda. "When darkness was hidden in darkness, undistinguished, like one mass of Water," opens the great Anthem of Creation. Still larger is the sweep of the Upanishads: "They that see the Real in the midst of this Unreal, they that behold life in the midst of this death, they that know the One in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto them belongs eternal peace—unto none else, unto none else." The Vedas were the capital with which Aryan culture began its occupation of India, and these immense and subtle generalisations of the Upanishads represent the first achievement of the national mind in its new place. Surely this is the secret of the striking fact in Indian history that all great eras of rejuvenescence, such as Shankaracharya's, and even minor movements of reconstruction like Guru Nanak's, and Ramanuja's have had to go back to the forest Sutras and place themselves in structural continuity with them. In this light we begin to suspect that the war of the Mahabharata itself represents the apparent exhaustion of Vedic inspiration at the end of the first period, and the restoration of pristine vigour by force of Krishna's personality.

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

Certain evils must have come in the train of the ideas then elaborated, essential as they were to prove themselves in the long run to the completed fabric of Hinduism. We can understand that monastic notions may have attracted too much of the national energy out of the safe paths of domestic virtue, with a tendency to bring about not only the depletion of family life, but the disintegration of morality itself. No doubt it was at this time, and to meet this error, that the song of the ideal sang itself so clearly, first through the lips of Kālidāsa,¹ in his "Birth of the

¹ Kālidāsa—the poet—One of the famous "nine gems" of the Court of Vikramāditya, of Ujjain. Kālidāsa may have lived in the sixth century A.D. or earlier. He wrote the play of "Shakuntala", which so deeply touched the poet Goethe.
War-Lord”, and again, in the final recension of Ramayana, as the love of Sita for Rama, that glorified wifehood, before which the renunciation and faith of the cloister grow pale.

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

But agitation against abuses has never been the method of Hinduism. Rather has the faith progressed by lifting repeatedly in moments of crisis the banner of the highest ideal. Already, in the era we are considering, this organic law of the national genius, the law of the Avatars, was well known “Whenever the Dharma decays, and when that which is not Dharma¹ prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of the national righteousness, I am born again and again.” So says the Bhagavad-Gita—and never was any prophecy more conclusively vindicated than this, by the appearance of Shankaracharya, early in the ninth century after Christ.

This wonderful boy—for he died at the age of thirty-two—was born at the end of the eighth century, and had already completed a great mission when most

¹ Literally, the a-Dharma—non-Dharma. The prefix is privative. See p. 162.
men are still dreaming of the future. The characteristic product of Oriental culture is always a commentary. By this form of literature the future is knit firmly to the past, and though the dynamic power of the connecting idea may be obscure to the foreigner, it is clearly and accurately conveyed to the Eastern mind itself. The whole of Confucianism is contained in a commentary on the Eking, or Book of Change, and European Protestantism might almost be described as a special kind of commentary on the Christian sacred literature. The Sanskrit Sutras lend themselves to critical writing, and even demand it, in a special degree: for the word Sutra means thread, and is applied to works which are only the main line of a given argument, and require expansion at the end of every sentence. This literary convention obtains in all Oriental countries, and must date from the period when the main function of writing was to assist memorising. Obviously, by writing a new commentary on a given Sutra, the man of genius has it in his power to re-adjust the relationship between a given question and the whole of current opinion. Hence it is not surprising to find that the masterpiece of Shankaracharya's life was a commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras.

The problems which faced the Indian mind during his lifetime, with the single exception that the country was then rich and prosperous, must have been curiously like those of the present day, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in his eyes they assumed national dimensions. Religious practices had lost their primitive simplicity, and also perhaps their
compelling power. Ideas as to national and un-
national (for the word "orthodox" was but the Asiatic
word for "national") were conflicting and confused.
Men lived much in the thought of the recent sectarian
developments of the faith, and tended to lose sight
of its austere imperative, pointing to the highest rea-
lisation, of its antiquity, and its close-knit continuity.
Lakshmi, Goddess of Fortune, was one of the chief
objects of worship. Sects and kingdoms alike had
lost their sense of mutual solidarity. Never perhaps
was an Asiatic people nearer precipitating itself on a
purely secular development.

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

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

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

Subsequent critics have painted Shankaracharya as the persecutor of Buddhists. Inasmuch as he asserted a co-ordination of mythologies and doctrines, instead of preaching a single exclusive method of salvation; inasmuch as to him the goal was a positive, and not
a negative affirmation; and in so far also as he insisted upon the worthlessness of ritual apart from philosophy, of worship without illumination, he may be taken as the enemy of one school or another. It is almost unnecessary to add that this enmity was purely controversial in its character, and to Buddhists of the Northern School, a clearer historic knowledge will reveal him as the very opposite of a persecutor, as, rather, another example of the race of inspired religious teachers to which their own apostle, Nāgārjuna,\(^1\) belonged.

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

The two or three centuries immediately succeeding

\(^1\)Nagarjuna—An Indian monk, whose name is well known in China and Japan. He followed in the wake of previous teachers, in the second century of the Christian era. He gave ultimate theological form to the first school of Buddhism.
Shankaracharya are commonly known as the dark ages of Indian history. The application of the term is obscure. In what sense were these ages dark? They were centuries of chivalric dominance, and in many a Rajput line the bardic annals are still preserved that will one day enable a generation of Indian historians to read their record. Even the wars of such a period were never destructive; for, apart from their specially chivalrous character, Oriental military usage has always secured the safety of non-combatants. The lives of water-carriers and commissariat servants were scrupulously respected in Asiatic warfare. It is said, indeed, that the European gipsy is an example of this. These poor people were originally a tribe of petty merchants who used to accompany the march of armies. Wherever the camp was pitched, they could run up a bazaar in half an hour, and their caste-honour lay in telling neither side the secrets of the other. When Genghis Khan invaded Hungary, these particular clans were carried there, never to return.¹

But it was not only camp-followers who were protected by a law such as that which now defends the Red Cross Sisterhoods of Europe, a like consideration prevailed, with regard to the peasant working in the fields, and the craftsman toiling at his anvil. The young crops were honoured in ancient combat, as would be Cologne Cathedral or Notre Dame de Paris in modern. Under these circumstances a battle became only a deadly form of tournament, involving in its peril none but fighting men.

But if such contests could not become destructive,

¹ In the year 1200 A.D.
neither could they succeed in educating the masses of the people to the common duty of military defence. This result could only be achieved when a religious idea should become the war-cry of whole regions, conferring on all men the right of struggle without distinction of caste. This right, so necessary to the completion of nationality, the Mohammedan invasion gave, and it is difficult to imagine any other way in which the lesson could have been widely learnt.

The great tide of vigour that emanated from Shankaracharya swept round India by south, west, and north, in a spiral curve. Râmanuja, Madhvaçhârya, Râm Dâs and Tukâram, the Sikh Gurus and Gaurânga were all in turn its products. Wherever it touched the Mussulman consciousness, it created, chiefly by means of contest, a well-centred nation. Where it did not come in contact with Mohammedanism, as in the extreme South, this spiritual energy did not succeed in evoking a nationality. And where it did not lead to definite fighting, as in Bengal under Chaitanya, the sense of national existence remained more or less potential. Thus the advent of Islam into India during the post-Shankaracharyan period cannot

1 Ramanuja and Madhvacharya—Flourished in the South of India in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.
2 Ram Das and Tukaram—Two Mahratta saints to whose inspiration Shivaji's passionate defence of his own people was due. Tukaram was born about 1605.
3 The Sikh Gurus—These were ten in number, Guru Nanak born 1469, was the first, and Guru Govind Singh, who died 1708, was the last. By the lives and teachings of these ten leaders was formed the Hindu nation of the Punjab, the Sikhs. Amritsar is still the sacred city of this sect of Hinduism.
4 Gauranga—Another name for Chaitanya, born 1486, the saint in whom Bengal first begins to realise herself as a united consciousness.
be regarded as a revolutionary invasion, inasmuch as under the new power there was no loss of Asiatic modes. New arts of luxury were introduced, but the general economic system remained undisturbed. India received a more centralised government than had been possible since the Asokan Empire, but no new forces came into operation, tending to reduce her own children to the position of agricultural serfs or tenants. And we have seen that even the wars which arose between contiguous populations of Hindus and Mohammedans must be regarded rather as those athletic contests between brothers and cousins which confer individuality, than as conquests on the one side or the other. The victor after victory attempts neither to exclude his rival’s creed from office, nor to create invidious distinctions. “The great bankers and nobles of Bengal remained Hindu under the rule of the Nawabs, as naturally as the Mussulman maintained his face in the shadow of a Hindu throne.”

Nor have the clearness and self-consciousness that its definition has added to Hinduism in any way tended to impair its inclusiveness. For the personality that the nineteenth century has revealed as the turning-point of the national development is that of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, whose name stands as another word for the synthesis of all possible ideals and all possible shades of thought. In this great life, Hinduism finds the philosophy of Shankaracharya clothed upon with flesh, and is made finally aware of the entire

1 Torrens’ “Empire in Asia”
2 Ramakrishna Paramahamsa lived in a temple-garden outside Calcutta from 1853 to 1886. His teachings have already become a great intellectual force.
sufficiency of any single creed or conception to lead the soul to God as its true goal. Henceforth, it is not true that each form of life or worship is tolerated or understood by the Hindu mind: each form is justified, welcomed, set up for its passionate loving, for evermore. Henceforth, the supreme crime for the follower of any Indian sect, whether orthodox or modern, philosophic or popular, shall be the criticism of any other, as if it were without the bounds of “the Eternal Faith”. “Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to truth,” becomes in future the formula that constitutes belief.

At this point we could almost have prophesied, had it not already happened, that some great disciple of this master would declare, on behalf of the whole nation, that the final differentia of Hinduism lay in the acceptance of the doctrine of the Ishta Devatâ, i.e., the right of every man to choose his own creed, and of none to force the same choice on any other.¹

At last, then, Indian thought stands revealed in its entirety—no sect, but a synthesis; no church, but a university of spiritual culture—as an idea of individual freedom, amongst the most complete that the world knows. Certain conceptions, such as Maya, Karma, and reincarnation, popularised by Buddhism, and Mukti or the beatific vision, sown broadcast alike by

¹I desire to say that in thus referring to my own Gurus, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and the Swami Vivekananda, I do not intend to imply that every one will or ought to be willing to assign them the same place in the evolution of Hinduism that seems to myself to belong to them. Whether their names be accepted or not, however, I believe that all Hindus will agree regarding the ideas which are here stated as constituting Hinduism.
Shankaracharya and the Sufis, are characteristic of large areas. But they are nowhere and in no sense regarded as essential. For it is as foreign to the genius of Hinduism to require an oath of conformity to any given religious tenet whatever, as it would be to the habits of an Oxford don to require adherence to the doctrines of Plato as against those of Aristotle. It would thus appear that the reforming sects of the Mohammedan period and of the nineteenth century itself, have to the full as good a right to call themselves Hindu as the most orthodox priest of Shiva, or the most learned Sanskrit pundit.

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

It is said that nations and systems of culture fulfil special functions, as organs of humanity just as individuals fulfil special uses in the community. If this be so, it would almost appear that within the bounds of India lies one of the focal or polar points of the race. The great task of the reconciliation of opposites would
seem to devolve on the peoples within this pale. It is not enough that the Mussulman should inhabit the pastoral belt, the Mongolian rest secure behind the Thian Shan, and the Aryan and Dravidian dwell peacefully side by side in the Southern peninsula. It was decreed from the beginning, it lay unavoidably in the very nature of things, that sooner or later all these should meet in the land of the Indus, and learn their mutual significance and responsibilities. Buddhism may be regarded in one aspect as simply the synthesis of Eastern Asia. Neo-Hinduism (to borrow a term which has been coined in no friendly spirit) is equally indicative of a place found in Aryan thought for Semitic formulae, and who shall say what is yet to be born of that conjunction between all these, in which Asia shall find herself to be—not, as she has so long been told, "merely a congeries of geographical fragments", still less a concert of rival political units, held in mechanical combination by a due admixture of mutual hopes and recriminations, but a single immense organism, filled with the tide of one strong pulsating life from end to end, firm-rooted in the soil of common origins and common modes? The value which we may attach to the prospect of this future will depend on the idea that we have already been able to form, of the place of Asia in the evolution of humanity, but to those who foresee a future moralisation of international relations it may well appear that this question is among the most important in the world.
THE ORIENTAL EXPERIENCE

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

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

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

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

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

Some such protest, at least, is apt to be roused in the Oriental by Western dreams of a future life. It is all physical, all sense-impression, he says, and as such is necessarily subject to that law of change and decay which must sooner or later apply to all compounds. In the sublime imagination of the Beatific Vision, he catches a hint of a deeper reality, but why, he asks, this distinction between time and eternity? Can the apprehension of the Infinite Good be conditioned by the clock? Oh, for a knowledge undimensioned, untimed, effect of no cause, cause of no effect! Reaching That, and That alone, we could be sure of unchanging bliss, of existence ultimate. But if accessible at all, it must be now in the earth-life or never. It must transcend and still the life of the senses, when the senses are most active; it must absorb and transmute the personal, when personality is capable of every eager claim, or remain for ever incredible, save as one swing of a pendulum, some day to be reversed.

