CHAPTER V

THE SOUL OF INDIA—II

OUR stay in Benares was very short. But that little time the Holy One made compact with loveliness, peace, and wisdom by giving himself whole-heartedly to us. We did not see him for some days following the operation, and that time we spent in visiting different shrines and other religious teachers. One shrine that we visited was Saranath, where Buddha taught for many months, five and twenty centuries ago. Though the archæologists have dug open and labelled the old Stupa remains, yet there was enough of the Lord's presence in the Deer Park to quicken one's pulse with wonder and awe. There is a tall full-length statue of Buddha as a young teacher that is an astonishing combination of femininity and manliness. Since he is God-man and man-God, he must convey that sense of perfection which epitomizes the highest qualities both in woman and in man—perfections wrought out of one stone into one image. I might warn the Christian beholder of the statue to remember that Christ, in mediæval art, is usually represented as man ; there is nothing feminine about Him, for in the image of His Mother all of feminine perfection was embodied —or so it seems to our alien view. On the contrary, in India, Maya, the Mother of our Lord, was kept out of the sacred iconography, so the twofold perfection of humanity had to be rendered in one image. In the Buddha of Saranath, the sculptor showed great skill in depicting a young man at an age when his beauty

is not altogether alien to a woman's. So any Christian who looks at the image should tell himself that he is seeing the Mother and the Son, two in one, and, if he does so, his pilgrimage to the Deer Park will be repaid by an exquisite experience.

Later, while my brother went inside, I sat on the steps of a temple watching the people come and go. The faces of the pilgrims who filled the streets almost stunned me. They were not faces but desolate immensities with eyes that had lost all trace of earthly interest and burnt with the terrible longing for another world. This was India and India's very secret—unbearable, lonely, sinister—yet how full of serenity in the absence of all but the ultimate desire! Presently, I began asking each one who passed within my reach, "Is the soul immortal?" to which came the invariable answer:

"It is. As the snake shuffles off an old skin to put on a new one, so doth the soul shuffle off a body, but it dies not with the death of its body."

I noticed among the pilgrims a peasant woman, about forty years old, who was from Kathiwar. She was very dark brown, a colour intensified by the spotless snow-white sari she wore, a small and delicate creature with sensitive features. She had been seated on the steps above me, and now she rose to her feet and stood with her back against the temple wall like an exquisite bas-relief. As though fortified by this support, she demanded what right I had to come and question.

Before I could answer, a tall fat beggar edged his way toward me: "O father, father of kings; the daughters from thy loins will be queens if thou wilt but give a starved man a penny," he begged.

"I have no daughters, and only one son," I said "and I shan't gain much by feeding fat fellows like thee!" Then hoping I was rid of him, I turned to the woman still leaning against the wall. "I come here as a Brahmin, a knower of holy love."

"How dost thou know it?" said she. "I hear thou hast lived in the West?"

In India news travels rapidly and that a strange woman should know about my life was not surprising.

The beggar put in another plea: "Thou shalt walk in sandals of gold; thy son shall unking kings."

The peasant woman interested me and I tried again to silence him. "What dost thou know, fool?" He was taken aback by that question, and I had a chance to say to her, "I have travelled everywhere, but found naught sweeter than my religion, and no women nobler than those of Hindustan."

She laughed, suspecting a compliment, while the beggar teased, "O thou father and mother, protector of religion, give me a penny."

But the Kathiwari woman, as though to test my knowledge of holy love, asked me to recite the Gita. I assented, but after ten minutes stopped short, and she supplied the rest from her own memory. Again I began—and stopped. And she helped me out and thus we finished the first two chapters of the Gita. Our Sanskrit had silenced the pestiferous beggar, but now that I paused he began again: "Didst thou ask what I know?" and patting his libidinous stomach, the impudent fellow cried, "I know all things—ask. What troubles thy pate?"

"Well, then," said I, thinking I had the best of him at last, "how does the Finite grow to be Infinite?"

And the rascal, after a slight well-calculated

hesitancy, replied, " By that same magic which turns a drop of water white when it is poured into a bucket of milk."

Since there was no hope of peace and I felt that his answer really deserved recognition, I gave him a double copper coin. But as if no interruption of any kind had occurred, the woman went on, " Thy Western sojourn hath hurt thy accent."

" No ! " I exclaimed in consternation. " Try me again, I beg."

She pronounced some excellent lines from the Svetaswataro and I chanted them after her as well as I could, but she exclaimed, " Thy accent is not rugged. The Western people have robbed thee of thy gold ; they have put clay at the tip of thy tongue. It is soft."

Desperately, I plunged into reciting the praise of night. " Night is a black stallion caparisoned with stars," etc. After I had finished, I looked anxiously at the white-vestured figure still standing against the temple wall. For a while she would not condescend to speak, then at last, completely ignoring my accent, she said abruptly :

" My son, thou hast a wonderful garland of words, but God is a raging bull. Hast thou the lasso of love to trap Him with ? "

Above the crowds of worshippers the sky began to grow red. The many-coloured towers rose tier upon tier until the last and highest minarets plunged their white points into the sunset. The fragrance of frankincense and flowers announced the evening worship at the shrines.

When my brother joined me, we turned away from the temple and wedging our way between the pilgrims

and the sacred bulls, we dashed down an alley that led to the river and away from the crowds. Here and there from the houses would come the sound of weird chants lifted to God ; a child rushed out from a doorway screaming for some friend beyond sight or sound, and then we came upon a man with his right arm upraised, stiffened, and petrified. It stuck out like a stump from his shoulder. He was a gaunt, shaggy fellow, his face and head covered with black hair streaked with white. He sat on the bank of the river, motionless in the twilight, and staring at the water without ever shutting his eyes. I hesitated to speak to him. His presence made me feel ill at ease, but at last, I summoned my courage and said, " Hast thou given thy hand to God ? "

" What foolishness dost thou utter ? " His voice was acrid.

" Thy arm, friend, why does it stick up like a pole ? " I persisted.

" It gave me terrible pains the first year I held it so," he replied. " The muscles and the sinews are not obedient at once ; they pain one before they obey ; but after a year of terrible suffering the arm stiffened, the muscles froze, the nerves died, and since then this refractory limb has behaved as it was ordered to—the very emblem of uselessness."

" What drove thee to such self-torture ? " I went on.

" Self-torture ? Dost thou give false name to true things ? It was self-liberation. This arm had to become petrified——"

" But why ? " I spoke confidently since in all India religious secrets are public property.

" An act of evil of dire consequence came to this

world owing to that foolish hand. It struck the one I loved most. So I punished it. Religion says that a limb that sins shall cease to exist."

"Master!" I exclaimed, "thou are a good Christian—the Christian God teaches, 'If thy hand offend thee, cut it off."

"But I am Hindu, my son," he replied stolidly. "Take thy babbling away from the presence of my meditation." With these words he fixed his steady gaze across the waters on the blue spaces beyond and forgot me as if I had sunk like a stone into the fast-darkening Ganges.

Beside many shrines we saw a few holy men, that is to say, men each of whom was holy in his own manner. In a hovel across the city, we visited a stark-naked man, fat as a Shiva bull, who denied God so vehemently that, compared with his talk, Ingersoll's and Huxley's words read like sermons. He had eyes like a parrot's, red with indignation and a nose like a parrot's, too. He said: "God does not exist; men die, that is the end of them. Those who are ascetics are buffoons, and those who indulge themselves are worms of the dung-hill. Life is what we see, and what we do not see is the box of tricks that supply the holy-bolies with the art to fool mankind." And turning suddenly on us he roared: "Begone from my presence! How can I have any use for you since I have no use for God?"

Yet there were many men and women who said that this fat fellow helped them to live their life better. There was no doubt in their minds that he was a holy man.

The next holy one we met was a woman, I guessed about seventy years old, though it was hard to be sure;

she seemed that old when one saw her at work. She lived in a little house of her own, which she cleaned with her own hands every morning, and no one was allowed to help her. She was a Sunyabadin (All-is-nothingist), preaching All-is-nothing-ism in her own dwelling and seldom leaving it. She was a sweet old lady, apparently a Kashmiri, for her skin was light and she had hazel eyes, large and round. Her dried thin lips looked like a crack across the ivory of her face. She was straight as an arrow and the doming of her tall shaven head made her look extraordinarily tall.

The walls of her brick house were pure as a Mohammedan cemetery just whitewashed. After we had sat down before her, on a cemented floor bare even of a mat, she said, " Why do you come here ? "

" Are we not welcome ? " I asked.

She smiled gently and replied, " I have no God to offer you."

" But are you not a Hindu ? " I questioned anew.

" A Hindu I am," she answered. " That is why I can be what I am. I could not be a Moslem and say God does not exist, but I can be a Hindu and say as Kapila, ' If God exists—where is the proof ? ' In our scripture it is said, ' He who says he knows, knows not God. He who says he knows not, may know Him.' One who denies is as good as one who affirms."

" Then, Mother, Hinduism is both theism and atheism ? "

She answered, " It is both and more. Kapila, who was a God-denier, is as holy to a Hindu as Shankara, who affirmed Him. Buddha is an incarnation of God, for he affirmed what he denied. Hinduism is not a bludgeon, but an assemblage of singers with instruments—each has his own melody and tune to

offer, correcting as well as enriching the other. I remember after my father died, my brother and I (who loved one another) had a quarrel. We were deeply humiliated by our own behaviour, so we sent for our Guru who came to see us the next day. He said that if, in the family of Music, Brother Drum must be tuned to the quality of Sister Flute, we should understand why the same thing has to be done in a family of human beings. So, my children, the seekers of the real are but instruments in the music of Reality—Hinduism recognizes that fact. It respects me, a God-denier, as it respects another who affirms."

I plied her with questions, but she pleaded to be excused, for her disciples needed her ministrations that day, and we were obliged to leave her. Her last words ring in my ears to-day as clearly as they did then: "Holiness can live with or without God. It is greater than God, for even He must be holy."

I asked her from the other side of her threshold, "Mother, if holiness exists, do souls exist after death, do they live and communicate with us?"

