their natures, strong and heroic though they be, as in us all.

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

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

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

Then for one short year, as wife, and queen, and future mother, she tastes of entire earthly happiness, only to be swept away from her home again in the sternness of her husband's will for his people's good. Through twenty years of acquiescent silence she keeps now, in all its fulness, that love that sent her first to share Rama's exile in the forest, and yet the perfection of her pride of womanhood is shown when she dies of the insult conveyed in a spoken doubt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER VIII

### NOBLESSE OBLIGE: A STUDY OF INDIAN CASTE

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

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

Our conduct is commonly governed far more by social habit than by considerations of right and wrong. When the tide of the ethical struggle has once set in over some matter, we may regard ourselves as already half-lost. Why are my friend's open letters absolutely safe in my presence, though I am longing for the information they convey? Why can money given for one

purpose not be used for another, when all the canons of common sense and expediency urge that it should? Who will confess to an effort in speaking the truth at any cost whatever? Why, when I am annoyed, do I not express myself in the language of Billingsgate? To each of which questions one would reply, somewhat haughtily, that the point was one of honour, or, that such happened to be the custom of one's class.

Yet if we examine into the sanction which honour can invoke there is nothing beyond a rare exercise of the power of ostracism. The Church excommunicates, the law imprisons, but society merely "cuts" the offender in the street. Yet which of these three inflicts the deepest wound? It is as true of London as of Benares that caste-law is the last and finest that controls a man. For it comes into operation at that precise point where tribunals fail. It takes cognisance of offences for which no judge could inflict penalties. It raises standards and demands virtues that every man will interpret according to the stringency of his pride, and yet that no one can feel himself to have wholly fulfilled. And it does all this without once permitting the sensation of merit. Having done all one remains an unprofitable servant. For no one would count the punctual discharge of debts (all debts are debts of honour), the hauteur that brooks no stain upon the name, the self-respect that builds the whole ethical code upon itself, as religious observances. These things were due, we say, to our birth or blood, or position before men. It is true that their non-fulfilment would leave a stain upon the conscience, and it is also true that the attempt to work out the obligations of honour must be the immediate test of the

sincerity of one who proposes to lead a life of greater devotion and earnestness than common. Still, caste is not the same thing as personal piety, and perhaps for this reason complete renunciation of its claims and benefits is essential in India to the monastic life.

There is another point about our Western conception of *noblesse oblige*. Few as the persons may be who could formulate their sentiment, the fact pervades the whole of the social area. Each class has its own honour. If honourable employers feel compelled to think of the comfort of their workers, honourable servants feel equally compelled to keep their lips shut on their masters' affairs, and either responds to an appeal in the name of his ideal. The priest may find the honour of his profession in conflict with that of the detective, but all the world will uphold the faithfulness of both. The efficient realisation of his ideals by the schoolmaster will involve an occasional pardon, even of a grave offence, if he conceives forgiveness to be the best formative influence which at the moment he can command. The very same effort in the merchant will require a distribution of punishment that is rigorous and just, since order, integrity, and unfailing promptitude—not the development of human character—are his ends. Thus every man, in every critical act of his life, calls silently for the judgment of his peers and refuses all other.

The weaknesses of caste everywhere are manifold. For society, like the individual, is always apt to insist upon the tithing of mint and rue, and to neglect the weightier matters of the law. But it is not usually the martyr who marks its worst failure. He is the white dove cast forth by crows, that is, a member of a higher

tried by consensus of the lower castes. We have here a case of government usurping the functions of society, much as if the headmaster should exercise authority in a dispute among boys. For it is essential to the very idea of honour that every caste should be autonomous. The true failure of caste occurs whenever it establishes such an ascendency of social opinion over the individual's conscience that his power of advance is impeded and he becomes less of a man, or less really beneficent socially, by remaining more of a gentleman, —a state of things which is not uncommon among ourselves. For we may postulate that all ideals are helpful only in so far as they subserve a man's manhood and freedom, and destructive the instant they render him less able to express his own inmost will. It is he, therefore, who ought to have been a martyr and chose ease, who is the true caste victim, not the hero of an *auto-da-fé*.