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

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

How we shall interpret and express the vision is determined wholly by our own past language and discipline. The mother comes out of it to love and serve; Joan of Arc commands armies with unaltering insight; Sir Isaac Newton gives us the law of gravitation; Mozart produces his Requiem Mass, and the Messiah comes down from the mountain side whispering, "I and My Father are One." That is to say, the self-limited joys of sense have given way to the pursuit of the good of others as an end in itself. The man is overpowered by a beauty and a truth that he must needs share with the whole world. Or the finite personality is completed, transcended, in union with the absolute and universal.
There are thus, as the East counts, two modes of existence—one the personal, or egoistic, and the other the impersonal, or supra-personal, where egoism and altruism are alike forgotten. The realisation of this illimitable existence is itself salvation, and is to be reached in life, not death. Concentration is its single secret, and real power is always power over oneself.

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

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

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

The temporary experience, in which the subject becomes unconscious of bodily sensation, is called Samâdhi. The process by which he comes out of Samadhi time after time, to work its volume of force, so to speak, into his daily life, is known as realisation. And the path of service in purity of motive, is spoken of as Karma-Yoga, or divine union by work.

Again, we can in some measure understand the development of a nature to whom everything appears in degrees of loveliness. This was undoubtedly the method of S. Francis, and after him of S. Teresa. It is called in India Bhakti, or devotion. Gradually, in such souls—guided by the thought of reaching the Infinite in abnegation of self—the power of love becomes a fire scorching, burning, consuming the barriers of individuality. "One cannot understand," says S. Teresa, "what is meant by talking of the impermanence of worldly joys. For one would renounce them so much the more gladly, could they but be eternal." Then there is a fusing of all things in the one conception of the Beloved. Lastly, distinction ceases, self is forgotten, there is left nothing, save the Infinite Love. First the prayer of quiet, then the prayer of union, last the irresistible rapture, says the great Carmelite. Such is Bhakti-Yoga, the road by which the vast majority of the saints have gone.
Highest of all, however, is union by knowledge or Jnâna-Yoga. A life whose whole struggle is the passion for truth; a soul to which falsehood or superstition is the worst of sins; a mind clear as the black depths of a mountain-pool; an atmosphere of joy, all stillness, all calm, all radiance without emotion; to these comes the growing intensity of recognition, the increasing power of direct vision, and finally that last illumination, in which there is neither knower, knowing nor known, but all is one in Oneness. It is much to be regretted that we have in English no word corresponding to Jnana. Insight has a certain affinity, but is not sufficiently intense. The fact is, the habit of thought that leads up to the conception is foreign to us: a true parallelism is, therefore, out of the question.

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

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

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

So far of the apprehension of unity when consciousness and self-direction have made it vital spirituality. The hindrance to our reaching it is always, it is declared, one, namely, under whatever guise, want of the power to give up self. "When desire is gone, and all the cords of the hearts are broken, then," says the Upanishad, "a man attains to immortality." And by "immortality", it should be understood, is here meant the quality of deathlessness. For this reason, all religions are a call to renunciation; all ethics negate selfishness of personality; all disciplines are a repression of individual impulse. In the Indian doctrine of One immanent in the many, all these receive interpre-
tation. The scholar’s austerity of study; the artist’s striving to become the witness; the lover’s desire to sacrifice himself; all speak, however unconsciously, of our longing not to be, that the infinite, the universal consciousness, may abide within us.

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

Obviously, the final truth of the doctrine is capable of no other proof or disproof than that of experience. But the attitude to it of the common Indian mind is strictly scientific. We cannot prove, save by making the experiment, but we can point to the fact that the accumulated observation of life goes to establish the tenableness of the proposition, says India in effect. And when we are shown one morality that does not demand the holding of unity of principle against manifoldness of impulse; one science that does not grow by the correlating of apparent discrepancies in continually stricter unities; or one character that does not find perfection in surrendering the personal to the impersonal, the theory of Maya—real unity amidst apparent diversity—will fall to the ground, and must be acknowledged a misconception. Hitherto, it may be claimed, the whole history of the world has not sufficed to furnish the required exception.
Thus the beatific vision of Hinduism is not unlike that of Dante's Empyrean, only it is to be relegated to no distant future, but triumphantly vindicated within morality itself. The name of God and the conventions of piety are as unreal as anything else in Maya, but they have the power of enabling us to break its bondage, whereas the delights of the senses only fasten it the tighter.

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

From the unreal, lead us to the real!
From darkness, lead us unto light!
From death, lead us to immortality!
Reach us through and through ourself,
And evermore protect us—O Thou Terrible!—
From ignorance by Thy sweet compassionate face
XI

THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH

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

Heredity is a condition, not a destiny—BJÖRNSEN.
As a man casts off worn-out clothes, and puts on others
which are new, so the embodied casts off worn-out bodies, and
puts on others which are new—Bhagavad Gita.

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

To the ancients, a curse, for example, was no
exercise of the volition of the speaker. It was in no
sense a threat. Our own more frivolous use of the
word is a case of degradation by the death of a con-
ception. To the old Greek, as indeed to the Hindu and the Norseman, a curse was entirely a prophecy. It was pronounced by way of warning or revelation that upon a certain act certain results would be found to follow. Apollo perceives that if Laios begets a son, disaster will result. He does not determine that it shall be so. Evidently, will is regarded as free up to a certain point, or we should not have the alternative imagined, of begetting no son. But to Oedipus and his children there is no alternative; he and they have been born in that circle of destiny where they can only fulfil the lot marked out.

This fact the Greek mind appears to accept without further inquiry. For it, overwhelming interest attaches, not to an analysis of the nature and conditions of fate, but to the spectacle of the human will in spiritual conflict with it. This spectacle is the theme of the whole of Hellenic tragedy. The Christian doctrine of grace introduces something confused and miraculous into the European idea of life, and for centuries the pursuit of the knowledge of things as they are is thwarted by a supernatural metaphysic of things as they ought to be, and are not. With the Renaissance, however, the intellect of Europe springs back sharply to the Greek position. _Macbeth_ and _Othello_ are in some ways as completely Hellenic as anything of Aeschylus. Temptation is once more placed outside a man; true and false incentives are inextricably blended; and the will is shown as the mere plaything of its own blindness. On these points, and in the feeling of vastness with which he covers his subject, Shakespeare's delineation is all Greek.
In *Macbeth*, it is true, a sense of ethical suffering somewhat blurs the outline. But nothing dims the prefect beauty of *Othello*. Untortured by misgiving its heroic figures move from the dawn of their love to the noontide of supreme vindication of its purity in death. The particular problem is not antique. Its delicacy of tint is somewhat modern, but in simplicity and grandeur, in the conviction that life is a mere straw swept along on the current of necessity *Othello* is an ancient drama.

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

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

But this will so often seems asleep! Unaroused, or ignorant as a child, it has turned aside perhaps for every way-side flower, for any shining pebble, and in the hour of the crisis is simply missing. Or it may be that it suffers from some base intoxication of falsehood or desire, and has fallen down to kiss the feet of evil as though it were good,courting slavery and defeat as maidens to be caressed. Surely here, and here alone, is the crux of things, in the difference between the enlightened and the unenlightened will. Necessity is but the sum of the conditions. Heredity is but one, though the most critical, of those conditions. In the setting of the will itself towards bondage or towards freedom lies the secret of the unity of life.

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

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

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

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

The answer of India is not doubtful. There is one tool and only one, she says, that is finer than the most perfect human brain, and that is the tool of a noble intention. No more than other delicate instruments is this, she claims, immediately producible wherever we may wish to see it. Just as faculty grows from feeble and unrationalised to its perfection, just as organisms progress from minute and simple to large and complex, so must we suppose that will passes through all the stages of egotism till it reaches that illumination which we know as perfect charity. At each stage the possibilities of aspiration are limited,
though they become less and less so as the goal is approached. The whole Hindu outlook is thus critical and scientific. There is no longer a vague horrible something called sin: this has given place to a clearly defined state of ignorance, or blindness of the will. Nor is this ignorance conceived of as a stationary or fixed quantity. So surely as trees grow and rivers seek the sea will it sooner or later give place to knowledge, in every human soul; and then a man’s mere forgetfulness of his limited personality and its aims may look to others like nobility: to himself it will not even be apparent, lost in the larger yearning of more universal life. Thus a great and generous thought is like a position near the river-mouth to the water springing at the source, not by any means to be reached without traversing the complete distance. The supreme good fortune possible to man would consist of a noble intention, joined to a great brain, joined to an external position of mastery and freedom—an advantageous point—that is to say, on some line of cause and effect. Such, we may take it, to Gautama the Buddha, was the opportunity of his birth. Most lives, however, represent every possible degree, and combination of degrees, of the three conditions. We see the great position made the background of stupidity and meanness. We see the kind wish rendered futile by feebleness of intellect. Very occasionally there is no discord between person and circumstance; but now and again the discrepancy takes the acute form of the lion caught in the net, or the common criminal wearing an emperor’s crown. Whence have these anomalies arisen? In what firm order do they stand rooted?
THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH

The Hindu mind seems always to have been possessed of the quiet confidence that all phenomena will yield themselves to a rational explanation. Since "that which exists is one", it is absurd to suppose an ultimate contradiction between the human reason and the universe. The mind that is normal and right amongst its fellows is normal and right in its relation to things. If we see and hear and taste, it is because in primal vibration there is something correspondent to sight and sound and the rest, of which our human sense has been the necessary outcome. Our faculty, that is to say, may be feeble, but we must assume it to be true. If thirty years of life can impress us with a sense of terrible duration, utterly disproportionate to their relative importance, it is because in the Absolute there is no passage of time, all the infinite eternities of consciousness lying in the Now. If human love can oppress us with a vastness undreamed of, suddenly opened before us, it is because in it we have approximated to a state which transcends all limit and all change. Whatever be the nature of the Real it must include, not exclude, consciousness. This being so, we must take it that the order of things as we see them—time, space, and causation—applies to life itself as naturally as to all that within the limits of life we perceive. Our appearance here from birth to death is a simple case of the sequences that every moment of our stay brings to our notice. It is the effect of some cause which could no more have failed to find its fulfilment in time and space than the sel.-striking of a bird's wing could fail to be accompanied by flight. Everything, again, within the general effect, is a
subordinate effect conditioned by its own subordinate cause. Physical, mental, and moral, are only terms denoting so many dimensions, as it were, within which the seed has germinated and come to its fruition. So much for the effect. Do things, as we see them, give us any hint as to the nature of the cause? Yes, there is one force—the force of desire—that we see at work daily, making, cherishing, gathering, action and its fruits. Without this as creative antecedent it will be found on examination that nothing that we know of comes to pass. Hence if life as a whole be regarded as but a phenomenon similar in kind to those which it encloses, we are impelled to the conclusion that of it also the efficient cause has been the human will. We dreamed of ourselves as bodies. Falling into some strange error, we longed for the sweets of sense. And we awoke and, without knowing it, found ourselves in prison, there but to continue adding to the energy of those desires, each of which was already a fetter binding us the faster. Such is the Hindu interpretation of our presence here. Of what led to our self-deceit he attempts no account, conceiving that his right to a rational theory applies only to the phenomenal, meaning those things that are perceived within the play of reason.