"Who told thee the dead speak?" she asked sharply, "and if they do, what do they say, child?"

"There is a Western scientist whose dead son speaks to him, as one man speaketh to another," I answered.

With a weary smile she retorted: "I see—the dead communicate as we do: even they must flatter and feed our vanity."

With these words she closed the door.

The next man we called upon was a lean and surly holy one. He lived in a very small hut far out of the city and anyone wishing to see him must go on foot, for there was no good road to his dwelling, nor did he welcome those who drove to his house. He hated

luxury in any form. His hut consisted of four adobe walls and a thatched roof, though inside it was painted white and shone with terra-cotta arabesque designs of exquisite delicacy. The teacher always sat on a little straw mat while his visitors crouched on the mud floor around him.

He was a middle-aged man, with a receding forehead, over which rose his steely mane in fierce animal grandeur. He looked like an old toothless tiger when he spoke, with a few teeth left in the front of his mouth. His eyes were grey and set so close to each other that it seemed as though only his small pug nose kept them from merging into one.

When we came into the room and elaborately bowed to him, he growled with satisfaction. "So thou art the illusion-stricken one from America?" he said to me.

"Yes, my Lord, I have sojourned in that romantic land of democracy and negro-lynching." I quoted a Hindu journalist.

"Beef-eaters all!" he growled again.

"What is wrong with us as a race, my Lord?" I asked in sincere humility.

After stroking his beard for a while, he said, "We are gifted with ability to realize God in but one way, the divine way—we must renounce ourselves in order to find Him, our true Self."

"What then is the Westerner's way?" interjected my brother.

"Why such haste with questions? Am I a holy man, or am I a cow that thy questions should fall like sticks on my back? We Hindus have given up our own path of renunciation and have lost ourselves on the path called the enjoyment of power. The Western

people follow that path, which is the demoniac way to God."

"Do you mean to say that both of those paths lead to Him?" I questioned.

"Why this beggar's hurry—am I a king giving alms so rapidly that thou are afraid to lose thy share?" he scolded me; then resumed, "Oh, a curse on kings, beggars, courtesans! The demoniac path is man's conquest of matter. By conquering matter he acquires power: by using that power for further conquest, he pursues God relentlessly and becomes His very Self. In India, King Asoka conquered an empire by force, then conquered himself by his own soul, and so found the Ultimate Power of Serenity. The West is travelling this path now—it is on the road of lesser power. Will it succumb at the threshold of God as did Akbar the Moghul? Who can say?"

The old man shook his grey mane and raising his voice into a kind of chant went on, "But we children of India must abandon Bhoga-Marga (the path of power) and turn back our steps, turn back three hundred years, thence directing anew the soul-elephant on the path of renunciation. Our race reaches God through Tyaga Marga (self-sacrifice), and loses Him through Bhoga (power). Renounce, renounce!" he exhorted us.

"I am much concerned," said I, "with the problem of good deeds."

"Ho, ho-ho!" He roared with laughter. What a Rabelais of religion the old man was. With a devilish look in his grey eyes, he said: "Only the pure in heart can do good. One must be pure like fire or it is impossible."

"But we can help our fellow man in trouble," I

expostulated. The question still tormented me. I had been living with it so long.

"O thou America-sodden spirit—to help is to help oneself! Whenever thou helpest a man out of his pig-sty of trouble thou art helping thine own moral muscles to grow. So why sayest thou that it is to another thou givest aid?"

"But suppose"—I tried a new approach—"one could be pure enough to do good?"

"The pure do good by nature," he roared. "The coco-palm grows coco-nuts not to give the cool drink of its milk to a thirsty traveller on a hot day; it grows coco-nuts because it cannot help the fruiting of its own being. The pure bear good fruits."

"But if, instead of good, I do evil and commit follies?" I asked.

"The folly of a mad soul," he answered solemnly, "may help the world more than the good deeds of the deluded and the impure."

"But if, in spite of all, I do good, what will come of it?" I insisted.

"Judging by the colour of thy character," the old tiger exclaimed, "thy good deeds will be stored up here on earth, and thou wilt be born again to reap and enjoy the result of them. That will be calamitous," he went on maliciously. "Take my advice and do not play the dangerous game of improving thy brother—thou art not pure enough!"

With these words he suddenly rose from his seat, saying, "Do not make me talk any more, I pray you. Every time a man talks he loses Prana (energy)." He took the ends of our chudders in his hands, rubbed them between his fingers, then held each end up to our respective noses. My chudder exhaled the fragrance

of jasmine, but my brother's had a perfume unknown to me. We took the dust from his feet. As we were going out through his narrow doorway, his parting shot rang out : " Every being must exhale the perfume that is in him. The flower doth not make the bouquet, that is the business of the gardener ; all that the flower can do is to keep its nature pure and its fragrance fresh."

After we had gone half-way toward the city, a thunder-storm broke. The cloud trumpeted like a mad elephant ; its lightning tusks flashed and curved from horizon to horizon ; cranes flew to greet it and the trees swayed with the wind like a green helmeted army clamorous in the fray. The temples and palace towers reared their challenging brows against the cloud, and the drums beaten by the worshippers sought to drown the thunder. Even flowers and leaves torn from trees and vines tumbled and trembled on the road as did the scarlet blossoms in the streets of Ancient Ujjaini where Kalidasa, the poet, observed them twenty centuries ago.

Right before us, hardly four feet away, a mango tree as thick as two legs of an elephant put together swayed and lurched. My brother cried out and pushed me back ; lo, with a sighing sound the tree rose slowly from the ground, all its roots straining to the utmost. For a while it seemed to stay in mid-air, then a gust of wind like a thousand sharp-edged axes snapped the roots, the tree was heaved like a pile of dirt and flung with a crash into the road. Its trunk throbbed and its branches trembled as an animal mortally wounded.

The wind blew harder and harder ; the very road seemed to be rocking under our feet. We skirted the fallen tree and fled for shelter into the city, running

at the highest pitch of our breath, as they say in India, until blinded and beaten by dust and wind, we reached the monastery.

As we entered the grounds, we beheld the peacocks dancing on the boughs of the mango. They had come from the Rajah's garden next door, spreading their jewelled fans to-day as they did before the time of Kalidasa. Every time the lightning flashed those dancers on the mango boughs shrieked with delight, and when the bolt crashed they danced to and fro as if quickened by a passion that was a secret between them and Heaven.

Our Holy One was sitting on the red-tiled veranda of his dwelling. He seemed very tall in the twilight of the storm, and the doming of his high shaven head loomed pale as marble. He beckoned us to gaze at the tempest with him.

"Shiva is coming," he said, "garlanded with the blue above, riding the black bull of cloud and blowing his lightning horn. The Nataraj, the god of the arts, is passing, and the dance of the storm is the sign of Shiva's coming. What a myth!"

As he spake we saw two kites fly very low over the roof of a neighbouring house; then suddenly they were dashed by the storm against the ground before us with such fury that their wings were instantly broken.

They rolled over and over for the length of the entire yard, a matter of fifty feet; then the wind left them, trying to beat their broken wings against the garden wall.

It was a horrible sight. As if in expiation, the storm-clouds overhead suddenly burst and the rain fell—not in drops, but in one thick writhing sheet of

water blotting everything out of sight. The fury of the rain muted the thunder roar into a plaintive distant cry ; even the flashes of lightning could be seen hardly at all through the inky curtain of dazzling rain that ploughed up the ground before us. The Holy One began to chant and his voice held fathoms of assurance in its clear depths :

" Thou art the One Truth to whom men have given many
names ;
Thou art the sanctity that is in woman,
And the manliness that is in man ;
Thou art the young woman and the little brother that
stands beside her,
Thou art the aged one leaning on a staff,
Thou art the new born, thousand-faced in every child,
The dragon-fly's blue loveliness flashing through space,
The startled light in the ruby eyes of the dove ;
Thou art the dancer footing the seasons,
And the large-wombed cloud
(Heavy with the pregnancy of its lightning-child)
That drags its dark side laboriously
Over the tumult of the blue-black sea ;
All these forms
Reiterate that thou art the Ultimate Silence
Over which gathers the dust of sound."

It rained all day and all night and before midnight all life seemed to have been enveloped for a thousand years in dull drumming showers. Moisture pressed closer and closer upon our senses until every pore in our bodies ached with the soft damp relentless insistence of the rain. The sinister monotone of water and wind pierced the hearing and seized the brain and beat upon every nerve centre again and again and again until the human consciousness danced with pain. The Holy One ordered us to meditate on God in his company. I do not know how long we meditated with him on the floor of his bare room, but when at last he spoke, it was the middle of the night. A light was

burning in a brass lamp on his right, while we sat facing him. His voice was resilient, low, and extremely soothing, and my spirit was as quiet as a little child's in the arms of its nurse.

" We as a race," he was saying, " have been driven to meditation by our climate."

I heard myself asking if that were not a rather deterministic point of view, to which he dissented in the same quiet tone. " It would be determinism," he said, " were it true of all races that live in the same climate. But Africans, who, I believe, have a temperature similar to ours, do not meditate. Holy men seated in snowy caves in the Himalayas meditate on God. A hard arctic climate will drive an animal to hibernate in its hole as it drives a man to shelter, but the animal sleeps in the cold cave where the holy man warms his soul by piling upon it the flames of immortal truth. Therefore, my son, say not that climate makes soul: souls use climate. As a man aimeth and thinketh, so shall be his realization."

" Master," I said, " so it is with us in India; but how of the seekers after Truth in other lands? They are sincere, their aims and thoughts high, and yet it seems to me they often fail. There was a man in America of whom you may have heard—Woodrow Wilson. He had an ideal of great good which he sought to embody under fourteen heads. He went forth to put into practice those fourteen principles, but high as was his aim, noble his thoughts, they were not realized. How do you explain this, my Lord? "

" I am an ignorant man; how can I explain such high matters, my child? I can explain the Beloved, for he loves those who know nothing. But this man of fourteen points—is he a holy man? Did he meditate

at least a year on each point? Did he fast and pray to God long enough to put immortal life into each one?"

