CHAPTER V

THE PLACE OF WOMAN IN THE NATIONAL LIFE

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

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

Such thought was the fashion of a very ancient world—the world in which myths were born, out of which religions issued, and wherein our vague and

mysterious ideas of "luck" originated. The custom bears its age upon its brow. For thousands of years must Indian women have risen with the light to perform the Salutation of the Threshold. Thousands of years of simplicity and patience, like that of the peasant, like that of the grass, speak in the beautiful rite. It is this patience of woman that makes civilisations. It is this patience of the Indian woman, with this her mingling of large power of reverie, that has made and makes the Indian nationality.

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

Perhaps this is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in all that concerns the place of the cow in domestic life. Journeying over the country, the eye learns to look to the grazing-lands in order to gauge the prosperity of districts. For in climates which horses support with difficulty the patient bullock is the friend of agriculture, and without his aid the fields could not be kept under the plough.* Thus the

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

Aryan and the cow between them have made India what she is; and never does the peasant forget the fact. Five thousand years of love and gratitude have been sufficient, on the other hand, to humanise the quadruped; and the soft eyes of the gentle beast, as we see it in this Eastern land, look out on us, with a satisfied conviction of kinship and mutual trust, for which the Western barbarian is but little prepared. Its breeds and sizes are almost innumerable. Benares, and the rich mercantile quarters of Northern cities, maintain the lordly Siva's bulls, who come and go about the streets eating from what shop-front or stall they choose, entirely unmolested. The South, again, possesses a kind of bullock little larger than a Newfoundland dog, which is nevertheless strong enough to draw a cart containing a couple of men; and perhaps there are no beasts of draught in the world finer than the Mysore bullocks. But almost all Indian cattle are smaller than their Western compeers, and all are characterised by a prominent hump, in front of which the yoke is placed.

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

the towns, where the stones of the courtyard are the sole pasture, they are kept, and in the huts of the poor the room occupied by the milk-giver is to the full as good as that of any of the family.

We find it difficult in the North to distinguish the natural festivals of fruit gathering and harvest home from purely religious rites. There is an exaltation of feeling and imagination, and a closeness to the powers of nature, in the one case as in the other, which forms a link between them. The occasion of receiving a new cow into a Hindu family is tinged with a like sentiment. The whole household turns out to welcome the incoming member, who is decorated with flowers and fed daintily as soon as she enters the gates of the dwelling, while endearments are lavished on her in the effort to make her accept the strange abode as home. The psychology of this is not purely self-interested, as when we butter the cat's paws that she may never be happy at a distance from our hearth. There is a habitual, almost an instinctive, recognition in India of the fact that mind is the controlling element in life, and it has become a second nature with them to appeal directly to it. Even in the case of what we are pleased to term the lower animals, it requires no argument to show a Hindu that the cow will maintain her health and perform all her functions better if her feeling goes with, instead of against, her new environment. The fact is self-evident to him. And in the ceremony of welcome, the intrusion of any violent thought or emotion upon the family circle would be earnestly deprecated, and every effort put forth to hold the mental atmosphere in gentleness and calm.

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

And, indeed, there is no end to the household debt. "Milk is the only food," said a Hindu, "that is the product of love." Probably for this reason—in a country where so much thought is given to the mental effects of what is eaten—it is the favourite, being held, with fruit and honey, to be fit nourishment for the saints. But fuel and medicine also are provided by the bovine mother. Cowdung is held to have antiseptic and purifying properties, and to spread it with her own hands, making the mud floor

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

damp proof, and giving it the breath ever fragrant to the peasant, would be thought no more disgraceful to the princess fallen upon evil days of poverty than to the humbler daughter of any poor but well-descended house.

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

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

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

dowry she would claim of God on the Day of Judgment.