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is the “cosmic suicide” of Schopenhauer, the
much talked-of "pessimism" of the East. It is indeed a familiar conception to all Hindus, so familiar as to be an integral part of language. But it is hardly "pessimism". Does the prophecy of victory carry with it sadness? the certain promise of his freedom embitter the slave? There is a sense in which, if Hindu philosophy be not optimistic, it is difficult to know what the world means by optimism. Taking the doctrine of reincarnation as a whole, we find it so necessary to the theory of Maya that even the Buddhist formulation could not exist without some version of it. At the same time, a clear understanding of it is a valuable corrective of slipshod misconceptions as to the philosophy of illusion. That this involves no lazy intellectual uncertainty regarding phenomena we have seen, since the whole doctrine of Karma is based on the Hindu's implicit conviction of the entire calculableness of law. It cannot be too clearly understood that the argument of Maya is compatible with, and tenacious of, the severest scientific research, and that to Oriental thinking, only that man who has in his own person, by some method of self-discipline, achieved a realisation, compared to which all that we know through the senses is unreal, has a right to speak of the phenomenal universe as, to him, fundamentally an illusion. The effort to reach this vision remains, nevertheless, to the Oriental mind the one end and justification of existence, the one escape from the wheel of life; and mankind is for ever divisible into those who see and struggle towards such a goal, and those who are engaged in sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind of Desire.
The battle-field of Kurukshetra lies silent these many centuries, yet still to the ear of the wise man it echoes the doom of Humanity in the terrible words: "Of that which is born, death is certain. Of that which is dead, birth is certain."
THE STORY OF THE GREAT GOD: SHIVA OR MAHADEVA

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

'Salutation to Shiva, as the Teacher of the Soul.'

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

To this day, we find ancient capitals and their ruins, old fortresses, royal temples, scattered up and down the heights from Beluchisthan to Nepal, in regions long depopulated. And Himalayan shrines and cities have
an art and architecture of their own, which is more severely beautiful, because more directly related to the common early Asiatic, than the later styles, to be found further south. For the first culture-area of humanity had these mountains as its rim. Long before a local prepossession had named the Mediterranean, Asia was. And of that Asia, Egypt, Greece, Etruria, were outlying provinces. The Saracen and Moor, with all that they brought of art and chivalry, with all the intellectual vividness they conferred on Europe, were but the relic-mongers of its past. In the West, even now, we admit a people to be civilised only if we can trace its intellectual descent from this ancient Asia.

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

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

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

    The Self sustained as cause below,
    Projected as effect above.

We find in India, then, a classical nation like Egypt or Greece, which has been allowed to develop freely on the mental plane, and has held the thread of its thought unbroken to the present day. It may be said broadly that great culture and subjective philosophies are almost always continental in their origin, while the sense of nationality and insistence on the beautiful are insular. If this be true, it would explain the greater sympathy between Hellenic and Japanese developments than between Greek and Indian.
For the Hindu imagination long ago detached itself from the cycle of physical beauty, to seek its fullest satisfaction in subtler realms. This fact is extraordinarily evident in Kālidāsa’s poem of “The birth of the War-Lord”, where he depicts the wooing of Mahadeva by Umâ, the Himalayan princess. Here the poet places his heroine at the very acme of maidenly charm, kneeling in worship to lay flowers at the feet of the Great God, and having as her background the forest of plum and cherry and almond, all suddenly burst into blossom, because to them comes Spring, as the comrade of Love. And then, with a single sweep of the brush, the picture is blotted out: the Great God has vanished from beneath his cedar; Eros is burnt to ashes; and the royal maiden kneels alone, while the bitter wailing of Desire, the beautiful wife of Love, fills the whole woodland. Uma’s triumph is reached, and the Divine Spouse drawn to her side, only when, in the midst of unheard-of austerities, she gives supreme proof of courage and devotion as nun and worshipper instead of woman and lover. This touch lies far beyond the range of the Greek.

A similar tendency to use physical symbolism as a system of notation merely, instead of seeking in it the direct and adequate expression of spiritual conceptions, as did the classical genius of Europe, is to be found throughout the whole conception of Shiva or Mahadeva, the Great God Himself. The tiger-skin in which he is clad, and some of the names of this deity, induce Tod in his “Annals of Rajasthan” to regard Him as simply a new version of the Greek
Bacchus. It is a great deal more likely that behind the two, in the dim North, and in the distant past—in some Lake Manasarovar of thought, to quote Max Müller—there may loom up a common ancestor. But this probability only makes more significant the divergences between the two conceptions.

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

The small stone pillar, called the Linga—the word Lingam is literally symbol—may have been taken from the bed of a stream, and in that case is likely to be of a long egg-shape. But if it has been cut by the hand of man, it is short and slightly tapering, with a thimble-like top. Sometimes, in all good faith, the features of a human face have been more or less crudely marked on it, with white paint. In any case, it is only a question of time till some woman, passing by on her way from bathing, stops to pour a little water, or sprinkle a few grains of rice tenderly over the head of the stone, perhaps also to add bael-leaves, trifoliate like our clover; or a garland of white flowers;
The story of the Great God

or, prompted by a heart more devoted and loving than usual, to touch it with a spot of sandal-paste, so cool and refreshing in this hot climate! Then the earth is touched with the head, and the worshipper passes on.

The simple act is not without its perplexities, and we seek for interpretation. At first in vain. Or the explanations given are more bewildering than helpful. Hindus are too conscious of the symbolistic nature of every faith, and too sensitive also to the scornful irreverence of most foreign inquirers, to speak out, or argue out, the heart of their heart with the passing stranger. Rather they will turn on one, with a strange pity. "Do you not understand," they will say, "that this is the Great God who is emblemed here? He can have neither visitor, nor history, nor worshipper. Such things are vain dreams of men. Only for our own hearts' ease, and to carry ourselves nearer to the inner vision, do we set up a stone whereon we may offer rice and water and lay a leaf or two!" It will be difficult in all India to find a woman so simple, or a peasant so ignorant, that to them worship is not, as some one has said, "a conscious symbolism, instead of a fragment of primitive personification". Yet by degrees the great myth leaks out. Little by little we learn the associations of the name.

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

About the whole conception there is a striking reminiscence of the Himalayas. Whether we will or not we are carried back, as we listen, to the great age of the Vedas, when the Aryan immigration was still taking place. It is a day of sacrifice, and at the forest-clearing people and priests are met, to heap the offerings on the mighty fire, chanting appropriate texts. Hour after hour, sometimes day after day, the mound of pure flame lasts, and long after it has ceased the hot white ashes lie in their immense bed, thrilling now and then to a faint trickling spark, sighing themselves out into the coldness of death. Who was it that first came and rubbed himself with those soft white ashes, in order to be clothed upon with the worship of God and separation from the world? Who was it that first retired into cave or jungle, and meditated, until his hair became a tangled mass, and his nails grew long, and his body emaciated, and he still pursued the sublime bliss of the soul? However the idea of such an exterior grew, the whole genius of India has spoken for many a century in just such a picture—the hermit clad in wood-ashes, with masses of neglected hair, piled on the top of his head, indifferent to the whole world, bent only on thought.

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

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

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

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

Like the true ascetic, begging food at the householder's door, He is pleased with very simple gifts. The cold water of the bath, a few grains of rice, and two or three green bael-leaves, are His whole offering in the daily worship. But the rice and water must be of the purest, for they are presented to a most honoured guest. Evidently the bael-leaf, like the shamrock, refers to the Trinity. For, as we all know, this doctrine is Hindu as well as Christian and Egyptian.

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

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

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

Once upon a time, all the splendour and glory of the gods seemed to be vanishing from them. (Are
such tales, we wonder, a reminiscence of the period when the old gods, Indra, Agni, and the lords of the universe, found themselves growing unfashionable, because the Trinity, Brahmâ-Vishnu-Shiva, was coming into favour?) What to do, the gods did not know, but they determined to pray to Vishnu, the Preserver of the World, for advice. He told them, perhaps contemptuously, to “go and churn the ocean”! and the poor gods trooped forth eagerly to do His bidding.

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

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

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

"The quarry was mine!" cried the Hunter—and his voice sounded like the winter-blasts, amongst the mountains—"the quarry was mine. Mine is the lordship of these forests! How dared you touch it?"
At this address, Arjuna blazed with anger, and picking up the bow and arrows that he had thrown aside before returning to his worship, he challenged the Hunter to a personal combat.

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

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

"Well, come on!" said the Hunter, as he recovered himself a few seconds later, and turned aside from the contest. But he seemed almost intoxicated. "I must finish my worship first," he said, in a thick voice, taking up a garland of flowers, to fling about the Shiva-Lingga. The next moment the eyes of Arjuna were opened, for the Hunter towered above him, blessing him, and the flowers were about his neck.

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

Such are a few of the stories told of Shiva, so deeply loved by all his devotees. To them there is nothing in the world so strong and pure and all-merciful as their great God, and the ballads and poems of Hindus are very few in which he is not referred to with this passionate worship.
Sometimes He is entirely a personification of the Himalayas, as when the Milky Way is made to fall upon his head, wander round and round amongst the tangled locks, and issue from them at last as the Ganges. Indeed, the imagination of the people may be said to make of their northern ranges one vast shrine to Him; for it is far away, they say, across the frost-bound heights, where the Himalayas are at their mightiest and India passes into Tibet, that the Lake Manasarovar lies, at the foot of the great ice-peak of Kailas. Here is the reign of silence and eternal snow, and here, guarding the north, is the holy home that Shiva loves.

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

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

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

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

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

O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
By Thy touch, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me pure.¹

¹ Literally, Make us both the same Brahman—i.e., let the Singer—low dancing-girl as she may be—become one with God Himself in the Supreme Essence, Brahman. The theological conception here is so difficult for Western readers that I have preferred to use the simpler alternative translation also furnished by my Master, the Swami Vivekananda.
One drop of water is in the sacred Jumna,
Another is foul in the ditch by the road-side,
But when they fall into the Ganges,
Both alike become holy.

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

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

THE GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED ONE

We worship Thee, seed of the universe,
Thou one unbroken Soul
We worship Thee, whose footstool is worshipped by the gods.
Thou Lord of the saints,
Physician of the world-disease,
To Thy lotus-feet our salutation, O Great Soul!

_Hindu form of salutation to a Divine Incarnation._

I

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

Called by various names, arrayed in widely-differing garb, we come constantly in Hinduism on the attempt, as here in the story of the Dalai-Lama, to express the idea that in the great Heart of the Absolute there dwells an abiding charity towards men. It would
seem as if, to the religious instinct of humanity, the
dream of "the pursuit of the soul by God" is a neces-
sity; and the Hindu, well aware of the impossibility of
giving it logical expression, veils his effort in mytho-
logy. Whence the stories of the Avatars. For our
conception of the doctrine of reincarnation is only
complete when we understand that now and again the
Eternal Love is represented as projecting itself into
the sphere of manifestation, taking shape as a
man, in order to act as a lamp amidst the darkness
of delusion, a counter-magnetism to the attractions
of desire.

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

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

It is natural enough to the Hindu intellect that around each such forth-shining of the Divine should grow up a new religious system or church. But each of these is only a special way of expressing the one fundamental doctrine of Mâyâ, a new mode of endearing God to man. At the same time it is thought that every one, while recognising this perfect sympathy of various faiths for one another, should know how to choose one amongst them for his own, and persist in it, till by its means he has reached a point where the formulae of sects are meaningless to him. "For it is good," say the people, "to be born in a church, though it is foolish to die there."