"No, my Lord. He did not fast and pray fourteen years," I answered.

His face lit up as the face of a child when it catches sight of a fascinating toy. His large eyes glowed with amazing innocence. "How can one engraft any idea on life without first sacrificing for it many years and many volunteers?" he exclaimed. "Life begets life. If a man lives a truth with all the devotion of a strong elephant, that truth will live as long as a mountain. There is no escape from paying the price of our desire. Even the Creator pays for what he wants.

"I will tell thee of my own experience," he went on. "All my life I did good. I was a far better man than a lecher, a fellow-disciple of mine who had been a drunkard and consorted with the flowers of delight since his adolescence. One day this man came to my Master, and in his drunken state, not knowing what he did, kicked the holy one. . . . The Master said after a few moments, 'It were better for thee to rest thy feet here a time. Thou didst kick so hard that thy feet will be too weary to carry thee home.' The drunkard broke down and cried. To end the tale, he became the Master's devoted disciple and attained self-illumination sooner than I, for my good deeds held me down to the cause and effect of them.

"One day the Godlike one said to me, 'Good deeds purify thy life, but they give thee no Insight. Now therefore that thou art purified with the lamp full of oil and the wick ready, strike the flint of meditation and light thy flame!'

"So I plunged into it. Years passed like minutes, till at the end of fifteen years the light came accident-

ally, as it came to that drunkard and lecher, my brother-disciple. . . . Is it I ? Is it mine ? Nay, nay. It is God—the supreme accident." His voice changed and grew stern. " A man must renounce riches, power, fame, and even the consciousness of his own power—the greatest and the final renunciation of all."

" Then we must renounce ourselves for our truth ? "

" No, that is like a factory," he replied sharply. " To renounce desire at this end of thy soul-factory, and receive the finished product of bliss at the other—how ludicrous ! The Infinite is not a factory—foolish one, He is a wrestling match ! In a wrestling match the victory is uncertain : a wrestler will tell thee that his victory was an accident. Why ? Was he not stronger than his opponent ? Was he not more skilled ? Yes, he was all of these. Yet his victory remains inexplicable to him."

As though a paroxysm of pain had seized me, I cried aloud : " Blessed one, give me my answer. This rain without is like the cruel ever recurring pounding of a hammer upon my soul. It is not rain, it is one question reiterated without end."

" What is the question, thou child of God ? " he asked gently.

All my pent-up anxiety burst from me again. " From Egypt to China, from Constantinople to Ceylon, my Lord, everywhere I hear only that the East suspects the West of thievery and murder and India herself believes that all the West wants not her soul but her gold. When I look into the future, I can see on the horizon only a long war between Asia and Europe. It is true that Europe has exploited Asia and that Asia has ground for her distrust, but I who have lived in the West know that the West, too, has

a soul that I love. Can we not avert the next war and bring the souls of the two humanities together ? "

My questions seemed destined to provoke mirth, for, like my Rabelaisian friend of the day before, the Blessed One laughed heartily, but with this difference : his enjoyment of it was like sunshine. For a few moments every fibre of him shook with such mirth that it was a delight to see. Oh, to be able to laugh like that ! And as if this blast of laughter was from Heaven, it made us forget the rain outside. My brain and nerves were relieved from the pounding sensation that had been going on for hours, and the pores of my body, until then clogged with the warm glue of throbbing moisture, now began to breathe in the early morning air.

" East and West," he answered, " those are two archways through which the sun passes on his large orbit of wandering—but is there East and West to Him Who watches that fiery form dance from space to space ? " He paused as though trying to simplify a difficulty for a backward pupil and then continued with a new metaphor. " What is man that his quarrels about the ant-hill, this Earth, should reach the lofty precipices of Heaven ? Arrogance and ignorance are the wings on which men fly, only to fall later irrevocably by the terrible weight of their leadlike spirits. Let East and West quarrel if that is their way. But to us who ' have taken down His golden mask of the sun and seen His Face and stared into His Eyes '—to us this quarrel of ants is no more than the chatter of the stars to Him. And thou," his voice changed again, " child of God, why dost thou bow thy head before the home-makings and home-wreckings of these ants ? To thee, every twig of a tree is as thine

own finger, and every leaf as the hair on thine own body; each animal is a part of thy limb, and each bird a reflection of the winged thoughts in thy brain. Thy feet are below the abyss, for thy soul is above the highest imagination of men. How darest thou stoop to notice this beggar-talk of the disinherited souls? To thee even the sun marks no frontier, and the spaces dare not ask for thy citizenship. Art thou not the myriad faces of life merged and intensified in One? What dost thou fear? Doth the Absolute fear? Can Immortality die? Canst thou be stilled by the lesser fury of men's words?"

He paused a moment. His face seemed to grow into another face. His eyes burnt with a serenity that almost scorched us.

"When I sit and meditate, gradually as I pass onward I raise my hand to the Ultimate Truth. Then I behold other hands coming from other parts of the world to rest upon the same shining Oneness. They, my brothers, are touching the same Truth as I. How can there be a conflict between them and me? Are we not God? I urge thee, my son: go back to the West and bring me my brothers. They are weeping in the dark who toil to build the road of God. Go, find those men. Tell them to help me—ask them to unite all peoples and all worlds. When thou hast found them thou wilt talk like men together, not like ants in terms of little rival hills, East and West. They will tell thee that there is neither East nor West, but only the spirit-seekers and the matter-mongers. The war is between these two. Dost thou not understand that the armies of the Soul can win only by Inward fire?"

"But tell me, Master, how to light my own soul?" I cried.

" Bring out the Face of Compassion from within thy heart ! Bathe the wounded body of man in the cleansing currents of thine inward peace ! "

Apparently he noticed the joy that was not unmixed with bewilderment surging within me ; for he paused a moment and looked at me with the tenderest smile, then concluded : " The world is suffering from judgment. Men talk philosophy to their brother writhing and bleeding on the ground, a spear planted in his heart. What the poor wounded man needs, they, the instructors of mankind, do not see ; it is not the salt of judgment on his wound, but the strong hand of affection. East and West are words that stab with criticism—drop thy words, like daggers by the roadside, and rush to thy Brother's rescue. Canst thou not see the agony in his face ? Compassion, compassion——" Suddenly, his voice changed, his language, too, changed into Sanskrit, and he chanted quietly :

" O thou indescribable self of Love,
Come forth from within,
Thou causeless, endless tide,
Rush forth like stallions
To pour healing Peace upon the world !
Wipe away the blood-stain of hate—
Erase the scars of fear from Our Heart ! "

The day had already broken, and the rain had abated long ago. A strong wind was still blowing when we came out of the room—the world looked young—nay, newborn to our eyes. Benares in this dustless morning light was indeed the city of holiness ; it was above the world—held aloft on the trident of Shiva, and over it hung the intensely blue sky, the body of Vishnu. I gazed on that rain-cleansed sky, near enough to lift on your arms, yet farther than the

farthest reach of your imagination! It burned, it danced, it beckoned, then almost touched you as a peacock eating from your hand; then suddenly it flew away and vanished beyond space into its vibrant, poignant nothingness of blue. He who has not seen the Indian sky after a heavy rain knows not India!

In a few moments the Holy One came out to join us. At the sight of the heavens he raised his hands in a gesture of benediction, and spoke softly:

"O thou that art within me, quicken each being; quicken every soul so that by his own will he may do Thy Will, on which the worlds hang like pearls upon a thread!"

Then he asked us to go with him and bathe in the Ganges. He walked on a few yards ahead while we two brothers followed, the whole world dancing like singing light in my eyes. Hardly had we gone a hundred paces when a bystander stopped us, asking, "Who is the man you follow?"

"What makes you enquire?" I replied.

"Why? Can I not see what I see? That man has attained the end of all wisdom. He walks like God's own son." The placid almost featureless face of my enquirer glowed with conviction, and his small eyes gleamed as he went on.

The next day we left Benares and as the train carried us from the holy city, I relived the experiences of my short stay there. It was not a farewell for I intended to return and see again the Blessed Master. I had but touched my lips, it seemed, to the sweet waters of his holiness; I had not quenched my thirst.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE HOUSE OF THE TEMPLE

CALCUTTA offended me. As a town it was bad enough fifteen years ago. Now with endless tram-lines, with numberless taxi-cabs as well as private cars, the second largest city of the British Empire was unendurable beyond description. Business was the genesis of this town when it was built and fortified in the last lap of the eighteenth century; and it will be business that, I hope, will kill it some day. The unbearable Gothic and French Renaissance architecture of the offices of the Government produced an excruciating effect on me, particularly when they were reinforced by European houses modelled after the horrible mediocre middle-class homes of the '70's in Britain and Germany. A thousand years from now when visitors marvel at the beauteous architecture of the Moghul India, they will marvel equally at the ugliness of British India. If there is anything exotically and unnaturally uglier than those Gothic horrors in tropical Calcutta, I should like to be warned that I may for ever avoid seeing it. I might advise a Western tourist not to judge India by Calcutta, for it would be nothing short of judging salvation by suicide. If you can imagine Brixton, Ealing, and Bayswater transferred to the shores of the Ganges, then you have imagined the unimaginable —Calcutta.

It has a long river-front covered with jute mills owned by Scotchmen, Americans, Greeks, Jews, and Englishmen. And where there are bathing Ghauts for

Hindus, the steps down are cast-iron made in Sheffield. Where there are no Ghauts or factories, there are steamboat landing stations as ugly as any the world over. Added to this a horrible steam goods-train line runs along the full length of the town up and down the river to carry jute from factory to warehouse, and back again. The only relief from the reign of ugliness is a few Indian temples and the Maidan.