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

There is thus a point of view from which the lives

of Indian women may be considered as a vast co-operation of the race to perform necessary labour, dignifying it meanwhile by every association of refinement, tenderness, and self-respect. And it might almost be claimed that the orthodox Hindu household is the only one in the world which combines a high degree of civilisation with the complete elimination of any form of domestic slavery. Certainly slavery in Asia, under the *régimes* of great religious systems, has never meant what Europe and America have made of it. There are still living persons who were bought in their childhood as *Golams* by Rajput and Bengali families. These were orphans, brought up and educated along with the children of the household, but made useful in minor ways. It never occurred to any one that when the days of wage-earning arrived, the quondam master and mistress had any claim whatever upon the emoluments of their dependents, yet they could not be held to have done their duty until they had married and settled them in life appropriately. It is a curious consequence of this humanity of custom that the word "slave" cannot be made to sting the Asiatic consciousness, as it does the European.

As one travels through regions not yet exhausted by famine, the signs of Indian peasant happiness become familiar to the eye. The mud homestead, built on its high plinth with deep verandahs, decently thatched or tiled, and almost hidden in clusters of cocoanut palms, bamboos, and plantains, the stretch of green with its grazing cows, or rice-fields and mango orchards, the unbroken dome of blue, edged off, on the horizon, by the tremulous line of foliage where new bamboos veil some fresh village or farmhouse, such is the

picture beloved by the Indian heart. Even in the distant cities, every festival-day brings back its memory; for the jars of water, with cocoanuts for lids, and the green shoots of plantain, standing against the pillars, with the garlands of mango-leaves above the doorway, are the "auspicious," and therefore universal decoration.

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

Indeed, if we would draw the life of an Indian woman truly, it is in a long series of peasant pictures that it must be outlined. Every plant, flower, fruit, in its own season, calls up some historic or poetic association. Under the kodhumba tree, whose blossoms occur in stiff balls, like those of our plane, stood Krishna, playing on the flute. In the magnificent shade and coolness of the bo—the tree whose leaves are so delicately poised that they quiver like those of our aspen, even in the stillest noon—Buddha, in the heart of the night, attained Nirvana. The soft sirisha flower that "can bear the weight of bees, but not of humming-birds," reminds one of all exquisite and tender things—the lips of a woman, the heart of a child, and so on. The amloki fruit is not only wholesome and delicious for household use, making the

work of preserving it an act of merit, but its very name is famous throughout Buddhist Asia, carrying one back to the great age when it was a constant architectural ornament. The fragrance of the mango-blossom is one of the five arrows of Cupid's bow. The custard-apple was the favourite fruit of Sita.

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

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

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

themselves content to be favoured members of most favoured nations.'

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

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

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

any fragment of her wall of custom that the resistless tides of the modern world may attempt to break away. And the daughters of Guzerat are, like the women of merchant-peoples everywhere, soft and silken and flower-like, dainty and clinging as a dream.

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

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

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

that only here and there a dazed white soldier could gather presence of mind to fire a shot at the cavalcade already passed. And old men still sing her glory with tears choking the voice.

But the Rani of Jhansi, though a queen, was no purdah woman. She was a Mahratta, with a passion for her country, and practised from girlhood in the chase. She had been the real heart of the kingdom ever since her marriage, for her husband was only a handsome figure-head, who spent in making feeble poetry the time he might have given to rule or to his wife. Her life had been, in fact, as solitary as that of a mediæval saint. And her ostensible reason for fighting was the right to adopt an heir. There has always indeed been a great development of the political faculty amongst Mahratta women, a development which is by no means lost at the present day. It is well known that, long before the time of the Queen of Jhansi, Sivaji owed the inspiration that led to the national reawakening to his mother rather than to his father.

If again we desire to hear of the woman of romance, is it not sufficient to cite the name of that Empress to whom the Taj Mahal was built? To Hindus as to Mohammedans this palace of the dead is holy, for to the one as to the other it speaks with silent eloquence of the perfect wife. We may dream as inadequately as we please of the Queen Arjmand Banu, Crown of the Palace, but two things we cannot forget. One is the tender thought of the woman who could detach herself from the very pains of death to assure her husband that she desired a tomb worthy of his love; and the other is the image of the passing of Shah Jehan,

in the sunset-lighted balcony, with his eyes fixed on the snow-white pile at the bend in the river, and his heart full of the consolation of having wrought for her he loved, through the space of twenty years, a work that she had surely accepted at the last. The words, "Even I, even I, am Beatrice," are not more full of the triumphant close of love than this picture of the death of the Mogul Emperor.