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

A certain sweeping justification of such facts may be urged, inasmuch as there are circumstances under which the cohesion of the group is well worth the sacrifice of the liberty of a few individuals. And the

habitual outrage of custom without reason is perhaps rightly held to be as anti-social as any felony. In the last resort, however, social pressure must be held in bounds, for nothing should interfere with a man's right to try himself, or sap the roots of his independence. And society is a vague and irresponsible magistrate, with so little illumination as to his own purposes and tendencies that he frequently mistakes the pioneers of his march for deserters, and orders the stoning of prophets whose sepulchres and monuments will be erected by his children.

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

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

As ages went on and the Upanishads and other things were added to the store, that which was hitherto memorised became entrusted to writing. The *Vedas*

became *Scriptures*—and now the *methods* of psychology, of astronomy, of mathematics, made themselves felt as integral parts of the Aryan treasure, in common with Sanskrit literature. This widened the conception of culture without liberalising the social bearings of the question, and the Brahmin caste continued to be recognised as the natural guardians of all learning, the old religious compositions being still regarded as the type.

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

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

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

Granting, then, what could not well be denied, that the Aryan forefathers found themselves in India face to

face with inferior and aboriginal races, what may we gather, from the nature of the caste system to-day, to have been the elements of the problem, as they more or less clearly perceived it ?

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

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

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

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

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

On the other hand, it is one of the mistakes of caste everywhere, that it institutionalises and perpetuates an

inequality which might have been minimised. But we must not forget, in the case of the Indian system, the two greater evils which were avoided altogether.

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

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

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

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

It is undeniable that this caste of the kitchen, so wittily named "don't touchism" by a modern Hindu leader, lends itself to abuse and becomes an instrument

of petty persecution more readily than the intermarriage laws. Some of the saddest instances of caste-failure have occurred here. Nevertheless, the original intention remains clear and true, and is by no means completely obscured, even with the lapse of ages.

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

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

As is the nature of caste, mere social prestige constitutes a perpetual stimulus and invitation to rise, which means in this case to increase the number of daily baths and the cleanliness of cooking, and to restrict to purer and finer kinds the materials used for food, approximating continually toward the Brahmin standard. For is it not true that *noblesse oblige?*

This fact it is that makes Hinduism always the vigorous living banyan, driving civilisation deeper and wider as it grows, and not the fossilised antiquity superficial observers have supposed.

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

(1) Priests and learned men—the Brahmins;

(2) The royal and military caste;

(3) Professional men and merchants—the middle-class or *bourgeoisie*, as we say in Europe; and

(4) The working people, or sudras, in all their divisions.

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

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

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

with its inclusion of peasant, citizen, and prince, belongs?

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

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

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

One peculiarity of the place of the religious life in the Indian system is that it is an inclusive term for all forms of higher individuation. Theoretically, to the

Hindu mind, all genius is inspiration, the perception of unity; and the mathematics of Euclid or the sculpture of Michael Angelo would be as authentic an expression of the religious consciousness as the sainthood of Francis. Only the result of this method of interpretation is that sainthood takes precedence of all others as the commonest form of greatness. Scientific research, as in the astronomy of Bhashkar Acharya and the psychology of Patanjali, has not had sufficient opportunity of securing defined and independent scope. And literature has been yoked to the car of mythology as much as the art of mediæval Italy.

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

This renunciation is *Sannyas*, the Indian form of monasticism, and Sannyas, theories to the contrary

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

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

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

The appearance of this new teacher, when he is powerful enough to be an important social phenomenon, is the historic origin of almost all new castes. The Sikh nation was formed in this way by a succession of

gurus. Chaitanya welcomed all castes to Vaishnavism and made it possible for them to rise thereby. The scavengers, too low to venture to claim either Hinduism or Mohammedanism as their own, were raised in consideration and self-respect by Guru Nanuk and Lal Begi Mehtar—the last a saint of their own degree.