The Maidan is a large park with gardens, cricket fields, and polo grounds, the centre of which is occupied by the garrison called Fort William. Beautiful grey macadam and red gravel roads serpentine their way through the thick tropical verdure of this park which is, however, being rapidly encroached upon by statues and public buildings whose untropical character I have already described. Even in the Maidan, if one has any hope left for Beauty, it is well crushed by the military band that plays indifferent Western music there with great gusto. Think of bits from Meyerbeer and Verdi, Victor Herbert, and Tchaikowsky—all groaning, booming, and bombarding your hearing where the sunlight falls on you like a thunderbolt of heat and the breeze is oppressive with a thousand whisperings of the forest lands where tigers creep taut as a rope stretched to the full, and leap on bisons twice their size, and the flute of the savage calls his beloved to the tryst through the thickly fragrant night. Where thousands of elephants used to walk through jungle lands, now honk and pass taxis intent on speed and profit. Speed and profit, yes, that is the breath and pulse-beat of modern Calcutta.

Yet, it is my own town, and I love it. The language of Bengal is spoken there as nowhere else. Every tongue has the style of Tagore's prose—pellucid,

haunting, wicked. The first Bengali sentence that Calcutta spoke to me on my return was, " Come, amuse thyself with kind words ; the day is young, and we all know that life is brief as a sparrow's hop." The speech of men is the ring of gold in which may shine the precious stone of Thought and there is no speech as attractive as Bengali, unless it be Spanish—" a language of caprice and orderliness."

Of course, we Bengalis are tremendous talkers, but what a picturesque speech we utter ! The best poet of India as well as the best scientist is a Bengali, and Jagadish Bose is as much of a poet (read his inaugural address before his institute) as Tagore is a scientist. So when I am accused of being a talkative Bengali I am complimented and I say to myself, " If you had such a tongue as mine you would talk also."

In a tumultuous state of mind—horrified at Calcutta's ugliness, and thrilled at the Bengali speech—I reached our home. It was all there, yet all seemed so empty without my parents to welcome me. My widowed sister and her children and my brother, all put together, could not fill the place of my mother. They, too, felt as I did, and the home-coming, though sweet, was infinitely sad. Everything reminded me of her, the pictures of Vishnu and Shiva on the white polished walls, which had been hers, the bare floors immaculate, and red-tiled as before, the tree in the front yard and the empty back-yard—each thing was familiarly itself, yet none spoke out its heart to me. As my brother and sister said : " The goddess is gone, only the devotees are left." Then I went to look at our family temple. How beautiful it was and how old ! It had been ours for many, many centuries. I was told that it had hardly any beams and rafters and that

all its three storeys were held up by cunningly contrived arches—the product of an art and a science that are no more within the command of the master builders. It was strange to think that here I might have remained to carry on the tradition of my family in peace, instead of leaving all in exchange for the strange turbulent years in a foreign land. Something had always driven me from the settled path, some urge toward an unknown goal, where should await me "The Thousand Faced One" at last.

I had reached home in the morning, and after the usual greetings and the sorrow-suppressed short speeches to one another, I walked to the Ganges to bathe. The river itself was the same, in spite of the new pest of motor-boats that floated on it. Hundreds of people were bathing in the tawny waters. Many were chanting praises to God, and many more, mostly the young, were playing water-football. It shocked me at first, but I, who have loved land-football, could have nothing against it on water and, in fact, this new game was a rare display of dexterous swimming and whalelike kicking. It made me laugh to watch the players bob up and down in the sacred waters, not to pray to God, but to hit a ball. Surely, no game has such amusing fouls—one boy I noticed shoved his opponent's head way down under him into the water; the submerged one could not shout "Foul!" so he sent the most eloquent bubbles of complaint up to the surface. "Foul, foul!" everybody else shouted, and at last the poor chap came up more to take a breath of real air than to make good the foul played on him. He was all sneezes and coughs.

I compared this with my own youth. I, too, swam the Ganges as well as they. But I felt that

these boys had more life than the youth of my day. Cheered by this sense of progress I looked at the barques—not the motor and steam launches—but those which were flying ochre or turquoise-coloured sails, and were going northward before the blast of the monsoon wind. The full-blown sails under which sat sailors bare to the waist, were the old, old symbols of life. You may see them still on the Nile, on the Euphrates, on the Yangtze, and on the Ganges, uninterrupted and untrammelled by the vulgarity of progress. These sails had carried hundreds of generations up and down the river, and the sight of them, ochre-coloured and unfurled, swimming gaily between tawny waters and emerald horizons, set my heart aching strangely.

I must not delude the reader into believing that the moment of re-union was a perfect happy one for our family. It took nearly two days for us to overcome strange obstacles of thought and make the necessary adjustment to them. I had to unlearn many things. For example, in America young and old smoke together, but in India one does not smoke in the presence of one's elders, whether relatives or friends. Since I am the youngest I had no end of elders in my family and the result was that I could hardly light a cigarette and smoke for a few seconds, without hearing footsteps which were the signal for me to fling the cigarette at once from the window, and sit still like a nice boy. It was agonizing to see a good cigarette smoking itself out of existence just outside. And I took the only way out of that difficulty—I gave up smoking. The cigarette episode proved to me beyond the shadow of a doubt that in my family we have an extraordinarily large number of elderly relations.

I must say also that besides unlearning many things, I was forced to learn. The younger members of the family, mostly my nephews and nieces, were very forward and assertive; I said to myself, "They have no manners at all. Why, when we were their age—eighteen or twenty—we were seen, never heard! The young are a horrible spectacle nowadays, the world over," I grumbled. "No doubt they have their excellence, but that does not excuse their demerits. Imagine young people thirty years ago arguing to prove one of their seniors wrong! We never did such rude things." Now my nephews and nieces not only contradicted me, but told me to my face that I was not good but—goody-goody! I was so enraged that I could have murdered the lot of them and felt no regret.

Every dog must have his day, however, even these modern youngsters. My niece told me that she thought men ought to attempt to "line up" to the women. As if they had done anything else all these centuries! She added insult to injury by saying that a man like me, who relaxes too much at home, will not be tolerated within another twenty years. I was advised to keep up to the mark at home as I did abroad. Then another niece, an orthodox soul, enjoined upon me two baths and three meditation hours a day. She also thought my relations with God were too loose. Now I ask the travelled reader if this does not sound like his own home-coming? I have since then decided to live on steamships and Pullman trains. Never shall I willingly go where the young are shaping the future nearer to their hearts' desire.

I have a nephew, a lad of twenty or thereabouts. He and his friends opened my eyes to another aspect

of modern Indian life. They are all University men and not a single one of them has any respect for the Western mind. I remember that when I was a boy of their age, I went to the Occident to learn at its feet. The young students of India, to-day, would rather sit —not at the feet—but on the head of the West. I had one unforgettable afternoon with these youngsters. There were four of us, myself and two students of physics and one medical student who was very fair, with a round face, pug nose, and extremely strong, ungracious chin. The other two were of a professional and retiring type, as dark as ripe olives, and with exquisite features, but they both lacked strength of jaw, and looked very much alike.

The young doctor began the conversation by saying: "Civilization comes from the East as does the sun. The West has nothing to teach us."

"But is not Medicine Western?" I asked. "Hippocrates, Harvey, Pasteur——"

He said, "But what about our Hindu medicine, Ayuarveda?" (Translated, how to lengthen life, which is our word for medicine.) And Chemistry? Has the East known less of these than the West? Has it not contributed just as many valuable truths? Even now we find that the majority of the people of India live by the aid of old Hindu medicine and few ever get assistance from the West. You forget, sir; I am afraid you take the sordid European's evil interpretation of our history and science. There are thirty Indians who go to Hindu practitioners to one who receives aid from European doctors. In the face of that——"

"But you must admit that some things are lacking to our science," I ventured meekly.

"Whatever it lacks in one way it can supply in another." He was firm. "The West may teach us something of surgery, but we can teach it the cure of leprosy. Does it not rather balance the account?" questioned this aggressive young hopeful.

"Surely in physics and chemistry Westerners can teach us a lot." I turned to the physicists, but I am afraid I had mistaken their meekness.

"What can these aggressive barbarians teach us more than we ourselves have taught them?" answered one.

"What did we teach them, by the way, for they think of us as savages?" I remarked.

A flood of eloquence was the reward of my retort. "Did not we Hindus teach the Arabs algebra and the decimal system of notation and numerals, and did not the Arabs give these to the Western savages? Did not the Chaldeans, another Eastern people, teach them astronomy? Did not China teach them how to make gunpowder and the mariner's compass? Did not Persia invent paper, the very thing on which printing—a Chinese invention—depends?"

The second physicist added to the list: "Did not India teach Pythagoras the scales of music—the very word, Pita Guru (Pythagoras) is Sanskrit—Father, Teacher. India has her own geometry, her own mathematics, her own art, science, and philology. Should we bow to the Western savage simply because he has the lung power to shout that he is superior? He has invented poison gas, liquid fire, and peace proclamations, then he comes to us, Bible in one hand and hand-grenades in the other. Who is savage—he or we? They from the West send us whisky with machine guns and we offer them Gandhism. Who is more spiritual, who more civilized, they or we?"

Here the medical student put the finishing touch to the afternoon's argument: "Until the eighteenth century, the East and West were abreast of each other. If one were more advanced than the other, surely it was the East. Since the Crusades and before the eighteenth century, the Western swashbucklers came to us for gold, silk, Damascene work, and the real arts of civilization. They kept on coming as beggars to the gate of a royal palace. Till the eighteenth century they were our debtors, then they stole a march on us when they superseded man- and animal-power by steam and electricity. During all these thousands of years, civilization was the gift of the East to the West. Only a hundred out of thousands of years is European; their civilization began with the steam engine and will end with aerial navigation. In a hundred more years, they are finished—and their souls dead. I grant you that the nineteenth century is theirs, but not the other hundreds of years before when they took and we gave!"

"But that hundred years is something, isn't it?" I asked.

"Give us time. Let us have the equivalent of those hundred years with all their material facilities, and I can wager that our splendid Asiatic genius and concentration will in the end give them a better science than their own. We shall beat them at their own game. Bose, Sah, Dutta, Ray, Ghose, Rahman, Noguchi are illustrious names in science already. In thirty-five years, working under discomfort and positive discouragement, the Asiatic genius has already shown what it can do. I repeat, give us a hundred years with full facilities; that is all we ask, and then the West will do what it did before: it will come to the East for culture and for civilization."