Yet we have to admit that to the Asiatic woman in general society does not offer the kingdom of beauty and charm as her sphere. The foster-mother of Moses the mother of Jesus, the wife of the Prophet, Khadijah, and his daughter Fatima, are the true exemplars of the Moslem woman. And the ideal achievements of Hindu womanhood are likewise of wisdom and service and renunciation, rather than of power and love. Hindu lyrics of romance are always put into the mouth of Radha the shepherdess, singing to Krishna; and it is interesting to note how the motive of each lover is placed always in the feeling of the other, and how quickly any departure from this canon would disgust Indian taste. Even Persian poetry, the classic of the Mohammedan, is said by those who know it to have avoided in a wonderful way the use of "he and she." "Be I the string, the note be thou! Be thou the body, I the life! Let none hereafter say of us that one was I, another thou." Is this spoken between two lovers, or is it entirely of the soul?

There is doubtless some truth in the idea that society in a military state tends always to seclude its women. The fact that in the aristocratic strictness of retreat the Mussulmannin ranks first, the Rajputni second, and the Bengali woman only third, in India, goes far to

support this conclusion. But the case of the Rani of Jhansi is sufficient indication that the custom is by no means so universal as is often stated. The lower classes move freely in all countries, for household work and the earning of their livelihood compel; and the screen is always more easily lifted for the Hindu than for the Mohammedan. A thousand considerations intervene to mitigate its severity in the case of the former, while in the South and West, where Moslem rule was brief, and Moslem fashions had little force, it is actually non-existent.

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

The liberty of Madras and Bombay is, however, a reality for all its limitations. And in certain parts of the province of Malabar woman is actually in the ascendency. This curious country, of women learned in Sanskrit, and kings who rule as the regents of their sisters, will have many disclosures to make to the

world, when India shall have produced a sufficient number of competent sociologists of her own blood. It is commonly said to be characteristically polyandrous; but it is not so, in the same sense as Tibet and some of the Himalayan tribes, for no woman regards herself as the wife of two men at once. The term *matriarchal* is more accurate, inasmuch as the husband visits the wife in her own home, and the right of inheritance is through the mother. Thus, far from India's being the land of the uniform oppression of woman by a uniform method, it represents the whole cycle of feminist institutions. There is literally no theory of feminine rights and position that does not find illustration somewhere within her boundaries.

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

But although it dates from the era of Ghazni or Ghor—except where the Rajput made an independent introduction of the purdah—there is nothing to show that the cloistering of women was spread in Hindostan by other means than by the force of fashion and imperial prestige. Indeed sooner or later we have to face the question: What induced the Mohammedan to

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

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

larity of manners, and equality of rights as between men and women ; and that, other things being equal, under long-settled conditions, from which anxiety is largely eliminated, there is a progressive inclination towards divergence of their lines of activity, accompanied by the more complete surrender of woman to the protection of man, and the seeking of her individuality in the sphere of morals and emotion.

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

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

to meet an emergency, brave, cheerful, and self-helpful. In such a life woman must move as easily as man.

It began to be otherwise, however, when the country was cleared, agriculture established on the Aryan scale, and the energy of the race concentrated on the higher problem of conserving and extending its culture of mind and spirit. It is doubtful whether Indian philosophy could ever have been completed on other terms than on those of some measure of seclusion for woman. "This world is all a dream: God alone is real," such an ultimatum could hardly have been reached in a society like that of Judaism, where love and beauty were held as the seal of divine approval on a successful life. Not that India would decry these happy gifts. But they are secular joys in her eyes, not spiritual. "The religion of the wife lies in serving her husband: the religion of the widow lies in serving God," say the women; and there is no doubt in their minds that the widow's call is the higher of the two.