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

Taking the history of Hinduism as a whole, we observe a great systole and diastole of caste, the Buddhist and the present Christian periods ranking as well-marked eras of fusion, while the intervening centuries are characterised by progressive definition,

broken every now and then by a wave of reform which thought itself a movement towards caste abolition, but ended simply in the formation of a new group. For this is the fact in which all would-be reformations in India find at once their opportunity and their limit. It may now be taken as proved that in order to affect caste widely, the agitator would need to aim deeper than the external phenomena, at underlying spiritual impulses.

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

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

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

To be absolutely just, however, we must admit that the observance of caste law has entailed many foolish and irritating losses upon society during the last fifty years. We have seen that there are definite reasons, not wanting in cogency, why a man of good birth should not eat in all companies, or of food cooked by hands supposed less cleanly. Such rules, however, cannot be kept by those who, for any reason, cross the seas to Europe. This fact, more than any other detail, makes it a matter of out-casting to take the journey, and persecutions have sometimes ensued which are shocking to contemplate. A man may care little about the loss of station for his own sake, but the shoe pinches when he finds himself unable to make worthy marriages for his daughters; hence he will often submit to a heavy fine in order to buy back his position. This rouses the cupidity of ignorant and conventional persons who happen to have authority with the stay-at-home community, and such are apt to be unscrupulous in bringing about the ruin or recanta-

tion of any who resist their power. This is a series of events which does occur occasionally; but it need not be supposed that every Europe-returning Hindu who is kept at arm's length is a martyr. There is an element of distrust for the moral results of a visit to the West in the situation; and this is not altogether unreasonable. It is chiefly with regard to possibilities of political, practical, or technical education that caste deterrence is to be regretted, and it is obvious that as communities progress in the power of estimating modern conditions, they must recognise the suicidal nature of such an attitude. Yet it is curious to note here how caste may become thus a very real instrument of equality, for the power of the individual to advance is by this means kept strictly in ratio to the thinking of the society in which he lives. This fact is characteristic. The good of caste, of race, of family stands first, and only second that of the individual man or woman in India. To take another plane. Let a man of the lower castes become wealthy, and he is compelled to educate men of his own rank to marry his daughters. Thus the group to which he owes birth, vigour, and development receives from him again the benefits of his life's work. This is the exact opposite of the European device, where the upper class absorbs money, talent, and beauty from the lower, while that is continually recruited by the failures from above.

The fact that every human force is polar in its moral activity needs little demonstration in the case of social pride. Every day we see this working on the one hand for the highest idealism, on the other for revolting egotism. Social exclusiveness may be condoned, it may even be robbed of its sting; but,

especially when coupled with personal exultation, it can never be made anything but vulgar-looking to the disinterested outsider. It is not to be supposed that Indian caste forms any exception to this rule of double effect. Nevertheless, it is well to understand the conditions of the sentiment, perceiving how inevitably this very thing repeats itself wherever two physically-distinguishable races are found side by side.

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

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

mine abide for ever." Caste is race: continuity; it is the historic sense; it is the dignity of tradition and of purpose for the future. It is even more: it is the familiarity of a whole people in all its grades with the one supreme human motive—the notion of *noblesse oblige*. For though it is true that all men are influenced by this principle, it is also probably true that only the privileged are very conscious of the fact. Is caste, then, simply a burden, to be thrown off lightly, as a thing irksome and of little moment?

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

Then the question of whether to walk or not in the

ways of the forefathers will be lost in the knowledge of the abundant power to hew out new roads, as those fathers did before them. Has India the possibilities still left in her own nature which can bring to her such an epoch?

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

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

# CHAPTER IX

## THE SYNTHESIS OF INDIAN THOUGHT

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

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

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

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

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

RIG. VEDA: Hymn of Creation.