I said, "I am glad to hear you talk like that. It illustrates the difference of your generation from mine. In mine we did not believe in anything hardly, not even in our own genius or race."

"We are hoping, sir," he said eagerly, "to bring in the new spirit. We are working against the adamantine obstructive conspiracy of the Westerners who have helped and taught the world to think that Asia has always been backward and always inferior. You know, an ant grows wings to fly, but no sooner does it hop off the ground than the insect-eating bird catches it in mid-air and devours it. The Western ant is growing wings of vanity. Once it flies, the bird of the East will swallow it. It is a pity that you have lived so long in the West; it has dazzled your eyes, but it cannot dazzle ours. Our generation in Asia will brush the Western fly out of existence."

When they left me I felt drowned in melancholy. Could it be possible that boys, hardly twenty years younger, could be just the opposite of what we were at that age? I do not mean that they were wrong; there was a great deal of sense in what they said, but why so much optimism? It sounded so crude, so vulgar. There was no difference between these Indian youths who wanted to brush the Western gadfly out of existence and the Tradesman on my ship coming over, according to whom the Nordic race was ordained to rule, as slaves, all other races. Yet perhaps, I thought, boastfulness is only natural to the injured vanity of the young men of a long-conquered race. Still the seed of the next war was being planted: arrogant West fighting the new arrogant East, and whose fault was it? Then I remembered the words of the Holy One of Benares. The running of the universe was not in

my hands—I must not give up the thought of Being for the thought of Doing. I must cease wishing to push the universe toward the pet goal of my fancy; and suffering because it was impossible. The Holy One was not the only Oriental prophet to remind me that I was not my brother's keeper, but his lover.

In passing, I may remark that the speech of the Indian youth of to-day is not poetic and picturesque as it was thirty years ago. They speak with a realistic turn of phrase scarcely mitigated by a fluid use of historical fact. Instead of inventing a story in order to illustrate a point, the intelligent young man quotes an event in history. This is the beginning of a mental barrenness which will kill our fertile imagination; I can forecast a day that I shall live to see, when no Hindu will make his point without quoting abundant statistics. The pestilence of figures is spreading from mind to mind.

From the younger generation I went to my brother and sister for protection. It was evening already. We sat on the roof under the starry sky—velvety black—from which the stars hung so low and warm that one could almost pluck them like grapes. But to-night even the stars were out of key. In that darkness we spoke of our parents and, presently, all our talk concentrated upon our mother.

My sister, it appeared, had for her the same worship as my brother and I. She came to know her long before we did, because she was about fifteen years older than my brother who was separated from me by four years. Doubtless, she could tell us much about her that would be new to us.

I had found my sister little changed. She had never resembled the rest of us—she had lighter skin,

" coffee tempered by cream," my brother used to say, not coffee-clear like ours ; her nose was aquiline, almost Semitic, her eyes were slanting, not round, darkened by long black lashes ; there was some grey now in her thick jet hair and a line or two in that smooth brow, but nothing else, save her white widow's sari, spoke of any change. In the darkness, I could distinguish nothing but the whiteness of her dress, but I knew that its severity was unmitigated by any borders of colourful design. She had never worn ornaments even in her youth. Great was her austerity, and fortunately she was very strong ; none of us could remember a day when she felt tired enough to omit the fulfilment of a single duty. She lived on two small meals a day —altogether one-half a pound of rice and a pound of milk ; while she superintended the work of a temple, fed forty or fifty people, meditated on God three solid hours every day, beside taking care of a daughter-in-law, son, and grandson. She gave an hour and a half each day to her grandson, as a part of religious communion. But in spite of her competence, she was not like our mother ; she had a plethora of common sense. Once when a European lady had invited her to tea, my sister enquiring the hour and hearing that it was half-past four, answered, " Oh, then I am sorry to say that it will be impossible for me to come as the important preparation of God-business begins after four, and if I do not attend to it, the even-song will not be as good as usual."

Such a reply would have been impossible from my mother ; to her God was a whim, not a heavy weight on her mind. I am certain that she would have found as much of Him in a tea-cup as in an even-song.

While I was thinking of these things, my sister

was saying: "To me, Mother gave different instructions from yours, my brothers. I was taught only stories and songs of devotion. I do not know whether she had a premonition that I should become a widow at twenty-two, but none the less, she taught me as if she felt certain of it, her sweet understanding firmly paving the road, so that it would be firmer under my feet at the bleak hour of calamity. And I believe that was why she had me taught English."

I expressed surprise at this for my mother herself knew not how to read or write. My sister explained that Mother had said to her:

"I belong to the age when wisdom came to men's hearts naturally, but thou, my child, art born in a time when only printed words are considered true. Learn English, my daughter; it is the ruler's language, and since thou canst not rule men without some cunning, the English tomes may help thee to hold thy place in this world."

"It did serve me in good stead after my husband's death," went on my sister. "But, thank God, I have forgotten all of that language now."

"Why?" I asked.

"Oh, it has so little wisdom and not much beauty. The last story I read in English was about a dead man's ghost who tells his son how he, his father, was murdered; then the young prince, an innocent dreamer, kills an old fool, whose daughter's heart he breaks and fights her brother at her funeral. Later, the prince is killed by the brother, whom he kills as well. It has luscious words in it, for an innocent young man's sorrow tastes sweet to the reader; but how can it be a tale of wisdom which our mother would have had me learn? Can ghosts be so revengeful? Is it right

to tell a mother that she is unchaste, and all because of the idle talkativeness of a good-for-nothing spirit, who should go to Heaven instead of walking about at night to poison his son's life with cruel thirst for vengeance? That tale destroyed all my ambition to know English. Thou dost know the language well; was I not right to give it up?"

"Yes, that wanton tale of beauty should discourage anybody." Thus I disposed of Prince Hamlet.

My sister resumed: "I took to learning from mother all the stories about our ancestor Chaitanya. She began them all in the same way. 'Listen, Oh, listen to the prophet of love! He was born to preach love to Hindu and Mohammedan alike in order to show that there is only One God, though we give him many names.' Chaitanya left home at the age of sixteen to acquire knowledge. When at last he was pronounced to be the wisest of young men, he returned home with his Commentary on the Gita that had earned him the highest honour. But on the boat crossing the Mother Gunga he met an old man who discussed the Gita with him, and defeated him in the ensuing argument: Chaitanya asked the sage, who knew the Gita so well, where he kept his Commentary. The old one answered: 'I destroyed it when I went in quest of holiness.' In amazement Chaitanya asked, 'What is holiness?' But the old man made no answer. Before the boat reached the other shore, Chaitanya, too, destroyed his Commentary, throwing it into the river. The sage said: 'Turn the boat back and let us retrieve it.' But Chaitanya said: 'You did not preserve a better Commentary than mine so why should I stoop to save that sinking bundle of vanity?'

" After his home-coming, he found life intolerable ; his parents wished him to marry an eligible damsel, but Chaitanya slunk away at night and was gone fourteen years. When he came back, the illumined Saviour, he passed through a town where a band of ruffians set upon him and beat him and robbed him, taking his money in order to buy drink ; but Chaitanya cried out to them, ' Behold, I will give you love which will buy you drink that will quench the eternal thirst—I will give you God !

' Though you have struck me,
You have made my blood flow with pain,
But here is my love that has broken out of my heart,
Take that as recompense for your stone and your sword!'

" And these wicked souls that hit and lashed his face became his first followers. The river of love that rose from Chaitanya's feet flooded the world."

" How old wert thou, Sister, when Mother taught thee this story ? " I asked.

" I was fourteen. After that she taught me line after line of the story of Savitri and how she saved her husband from death. Next I memorized the trial of Sita. When I grew to be a woman, I was made to fast twenty-four hours in seclusion with her, and in that seclusion she taught me Gita Govinda, the Song of Songs, and imparted the secret and wisdom of love to my heart." Suddenly, she stopped to ask me, " How do Western mothers teach their daughters the art and wisdom of love ? "

" Am I a woman or a Westerner that thou shouldst ask me that ? " I questioned.

" Men always insist on remaining ignorant," she retorted, and went on with her story. " I learned to cook, to serve dinner, how to dress for cooking, then

how to dress for dinner after cooking. The garment of the kitchen may be worn only after an arduous bath and the cleansing of the body. Once the cooking is done, the garment of the kitchen must be put away and the garment of the feast donned. I was not allowed to rest in the afternoon in the dress of the feast. . . . Oh, there were a thousand little things that the woman-mind picks up as a miser gathers his pennies—there was the evening toilet, the meditation—all these things was I taught as well as the work of pleasing a husband. But now I seek only to please God," she concluded.

"How much Sanskrit dost thou know, Sister?" I asked.

"A few hymns. The one I love most is: 'Those who with steadfast love worship Me, seeking Me in all things, and all things in Me, shall attain the supreme light.' I weary of all this; I hunger for the stealthy one—Death!"

Something in her voice made my brother who had been silent all this while ask gently, "Dost thou weary of us, my sister? Dost thou not love us?"

"O ho! What idle talk," she expostulated. "If I did not love you both—the images of herself—would I yet cling to this dancing dust?" She turned to me: "Did I not fast for thy home-coming so that all the impurity of life might be cleansed and the paths of thorn turned into a river of blessing? Were she here she would have fasted to purify her thoughts in order to mirror for other souls their own purity. 'Self-cleansing cleanses the world,' she said once—and, thinking of her, I fasted and prayed to make myself and the world worthy of thy home-coming."

We were obliged to reassure our sister who was as

conscientious in her affections as her duties. After a little more talk she rose to go, saying :

" Now I must seek slumber ; in old age two days' fasting feels like a week of it. My prayers have been heard ; thou art home again and at peace with thy soul."

We lingered, happy in talk of our mother ; and then my brother began to tell me gradually the story I had waited so long to hear—the story of his own life. But not only that night, but many others passed beneath the stars before all of it was finished.