While we talk of the seclusion of woman, however, as if it were a fact, we must be careful to guard against misconception. In society and in the streets of Indian cities, it is practically true that we see men alone. This fact makes it a possibility for the religious to pass his life without looking on the face of any woman, save such as he may call "Mother." Inside the house, if we penetrate so far, we shall probably meet with none but women. But if we live there day after day, we shall find that every woman has familiar intercourse with some man or men in the family. The relation between brothers and sisters-in-law is all gaiety and

sweetness. Scarcely any children are so near to a woman as the sons of her husband's sisters. It is the proud prerogative of these, whatever be their age, to regard her as their slave. There is a special delicacy of affection and respect between the husband's father and his daughter-in-law. Cousins count as brothers and sisters. And from the fact that every woman has her rightful place in some family it follows that there is more healthy human intercourse with men in almost every Hindu woman's life than in those of thousands of single women, living alone, or following professional careers, in the suburbs of London and other Western cities.

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

We are too apt to define the ideal as that towards which we aspire, thinking but rarely of those assimilated ideals which reveal themselves as custom. If we analyse the conventions that dominate an Indian woman's life we cannot fail to come upon an exceedingly stern canon of self-control. The closeness and intimacy of the family life, and the number of the interests that have to be considered, make strict discipline necessary, doubtless, for the sake of peace. Hence a husband and wife may not address each other in the presence of others. A wife may not name her

husband, much less praise him, and so on. Only little children are perfectly untrammelled, and may bestow their affection when and where they will. All these things are for the protection of the community, lest it be outraged by the parading of a relationship of intimacy, or victimised by an enthusiasm which it could not be expected to share.

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

This is only to say that she is more deeply self-effacing and more effectively altruistic than any Western. The duty of tending the sick is so much a matter of course to her that she does not dream of it as a special function, for which one might erect hospitals or learn nursing. Here, no doubt, she misses a great deal, for the modern organisation of skill has produced a concentration of attention on method that avails to save much suffering. Still, we

must not too carelessly assume that our own habit of massing together all the hungry, sick, and insane, and isolating them in worlds visited throughout with like afflictions to their own, is the product of a higher benevolence on our part.

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

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

CHAPTER VI

THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN

THE student of Greek vases cannot fail to be struck by the frequent repetition of a single theme—the procession of women to and from the well. In ancient Greece, in Palestine, and in India up to the era of water-taps and street hydrants, that is to say till the other day, the women had an established social centre, the well from which the community drew its supply of drinking water. Hither, in the last hours before sundown, came the maidens of various households, young daughters-in-law, maybe, in charge of some elderly aunt or mother-in-law, or with each other's company for chaperonage, each bearing her shining metal vessels to be filled. And thence, their mutual talk and task being ended, went the girls to their homes, with towering load some two or three pots high, and superb swaying walk. Sometimes, it is said, for a trial of skill, they would run and skip, and even dance, as they went along the road, and never a drop of water spilled the while. The hour was held in great esteem. The way was avoided by men, and the women proved, what all women know, that their real motive in dressing well is to compete with each other, not to shine in the eyes of the sterner sex. Showy silver anklets, the pearl-

decorated pad or ring on which the water-pots rested on the head, saris draped as severely as in Greek statues,—all these beauties were arranged for the discriminating envy or sympathy of sister eyes, not for the enjoyment of a being who may be trusted to think his own wife and sisters beautiful, yet cannot do them the honour to remember what jewels and clothes they wear.

For a vanity not less than that which chooses a gown in Paris, can go to so simple a matter as the fitting of a dark-blue sari against a fair complexion, that the wearer may look "like the full moon in the midnight sky," the placing of opal or diamond on one nostril or the other, or the selecting of a glass bangle of white or green, according to the tint of the brown skin. The vanity may be no less, and the highest skill always desires the eye of the keenest connoisseur.

This picture of the women drawing water has its pendant in the cluster of men who gather for friendly smoke or chat at evening about the smouldering log, lighted on the outskirts of the village by any wandering sannyasin who may have taken up his abode for a few days beneath the local banyan tree. But this suggests a wider, more cosmopolitan relation. The men's talk is apt to be of other lands than their own, and the strange customs and lapses of customs prevailing there. Their interests are rather general, abstract, impersonal. For the yellow-robed guest of the village is, it must be remembered, a traveller of the ancient type. He has not journeyed in railway trains and lived in hotels. Rather, tramping his way from village to village, he has shared, at each halting-place, in its

personal drama; has begged a meal daily from door to door; has eaten, therefore the characteristic food, cooked and served according to the ways of each district. By such modes the geographical sense of this old-time wayfarer is developed far beyond that of a generation that lives on maps and learns from the schedules of facts known as newspaper reports and the journals of other men's travels. And it is his geographical knowledge that he shares with the men of the village where he eats and sleeps for a few days. In the old Sanskrit books, kings are represented as receiving such guests with the question, "What have you seen elsewhere?" and asking before they depart, "And what have you noted here?"