I

LIKE the delicate charm that is common to honourable women; like the distinctive greatness of saints and

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

It is clear that such a conception is very inadequately rendered by the English word "religion." It is clear also that to dissect out and set in order the distinctively

religious elements in an idea so definite at its centre, and so nebulous at its edges—claiming thereby to have defined the religion of the Indian peoples—would be a task of extreme difficulty. It must have been in the face of just such problems that Max Müller exclaimed, "Ancient words are round, and modern square!"

As the forest grows spontaneously, of many kinds, each like all the others only in the common fact of the quest of light, and every plant having a complete right to regard its own as the chosen seed, so amongst the Hindu people, up to the twentieth century of this Christian era, grew faiths and creeds. Islam itself was scarcely an exception to this rule. For the spirit that makes a township, after learning English, differentiate itself sharply into Hindu and Mohammedan social cliques, is of modern growth. It appears to be a result of that false interpretation which reads the history of India as an account of the struggle between the two ideas. In the life of the villages there is no such strong distinction. In Bengal and Behar, the sons of Hindu and Mohammedan gentlemen grow up in the closest fraternity and fellowship. In the North-West Provinces they mingle their names. In the Moslem zenanas of the same districts the Hindu babies of the village are privileged guests. Every Hindu guru accepts Mohammedan as well as Hindu disciples. Every Mohammedan fakir is sought by Hindu as well as Mohammedan devotees. In the South, narrowly orthodox as the South is counted, the proudest feature of Trevandrum is the shrine dedicated to a Mohammedan princess, who forsook courts and palaces for the worship of Trevandrum's local god. Over and over again, in the political world, have the armies of Delhi

and the nawabs been led to victory by Hindu generals; and in every Native State to this day will be found positions of responsibility and power assigned to men whose creed is that which the sovereign's is not. A more beautiful tribute was never surely paid than that spoken of the Mahratta queen, "she was peculiarly kind and considerate to such of her subjects as differed from her in faith." But indeed the intolerance of Mohammedanism itself has been grossly exaggerated by Christian observers, who seem curiously incompetent to grasp the secret of an Eastern attitude. This intolerance could never, for instance, be compared with that of the Roman Church. The necessity of making a strong and competent nation out of a few warring tribes led to the enunciation of a brief and simple religious thesis; but the Prophet did not fail, in true Asiatic fashion, to remind his people that "God is the God of all creatures, not of one section only," and to exempt especially from condemnation all the alien religions definitely known to him, namely Christianity and Judaism, "the peoples of the Book." Truly the quarrel of that stern spirit of righteousness was with unfaithfulness, not with other faiths, however strongly, under unforeseen military and political exigencies, it might seem to lend itself to the contrary interpretation. The fact that Mohammedans have sometimes held another opinion is no argument as to the teaching of their religion in its purity, and it must be remembered that "dog of an infidel" is an expression hurled as freely against Spaniard and Crusader, as ever against what Christians call a Pagan. No. The feud between Delhi and Ghazni was no more a battle between *Din* and *Dharmma* than was that so long existing between

France and England, the combat of the Catholic against the Protestant Churches. Even Sikh and Mahratta risings were only the psychological transfer of regional power-centres. The famous jewelled shawl of the Hindu State of Baroda was made quite naturally under the old *régime*, to be sent to the tomb of Mohammed at Medina!

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

In the religious consciousness of Islam there is nothing that is without analogy amongst the faiths that have sprung up on Indian soil. Every one is tolerant of the idea of "the one true church," for it is held by

Hindus to be a necessity of the early stages of religious development. Allah is of course the Personal God: but then the worshipper of Vishnu has always had to admit his brother's right to offer praise to Siva, though the name left himself unstirred. Why not Allah, therefore, equally? The Hindu uses images: to the Mussulman the image is abhorrent. True, but every Hindu hopes to escape some day from the necessity of using images. Who is not touched by the devotional custom of Hindu women, bathing the reflection of the Holy Child in the mirror and saying, "This which we bathe is not the image: neither is the image He whom we worship!" Are not the saints for ever telling the idolater that even to name the Infinite Unity is sacrilege? And what Mohammedan saint has failed to say the same? The dispute about the image, in the light of such facts, becomes a mere difference of opinion as to the use of the concrete in the early stages of an education. Indeed, Hinduism itself has shown its power in modern times to throw out sects that decry the use of images as strongly as Islam.