CHAPTER VII

MY BROTHER'S STORY : THE CHILD

" I HAD hardly set foot into my eighth year," began my brother, " when one morning Mother sent me down to open the garden door and let in one of the servants. As I walked through the flowers, I was thrilled by their colours and fresh perfume. I am glad I looked at everything, for it was the last time in my life that I was to feel the poignant beauty of things as they are, without also sensing the ever present closeness of death. I was walking very slowly and this was extremely fortunate, for behold, only half a dozen yards away, coiling near the door, the king cobra raised his head ! He must have heard my footsteps for he was making ready to strike. At that moment I received the most powerful shock of my childhood and I cannot explain to this day my complete presence of mind. I pulled out a stake about two feet long from one of the rose plants that was growing around it, and before the partly sleepy snake had spread his grey-brown hood to its full size, I smote him so hard that his neck broke almost in two. The uncoiled rest of his body rose and fell like a whip-lash in an attempt to wind around my leg or hand. I struck on his head again and again till the whip-lash rose no more ; it pulsated with life for a moment or two, then grew still. When I opened the door over the body of the snake and ordered the servant to step carefully, she nearly fainted when she understood what I had done. She carried me up to my mother, saying, 'He is born to be a King for he

has slain the King of Serpents.' Mother only smiled with the peaceful assurance of love, but that afternoon she started to teach me our Bible, the Bhagavad Gita. I do not see why she began it so early in my life, when the rest of you did not have it until after you were fourteen."

"Thou wert years older than any of us in spirit. She knew it well enough," I said.

"Nay, she knew that the sudden discovery of the viper in the midst of the glow and richness of the morning freshness of our garden had opened an unknown window for me. I felt that I was looking at a world where gall and nectar grew together. Good and evil were but two branches of the same tree. It was not a pleasant awakening at the age of eight and perhaps that was why Mother chose to give me the Gita.

"Her method of teaching it was unique. She began by telling me to shut my eyes and then urged me to imagine that my fingers were grappling and crushing a hundred vipers that would kill me were I not able to kill them. With the help of my recent experience, she made me realize this imaginary thing so completely that I can never forget the sense of crushing a hundred little poisonous creatures in my hand. When, after a few days, she was convinced that I could vividly imagine this thing, she said: 'This is the lesson of the Gita. Now we are ready to begin the book.' The explanations she gave and the comments she made I find are just as sound to-day as they were then. Has thou read our Bible recently?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," I answered. "And my recent reading verified what I too learned from Mother years ago."

My brother nodded and resumed his story. "I find that every time I read the Gita I verify what she taught me, yet she was not learned, and how she pierced the symbolism of it passes my understanding. She began by giving me a summary of the poem. It was dry and clear; she could be dry sometimes when she discussed philosophy.

"'Notice, my son, who opens the song. Dhritarashtra, the King of India. He, the blind King, is holding converse with Sanjaya, the clairvoyant. Whatever the King wishes to know, Sanjaya who can see anything anywhere reports to him. The Sightless One asks: "Tell me, O Sanjaya, how the battle of religion progresses. My hundred sons are at war with their cousins who are only five in number, and I would fain know who is winning the battle, my sons or their enemy, the Pandavas, the fierce children of my brother Pandu?'

"'Sanjaya (who, as I have said, could see anything at any distance) answers that the five brothers, sons of Pandu, are under the leadership of Arjuna whose charioteer is God, Shree Krishna. And as the chariot is driven into action Arjuna says to his God-charioteer, "O Madhava (another name of Shree Krishna), I pray thee stop the chariot before the contending armies." He then adds, "I do not wish to damn my soul by killing anyone in battle; I am willing to abandon this contest for the throne, its glory and exaltation!"'

"But," my brother pauses, "it is idle to repeat what thou knowest so well already."

I persuaded him, however, to give me a minute account of what our mother had taught him, for it was not only precious to me to hear again from his

lips the old lessons of my childhood, but I was deeply interested to find that she had stressed for him different points from those which she had emphasized in my education, and it helped me to understand more clearly not only her singular insight but all that had gone to form the remarkable character of my brother. So he went on with his account.

"Then followed the long dialogue of eighteen chapters between the God-charioteer and Arjuna, about the meaning of killing and not killing, about birth and death, and realization of immortality. All that dialogue is reported by Sanjaya to the blind King in his palace, as if the battle were between the two halves of the King's very self, witnessed by the eye of his soul symbolically represented by Sanjaya. As one goes on and on with the problems of life and their solutions, as pronounced by the God-charioteer to Arjuna, one finally perceives the battle-field, the battle, and the outcome, to be all within ourselves, and then, suddenly the key to it is given to us by these lines: '*Nahi Mam Sakyase drastum ananaiva sachakshusa Dhumena-bryate agni yathadarsa malenacha*'—('The dust hides the mirror, the smoke hides the flame, so the sight of thy outer eye blinds thy soul's insight; behold Me, thy true Self, with the eye of thy Spirit!')

"'The symbolism of the Gita is now clear,' said our mother. 'The battle is within ourselves. The bling King is Everyman beholding his own problems with the very eye of his own spirit.' I asked Mother who were the hundred sons and what they symbolized.

"'Those are our human problems,' she said—'a legion of them. The only way we can conquer them is to use our five senses and their spokesman the Mind (Arjuna) who, with the power and insight of our

Soul, Shree Krishna, is the God in each being. But it is not enough to use the senses for the mind; we must go further and control the mind and use it too as a servant of our soul. Thus we increase our soul's sight—the third eye. Dost thou understand now why every man puts a mark each dawn upon his forehead—the foreigners call it the caste mark, but in truth it is the mark that symbolizes to each man his third eye. We begin each day by marking our foreheads and reminding ourselves so to act and live each moment that our soul-eye may soon open wide and behold Him who is waiting to become visible. There is no escape for us from the purpose of the Gita.'

"Without raising any further questions at the outset, we went on studying the poem. On an average we spent upon it three hours a week. In the course of a year, I nearly mastered its salient stanzas. The advantage of being taught by word of mouth is that the unconscious being assimilates what is congenial to the spirit and the rest it rejects despite all the effort of the conscious mind to crowd the soul. Is not everyone of us a blind king? Mother bade me notice how the characters in the poem speak in the first person. It is I, the infinite consciousness talking to I the finite listener and wanderer. Finally, God says, 'I am the taste in the water, the light behind the sun and the moon, the sanctity in the Vedas, the humanity of Man and the sound wandering to its silence in the sky. I am the golden thread of continuity running through all things, the seed eternal blossoming in each being.'

"In each man crouches the silence, the enigma of all existence, as the tiger crouches in the densest jungle. 'There is no answer buried outside ourselves,' Mother said, 'for the claws of our spirit to dig up as

the bear grubs for roots; our questions are answered from within.'

"To illustrate her meaning further, she told me this story. 'Once in many years, my child, Mushiknava, the musk-deer of the hills, is haunted by the breath of musk-perfume in its nostrils. It does not know whence that odour comes, but it is like the call of Krishna's flute which none can resist. So the Mushiknava runs from jungle to jungle in pursuit of the musk. The poor animal gives up food and drink, sleep and rest. As a child seeks the echo, calling here while echo answers from over the ravine, then crossing the ravine and hearing from this side the answering cry, so it is with the Mushiknava. It knows not whence the musk calls—but it must follow over ravines, forests, and hills until at last hungry, tired, exhausted, it steps carelessly, slipping from the crest of some rock and falls mortally broken in body and soul. As a last act before dying it takes pity on itself and licks its breast—and there, there! behold, the musk-pouch has been growing in its very own body. It pants deeply, trying to inhale the fragrance, but it is too late. O, my blessed son, do not seek for the perfume of God without, and so perish in the jungle of life, but search thy own soul, and lo! He will be there. Do not fail to feel Him within, no matter how thy senses insist that He is like the deceptive echo—outside thyself.'

"Since thou art interested in these memories," went on my brother, "I must tell thee of a kind of trick she used to teach me, before I was initiated into the priesthood."

I should perhaps explain here to my Western readers that being Brahmin children it was our right to receive initiation into the priesthood at the age

of fourteen whether or not we chose later to follow that profession through life.

"Every evening just before I fell asleep she would quote certain lines of the Gita. At first it would be our creed: 'When virtue is in decadence, and vice in ascendance to bring out the rebirth of righteousness, God, indifferent to time or place, incarnates Himself among men. God has incarnated Himself many times before and shall again many times in future. Refuse not to welcome His Divine Recurrence, for that man shall suffer more than all others who shuts the door of the future in the face of the New-born Truth!'

"After many, many repetitions and embellishments of these lines, she taught me one day a new stanza. My eyes were heavy with sleep and so I said it only once. 'Who sees God in other beings, treating them as he treats himself, that man God loves.'

"'I am too sleepy to repeat these words,' I murmured.

"Mother answered, 'Once is enough if it is with all thy heart; then the force of thy sincerity will throw the words fathoms deep into the waters of thy dream until they reach the calm places of unconsciousness. Sleep well, blessed child.'

"The next morning out of my memory came those words as if they had been mine many years! Not only when she was teaching me the Gita, but on many another occasion she would throw a precious thought into my consciousness just when I was almost engulfed by the flood of sleep.

"It was when I was about ten that the next great experience of my childhood came to me, my adventure with the cross-marked Christian tiger.

"Thou rememberest Ghond. the hunter?"

Remember him? Indeed I did; the extraordinary old man, mighty hunter, and companion of my childhood!

"Thou must assuredly see him whilst thou art here," continued my brother. "It will delight the old fellow's heart."

"What about the Christian tiger? I remember hearing of it when I was a child," said I, "but I have clean forgotten the story."

"This is what happened," my brother began. "Father, as thou knowest, was originally trained to be an engineer; he gave that up and went into the law, though his real talent was music. He was a great master of melody, but he never would take a penny for his performances, thinking it would demean him. Now thou knowest why we are a poor family," said my brother smiling. "If Father had taken half the gifts the Rajahs offered him for his playing, we would be many flights above the floor of want, but since he believed in being a proud and poor Brahmin, we must continue to inhabit the lower storeys.