In this sense—somewhat different from the religious partisanship of Europe—the popular and growing belief of the Hindu masses consists of various forms of the worship of Krishna. It is this creed that carries to those who need it, a religious emotionalism like that of the Salvation Army or of Methodism. In the hottest nights, during periods of "revival", the streets

1 Literally, Dharma and A-Dharma. The prefix here adversative—Dharma and non-Dharma.
of a city will be crowded with men bearing lights and banners, and dancing themselves into a frenzy to such words as:

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

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

If we dip into His history we shall think it a strange medley. So many parts were never surely thrust upon a single figure! But through it all we note the predominant Indian characteristics—absolute detachment from personal ends, and a certain subtle and humorous insight into human nature.
His main spiritual significance for India does not, perhaps—with one exception—attach to that part of His life which is related in the Mahābhārata, but rather to what is told of Him in the Purāṇas—works not unlike our apocryphal Gospels. But the one exception is important. It consists of no less an incident than that conversation with the cheftain Arjuna which comprises the Bhagavad-Gîtâ, or Song of the Blessed One. Of this little poem—only some three or four times the length of the Sermon on the Mount, and shorter even than the Gospel of St. Mark—it may be said at once that amongst the sacred writings of mankind there is probably no other which is at once so great, so complete, and so short. It provides the worship of Krishna—and incidentally all kindred systems—with that open door upon abstract philosophy without which no cult could last in India for a week. But it is by no means the property of the Vaishnavas exclusively. From Kashmir to Cape Comorin it is bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of all forms of religious thought.

Its ideas are unmistakably Indian in colour: its feeling is just as unmistakably universal. The voice that speaks on the field of Kurukshetra is the same voice that reverberates through an English childhood from the shores of the Sea of Galilee. We read the gracious words: “Putting aside all doctrines, come thou to Me alone for shelter—I will liberate thee from all sins, do not thou grieve,” “Fixing thy heart on Me, thou shalt, by My grace, cross over a'1 difficulties”, and we drop the book, lost in a dream of One who cried to the weary and heavy laden, “Come unto Me.”
We certainly now understand, and cannot again forget, that for the Indian reader the eyes of the Lord Krishna are most kind, His touch infinitely gentle, and His heart full of an exceeding great compassion, even as for us are the eyes and the hand and the heart of Him who spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd.

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

And indeed it was for these, labouring men, unlettered and poor, that the Gita, with its masterly simplicity, was written. To those who had thought salvation and the beatific vision as far beyond their attainment as a knowledge of the classics—to these humble souls the Divine Voice declares that, by worshiping God and doing at the same time the duty of his station, every man may attain perfection: "Better for one is one's own duty, however badly done, than the duty of another, though that be easy." Again and again, as we read the Gita, we are driven to the con-
clusion that we hear an infinite mercy addressing itself to a people who had imagined the knowledge of God to be the monopoly of priesthoods and religious orders, and biding them be of good courage, for the true monk is he "who neither hates nor desires", the true worshipper any one "who offers to Me with devotion even a leaf or a flower or a cup of water". No wonder that the Indian people, saluting a Divine Incarnation, call Him the physician of the world-disease! Never did speech know how to be more interior. "Those who worship Me, renouncing all actions in Me, regarding Me as supreme, meditating on Me with entire devotion, for them whose thought is fixed on Me, I become ere long, O son of Prithâ, the Saviour out of the ocean of this mortal world."

"For I am the abode of Brahman, the Immortal and the Immutable, the Eternal Substance, and the unfailing Bliss." We kneel in a vast silence and darkness, and hear words falling like water drop by drop.

Nothing is omitted from the Gita that the unconsoloed heart requires. There are even the tender promises of daily bread, so dear to the anxious: "They who depend on Me, putting aside all care, whatsoever they need, I myself carry it to them," runs one verse. Of this a beautiful story is told in the villages. The Brahmin sat copying the text, but when the word "carry" had been written, he felt a doubt. "My dear," he said, turning to consult his wife, "thinnest thou not it is irreverent to say 'carry' here? Did not our Lord mean 'send'?" "Beyond a doubt, beloved," answered his wife, "it is as thou sayest. Let the word be 'send'." Then the man took his penknife
and erased the word he had just written, substituting his own emendation for it. A moment later he rose up to go and bathe. But his wife stood before him with troubled face. "I told thee not," she said, "that there is no food in the house, and nought have I to cook for thee." The Brahmin smiled gently. "Let us call upon our Lord to fulfil His own promise," he replied quietly; "meantime, I shall go and bathe," and he passed into the next room. Only a few minutes had he gone, when his wife was called to the door by a beautiful youth, who stood there with a basketful of delicious foods, ready for eating. "Who sent me this?" the woman asked in amazement. "Your husband called me to carry it," said the lad carelessly, putting the basket as he spoke into her hands. But to her horror, as he lifted his arms, the housewife noted cuts and gashes above his heart. "Alas, my poor child, who hath wounded thee?" she cried. "Your husband, mother, before he called me, cut me with a small sharp weapon," was the quiet answer. Dumb with astonishment, the Brahmin's wife turned away to bestow the viands he had brought, and when she came back to the door the youth had gone. At that instant her husband re-entered the room, having returned, as she supposed from bathing. Her wonder about the food was forgotten in indignant sympathy. "Why," she cried, "dost thou so hurt thy messenger?" The man looked at her without understanding. "Him whom thou sentest to me with food, as thou didst go to bathe," she explained. "To bathe I," he stammered, "I have not yet been!" Then the eyes of husband and wife met, and they knew both who had come to
them, and how they had wounded the heart of the Lord. And the Brahmin returned to the sacred text, and once more erasing a word restored it to its original form, for there can be no doubt that the true reading is, "They who depend on Me, casting aside all care, whatsoever they need, I myself carry it to them."

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

"O Thou that playest on the flute, standing by the water-ghâts, on the road to Vrindaban!" sing the lovers of Krishna, and their hearts melt within them while they sing, pierced as by S. Teresa's wound of seraphic love. Of all its elements, however, there is none which has the unequalled importance to the world of the scroll in the right hand, both as throwing light on Indian habits of thought and as an exposition of the science of religion. The questions, therefore—On what fundamental experience does he Gita base itself? To what does it appeal? What does it single out in life as requiring explanation? What is
its main imperative— are of singular interest. That place which the four Gospels hold to Christendom, the Gita holds to the world of Hinduism, and in a very real sense, to understand it is to understand India and the Indian people.

II

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

Incidentally, the opening of the poem presents us with an impressive picture of an ancient battle-field. On the great plain of Kurukshetra, already the scene of the prayers and austerities of saints and pilgrims for hundreds of years, two armies face each other. The leaders of both sides occupy chariots drawn by white horses; over each waves his personal ensign; and each carries a conchshell, by way of trumpet, to enable him to give signals and enforce attention to his commands. Both armies are represented as great hosts, but indications are not wanting that that of Duryodhana, the usurper, under the leadership of
Bhishma, is the larger and stronger. And this is natural, since Duryodhana, rightly or wrongly, is still suzerain of the whole country, while the five Pândava brothers, his cousins, are only bent on the recovery of their rights from him. We have to call to mind that this is an ancient battle, consisting of an immense number of small fights, before we are able to give our thoughts calmly to the narrative, for we are told that from all parts of the field and on both sides the white conchshells have been blown, giving the signal for assault, and that already "the discharge of weapons" has begun, when Arjuna requests Krishna, who is acting as his charioteer, to drive him into the space between the two hosts, that he may single out those with whom he is to enter into personal combat during the fray.

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

This feeling of Arjuna's finds religious expression: "I desire not victory, O Krishna, neither kingdom nor pleasures. . . . It would be better for me if the sons of Dhritarâshtra, arms in hand, should slay me, unarmed and unresisting, in the battle." Surely the moral situation is finely conceived! A prince, of the proudest lineage on earth, is eager to be offered up as a sacrifice rather than accept empire at the price to be paid for it. On the battle-field of life does any case need better stating? Yet this thirst for martyrdom, which looks so like renunciation, is really quite another thing. "Thou art grieved for those who require no grief, yet thou speakest words of wisdom," says Krishna. For, instead of the actual indifference to the world and to his own part in it, of one who perceives that all before him is unreal, Arjuna is betraying that determination to maintain things as they are which belongs to those who hold that affection at least is a very actual good. It is on this distinction that the whole treatise is based.
At first, indeed, the charioteer affects to meet the chieftain's hesitation with all the contempt of knighthood for panic. "Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha!" he exclaims. "Ill doth it become thee. Cast off this base weakness, and arise, O terror of foes." It is not till Arjuna, with a touching acknowledgement of grief and confusion, makes a supreme appeal for intellectual enlightenment, that Krishna, in the character of divine teacher, enters on that immortal pronouncement regarding the real and unreal, which ends by sending the knight back to the duty of his birth, unshrinking, with the words: "Firm, with undoubting mind, I obey Thy word."

As the dialogue proceeds, the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of battle die away. We are standing alone in some chamber of the soul, holding that colloquy between human and divine, finite and infinite, which never ceases during life for any one of us, however little able we may be to disentangle it from the voices of the world. At the culminating moment of the interview, when the worshipper receives the sudden revelation of all existing in and by the Lord Krishna, as mere multiform expression of His sole energy, even at this moment, and during the rapt and broken praise which follows it, we find nothing discordant in the mise en scène. A chariot of war has become, as only a Hindu pen could have made it, silent as any cell of meditation. The corner of a battlefield has grown as remote from the whirl of life as the inmost recesses of a heart at prayer.

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

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

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

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

The Gita is today the gospel of the Indian revival. And never was book so well suited to such function. For its eighteen chapters are the expression of an overwhelming national vitality. It is as true of peoples as
of individuals, that when the age is full and rich, living is apt to outrun knowing. It is then that large questions press for solution. Great areas of experience require to be related to their common centre and to each other. And so pre-eminently does the Gita do this, that the Mussulman and the Christian can sit indifferently with the Hindu to gather its interpretations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISLAM IN INDIA

I

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

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

It has been administered through the Jew as well as the Mussulman. But the Jew was the spiritual heir of Egypt, and as such could not individualise the desert pure and simple. His religious ideas were too complex, his social system too exclusive, his national sentiment too unfixed. When he ceased to be a peasant in Syria, the world was before him as scholar and trader.
To the Arab, on the other hand, belonged the shifting constancy of the desert sands. No luxury of cities could fire him with ambition to leave home and kindred, the scanty fare and hardy contests of his youth, that he might eat well and sleep soft amongst aliens. To this day the seamen in the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean will pass those curious, square-sailed boats known as Arab dhows, and will carelessly shout their bearings in answer to the inquiry of the navigators within, who are steering their way on the ocean as they would across the desert, by the position of the sun. But these boats are rude merchantmen merely, not emigrant vessels. They are going out, only that they may return and enrich their own people with the benefits of trade. When the Arab of old did set his eyes upon the capitals of the world it was to possess them. He went forth in his armies, taking his kindred with him, and seated himself in their palaces, upon their thrones. And yet the city where that idea of his own solidarity was born which enabled the Mussulman to ignore petty feuds for a great unifying idea, was the open port of its day and place, and the Prophet himself was more travelled than most of his contemporaries. It is always so. Behind the rise of a world-swaying idea there is always the sentiment of the advancement of truth, the impulse to assimilate all that is newest and best in foreign influences; there is always, too, the power of outlook in more than common degree. Mohammed had reached his burning tenderness for his own people, and his consciousness of a national perplexity, by direct contact with Syrian market-places and Byzantine townsfolk. Long talks
beside the caravan fires at night with men of many different nations, had given him his education, setting dim thoughts and mighty longings vaguely astir within him. It is difficult for the modern world to realise the largeness of primitive thought and personality. We feel that we have triumphed mightily in the invention of the steam-engine and the railway train; and so, along one line, we have. We forget, however, that henceforth the leader of our travel is to be a mere mechanic, managing a few cog-wheels, and superintending water and coal. Once upon a time, in the same capacity, he was something of patriarch, savant, poet, and ship’s captain all in one.

Similarly of the personal courage required in war, and the breadth of nature-painting in early literature. The progress of time and thought means the deterioration of these qualities. No modern poet can speak of the sunset like a Red Indian. No user of Maxim guns has the personal prowess of an old-time pirate. Strong individuality is demanded by undeveloped, un-regimented conditions, and later civilisation is only a specialisation upon this, growing by degrees more subtle and detailed, in which the man has often lost in proportion as the institution has gained.