But amongst the women gathered about the well it was the civic life that found expression, the civic life of the village or small township. Here they could form a consolidated feminine opinion, of great weight in local affairs, and exchange the news of the day with each other. The better organisation of public convenience now deprives them of the laborious necessity of meeting in the old way; but it is much to be desired that, with the dying out of their ancient forms and institutions, new occasions of assembly and new subjects of discussion might spontaneously arise. At present Indian emotion spends itself more and more within the home. Woman, always dominant in private life, by her very affection is co-operating with the loss of public institutions to restrict the activity of Man. Surely, then, Europe has no right to grow contemptuous if rich men prove effeminate and poor men inefficient, or taunt India with the fact that she has not yet seized the *ethos* of the West, that her princes

send out no expeditions to discover the South Pole, and her youth grow up with no consuming curiosity about rocks and stars; for the European organisation quietly defeats all through which the people are accustomed to find expression and yet fails to call them to new responsibilities, in which their mind and character could receive adequate scope and stimulus in a different form.

It is quite evident that if the centre of social gravity is some day to be shifted, if the intellectual atmosphere of India is yet to be saturated with fresh ideals, not only must her womanhood participate in the results of the implied revolution, but they must contribute largely to bringing it about. For it is the home, not the factory, that fills life with inspiration; and the school, in British India, is no more than a mill or institution in which children master the reading and writing necessary to future clerkships, as they might learn the technical processes of any other industry. A census-taking, index-making age conceives that without literacy there is no education, as if to read the *Strand Magazine* were greater than to be the mother of Shakespeare. With such an age it is difficult to argue regarding the existing education of a Hindu woman. Yet if a thorough training in a national mode of living, and that extremely complicated, be an education, she has something; for the ordinary wife can act in any capacity, from that of cook or dairy-mistress to that of chief of commissariat and general administrator for a hundred or more persons. If a knowledge of language, poetry, and folk-lore, with all thereby connoted of logical and imaginative development, form an education, she has this, sometimes to the extent of under-

standing and reciting works in Sanskrit. More: poor women who may not be able to read and write are deeply, and even passionately, possessed of the spirit of the ancient culture. The philosophy of Maya, not seldom bewildering to the Western *savant*, has no difficulty for them. They understand to a hair the meaning of the word *Nirvana*. It is no one special command to deny oneself and take up a cross and follow, that has weight with them; but the bearing of the great law of renunciation on the personal realisation of freedom. Add to all this the inbred habit of life in community, and it will appear that under the old scheme women found not only a training and a discipline, but also a career.

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

which they are busied under her. Caste equalises the dignity of beggar and king, and the form of work is merely a question of wealth.

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

* Lest it should be thought that India had ever been a land of the unclean, let me point out here that the use of earths and oils for the

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

Orthodoxy does, of course, oppose some obstacle to

bath has always been compulsory. There is, perhaps, no people in the world from whom the culture of the skin receives so much attention, or where it is so successful. But manufactured soap as producing a chemical change on the epidermis, is theoretically disapproved.

this process of decay. It would still be accounted an act of vulgarity if a man of means gave a piece of English cotton as wearing apparel to a friend. Soap, kerosine oil, and the substitution of chairs for mats, are still regarded askance by the leaders of pious opinion. But this opposition savours too much of mere prejudice. Therefore it can only retard, it cannot overcome, the evil. What is wanted in this regard is a dynamic orthodoxy, capable of enforcing a decision that only what Indian people can make ought Indian persons to use. And such a canon, it is needless to point out, would have to find its root and strength in the women, who are buyers and consumers, reaching the craftsmen through constituted social and religious channels. Once having obtained a grip of the national conscience, no political or commercial cajolery would be of the slightest avail against this principle; but then, if the people were capable of understanding and carrying out such an idea—women, priests, pundits, heads of castes, and labourers—the whole problem would already have been solved, and there would be no disaster from which India must be saved.