"At the time we came across that Christian tiger, there was a property dispute going on in the hills and forests of Chhota between two small Rajahs, each of whom claimed the same forest as his hereditary property. The Court sent Father to survey the entire estate in dispute and bring back an accurate map of it. Both the Rajahs respected Father's impartial spirit, and both of them did their best to bribe him! Elephant-hunts, tiger-shooting, good music, long séances on poetry and philosophy were offered for his pleasure.

"Ghond the hunter and I went with Father on this expedition. It was the first time I had ever seen the hills. Suddenly, and from nowhere, on the borders of

Bengal, they rose blue and distant. I shouted to Father, 'Look, there are blue clouds in these parts.' Ghond said, 'Your son calls the Sky-complexioned Ones clouds.' My father explained that these appearances were not mobile and rootless, as the clouds, but forest-clad hills as rooted to the ground as the trees that are rooted in them; not 'sky-complexioned' but 'sky-drinkers,' he said, 'is their name.'

"When we reached Chhota, we descended from the railway goods van—the line was new then and goods vans were the only cars running. Outside the little station-house stood six elephants caparisoned in scarlet and gold. The oldest one had a pearl-wrought lacework on his forehead to shade his eyes from the sun, which was apparently the excuse for showing off some pounds of excellent pearls. The old bull's tusks must have been at least five feet long and were covered with rings of gold. We learned that on every celebration of the Rajah's birthday a new pair was put on his tusks. We climbed up a ladder and sat on his back while Ghond took a smaller elephant. The word was given and the old fellows started. It seemed strange to me that none of the elephants had bells, but that soon explained itself, for hardly had we gone twenty paces from the station-house when the expedition plunged into the jungle. We had twelve miles of it to traverse. The tracks were not broad, and every now and then trees brushed the elephants' sides, so hanging bells would have been torn off by the brushing branches. It was wonderful to feel those tides of green break upon the sides of the elephants. I felt as though I were on a ship, and as a ship quivers when a wave smites, so did our elephant when certain heavy branches tickled his thick hide." I could well imagine it, for

a tickled elephant is the happiest mass of flesh in the world!

"It was a devious journey, uphill, down ravines, circuitous like a python's coil and unsafe as a secret on a gossip's tongue. At last we emerged from the forest, but I, who had been holding loosely to the elephant's back, suddenly let go. He, Shiva knows why, lurched just as he was reaching the open road, and I fell to the ground, then rolled over under the belly of the beast. All I saw was a big leg large as a banyan tree-trunk raised above me; it would surely come down upon me in an instant. Like the hiss of a serpent came a sound sharp and loud from the Mahout—the black mountainous mass above reared, it literally rested in the air for a moment and instead of one leg all four of them were above me; I shut my eyes in terror and waited for the painful, crushing weight of the elephant's entire body on my little self. But nothing came. I decided to open my eyes, and suddenly a thick, warm, soft thing pulled me by the hand. Then it let go and dove under me. Suddenly, I was hoisted right up into the sky from under the brute's belly by his own trunk. The elephant held me like a trophy for all to gaze on, then trumpeted joyously. He put me on my feet upon his tusks, whence I climbed over his head past the Mahout, to my former seat on his back.

"Father scolded me: 'Sit tight and behave thyself.' We resumed our march, reaching the Rajah's palace about half-past four. It was a beautiful sight; an ivory-white façade of tall arches leaping up before us at the end of the red road.

"The major-domo showed us into our quarters—an enchantment of marble walls and sunlit porticoes that gave on forest lands gleaming in saffron and green.

The sunset and the darkness fell like heavy wings. In the intense stillness horns sounded from the forest lands announcing the Rajah's return from the chase.

"About eight in the evening, after a hearty dinner, we were received by the Rajah, dressed in Tussar silk. As my father went forward towards his couch where he was resting on a mountain of pillows, the Rajah rose and saluted saying, 'The Lord of all castes, I salute the Brahmin.' Father said, 'Blessings pour upon thy royal head.' We were in a small reception room, white and austere; except for the two or three couches laden with blue silken pillows, there was not an ornament of any kind. Father and I sat on a couch facing the Rajah. They talked of the journey. One said that the road was as though paved with ruby, the other said the jungle was like an emerald jewel, on and on without the slightest mention of my fall from the elephant and narrow escape from death! So I learned that it is not polite to talk of personal events with strangers.

"We spent the following week riding elephants, wandering in the jungle, and listening to music and poetry. Nobody mentioned work. Those were great times. It is different now and as natural to work as it was to idle then.

"Finally, when all the members of the chain gang were assembled, we started for the jungle which was a mile away—three elephants, twenty men under Ghond's leadership, a guide, and we two. Three days we went into the heart of the forest, reaching at last a river about forty feet broad, where the disputed territory began, and we pitched camp.

"That very night a tiger captured one of the chain-gang men and disappeared with him. However, the

work began the next morning. It was all noise; the men cutting trees, or pushing them down by making the elephants rub their sides against them; wild birds, squirrels, monkeys were shouting and screaming; and once in a while herds of wild oxen crashing through the forest.

"We slept in our tents ringed in by fires that all night long the men fed with large logs. So went many days, swiftly as shadows at sunrise.

"I slept with Ghond in the same tent. One morning, as I lay wide awake, I saw that his bed was empty. I was frightened and raised my head to look for him. Behold, at the tent's mouth sat a mountain of yellow crossed with black patches—What could it be? I looked and looked—it was surpassing strange, and suddenly in a flash of terror the realization came to me that it was a tiger, but instead of being striped, his yellow skin wore black crosses like two deodar leaves lying athwart each other! There he sat like a tall watch-dog resting on his haunches. The flap-door at the tent-mouth moved with the breeze every now and then, and whenever the tiger tried to put his head inside the flapping canvas, it would hit his nose and he would withdraw hastily. I looked at Ghond's empty bed; apparently the tiger had eaten him and was wondering whether to come in and eat me too. Again he tried to stick his head in, the tent door flapped anew, and he withdrew. Once, twice, thrice, this happened, then suddenly with a growl he was in, crouching at the foot of my bed. I lay quiet. Nothing moved inside that tent—and nothing moved inside me! Suddenly, the tiger growled uproariously. Then and there I gave up all hope of living and that gave me courage. I raised my head: lo, through the opening

of the tent-door I could see the end of a rifle and something like a man behind it. Just then the tiger caught sight of me. Up to now, though his nostrils must have told him of my presence, I had kept so still he had not seen me where I lay covered with much bedding. At first he was as surprised as I, but in an instant he yelled furiously and put his fore-paws on my bed. Thank God for the quilts! His paw rested on my leg —very heavy but not sharp. At this moment, the man behind the gun yelled, '*Oh re! Oh re!*' it was Ghond. I knew his voice.

"The tiger looked around, his head turned to the tent-door, his claws still sticking to my quilt. He roared deafeningly. Then a shot rang out—and in a blinding spurt of blood, he bounded off his feet. Everything became confusion; the tent flew up and vanished out of sight, then fell, a growling, gurgling mass of canvas running red with blood that collapsed in a pile some ten feet away. Everybody was shouting from every direction. Elephants trumpeted and birds shrieked. Then all was still. The tiger was silent. The crimson-tinted canvas moved no more.

"Hastily, Ghond came to me, followed by my father who scolded with the sudden rage of nerves relaxed after mortal anxiety.

"'Fool, hare-brained idiot, hast thou no more sense than a baboon, no more knowledge than a baby ass, no prudence in a single muscle of thy body? Worthless, shameless, heartless child! What wert thou doing with the flap-door of thy tent open?'

"Before I could explain, Ghond said, 'It was I who opened the flap-door and went out.'

"Father, his face a very thunder-storm, shouted, 'Thou savage! Barbarian of the first water, pearl of

imbecility, blinder than blindness, knave of knaves, first and last ass of the Universe!' He paused and went on like a man in a daze, 'Let me think . . . Yes, art thou hurt, child?'

"I, who was now standing on my feet, replied, 'No, my Lord.'

"'Come to breakfast as soon as thou art washed,' said Father. 'My nerves are all unstrung. As for thee, Ghond, after breakfast I shall hear thy account of this nefarious carelessness. Begone till then. My eyes catch fire at the sight of thy face.'

"'Yes, Your Honour,' said Ghond. Then with a wink at me he went over to the crowd that was unwrapping the dead tiger from the tent canvas.

"After breakfast Father announced, 'I am suffering from loss of serenity.'

"Then he sent for Ghond, to whom, when he appeared, he said, 'Explain thy conduct. The Rajah's rifle is not thine. How didst thou come by it?'

"Ghond began, 'O protector of religion, can a live hunter do anything but shoot? I am not a fish. I have been watching that cross-marked half-leopard and half-tiger for three nights now. He is cunning as a Christian. Look, he broke through the ring of fire, at dawn when the men that feed it had retired into their tents to sleep. I smelt his presence in my sleep three nights in succession. This morning the stench was so intense that I went out to see where he was. I could not find him. Then I stole into your tent and took the rifle. When I had wind of him again, there he was playing with the flap-door of our tent, which I had left untied. I could not aim at his head, for every time I tried, the flap would move and interfere, as a gossip interferes with love.

" ' At last, suddenly, he ran inside. Then I hurried to give him the bullet ere he killed your son. That is all. Have I betrayed the trust that your sanctity put upon me ? Look, the boy lives. He has eaten so that his belly is like a well-tuned drum.'

" Said Father, ' Yes, my son is a greedy child.' For it is not meet for the master to be voluble to his servant.

" Ghond gave me another wink and withdrew from our presence.

" ' Those low-born fellows do not know what it means to lose one's serenity,' said Father. ' Our day is ruined. We must meditate in order to compose ourselves.'

" The terrible experience of the tiger was too much for me. It seemed that always some terror faced me in the midst of joy. The problem of good and evil obsessed my small soul. . . . When I returned home I told my trouble to our mother and again she went to the Gita. One night at bedtime she knelt beside me. I can see it all now. The walls and cornices pale as old ivory, full of black arabesque designs, the large, brass candelabra in the corner of the room burning steadily, and her round face full of care above me. Canst thou not remember," my brother asked me eagerly, " how her voice grew low and clear-cut when she was agitated and her eyes were still as pools under threatening skies ? Thus she looked as she spoke to me. Her green sari, fringed with silver, glistened.