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

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

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

But the word that follows argues little enough, at least in early days, about the unity of God. After all, this is a fact that we recognise instinctively. No man, least of all the dweller in the desert, in his heart believes that God is two. The Prophet's first task is to give life and vigour to this supreme intuition by making it only the starting-point of a searching appeal to conscience, an authoritative condemnation of insincerity and evil custom, and terrible pictures of judgement and hell-fire. In all this he must only have uttered what was already in the air. Social life in Arabia must have been ripe for change. The sacred-
ness of property, the protection of childhood, and the fixing of woman's status, had already doubtless been felt as necessities by good men of all tribes and cities. But the gigantic power of conviction that could use these very reforms as a means of welding the scattered and divided kinships into a single brotherhood, fired with a common purpose of righteousness and armed with the mighty weapon of a divine mission—this was the sole right of one whose boyhood had been spent among the sheep-folds, and whose manhood had known the solitary watch, with the awful trance of revelation, in the mountain caves.

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

The relation between the master and his disciples is always one of the most vital elements in the life of Asia. In this case, whole nations are the disciples of a single man. They are taken into his kindred. They form his family. They strive to approximate to his method of life—in dress, food, manners, even to some extent in language. Whenever they pray, place themselves mentally in Arabia. Such facts make religion in the East a matter of enormous social consequence.
The convert in India immediately changes his style of cookery. One can eat a dinner in that country, Hindu, Mohammedan, Parsi, Jain, Jewish, Christian, or Buddhist in kind; but assuredly without changing his food no man could be held to have sincerely changed his faith. It is inevitable, therefore, that communities which accept the creed of Islam should became Arabised in every possible way.

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

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

It is a curious fact that from the Parthenon to the Taj Mahal, the appearance of a memorable national art has always been coeval with the existence of a powerful centralising consciousness. Pericles adorned Athens with the tribute of the Greek States. Ancient Rome was decorated with the trophies of the world. Mediaeval cathedrals and town-halls grew out of the vigorous craft and municipal solidarity. Florence and the Vatican were the blossoms of the Church. The commercial nexus of Venice was an empire wide as the planet. The diggers of Buddhist cave-temples in India, and the builders of Indo-Saracenic palaces and tombs, alike worked under the shadow of imperial thrones, which articulated for them the enthusiasm of the wholeness of things.

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

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

II

No one can stand and face the ruins behind the Kutb-Minar\(^1\) at Delhi, no one can realise, even dimly, the beauty of Persian poetry, without understanding that Arab, Slav, Afghan, and Mogul came to India as the emissaries of a culture different indeed from, but not less imposing than, that of the people of the

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\(^1\) Kutb-Minar, a famous tower or minaret, about eleven miles from Delhi.
soil. The arches in the broken screen of Altamish, as it is called, which are all that remains of a mosque of the twelfth century, are as perfect in taste and devotional feeling as anything in the Gothic. The complete building must have lacked somewhat in weight and solidity, but it was not the work of ruffians and barbarians, nor were the men who thronged to it for prayer, mere lovers of wanton destruction.

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

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

The history of India, from the middle of the six-
teenth to the end of the seventeenth centuries, displays a curious parallelism and contrast to this of England during the sixteenth. The reign of Akbar was contemporary with that of Elizabeth, and, with a still greater statesmanship and breadth of mind and heart, he undertook to inaugurate a vast national, as distinguished from a sectarian policy. Few indeed of the world’s monarchs have ever used so marvellous an opportunity with such wisdom and magnanimity as this Emperor of Delhi. An almost equal sympathy with the speculations of all religions, a deep understanding and admiration of the old Indian system, with a desire only to complete and extend, never to nullify it; a love of everything that was national, with a habit of striking swiftly and pardoning generously—all these qualities gave Akbar a place in the hearts of his subjects which makes “Secundra, the Great”, a sufficient name for him to this day. He had been born in a Rajput household, and his greatest act, after the modelling of his administration on the ancient Dharma, was the marrying of a Hindu princess, and making her the mother of the heir-apparent. Aurangzeb was the first of his successors who was not Indian in this complete sense, of having had a Mussulman father and a Hindu mother.

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

Such were the four great Moguls, whose united reigns began two years before the accession of Elizabeth, and ended at the date of the Parliamentary union of England and Scotland, scarcely yet two hundred years ago. Their Tartar blood, for they came of the race of Tamerlane, gave them unflagging energy and perseverance. Their Mohammedan faith gave them strength and simplicity of creed, unexhausted by the three hundred years' adhesion of their tribes. Their soldierly origin gave them the power to adopt the ruder side of military life at a moment's notice, while, at the same time, all their habits and associations imposed on them the power and means of unequalled splendour. Such were they all; but of them all, Akbar stands unrivalled in liberal statesmanship, and Shah Jehan in personal genius.

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

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

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

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

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

The very courtesy of Mohammedan bearing speaks of palaces and of military life. Were India an independent country, her most important embassies would doubtless be filled by Moslems. The act of salutation is almost as devotion amongst the sons and daughters of Islam. The pause of reverence, the evident depth of feeling with which the hand of the elder is lifted by the younger to the forehead and then kissed, the beautiful words, "Salam alaikum!" ("Peace be unto
you!”), which accompany a bow—all these things are the tokens of a culture of humanity which produces a depth of sympathy and tenderness not unworthy of that Prophet whose burning love of God found no adequate expression save in the love and service of man. It is a humanity in which still breathes the fragrance of that great pastoral peace of desert and steppe which is the living force and unity of the whole Moslem world, however the accidents of time or place may seem to betray it. The patriarch seated at his tent door welcoming strangers, loving and just in his dealings with wives and kindred, trusted and revered by all his tribe, and giving his very heart, as is the fashion of the men of Islam, to little children, is an integral imagination of the race. There is nothing in the world so passionately tender as a Hindu mother, unless it be a Mohammedan father.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And again:

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

The prayer and creed, for all their ring of pride and awe, are not the words of beaten slaves, but of loved and loving children, confident of the depth of that mercy whereto they appeal. Something there was indeed in the fierce ethical passion of Mohammed, the basis of his piercing appeal to the conscience of his people, which might look like terrorism. If all men knew of hell and judgement, he said, what he did, there would be little laughter and much weeping amongst them. But all this is on behalf of conscience and the voice of righteousness. A nature itself so radiant in compassion for women, for the poor, for slaves, and for dumb beasts, could not long remain in contemplation of the terrors of the Divine. Throughout the creation he sees one law writ large, "Verily my compassion overcometh my wrath," and Mohammed, who be-
lieves in austerity, but not in self-mortification, feels all the passion of the Flagellant, as he utters the word Islam, or uttermost surrender of self to the truth that is in God.
The old roads of Asia are the footways of the world's ideas. There is a camel-track that crosses the desert from Egypt into "Sooria", broken at the Suez Canal by a ferry. What road in Europe, Roman or barbarian, can compare in charm and pathos with this sandy path? On it we might yet see a woman carrying a child on the back of an ass, and an old man leading them, even as the legends picture the Flight of the Holy Family. By it long ago marched the armies of Egypt to meet those of Assyria in destructive conflict on the borders of Israel. By it Judea sent the streams of her burning thought and fierce ethical emotion to Alexandria, before Christianity was born.

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

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

At any rate, it is certain that behind sanctity of pilgrimage lies admiration of place, of art, even of geographical significance. Banaras in the North, and Conjeeveram¹ in the South, are loved and visited in India for the same reason as Durham or Cologne amongst ourselves. They are cathedral cities, rich in architecture, in treasure, and in the associations of saints and scholars. Jagannath² is placed where it is, for sheer beauty of the sea, and perhaps a little also for the old cosmopolitan grandeur of the port through which flowed the Eastern trade. Allahabad is sacred, because there two mighty rivers join their waters,

¹ Conjeeveram—A town in the Madras State, which contains some of the most beautiful specimens of Dravidian architecture. Often called the Banaras of the South Râmânuja lived here, and Shankaracharya visited it.
² Jagannath—Or Juggurnath—Lord of the Universe. The famous place of pilgrimage, and the "Car of Juggurnath", on the coast of Orissa, at Puri. This temple is distinguished for the fact that all castes eat together of its consecrated food. The oneness of all men is the religious idea which is associated with it.
making her the strategic key to two vast basins, inhabited by different races, with diverse traditions, hopes, and folk-lore. It is the solemn beauty of the Himalayas that makes them the refuge of holy men. The four most meritorious pilgrimages\(^1\) of the Hindus are the four extreme points of India—North, South, East, and West—knowing which the country must be known. The worship of the Ganges, and the reverence that makes a Deccan villager journey, as an act of piety, to look on the face of one who has seen any of the seven sacred rivers, amongst peoples less poetic, would be simply called the love of place. How large an element in Hinduism is the folk-lore of the country! To the student who is looking for this, it appears to be past all computing. The Mahâ-bhârata, the Râmâyana, and the Purânas are to a great extent the outpouring of passionate fancy in local interpretation. In the story of Sati, the perfect wife, who can miss the significance of the fifty-two places in which fragments of the smitten body fell?

"And one finger fell in Calcutta, and that is still the Kâlighât....And the tongue fell at Kangra (Jwala Mukhi) in the North Punjab, and appears to this day as licking tongues of fire, from underneath the ground..... And the left hand fell at Banaras, which is for ever Annapurnâ, the Giver of Bread." No foreigner can understand the crowding of associations into these few sentences.

Even the Pole Star has its Indian myth in the

\(^1\)"The four pilgrimages", which constitute the Hindu counsel of perfection, are Kedar Nath in the Himalayas, in the extreme North; Dwarka Nath in the West; Rameswaram in the South; and Puri, or Jagannath in the East.
legend of the child Dhruva, whose heart was the steadiest point in all the universe.

Nor is the historic element lacking, in this unconscious worship of country. Like that of some Indian Bernadette is the story told at a beautiful Southern temple of a cowherd who had one cow that gave no milk. He followed her into the jungle, and found a natural Linga in the rock, over which she poured her offering freely, of her own devotion. And, in proof of the occurrence, does the temple altar not consist today of that same Linga set in rough living rock? Of such stories the villages are full. Assuredly, a deep and conscious love of place pervades the whole of the Indian scheme. It has never been called patriotism, only because it has never been defined by boundaries of contrast; but the home, the village, the soil, and, in a larger sense, the rivers, the mountains, and the country as a whole, are the objects of an almost passionate adoration. And nowhere are we more impressed by the completeness of Eastern idealism, than in this, its relating of itself to nature. Norway, with her broken crags and azure seas and sombre pines, her glacier-crowned mountains, and her island-dotted fjords, is surely beautiful. But Norway's memories are always of the heroes, and we miss those voices of the saints that greet us at every turn in every part of India. Brittany, windy and grey, storm-tost and boulder-strewn, is beautiful. Here too the miles are marked with rude Calvaires, and the tales of the saints lie like her own moorland mists across the whole Breton land. But this Catholic sainthood never reaches the stern intellectual discipline
of Hinduism, and we long in vain for that mingling of mystic passion and philosophic freedom, where holiness merges into scholarship, that at once distinguishes the Orient, and weds its races and all their dreams to their own soil. It might almost have been S. Francis, but it is actually a Bengali poem of the people, that says:

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

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

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

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

But we are dominated more by the idea that is behind us than by the spontaneous impressions of our
senses. To the nomad of the desert, accustomed to
the shifting of hot sands, and ceaseless moving of the
camp, what coolness and refreshment must rise the
thought of death! Mussulman piety has three motives
—the glory of man, the charm of woman, and the
holiness of the grave. In very early times we see the
august pastor Abraham seeking out a cave in which
to place the body of his wife. Death, the fixed, the
still, the cold, must be shrined within the steady and
imperishable. "The long home", a great rock in a
weary land, endless rest, eternal cold, and silence—
all these are to be found in the grave. Is it not easy
to understand that while the peasant, from the banks
of the Ganges to the banks of the Tiber, turns naturally
to burning of the dead, the wilderness-dwellers bury
him deep in mother earth, or build him about with
unyielding granite, and thenceforth make this dwelling-
house of the beloved as the centre of their own
wanderings?

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

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

But the temples are all visited, the bathing is performed, evening worship is over, and silence and sleep fall upon the pilgrim's camp. The moon grows to the full, for we must arrive at the goal on the fifteenth day. And again, it is the simple beauty of the world which determines the law, that under the young moon shall be the going forth, and with her wane the return home. The moon is near the full, and weariness sleeps sound. At what hour is the first tent struck? When does the first sleeper rouse himself, and take again to the road? Who can tell? Certainly not one who has never been able to rise so long before dawn that others were not up and afoot before her, their tents gone; and little heaps of white ashes from the cooking-fires the only sign of their twelve hours' tenancy of tree-shadow or streamside.