It is clear that as the objective of the old education of Indian women lay in *character*, the new cannot aim lower. The distinctive element, therefore, in their future training cannot be reading and writing—though these will undoubtedly grow more common—but the power to grasp clearly and with enthusiasm the ideas of nationality, national interests, and the responsibility of the individual to race and country. Even in Europe, habits and opinions tend to stereotype and harden themselves quite as much as in the Orient. But at present there is still a certain flexibility. This flexi-

bility rather than any definite change is what the East requires. It is a form of freedom and mastery. European communities, in consequence of this mobility of structure, enjoy a power of intelligent co-operation towards new but agreed ends which is universally desirable. India has the power to act, but the end must be familiar. A few women will organise themselves at a moment's notice to cook for hundreds or even thousands of guests, without the least waste of energy or temper such as Western women would incur in organising a soup-kitchen. But if we call the guests "the unemployed," and refer to them as "a social problem," the Oriental becomes bewildered, as would we in like manner were it proposed to us to regard them all as visitors. It is clear that the Western mode of approaching such tasks can only be acquired by India, if it be necessary, through an enlarged idea of the public life.

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

Such a change, however, is only possible as a direct growth out of old conceptions. The national idea cannot be imposed from without—it must develop

from within. And this will be in full congruity with the national religions. Islam, in the days of its power, rejoiced to establish itself as Indian on Indian soil. The architectural works of the Mogul emperors are full of enthusiasm for the Indian past, for the Indo-Saracenic style owes as much to Rajputana as to Mecca and Constantinople. Asiatic among Asiatics—there was no wide gap between Mussulman conquerors and Hindu conquered : no gap in taste, or morals, or style of thought and education. The newcomer settled down as a child of the land, in his own home. His children were first Indian, and only in the second place members of the Mohammedan confraternity. To-day, under the necessity of a secular expression, there is nothing whatever to prevent him from projecting himself upon the cause of his own people, both Hindu and Mohammedan, and working for them with that same power with which his fathers once made the deserts of Arabia ring. For the Hindu, the point should be still more obvious. His avatars have lived always for humanity. They have appeared in the hour of the national need. They have been followed by waves of popular and political rejuvenance. Neither Hinduism nor Mohammedanism has been weak in putting forward the claims of soil. The sacred texts go so far as to say that he who dies for his country at once attains the Beatific Vision. With regard to their fundamental duties, both faiths stand like converging artillery in the world of motive, ready to shoot forth individuals upon the great common task of remaking the motherland.

But for all this again, there must be a re-reading of orthodoxy, a re-discovery of essentials. Already the

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

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

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

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

This is not merely an inspiration of defence. Oriental methods have had an unparalleled success in producing a widely extended amelioration of conduct and cultivation

of mind. Any large country town in India may be observed, and the number of its saints and scholars counted. Not even the most favoured of London suburbs can boast, of its commercial or scientific order, so many men severely learned. But the old Indian learning is now complete. The task is done. There is nothing left for the common mind to add.

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

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

In order to make such changes possible, however, there would need to be a spontaneous appearance, in various parts of the country, of persons with the synthetic habit of mind and heart. India is actually a unity, but few of her people realise the fact, and fewer still feel the appropriate emotion. No parochial ambition can, at this juncture, save the motherland. The Mahratta may not seek the good of Maharashtra, nor the Sikh of the Punjab. There must be no revival of forgotten feuds. Not in such things lies the

thrill of nationality. Rather, all must unite in a common glorification of India and the whole Indian past. Each must recognise what the others have contributed. There must be thinkers able to take advantage of every accident in local history, and to turn it to the advantage of the one great cause. The passion of nationality was so strong in the Punjab, in Rajputana, and under Sivaji, that it broke even the power of the Mogul Empire. Yet the fact that she has never had any definite and consolidated form of her own may be the critical element in the history of Bengal, to make her the welder and fuser of all the provinces to-day.