Hence it would appear that the important points at issue between Hindus and Mussulmans are rather details of purification and domestic practice, than religious or doctrinal. This fact becomes increasingly evident as the higher phases of the two faiths are reached. For the more completely either is realised, the more perfectly is it fused in the other. Sufi-ism *

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

leads the soul by love, and the Vedanta leads it by knowledge, love, or emancipated motive, as the case may be; but for both alike the theme is of a common goal, where all sense of difference shall cease, and the small self be swallowed up in the universal. Of each of the two faiths, then, it may be said, that it has nothing to lose and everything to gain by the more complete development of the other. Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, Sankaracharya,* are not so many deplorable obstacles in each other's paths, but rather widely separated examples of a common type—the radiant Asiatic personage, whose conception of nationality lies in a national righteousness, and whose right to be a leader of men rests on the fact that he has seen God face to face. Such souls cannot fail to recognise each other, and the Prophet was not slow to salute Moses and the Christ, the only examples of his own order whose names he knew.

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

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

that which is their actual ground of union—the Asiatic synthesis of life?

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

All through the Old Testament, and throughout the story of the rise of Mohammedanism, we hear of "stones" as objects of worship. It is the black and mystic Kaaba, that is to this day the symbol of their unity to all the peoples of Islam. And throughout India still there are races of working folk who ask no better symbol of divinity than rude stones, selected with some care possibly, and then set up, singly or in a row, perhaps in an enclosure, perhaps not, to be regarded henceforth as objects of reverence. The people who use these emblems—for they cannot be regarded as images—may be anything, from sudras, or peasants, as I have seen them in the South, to Bhutias, or gipsy-like wanderers, as one meets with them in the Himalayas.

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

intense. Sometimes the sacred stones themselves are smeared with oil, for the very touch of the wondrous fluid that nourishes light seems to be holy.

To richer races in India only clarified butter is good enough for use in the service of the altar, and we of Europe require the great wax tapers. But can we not trace through all these a single common process of the sanctification of labour by the products of labour? "We worship the Ganges with the water of the Ganges, but we *must* worship," said a Hindu. Similarly does the peasant dream of the sacred oil, and the pastoral Toda* worship his cowbells. Is it not true that if all could be blotted out in a moment from the human memory, the Eucharist and the sanctuary-lamp from Christianity, flickering light and fragrant flowers from the Mussulman grave, oils and fruits and incense from the Eastern worshipper, it would only be to spring forth fresh again to-morrow—corn, wine, and oil to the peasant, scented gums to the lover of gardens, the Good Shepherd the ideal of the herdsman, the ship of salvation the hope of fisher-folk? What are mythologies after all but the jewel-casket of humanity, by means of which its wealth of dreams and loves and sighs in every generation becomes the unperishing and imperishable treasure of the after-comers? The mystery of the birth of faith is about us always.

All the great Asiatic faiths—that is to say, the world-religions—would seem to have been born of the overflow of something that may be called tentatively the Aryan thought-power, upon the social and religious formations of earlier ages. Taoism in China, Zoroastrianism in Persia, and Hinduism in India are all as three different

* Toda.—An aboriginal tribe in the Neilgherris.

applications of a single original fund of insight and speculation, and Islam itself has incorporated Sufi-ism after reaching the Aryan region. Doubtless of all these India developed her share of the inheritance with the greatest freedom and perfection, but we recognise common elements in all alike.