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

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

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

Our neighbours in the tents about us are not amusing themselves by botanising, probably, but they are communing with nature none the less truly than ourselves. On the last day, drawing near to the shrine, we shall see them risk their lives to gather the great nodding columbines and the little Alpine roses growing on the rocks. Their talk is all of Shiva. As they are borne along, they are striving, doubtless, to fix their minds on the repetition of His name, or the contemplation of His form. But the awesome grandeur and beauty of the heights about them will always be remembered by them as the Great God's fit dwelling-place. They are in a church. Rocks and glaciers form the sanctuary. Snowy passes are the pillared aisles. Behind them stand the pine-forests for processions of singers carrying banners, and overhead are the heavens themselves for cathedral roof. It is the peculiarity of Eastern peoples to throw upon the whole of nature that feeling which we associate only with the place of worship. But is their love less real, or greater, for this fact?

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

But the shrine itself—where is it? what is it? Perhaps a temple, placed above some gorge, on a beetling rock, with sister snows in sight. Perhaps the source of a sacred river. Perhaps a cave, in which continual dripping of water makes a stalagmite of ice, a huge crystalline Linga that never melts. One can picture how such a place would first be discovered. Some party of shepherds, losing themselves and their flocks amongst the ravines on a summer day, and entering the cavern by accident to find there the presence of the Lord Himself. Men and beasts, awed and worshipping, how dear is such a picture to the Christian heart!

Worship! Worship! The very air is rent with prayer and hymns. From the unreal to the real! From the many to the One! Lord of Animals! Refuge of weariness! Shiva! Shiva! the Free! the Free!

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

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

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

Sanskrit is the lingua franca of this ancient learning. To this day the visitor to a Calcutta Tol\textsuperscript{1} may hear the boys dispute with each other on time-worn themes in the classic tongue, and may picture himself back in the colleges of Thebes or Athens in the long ago. But here in the great Melâs are the crowning achievements towards which are directed the hardier ambitions of those Brahmin boys. And we need not wonder at their enthusiasm for such distinction. The great open competition, with its thousands of years of the prestige of learning, is like all the learned societies of a European metropolis thrown into one. The canvas city of a few weeks at Nasik or Allahabad serves all the purposes of Burlington House to London. But the system of culture to which Nasik belongs is no longer growing, it will be said. This is, indeed, its defect. The statement is not entirely true, for even now the test of a supremely national personality would still be, for the Hindu world, his power to add to their philosophy. But it is true to the extent that there is nothing left for collective thought to discover. The common mind of India has now to sweep great circles of intellectual exploration in worlds that as yet are

\textsuperscript{1}Tol—A Tol is a Sanskrit school, in which a Brahmin lived with his disciples, studying and teaching. The ideal Tol consisted of a series of mud cottages with wide verandahs, built round a small lake or "tank", with its cluster of bamboos, palms, and fruit-trees. Poverty and learning were the inspiration of the community. These Tols formed the old Indian universities.
virgin as the Polar ice, or India will die. Of this there can be no doubt.

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

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

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

Yet it was unity and not disunity that impressed us as we looked. From one end of the camp to the other the same simple way of life, the same sacramental reverence for food and bathing, the same gentleness and courtesy, the same types of face and character, and, above all, one great common scheme of thought and purpose.

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

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

And the modern world may be right.

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

Who that has caught even a whisper of what her name means can say so? Custom kept always as an open door, through which the saints may dance into our company, thought sustained at a level where religion and science are one, a maze of sublime apostrophes and world-piercing prayers; above all, the power to dream rare dreams of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among men that they may behold His glory—are these things nothing? If, after all the higher transformation of man be the ultimate end of human effort, which has more deeply vindicated its right to exist, the modern nexus of commerce and finance, or that old world on which we have gazed in the pilgrims' camp?
ON THE LOOM OF TIME

The essential differences between countries of the Asiatic and European types are as yet but little understood; and a main difficulty in the growth of an understanding is the absence of elements in the English language, embodying any wide power of social survey. The disciples of Auguste Comte have done much to popularise certain important words and conceptions, but the hearts of angels and the tongues of poets would be too little to meet all the necessities of the task.

The word *theocracy*, for instance, which is essential to an understanding of Asia, either territorial or historic, has but an ambiguous sound in English. To the learned Positivist it means "the social system built up on theism"; to the vulgar, it indicates some fabulous scheme of divine monarchy, such as is popularly attributed to Israel before the days of Saul, or to England in the dreams of Oliver Cromwell.

To persons thinking in the latter fashion, the two statements that India is a theocracy, and that it is at present occupied by the British Rāj, seem incompatible. It is clear that only detailed and penetrative knowledge of concrete examples can build up in our minds such a conception of the essentials of a theocratic system as shall give us the power of handling the term as confidently and intelligently as we now
feel capable of using more purely political expressions. And of such examples it will be found best to take the nearest first.

In the history of the world, the city of Rome occupies a unique position, as the Occidental cradle and battle-field of two opposing forces, the imperial and the theocratic, or, as one may prefer to call them, the European and the Asiatic ideas. For it was Rome that first imposed upon the West that notion of organised force which is almost all that is at present meant by the state-empire. And through all the feuds and disorders of the Middle Ages, it was the Roman impulse that was working itself out by the energy of barbarian peoples, to its perfect triumph in the nineteenth century. Caesar conceived, Napoleon completed, the imperial scheme. Alexander, as an individual, may have seen what they saw: but Greece was far too near to Asia, and his military designs could but evaporate before their time into mere learned observations and the exchange of interesting thought.

It was left to Rome to elaborate into fixity of precision that destiny which could not perhaps have been avoided by the peoples of a coast-line, kept militant by the daily conquest of nature, tempted to aggression by the very habits of their life. For empire in the European sense is a very different thing from the marauding hosts of the East going out to warfare headed by a commander of brilliant prowess. Rome instituted, and modern Europe has inherited, the idea of one people exploiting another, under rights strictly defined by law, with an appearance of order which would deceive the very elect.
The Caesars failed by the strength of the unassimilable elements which their empire had to meet. Napoleon failed because those whom he temporarily subdued were as strong to react in imitation as to be assimilated. Today the Roman Empire is represented by some eight or ten emulous peoples and princes, all armed to the teeth, all bent on appropriating the world. But it is the Roman Empire still.

And yet Rome herself is the one character whose part in the drama is completely transformed. For no one yet thinks of her as the metropolis of the juvenile kingdom of Italy. To the imagination of humanity she is still the city of the Church. St. Peter's and the Vatican still form her central point. The Pope still rules. This contrast between her first and second selves is much more startling than the transition by which the brigand-chief becomes the sainted ancestor. Before it happened, it would have seemed far more absurd than it would be today to propose to make the name of Oxford or Banaras a synonym for the vulgar competition of trade. For Rome, the supreme, the invincible, has actually been conquered by the ideas of the East. The poor and the lowly have taken her by storm. Henceforth is she to be in Europe not the voice of domination, but of renunciation; not the teacher of aggression, but of self-sacrifice; royal in her rank and her prerogatives certainly, but far more deeply and truly the friend of the people than of kings. Henceforth, those who are in a special sense her children will live sequestered from the world, pursuing after poverty instead of riches, after self-mortification instead of self-indulgence; men and women apart, as
in the Eastern household. Every simple act that she enjoins will possess a sanctity out of all proportion to its intrinsic value. Her customs will become rituals. Her journeys will be pilgrimages. The simplest ordinances of life, administered by her, will now be sacraments. The expression of her forgiveness will be absolution; of her affection, a benediction. Her very rulers will claim no personal right to their high places, but will declare themselves simple executors of the divine will. "Servant of the servants of God" will be, to the thinking of the world, their proudest title.

In the eyes of the Church, henceforth, all men are to be equal, at least until one has made himself a saint, and another Judas. The differences of rank established by the world are to be as nothing before her, and even ecclesiastical gradations are to be merely as conditions on which grace can work. Many of the saints will be humble and unlearned. Many a bishop will reach the lowest hell. Rank, at least theoretically, is nothing to Rome. Her children are all to be the sharers of a common supernatural life, of which a religious banquet is the token. A great responsibility is to rest upon them, of living worthily of the name by which they are called. Their life, as related to each other and to her, can be expressed only in terms of the exploration and manifestation of certain ideals, laid down broadly in authoritative writings, known as scriptures, and with less clearness and power in secondary writings and teachings, called traditions.

In other words, the imperial city has transformed
herself into a pure theocracy. If we blot out the idea of birth by a sacramental rite, and substitute that of a chosen place and race, keeping everything else approximately the same, the Church is re-transmuted into any one out of half a dozen Eastern countries—ancient Egypt, Judæa, Arabia, modern India—under the government of the religious idea. Here, too, the priesthood dominates all classes equally, and the priestly interpretation of life prevails—the very gifts one brings home from a journey are explained as temple-offerings. Here, too, the political system is extraneous: custom is sacred, so that a grammar of habit takes the place of legislation; men and women live apart; merit is the sole real condition of social prestige; and so on.

It is due to the purely natural character of the great complexus, that we have in India the—to us so extraordinary—spectacle of a society handed over to the power of a priesthood, without in any way losing its sense of the universal sacredness of learning and freedom of thought. In the case of Rome, where an artificial system was created on the basis of a foreign experience, the crude temper of the old imperialism betrayed itself primarily against mind and thought, which it conceived as the legitimate sphere of its authority. In Catholic Europe, a man might scarcely venture to believe that the earth moves; must apologise for enjoying the cosmic speculations of La Place; could hardly study Plato without grave suspicion. In India, atheism itself might be preached on the very steps of the temple. All that the people would de-
mand of the preacher would be sincerity.\(^1\) In Christendom, knowledge has been so much feared that men have again and again suffered torture and death for no other crime. In India, knowledge has always been held to be beatitude. Abundance of words, in every Indian language, testify to the honour paid to scholars. Persian and English books are held as sacred as the Sanskrit. And we should seek in vain, throughout history and language, for any trace of limitation imposed, or suggested to be imposed, upon the mind of man.

Even the vexed question of the right of literature to reveal more than is permitted to conversation, was foreseen long ago and settled in a flash of wit by the legislator who, writing of defilement by the touch of the mouth, makes three exceptions, in favour of "the beaks of birds, the lips of women, and the words of poets".

In fact, opinion is so free that religious propaganda is actually discouraged by Hinduism, lest zeal, out-running discretion, prove mischievous to society. "A man has a right to hold his own belief, but never to force it upon another," is the dictum that has made of India a perfect university of religious culture, including every phase and stage of thought and practice, from that of the kindergarten, where all is concrete, to that of the higher research student, who has direct

\(^1\) The Chârvâka system of philosophy, one of the orthodox schools, is a purely agnostic formulation I have myself met a Charvaka on a pilgrimage. His statements of belief sounded like mockery of the people about him. The word "orthodox" here only means that, by adopting Charvaka doctrines, a man did not cease to be called a Hindu.
visualisation of the solutions of problems which most of us cannot even understand.

But freedom of thought in the East has not been the prerogative of religion alone. The deeper we go into the history of Hindu philosophy, the more perplexed we are that, with its obviously scientific character, it should never have created a scientific movement of the prestige and éclat of that of the West. Patanjali, who wrote his great psychology in the second century B.C., was obviously a physiologist, studying the living body in relation to that nervous system which in its entirety he would call the mind. The action and interaction of the living neuro-psychosis is a question which modern science, content with a more static view of human structure, has hardly yet ventured to tackle; and students of Patanjali cannot be controverted if they hold that when it is reached, it will only be to corroborate the ancient investigation step by step. But a still more interesting feature of Patanjali's work lies in the fact that it is obviously the final record of a long research, carried out, not by a single individual, but by a whole school, experimenting continuously through many generations. Each man's labour was conditioned by the fact that he had no laboratory and no instruments outside his own body, and there can be no doubt that life was often sacrificed to the thirst for knowledge. The whole, therefore, is like a résumé of two or three centuries of the conclusions of some English Royal

1 Patanjali wrote "Yoga Aphorisms". "Raja-Yoga" by the Swami Vivekananda is a translation of this work, with a compilation from some of Patanjali's commentators.
Society, or some French Academy of Sciences, dating from two to three thousand years ago. And we must remember that, if the terminology of this old science has a certain quaintness in our ears, this is probably not greater than that which our own talk of forces and molecules, of chemical affinities and sphygmo-graphic records, would have, if it were suddenly recovered, after a lapse of two thousand years, by a new civilisation, stationed, say, in Mexico.