Such an inspiration as this is social as well as political. It is religious in the highest sense. It has to fill home, school, and market-place. There is no question therefore as to its requiring the co-operation of woman with man. For her, also, there is a new and greater orthodoxy. She must become of her own freedom that which custom now makes her. Eastern piety is often good bacteriology. Sitola, the Smallpox Goddess, is depicted as riding on the washerman's donkey, an unclean beast. But requiring to be worshipped with water and broom, and isolation of the patient. The myth is admirable. Europe can show nothing of its kind so good. But the next step is, obviously, facts at first hand. Woman must be enabled to know, think, and judge freely, on all questions such as those of food and the public health. The severe exigencies of modern labour make the old food and cooking entirely insufficient. Dyspepsia has become a national curse; yet this is certainly one of the difficulties that could be overcome. An extended choice of food-stuffs, and the alternative of simple

methods of preparation would be fully consonant with orthodoxy, which has always aimed at making the body the servant of man, and not his master.

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

There is no question here of educating an intellect hitherto left in barbarous ignorance. Only those can do vital service to the Indian woman who, in a spirit of entire respect for her existing conventions and her past, recognise that they are but offering new modes of expression to qualities already developed and expressed in other ways under the old training. Therefore the fundamental task of grasping and conveying the inspiration of the West must be performed by Easterns for Easterns, and not by foreigners.

Nor ought the result of such a process to be in any sense denationalising. To assimilate an ideal and make our own persons a demonstration of its power—this is not imitation. A merely imitative apprehension of the West—like that of the clerk in his office, the constitutional agitator in politics, the manufacturer who knows only enough of mechanical industry for a

cheek-by-jowl competition with Manchester—is indeed the parent of death to the Orient. But to achieve a living, forceful, heart-to-heart appropriation of the Western energy and its immediate re-translation into Eastern terms, is not death but life.

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

Very little that deserves the name of Education has been attempted in modern India. A machine has been created; an organisation stands ready. But nothing in all this represents the work of the people themselves, for ends which they spontaneously perceive to be good in themselves. Moreover, liberal ideals of what Education means are wanting. It is obvious that no system can be complete till secular culture

exists in all forms and grades as does religious culture now, from that of the child playing with sense-impressions, up to the solitary student, standing on mountain-peaks of knowledge where human foot before his has never trodden, and yet finding abundance of sympathy and understanding and new stimulus again, in the social matrix out of which he climbed, when he returns to recount his vision and his wandering.

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

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

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

But how do we propose that Indian women shall grasp an idea of such vastness as this of Nationality? How are they to acquire the knowledge necessary to define it? And how are they to grow in clear and accurate mastery of essential facts? Is it to be expected that the conventional channels of their education—the Homeric singers who chant the epics from door to

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

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

door—is it to be expected that these shall transform themselves at a stroke from pious rhapsodists into heroic bards, chanting of nationality? No, it is clear enough that such a change could only befall them as result, not cause, of some great upheaval, from which the nation herself had emerged radiant, victorious, impressing herself upon the imaginations of her own children for ages to come. But the spring of such an upheaval, where is that to be found?

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

This is the more true in these days of telegraphy and letter-writing, of a common language and cheap print. A process which in Asoka's India would have taken at least two hundred years, may now be accomplished in a single decade. And wherever a word of English goes, the national idea constitutes for itself the necessity of an apostolate. No one can say exactly how it will come to birth among the women. Some will catch it for themselves. Some will gather it from the men. Some are possessed of it already. But it is certain that woman, with her determinately synthetic interests, will refuse long to be baulked of her right to consider things as a whole. The interest of the mother is ever with the future.

Woman will readily understand that a single generation of accomplished defeat is sufficient to divorce a whole race from its patrimony; and she will determine, and effectively determine, that the lot of her own sons shall be victory, and not surrender.

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

CHAPTER VII

THE INDIAN SAGAS

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

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

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

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

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 Bhagavats") 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-æsthesic, that is, psychic sense, who utters to him every word as it is spoken.