II

As the basis of Indian thought rests deep in the very foundation of human evolution, so it has not failed, at each new point in the historic development, to add something to the great superstructure. The whole story of India may be read in a philosophic idea. The constitutional ceremonies of the kingdom of Travancore contain clear indications of the transition from the matriarchate which was probably characteristic of the old Dravidian* civilisation, to the patriarchate, which was Aryan. In the yearly village-worship of the heroic figures of the "Mahabharata" which is common throughout the South, we have what may be the effort of distant peoples to include themselves in the "Great India" of Bhishma, Judisthira, and the national Epics.† The charge of country gunpowder which is fired off in the temples of the Southern Dekkan on festival days is sufficient evidence that orthodoxy was once aggressive,

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

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

eager, absorbent of things new, fearful of nothing, and friendly to advance. It is a popular superstition that the East stands still. Children observe no motion of the stars. But the fact is that one generation is no more like another at Benares than in Paris. Every saint, every poet, adds something to the mighty pile which is unlike all that went before. And this is quite as true of the thought expressed in the vernaculars, as of the all-dominating culture contained in the classic Sanskrit. Chaitanya in Bengal, the Ten Gurus of the Sikhs, Ram Das and Tokuram in Maharashtra, and Ramanuja in the South—each of these was to his own time as the very personification of the national philosophy, relating it again in its wholeness to the common life. Each such great saint appears to the people as the incarnation, the revelation, of themselves and their own powers, and the church by him founded becomes a nation. Thus arose the Mahratta Confederacy. Thus arose the kingdom of Lahore. And far away in Arabia, Islam formed itself in the same fashion. For the law that we are considering is not peculiar to India; it is common to the whole of Asiatic life.

The Hindu world in its entirety then, is one with the highest philosophy of Hinduism. The much-talked-of Vedanta is only the theoretic aspect of that synthesis whose elements make up the common life. The most unlettered, idolatrous-seeming peasant will talk, if questioned, of the immanence of God. He recognises that Christianity is fundamentally true, because the missionaries are clear that there is but one Supreme. The question, What would happen could the nation be divorced for a single generation from the knowledge

of Sanskrit? is only another way of asking, What is the actual dynamic force existing at a given moment in the Hindu people? What are the characteristic ideas that are now an inbred habit, past the reach of authority to substantiate, or disaster to shake? It is given only to great events and to the imagination of genius to find the answer to such questions. Yet some indications there are, of what that answer might be.

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

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

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

* Asoka's inscriptions on the Dhauli rock, Orissa, and at Girnar in Gujrat.

pass on the great message of human brotherhood. They were to go out into *all* the world and preach the Gospel to *every* creature. What must not have been the faith and enthusiasm of the common people, when merchants, traders, and caravan-servants could suffice to make a permanent contribution to the religion of the powerful Empire of China? It was a great age, and only those who have seen the colossal fragments which remain of it to this day can form any idea of its wealth and vigour.

And yet Asoka's conversion had not been to a new religion, but only into the piety of his time. "I, King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, obtained true intelligence ten years after my anointing." Hence the thing that we call Buddhism ends its career in India very gradually. He who has first visited Ellora* is surprised, on entering Elephanta,† to find the Buddha-like figure on his left to be Siva, and the Triumph of Durga on his right. At Ellora itself there must be a gap of centuries between the cathedral-like caves of the Thin Thal‡ and of Kailash.§ Yet even there we see the solitary figure of the teaching or the meditating Buddha give place by degrees to a rich pantheon of devas and guardian kings. But the hope and delight that are

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

† Elephanta.—A series of cave-temples on an island in the Bay of Bombay, about the twelfth century.

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

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

expressed so freely in the architecture and sculpture, and in the cosmopolitan intercourse of the Buddhist period die away imperceptibly into the rich imagery of the Puranic age,* and the manifold social and political problems of Sankaracharya and the age of chivalry.

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

In the period of the Upanishads, the conception of Brahman—the one real appearing as many—had been reached. This implies the doctrine of Maya, or the

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

illusion of things, as popularised under Buddhism. It is clear that in this theory the whole question of the origin of evil is put aside. Evil and good are alike shadows on the wall, cast by our sense of personal convenience in magnified and distorted form. The saints recognise neither pain, insult nor self-interest, being swallowed up in the joy of God.