What is true of the psychology is equally true of Indian mathematics, astronomy, surgery, chemistry. The Oriental predilection for meditative insight is an advantage in the field of mathematics, where deduction is a necessity. But at the same time its fundamental solidity and originality are shown by the fact that highly abstruse problems are stated by Hindu thinkers in concrete, and even in poetic terms. And it will be remembered that less than a hundred years ago, De Morgan\(^1\) celebrated the solution at sight of certain hitherto uncompleted problems of "Maxima and Minima", by a young Hindu called Ram Chandra.

The law of gravitation itself was enunciated and discussed by Bhāskarāchārya in the twelfth century. And the antiquity of the Sanskrit word Shunya, for nought, together with the immemorial distribution of the system all over the country, conclusively proves that our decimal notation is Indian, and not Arabic, in origin.

How is it, then, we repeat, that a more imposing

\(^1\) De Morgan died 1871. Pére Gratry and George Boole were other distinguished mathematicians deeply aware of their indebtedness to Eastern systems.
scientific activity has not been the result of a faculty so undeniable? Many considerations may be ad-
duced in explanation. There is a vast international organisation of scientific effort in Europe today, operating to make an incomparable sum of results. Ancient India knew what was meant by scientific co-
operation, but by organisation scarcely. And no one nation, working alone, could have produced the whole of what we know as modern science, or even one division of it. Ancient Greece gives us the first word on electricity. What a leap from this to Volta and Galvani! Where, again, had these been without the German Hertz, the French Ampère, the Hindu Bose? And then Italy for a second time takes up the thread of inquiry, and produces the apparatus for wireless telegraphy.

Again, we must remember that in Europe today we have renounced almost everything for science. Art and letters are almost at a standstill. In these departments—at least, in every country outside France and Russia—we are living almost entirely on the treasures of the past. In religion we see the same superficial eclecticism, the same absence of genuine contemporary impulse. But India never was in this position. Side by side with the learned man, specu-
lating or experimenting on the secrets of nature, the builders were raising the village temple, the shuttle flew to and fro in the loom, the clink of the tools was heard in the brass smithy, the palace pundits busied themselves with their collection of ancient texts, the saints poured forth the rapture of their souls, the peasant waked and slept in the good company of
nature, rice field and palm tree, cattle and farm-stead. Faith, art, and industry lived on undisturbed.

After all, is it not possible that we deceive ourselves? The true secret of our elimination of every other intellectual activity in favour of science—is it really the depth of our enthusiasm for knowledge, or is it not rather our modern fever for its mechanical application? How far is the passion for pure truth unimpaired by commercial interests? How far is our substitution of specialisms for synthesis conditioned by finance merely? When our utilitarian ingenuity draws nearer exhaustion, when the present spasm of inventive ability has worked itself out, then, and not till then, will come the time for estimating the actual profundity and disinterestedness of our scientific ardour. Will our love of knowledge continue to drive us on to a still deeper theoretic insight, or will our investigations languish in our hands, lingering on as a mere fashion in learning, even as Aristotle lingered on through the Middle Ages? Till such questions are nearer finding their answer, we are in no position to assume that the present period is, or is not, ultimately scientific.

Meanwhile, in India this danger of a mercenary science was always foreseen, and viewed with perhaps an exaggerated horror, so that from the beginning the disciple has been required to seek knowledge for its own sake, renouncing all ulterior motive. The value derived at the present stage of development from incorporating a progressive science in a progressive civilisation was thus lost; although we must remember that in a very real sense such a transition, shorn of its
lower elements, has occurred in the East from prehistoric times, whenever new plants and animals were to be domesticated, or new tools invented. On the other hand, it is still open to India, facing the actual conditions of the modern world, to prove that the innate capacity of her people for scientific work and inquiry has been in no way lessened by this long abstention from its vulgar profits.

In spite, nevertheless, of the relative non-development of natural science in India, it is the perfect compatibility of the Hindu religious hypothesis with the highest scientific activity, that is to make that country within the present century the main source of the new synthesis of religion for which we in the West are certainly waiting. Several nations cannot suddenly come into contact by the use of a common language without a violent shock being given to their prejudices in favour of local mythology. Such an occurrence was inevitable in English-speaking countries under present circumstances, and has been accelerated, as it happens, by the agnosticism born of scientific activity. Christianity, moreover, has been further discredited by the discovery that its adherents possess no ethics sufficiently controlling to influence their international relations, and finally by that worship of pleasure which an age of exploitation necessarily engenders. Thus neither the sentiment of childhood, the reasoning of theology, the austerity of conscience, nor the power of idealism, has been strong enough to maintain the creed of the West against the assaults to which the age has seen it subjected. Everything seems to be going through a transition. Social morality, intellectual
formulas, legal and economic relationships, all have broken loose from their old moorings, and are seeking for readjustment. The first agony of the loss of belief is now over; but it has only given place to a dreary hopelessness, a mental and spiritual homelessness, which drives some in whom heart predominates into the Church of Rome, while others in whom the faculties are more evenly balanced, try to forget their need in social service, or in the intellectual and artistic enjoyments of an era of résumés.

Protestantism has at last delivered herself of a genuinely religious product of the highest order, in that love of naked truth which finds its voice and type in modern science. For all other forms of non-Catholicism are more or less compromises, mere halfway-houses on the road to this. But, even in this, the environment of spirituality and the communion of saints are apt to be left behind with the Mediaeval Church. Is there no way to combine these things? Can the devotional attitude receive no justification from the clear and unbiased mind? Does religion, which has made so much of faith, want less than absolute conviction as its basis? Is that sentiment which has produced all the greatest art, and almost all the greatest conduct, to be relegated to the mental lumber-room, as, after all, only a superstition? Surely, if so, there is an eternal inharmony and divergence between the creative and the inquiring faculties of man.

But the very constitution of our minds forbids us to accept this paradox. It may be that we are no longer able to believe in the exclusive authenticity of
any single religious system. But we are fast inclining to the opinion that even here there must be some observable sequence; that creeds and mythologies must be as genuine a product of the Unity-of-Things as the animals and the plants; that order and meaning there must be, in the one case as in the other. Instead, therefore, of a contemptuous disregard of all faiths as equally untrue, we are beginning to adopt to all alike an attitude of respect as equally significant.

Only in India has this recognition of law in religious conceptions ever been held in its completeness as a part of religion itself. Only in India have inspired teachers been able to declare that the name of God, being also an illusion, differed only from worldly things in having the power of helping us to break our bondage to illusion, while they, on the other hand, increased it. Only in India has it been counted orthodoxy to believe that all is within the mind, that the forms of gods are but objectifications of our own sense of what is best to be attained, that prayer is only the heightening of will. And, therefore, it is from India that we shall gather that intellectualisation of belief which is to re-establish, in the name of a new and greater synthesis, our confidence in our own past. In this new synthesis every element of our own thought must find a place—the conception of humanity and the worship of truth, of course because without these it would have no raison d'être. But even the emotionalism of the negro must not go unplaced, uninterpreted, any more than that wondrous mood in which the explorer of knowledge finds himself launched on a vision of Unity that he
dare not name. Neither the Catholic organisation of monasticism nor the Protestant (taken from the Mohammedan) inspiration of common prayer can be left out. There must be a religious consciousness strong enough to recognise the anguish of denial as its own most heroic experience, and large enough to be tender and helpful to the ignorance of a child.

In that other synthesis which grew up under the Roman Empire, all the Mediterranean peoples and those originally related to them found a part. The doctrine of immortality came from the desert; resurrection, mediatorship, and personal consciousness of sin from ancient Egypt; many elements from Persia and Syria; purity and asceticism from the Asokan Essenes; the basis of ethics to be transcended from Judæa; the spirit of inquiry and the necessary feeling of an intellectual void from Greece, or at least from the Greek elements in Mediterranean society; the instinct of organisation from Rome; and the all-absorbing renunciation and compassion for the world that alone can give sufficient nucleus for a new religion from one sweet central Personality, in whom each of these various hungers found its own Bethlehem—its house of bread.

Similarly, in the new up-growth of our own days, many preparatory influences now at work are to find fulfilment. All who have felt love of the disinherited and oppressed, all who have followed truth for its own sake, all who have longed to lose themselves in a paradise of devotion and been refused by the armed reason standing at the gate, all who have felt out for a larger generalisation, as they saw the faith of their
babyhood falling away from them—all these have helped and are helping to build up the new consciousness, to make the faculty that is to recognise and assimilate the doctrine of the future. But the evangel itself will be mainly drawn from India.

And then, having thus renewed the sources of the world's inspiration, we may be pardoned if we ask: What of India herself? The Egyptian delivered up his whole treasure, and where is he now? Buried under many a layer of foreign invasion; tilling the soil as patiently and hopelessly as one of his own oxen; scarcely remembered, even as a name, by those who make so-called plans for the country's good, and are wakened only to a stupid wonder, as at the sound of something familiar from books, when they hear that to kill a cat today in the bazaar in Cairo would almost cost a man his life. The Jews produced Jesus, and what have they become? Pariahs and fugitives amongst the nations of men. Who remembers them with any feeling of gratitude for that which they have given? A miserable formula, "the Jews who crucified Him", has taken the place amongst the devout of any memorial of the fact that they created the language, the thought, the habits of life, and the outlook of righteousness, in which He assumed the garb of humanity.

Is something of this sort to be the fate of India? To give a religion to the world may be a sufficient proof that one's past was not in vain, but evidently it is no sort of safeguard for the future. The process by which the peoples of a vast continent may become mere hewers of wood and drawers of water has already
begun, is already well afoot. Their indigenous institutions are all in decay. Their prosperity is gone. Some portion or other of the immense agricultural area is perpetually under famine. Their arts and industries are dead or dying. They have lapsed into mere customers for other men’s cheap wares. Even their thought would seem to be mainly imitative. The orthodox is apt to tread the round of his own past eternally. The unorthodox is as apt to harness himself to the foreign present, with an equal blindness. In suicidal desperation, the would-be patriotic reiterate the war-cries of antagonistic sects, or moan for the advent of a new religion, as if, by introducing a fifth element of discord, the Indian peoples could reach unity. Nor does the education, at present offered, promise any solution of the problem. It is the minimum that is possible to the efficient clerk, and even that minimum is undergoing reduction rather than increase.

In spite of the absence of any theory of history that might elucidate the course of events in the East during the next two centuries, one truth reveals itself with perfect plainness. A nation becomes whatever she believes herself to be. She is made great, not by her relative superiority, but by her thought about herself. It becomes important, therefore, to ask: What conception of her own nature and power forms the inheritance of India?

As Roman Catholicism is but one element inhering in a great whole called Christianity, and as a man may well claim to be a good Christian without being a Catholic, so the religious system of Hinduism is
only a fragment inhering in a vast social-industrial-economic scheme called the Dharma, and a man may well and rightly be the servant of the Dharma, without calling himself a Hindu. It is this Dharma, in its large and non-sectarian activity, that determines the well-being of every child of the Indian soil. The word itself is an ancient name for national righteousness or national good. It is true that the Brahmin who bows before one who is not the rightful king is held many times accursed by Manu. It is true that the Bhagavad-Gita is the only one of the world gospels that turns on the duty of fighting for the true sovereign against usurpers. And yet it is also a fact that the person of the ruler is always a matter of singular indifference to the theocratic consciousness. It has been hitherto indeed a mere detail for military persons to fight out amongst themselves. The secret of so curious an attitude is reached when we discover that in the eyes of the Indian peasant, the sovereign himself is only the servant of the Dharma. "If he uphold it, he will stay: if not, he will have to go," they all say when questioned. Little do they dream, alas! that themselves and their children and their children's children may be swept into oblivion also by that same failure to uphold!