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

On this plan, more than half the country-side tales of Northern India could be woven into the Mahabharata when it was first thrown into form by some unknown hand, three or four centuries before Christ. It underwent its final recension not more than two or three hundred years later—a possible fifteen hundred years after the occurrence of the events which are its central theme. It is easy to see that this saga fulfils thus all the conditions of great epic poetry. The stories that it

tells have been worked over by the imagination of singers and people for hundreds of years. They have become simple, direct, inevitable. They are spoken out of the inmost heart of a nation not yet dreaming of self-consciousness. They are nothing if not absolutely sincere.

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

These characteristics do not hold good to the same extent of the second Indian epic, the Ramayana, which has a closely-worked motive running throughout. This poem—the tale of the Exile of Sita and Rama—received its present form not long after the Mahabharata, early in the Buddhist period. It is supposed that under Buddhist influence the monastic life had come to be so honoured that the flower of the nation were drawn to it, rather than to the mingled responsibilities and joys of the home. The romantic reaction in ideals which was inevitable gathered itself about the ancient theme of a princely couple of the house of 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 Ayodhya thousands of years ago.

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

In these versions the story becomes more and more clearly defined. Pulsing through every Ramayana runs the Hindu reverence for Rama as man, husband, and king. This reverence may seek new modes of expression, but it can never admit that that which is expressed was at any time less than the ideal. Yet we must remember that that ideal is in the ancient terms, Oriental rather than Occidental. It belonged to a conception of duty that placed Society far above the individual, and made the perfect king seek the good of his people without any consideration for his own or his wife's happiness. The fact that made his marriage perfect was its complete demonstration that it was as possible for two as for one to devote themselves first to the general weal. For the acquiescence of Sita is

given in her twenty years of silent banishment. Once during that time, says one of the regional poets, she saw her husband as he passed through the forest where she was and kept silence still. And though the incident is an addition not found in the original, it only serves to bring out more clearly the intention of the first poem, where every dumb moment of those twenty years speaks louder than words the wife's acquiescence in her husband's will.

Behind the vernacular translators stand all those old nurses and 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, Rabon the Ten-headed, king of the island of Lanka or Ceylon.

It was inevitable that some of the skalds who chanted the deeds of Rama should attach themselves specially to the character of this mythical Rabon, 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 Rabon, one of the strongest personages, at least from a literary point of view. To this day old wives tell of an incident that has crept into no published poem. When the time came, they say, that Rama had conquered and slain his ten-headed foe, Mandodari was inconsolable that she was now a widow. Then it was declared to her that, till her husband's funeral fire was dead she should be no widow, and that that fire should burn for ever. And so, sure enough, we have only to shut our ears tight, and we hear the roaring of the flames that are burning Rabon 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, ashen-clad, with matted locks, and begs for

charity. Sita pleads that it is late and she is alone, imploring him to go. And this he promises to do if only first she will step outside and give him a little food. She is full of dim forebodings of evil, but pity at last gains the upper hand of fear; she steps out of her enchanted circles to bestow alms on him; he throws off the disguise of the Brahmin, appears as Rabon himself, and carries her off to his kingdom in his chariot. It is during the first terrible moments 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, Hanuman, the monkey-general. It is supposed that if there be any historical foundation for the legend of the Ramayana, this name of Hanuman may refer to the chieftain of some strong aboriginal tribe. In any case, he stands to-day 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 as he dies he declares that the

names of Sita and Rama will be found written on his heart.

It is now time for the return to the kingdom, and Sita and Rama go back to 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 Sitá. She retires to a distant forest, to live the life of a nun, under the care of Valmiki, the old hermit; and Rama sits alone on the throne of 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 Valmika 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, Yudisthira. And Krishna, the Indian Christ, is there, in that guise of prince and leader of men that has given him the name in India of "The Perfect Incarnation." One of the rival houses consists of a family of no less than a hundred children, so that the multiplicity of persons and incidents is best left to the imagination. Yet certain main features belong to the treatment of all characters alike. For the attention of the poet-chronicler is fixed on the

invisible shackles of selfhood that bind us all. He seems to be describing great events; in reality he does not for one instant forget that he is occupied with the history of souls, depicting the incidence of their experience and knowledge on the external world.

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

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

From this point, having set aside the privileges of

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

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

Such stories illustrate the Hindu endeavour to understand every man's relation to a given situation, and to read in conflicting lines of conduct that

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

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