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

But perhaps the most significant of all points in the Buddhist propaganda is its assumption that the word of the Blessed One Himself is all-sufficient authority. Hinduism recognises only one proof, and that is direct perception. Even the sacred writings give as their sanction the direct perception of saints and sages, and

the Vedas themselves declare that man must reach beyond the Vedas. That is to say, the books allege as their authority that realisation out of which they were written. The Jains refuse the authority of the Vedic texts. But there is less divergence between them and other sects of Hinduism than would appear on the surface. Common language and the historic acceptance of the race alike, lead up to the last great pronouncement on the subject—"By the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times."

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

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

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

III

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

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

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

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

pathetic interpretations now known to us as the Laws of Manu.

It is only with difficulty that we realise the sense of vastness to which the thinkers of this period strove to give expression. The Celt, it has been said, strives ever towards the infinite of emotion. The Hindu, in the same way, cannot rest content, short of the infinite of thought. We see this, even so early as the hymns of the Rig Veda. "When darkness was hidden in darkness, undistinguished, like one mass of water," opens the great Anthem of Creation. Still larger is the sweep of the Upanishads—"they that see the Real in the midst of this Unreal, they that behold life in the midst of this death, they that know the One in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto *them* belongs eternal peace—unto none else, unto none else." The Vedas were the capital with which Aryan culture began its occupation of India, and these immense and subtle generalisations of the Upanishads represent the first achievement of the national mind in its new place. Surely this is the secret of the striking fact in Indian history that all great eras of rejuvenescence, Sankaracharya's, and even minor movements of reconstruction like Guru Nanuk's, and Ramanuja's, have had to go back to the forest sutras and place themselves in structural continuity with them. In this light we begin to suspect that the war of the Mahabharata itself represents the apparent exhaustion of Vedic inspiration at the end of the first period, and the restoration of pristine vigour by force of Krishna's personality.

The twilight of Indian forests in the pre-Buddhistic age is resonant, to the historic ear, with chants and

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

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

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

love of Sita for Rama, the glorified wifehood, before which the renunciation and faith of the cloister grow pale.

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

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

This wonderful boy—for he died at the age of thirty-two—was born at the end of the eighth century, and had already completed a great mission when most men are still dreaming of the future. The characteristic product of Oriental culture is always a commentary

*Literally, the a-dharma—non-dharma. The prefix is privative. See p. 301.

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

The problems which faced the Indian mind during his lifetime, with the single exception that the country was then rich and prosperous, must have been curiously like those of the present day, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in his eyes they assumed national dimensions. Religious practices had lost their primitive simplicity, and also perhaps their compelling power. Ideas as to national and unnational (for the word "orthodox" was but the Asiatic word for "national") were conflicting and confused. Men lived much in the thought of the recent sectarian develop-

ments of the faith, and tended to lose sight of its austere imperative, pointing to the highest realisation, of its antiquity, and its close-knit continuity. Lukshmi, Goddess of Fortune, was one of the chief objects of worship. Sects and kingdoms alike had lost their sense of mutual solidarity. Never perhaps was an Asiatic people nearer precipitating itself on a purely secular development.

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

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

Adwaita Philosophy, constitutes, for the rest of the Hindu period, the actual unity of India.

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

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

the very opposite of a persecutor, as, rather, another example of the race of inspired religious teachers to which their own apostle, Nagarjuna, belonged.*

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

The two or three centuries immediately succeeding Sankaracharya are commonly known as the dark ages of Indian history. The application of the term is obscure. In what sense were these ages dark? They were centuries of chivalric dominance, and in many a Rajput line the bardic annals are still preserved that will one day enable a generation of Indian historians to read their record. Even the wars of such a period were never destructive; for, apart from their specially chivalrous character, Oriental military

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

usage has always secured the safety of non-combatants. The lives of water-carriers and commissariat servants were scrupulously respected in Asiatic warfare. It is said, indeed, that the European gipsy is an example of this. These poor people were originally a tribe of petty merchants who used to accompany the march of armies. Wherever the camp was pitched, they could run up a bazaar in half an hour, and their caste-honour lay in telling neither side the secrets of the other. When Genghis Khan invaded Hungary, these particular clans were carried there, never to return.*

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

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

* In the year 1200 A.D.