Thus, whoever was the master that an Indian statesman served—whether Hindu, Mussulman, or British sat upon the throne—it was the minister's duty, as the loyal and obedient child of an Asiatic race, to use all his influence in the best interests of his people and his country. It is this element in the national system that tends, with its great regard for agriculture, to
rank the cow almost on a level with the human members of the commonwealth, making the Hindu sovereign forbid beef-eating within his frontiers. It was this that made a certain prince, in despair, hand over his salt-mines to the British Government, rather than obey its mandate to tax this commodity to his people, and thus derive personal benefit from their misfortune. It was this that made it incumbent upon many of the chiefs in the old days to provide, not only salt, but also water and fruit free to their subjects, a kind of "noblesse oblige" that has left the way-side orchard outside every village in Kashmir, till that favoured land is almost like the happy island of Avilon, "fair with orchard lawns, and bowery hollows crowned with summer sea". It was this power of the Dharma to safeguard the welfare of its people, through a law as binding upon the monarch as upon his subjects, that brought about the immense network of custom which regulated the relief of beggars, the use of water, the provisioning of pilgrimages, habits of sanitation, distribution of grazing-lands, the forest-rights of the peasant, and a thousand other matters of importance. The mere fact that the king's personal devotions were offered in a mosque could not interfere with his acceptance of the system, in any important measure. It was the language of rule, dominating all rulers alike, by every detail of birth and upbringing, and by the very impossibility of imagining any deviation. Hence it could never be more than a question of time till some new prince had assimilated the whole, and Mussulman, co-operated actively with Hindu in the great task of enforcing and
extending the essentials of the common weal. We may regret, but we cannot condone, the strange indolence by which the Indian people have permitted themselves to lose sight of these national and civic responsibilities of their ancient civilisation, and become absorbed in its personal and domestic rites. Nor can we for one moment admit that this substitution of the trees for the forest deserves the name of orthodoxy—faithfulness to the Dharma.

It is, however, an essential weakness of theocratic rule that while it can tolerate any neighbour, it has no idea of dominating and unifying diverse elements round itself. The great mass of its subjects, too, see life indirectly through the nimbus of the supernatural. Instead of subordinating the priesthood in national affairs to the recognised leaders of the nation, exalting it only in its rightful capacity of influence upon the social and individual conscience, a theocracy is apt to require that its leaders move, encumbered by the counsels of the priests.

It was the Prophet's clear perception of these facts that gave its peculiar characteristics to Islam. He established a strong confraternity, and made subscription to a brief and concise formula its sole condition of membership. But Arab blood was comparatively unmixed and the greater part of Mohammed's work was done for him, in the close bond of consanguinity that united his central group. At one bound, and without any means save that power of personality which is the first demand of the theocratic method, he performed the double task of creating an all-absorbing consciousness of nationality, and carrying his people
through the required emancipation of thought. To this day the great Semitised belt that divides Eastern Aryans and Mongolians from Europe, reminds us, whenever we look at the map, of the reality of his achievement. And the history of the origins of European learning remains to attest the enthusiasm of freedom which he conferred on the Saracenic intellect.

Geographical conditions impose upon India the same necessity of unification at all costs, and yet combine with other facts to make her the meeting-ground of all races. Especially is this the case in modern times, when the ocean has become a roadway instead of a boundary. She is almost a museum of races, creeds, and social formations, some hoary with age, some crude with excessive youth. Thus her problem is vastly more difficult than that of Arabia before the seventh century. Yet she contains in herself every element of self-recovery.

If the fact had been open to doubt before, the British rule, with its railways, its cheap postage, and its common language of affairs, would sufficiently have demonstrated the territorial unity of the country. We can see today that India's is an organic, and no mere mechanical, unity. "The North," it has been said, "produces prophets, the South priests." And it is true that her intellectual and discriminating faculty, her power of recognition and formulation, lies in the South; that Mahratta, Mussulman, and Sikh, form her executive; while to Bengal, the country that has fought no battle for her own boundaries, falls the office of the heart, which will yet suffuse all the rest with the realisation of the vast inclusiveness of meaning of the
great word "India". Historically the Indian unity is obvious. And if socially it appear doubtful, the country itself could set aside the doubt in an instant by grasping that intuition of nationality which alone is needed to give the spiritual impulse toward consolidation.

But the bare fact of an actual social, historical, and geographical unity, waiting for precipitation as a national consciousness, is not the only possession of India at the present crisis. She has a great past to return upon, and a clearly defined economy for model. Her traditions are unstained. There is no element of national life—art, poetry, literature, philosophy, science—in which she has not at some time been exceptionally strong. She has organised at least two empires of commanding character. In architecture, three of the most imposing styles in the world have been hers—the Dravidian in the South, the Buddhist across middle India from Orissa to Bombay, and the Indo-Saracenic in the North.

There can be little doubt that her next period will confront India with the necessity of introducing some community of ritual as between priest and people; and this of itself must create fresh architectural needs, a new architecture of the communal consciousness which would be sufficient to make the required appeal to the national imagination, and at the same time give the needed scope to the passion of democracy.

For in looking to the growth of a sentiment or nationality as the solution of Indian problems, we are of course turning away from kings and priests, and appealing to woman and the people. A similar appeal, in the only form possible to the unmixed theo-
cracy of that day, was made by Buddhism; and the whole history of India, from the Christian era onwards, is the story of the education of the popular consciousness, by the unifying and ameliorating influence of Hinduism, as it was then thrown open. Today, if we adopt, moral and intellectual tests as the criteria of civilisation, we can hardly refuse to admit that in such issues the East has been more successful than the West. In strength of family ties; in sweetness and decorum of family life; in wide-spread understanding of the place of the personal development in the scheme of religion as a whole; in power of enjoyment of leisure, without gross physical accompaniments; in dignity, frugality, continuous industry without aggressive activity; in artistic appreciation of work done and doing; and above all in the ability to concentrate the whole faculty at will, even the poorest classes in India, whatever their religion, will compare favourably with many who are far above them in the West. Such are some of the results of the Buddhist period.

The Mogul Empire fell into decay and failed, simply because it did not understand how to base itself on a great popular conception of Indian unity. It could neither assimilate the whole of the religious impulse of India, nor yet detach itself completely from it. Hence, as a government, it succeeded neither in rooting itself permanently, nor in creating that circuit of national energy which alone could have given it endurance. Nevertheless, it contributed invaluable elements to the national life of the future, and it is difficult to see how that life could hope to organise itself without its memorable preliminary experiment.
The foreign character of the English period produced, as its first effect, a wide sense of bewilderment and unrest, which gave birth to a hundred projected panaceas. There were social reformers, who thought that by a programme more purely destructive than they then realised, their Motherland would be best served. And while we may deprecate the form taken by their zeal, we can but admit that no other testimony could have been given to the living energy of the race which would have been so convincing. If Indian civilisation had really been stationary, as is so sapiently supposed by the West, the embers could hardly have leaped into such flame, at the bare touch of new ideas. If, on the other hand, the country had accepted the superficial theory and run agate in the endeavour to reform itself, we could not thereafter have conceived of India as possessing sufficient depth and stability to make hope possible. Meanwhile the reformers have not failed to bring forth fruit. They have produced groups of persons who represent what is valuable in Western thought and habits, without necessarily being denationalised, and they have demonstrated once for all the fact that India contains sufficient forces of restitution within herself to be completely independent of foreign advice and criticism.

Next came political agitators, who seemed to think that by entire deference to an alien idea their country would be saved. There can be no doubt that here also a valuable contribution had been made. The foreign idea can never save India—indeed, the use of the word "politics" in the present state of the country may strike some of us as a painful insincerity—but at
the same time, the mastery and assimilation of the foreigners' *method* is an absolute necessity. The education of the people, also to a knowledge of their common interests, and the throwing of a net of friendship and mutual intercourse all over the country, are great services.

Outside social and political movements, again, there are a hundred emancipations and revivals of religious centres, all of which are noteworthy symptoms of inherent vitality. And still a fourth school declares that the one question of India lies in the economic crisis, and that that once surmounted all will be well.

At this moment, however, a new suspicion is making itself heard, a suspicion that behind all these interpretations—the social reform, the political agitation, religious movements, and economic grievances—there stands a greater reality, dominating and co-ordinating the whole, the Indian national idea, of which each is a part. It begins to be thought that there is a religious idea that may be called Indian, but it is of no single sect; that there is a social idea, which is the property of no caste or group; that there is a historic evolution, in which all are united; that it is the thing within *all* these which alone is to be called "India". If this conception should prevail, it will be seen that social, political, economic, and religious workers have all alike helped to reveal it; but it can never be allowed that the whole problem is economic, grave as the last-mentioned feature of the situation undoubtedly is. It is not merely the status, but the very nature and character of the collective personality of a whole nation, occupying one of the largest areas in the world,
that has to be recaptured. In the days when ancient Egypt made an eternal impression on human civilisation, the personal belongings of her great nobles were no more than those of an Indian cowherd today. It was the sentiment of fraternity, the instinct of synthesis, the mind of co-ordination, that were the secret of her power.

The distinctive spirituality of the modern world depends upon its ability to think of things as a whole, to treat immense masses of facts as units, to bring together many kinds of activity, and put them in true relation to one another. This is the reality of which map, census, and newspaper—even catalogue, museum, and encyclopaedia—are but outer symbols. In proportion as she grasps this inner content, will India rise to the height of her own possibilities.

The sacraments of a growing nationality would lie in new developments of her old art, a new application of her old power of learnedness, new and dynamic religious interpretations, a new idealism in short, true child of the nation's own past, with which the young should throb and the old be reverent. The test of its success would be the combining of renewed local and individual vigour with a power of self-centralisation and self-expression hitherto unknown.

But before such a result could come about, we must suppose the children of every province and every sect on fire with the love of the Motherland. Sikh, Maharatta, and Mussulman, we must imagine possessed each by the thought of India, not of his own group. Thus each name distinguished in the history of any part would be appropriated by the country as a whole.
The Hindu would prostrate himself on the steps of the mosque, the Mohammedan offer salutation before the temple, the Aryan write the history of Islam with an enthusiasm impossible to those within its walls, the Semite stand forth as the exponent of India's heroic past, with the authority of one who sees for the first time with the eyes of manhood. For we cannot think that a mere toleration of one another's peculiarities can ever be enough to build up national sentiment in India. As the love of David and Jonathan, a love the stronger for distance of birth, such is that last and greatest passion which awakes in him who hears the sorrowful crying of the young and defenceless children of his own mother. Each difference between himself and them is a source of joy. Each need unknown to himself feeds his passion for self-sacrifice. Their very sins meet with no condemnation from him, their sworn champion and servant.

But has India today the hidden strength for such developments? What of the theocratic consciousness? What of warring religious convictions?

Whether or not she has adequate strength for her own renewal, only the sons of India are competent to judge. But it is certain that in the nationalising of a great nation, the two theocracies would reach, on the human side, their common flowering-point. Do not all kingdoms of God hold forth hope of a day when the lame shall walk, and the blind see, the leper be cleansed, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them? The theocratic consciousness is never jealous of the social good, but profoundly susceptible of it. It seeks it, indeed, as its true goal. What of the
theocratic consciousness, what of religion, should a
day ever come to pass in which men discovered that
divine revelations were meant to unite humanity, not
to sunder it? Surely the question is hardly serious.
The old orthodoxy of the Arab would still be the
austerity of the Moslem. The ancient piety of
the Hindu would still and for ever be the church of
the devoted life. Yet both would have found new
purpose and common scope, in the re-making of the
Motherland.

Nevertheless, the question remains: The road is
clear, but has India strength to follow it?
Jackals prowl about the buried cities and deserted
temples of the Asokan era. Only a memory dwells
within the marble palaces of the Mogul. Is the
mighty Mother not now exhausted? Having given to
the world, is it not enough? Is she again to rouse
and bestir herself for the good of her own household?
Who can tell? Yet in all impotence and desolation
of the present, amidst the ruin of his country and the
decay of his pride, an indomitable hope wakes still in
the heart of the Indian peasant. "That which is, shall
pass: and that which has been, shall again be," he
mutter "to the end of time." And we seem to catch
in his words the sound of a greater prophecy, of which
this is but the echo:

"Whenever the Dharma decays, and Adharma
prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection
of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm
establishment of THE NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS I am
born again and again."