The great tide of vigour that emanated from Sankaracharya swept round India by south, west, and north, in a spiral curve. Ramanuja, Madhavacharya,* Ram Das and Tukaram,† the Sikh Gurus‡ and Gauranga,§ were all in turn its products. Wherever it touched the Mussulman consciousness, it created, chiefly by means of contest, a well-centred nation. Where it did not come in contact with Mohammedanism, as in the extreme south, this spiritual energy did not succeed in evoking a nationality. And where it did not lead to definite fighting, as in Bengal under Chaitanya, the sense of national existence remained more or less potential. Thus the advent of Islam into India during the post-Sankaracharyan period cannot be regarded as a revolutionary invasion, inasmuch as under the new power there was no loss of Asiatic modes. New arts of luxury were introduced, but the general economic system remained undisturbed. India received a more centralised government than had been possible since the Asokan Empire, but no new forces came into operation, tending to reduce her own children to the position of agricultural serfs or tenants. And we have seen that even the wars which arose between contiguous populations of Hindus and Mohammedans

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

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

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

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

must be regarded rather as those athletic contests between brothers and cousins which confer individuality, than as conquests on the one side or the other. The victor after victory attempts neither to exclude his rival's creed from office, nor to create invidious distinctions. "The great bankers and nobles of Bengal remained Hindu under the rule of the Nawabs, as naturally as the Mussulman maintained his faith in the shadow of a Hindu throne." *

Nor have the clearness and self-consciousness that its definition has added to Hinduism in any way tended to impair its inclusiveness. For the personality that the nineteenth century has revealed as the turning-point of the national development is that of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa,† whose name stands as another word for the synthesis of all possible ideals and all possible shades of thought. In this great life, Hinduism finds the philosophy of Sankaracharya clothed upon with flesh, and is made finally aware of the entire sufficiency of any single creed or conception to lead the soul to God as its true goal. Henceforth, it is not true that each form of life or worship is tolerated or understood by the Hindu mind: each form is justified, welcomed, set up for its passionate loving, for evermore. Henceforth, the supreme crime for the follower of any Indian sect, whether orthodox or modern, philosophic or popular, shall be the criticism of any other, as if it were without the bounds of "the Eternal Faith." "Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to

* Torrens' "Empire in Asia."

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

truth" becomes in future the formula that constitutes belief.

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

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

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

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

It is said that nations and systems of culture fulfil special functions, as organs of humanity, just as individuals fulfil special uses in the community. If this be so, it would almost appear that within the bounds of India lies one of the focal or polar points of the race. The great task of the reconciliation of opposites would seem to devolve on the peoples within this pale. It is not enough that the Mussulman should inhabit the pastoral belt, the Mongolian rest secure behind the Thian Shan, and the Aryan and Dravidian dwell peacefully side by side in the Southern peninsula. It was decreed from the beginning, it lay unavoidably in the very nature of things, that sooner or later all these should meet in the land of the Indus, and learn their mutual significance and responsibilities. Buddhism may be regarded in one aspect as simply the synthesis of Eastern Asia. Neo-Hinduism (to borrow a term which has been coined in no friendly spirit) is equally indicative of a place found in Aryan thought

for Semitic formulæ, and who shall say what is yet to be born of that conjunction between all these, in which Asia shall find herself to be—not, as she has so long been told, "merely a congeries of geographical fragments," still less a concert of rival political units, held in mechanical combination by a due admixture of mutual hopes and recriminations, but a single immense organism, filled with the tide of one strong pulsating life from end to end, firm-rooted in the soil of common origins and common modes? The value which we may attach to the prospect of this future will depend on the idea that we have already been able to form, of the place of Asia in the evolution of humanity, but to those who foresee a future moralisation of international relations it may well appear that this question is among the most important in the world.