" ' Thou must think not of evil or good, little son,' she said. ' Evil is as necessary as good, and God is beyond both. Hold to Him and good and evil will not torment thee, for He is Gunatita—beyond all qualities.'

"'Mother,' I said, 'why are there not men only and no tigers?'

"But Mother replied, 'Why not only tigers and no men?'

"That puzzled me. But she went on: 'Evil may be just as necessary a stepping-stone to God as good. Listen to this story:

"'When our ancestor, Chaitanya, was abiding with his disciples in Nudia, the most devoted of them all was Haridas. Haridas was a trader of great wealth. One day he saw the Lord go by his shop. He looked at Shree Chaitanya's face, then at the pile of gold in the corner of his counting-house and said to himself, "That man is as the sun and with him goes the light of day. My gold pales near him."

"'With those words Haridas left wife, wealth, and children, and followed the Lord. And the Teacher loved him exceedingly.

"'But during their stay in Nudia, Haridas committed evil, as thou shalt hear.

"'The disciples were monks living with poverty. They went from house to house singing the praise of God. . . .

> "' *The cleansing love runs like a river at thy door.*
> *Come fill the chalices of thy heart.*

"'When the people heard such songs they made many offerings, but the monks took only enough for a day's meal. They never even accepted more than one Haritoki fruit, though it is small as a fig.

"'One day, late in the afternoon, long after their midday meal, the Lord asked his disciples for one of these fruit, but the disciples had none left to give except the ever vigilant Haridas, who produced one from his

begging bowl and gave it to the Master. The Lord said, "I am pleased. This fruit slakes my thirst as nectar that of the Gods. Yet, Haridas, how camest thou to have it?"'

"'"To-day when I begged for fruit, they gave me many,"' said Haridas, the trader; "'so I chose two, one to eat to-day, and the other to save up for an emergency."'

"'But the Lord said, "Depart from me—thou art a householder, not fit to be the friend of Poverty. I send thee hence as one who by saving a fruit has shown himself the hoarder of goods. Go, go—thou art not of me."'

"'Haridas fell at the Lord's feet and wept bitter tears, praying for mercy. But the Lord proved as moveless as the hills. At last, broken-hearted, Haridas, decided to leave. As a final request he said, "Lord, now I go to my home of shame to expiate my avarice; but tell me, I beg of you, may I ever again look upon your radiant feet?"'

"'The Lord with firmness and fire said, "In a hundred lifetimes."'

"'A hundred, Lord?' asked Haridas, for he feared that his ear misheard his Master's verdict.

"'The Lord repeated, "In a hundred lives, and not even one less than a hundred, it must be."'

"'Suddenly, like a man possessed, Haridas danced in joy saying, "*Peyechi, Peycchi*—I have found Thee. I have found Thee, O my King."'

"'What insolence is this?' exclaimed the Lord.

"'"But," Haridas cried, "a hundred lives are but a moment, O my King, if at their end they lead to Thee."'

"'Then ravished with love, Chaitanya embraced

Haridas and said, " Come, sweet son, let us sing the praise of God." '

" ' They praised God, my child, four and forty hours, rejoicing over Haridas's return to his King.'

" ' Haridas committed evil and evil in turn became his wing for flight,' Mother concluded. ' It is always so. Good and evil are both branches on the Tree of Life.'

" That had a profound effect on my sleep. I never rested better than that night. Next evening when Father visited Mother, she asked me to be with them, saying :

" ' My Lord, this child is not as the others. Wilt thou teach him God ? '

" Father bent his head. His narrow temples and tall brow glistened. He said, after an age-long pondering, ' Why not send him to the Christian mission, or, tether him to a holy man ? '

" Mother expostulated. ' The Christians may teach him God. The holy man may also teach the same thing, but the child is not the kind that will profit by these. He needs more love ; he has mine. Reinforce mine with thine, my Lord. He is all truth, but if we are to make him True, we must love him doubly.'

" Father still pondered : in his veins were too much of mathematics and law and his pulse never beat fast. ' To make a man true we must love him : is that what thou conceivest to be the solution ? ' he asked.

" ' My Lord, until a young soul has all the love it needs, it will not be true to its own truth.'

" Father was always guided by our mother and their talk bore fruit. Though he had had no religious experience himself, yet he believed in every religion

and he tried to do his best for me. He had a deep appreciation and love of Mohammedanism and he taught me to love Moradali, his Mohammedan music teacher, in order to induce my love for music. I was so dogged in my devotion to that white-haired, white-bearded, and white-clad old man telling his beads of amber, that instead of Mother I used to send for him to tell me stories at bedtime.

" How often I remember the dark room, the sandal-wood bedstead, heavy and ornamented like a big galleon, the evening dusk rushing in like currents of soot. There I would lie lost in my enormous bed with the old man sitting on its edge, a white wizard guiding a ship by the magic of his voice. Ah, what a voice! He was the only one left who could sing Dipak—the Fire and Thunder melody. His tones were deep and vibrant as a bull-frog's."

Moradali had been the dear friend of us all as children and I begged my brother to tell me more of him.

" I shall never forget two of his stories," my brother resumed. ' All religions should be the same thing, as all melodies are music,' Moradali would say. ' Instead they all have the one trouble—Schism.'

" ' How did they get so, Grandfather? ' I questioned.

" His voice deepened into a whisper, almost as if to tune it to the theme and the darkness about. ' The believers in the old days quarrelled. Some said the Prophet's grandsons, Hassan and Hoossain, must not be made Khalifa merely because they were descended from him. " We must elect the man who is most worthy to rule us and not the heirs of His Blood," said the people.'

" ' Eiid, the leader of the radicals, succeeded in

poisoning Hassan; then he pursued the holy family, led by Hoossain, from desert to desert in order to kill them. This was a terrible war, Grandson. Hoossain, with a few scores of followers and many, many women and children, was driven into the desert to perish there of hunger and thirst. So he made a dash toward the waters of Karbala. But between him and the waters stood Ejid's army. Flight into the desert spelt death, and so fight he must or die of thirst.'

"'Hoossain was a great warrior. His men cut their way through the enemies' forces till they reached the river, but then they were beset from both banks; whenever men from Hoossain's camp reached the water's edge, the enemies' javelins, flying from every direction, killed them. Hoossain's army was so badly exposed in the flanks that it could not avail itself of any respite to fill the water-casks.

"'At last Hoossain decided to wage a battle at night and made an attempt to fill the casks in the dark; but the enemy proved too vigilant. Still Hoossain fought on. The battle raged all night; like fiends of hell the enemy fell upon the dwindling army. Men killed men as butchers kill cattle. But at last, toward dawn, Hoossain's warriors cleared the place of the enemy and were able to fill their goatskin water-bottles. But when Hoossain came with his, it was broad daylight and he saw that there was blood in the water. His heart sank within him.

"'The price of a drink is blood!' he cried.

"'At once he threw away his goatskin bottle and raised his face to Allah. He prayed as no man had ever prayed before.

"'Allah, Allah, Allah!' he cried. But Allah heard him not.

"'In the midst of his unfinished prayer an enemy hurled a javelin from across the river. It pierced Hoossain's heart and flung him into the water. There he lay, the last descendant of the Prophet, crying to Allah with his remaining breath, "The price of a drink is blood."'

"Thou knowest," my brother commented, "Moradali was a Shia. He believed in the Prophet's descent. To him the murder of Hassan and Hoossain was the beginning of the end of the inner meaning of his religion.

"Another evening, Moradali sat on the edge of my galleon, as I lay in it. The darkness ran in like tides of soot. I begged him to tell me whether I would make a good Mohammedan. He laughed. How funny I thought him! 'Why dost thou wish to be a Mussulman?' he asked.

"'I have seen you pray to your God,' I said. 'You stand up straight, you kneel down, then you bend low and touch your face to the dust. I like to do that, Grandfather.'

"He answered, 'Allah needs not thy prayer. We, the old, pray enough to surfeit all His hunger. Grandson, thy fat cheeks and drumlike belly are prayers enough. Allah is good—why should he wish thee to stoop and bend like an old fool?'

"'But, Grandfather, your prayer is different from mine. It will please Him if I pray as you do.'

"Moradali chuckled again and said: 'All prayers are one. Allah is one. He is the grape; we call the fruit different names in different tongues, but does that change its taste? Even among Mussulmans are Yogis as there are among the Hindus.'

"'No, Grandfather!' I exclaimed in amazement.

"'Yes!' he answered. 'Listen to the reed flute sing. The reed is cool as the water that sings, and hot as the sun that ripens its mouth. Oh, listen to the reed flute sing:

"'His holiness, Ali, the Prophet's first male disciple and his son-in-law, was a Yogi as a Hindu is. Ali loved the Prophet and was His friend in distress. All prophets have one pet disciple, the recipient of their insight into Truth. Ali was such a one. The Prophet would lose himself in God-consciousness for days and he taught Ali how to achieve this state, in which, like a Hindu Yogi, one feels neither pleasure nor pain.

"'One day, in a battle, a spear entered Ali's thigh. It stayed there, a very fountain of Pain. The wounded man suffered no Hakim (doctor) to come near him lest it interfere with the battle. He sat on his horse and commanded the fortune of war. At last, when victory put its muzzle in the palm of his hand like a colt, Ali dismounted and went to camp, the spear deep in his limb.

"'He would let no one pull it out; nor would he let the Hakim heal his wound. News of Ali's behaviour reached the Prophet; but he told them to wait until prayer time.

"'So, when the purple wings of evening settled down on the land and Ali sat down to prayer, the Hakim pulled out the spear that had entered his thigh, deep as the span of my hand. But Ali stirred not; nor felt the flow of blood. He was a Mussulman Yogi. He was lost in God.

"'Only a shallow man changes his religion, my child, for a deep soul finds in his own the fruit of Life, and is certain that there God will meet his hopes and

dreams. A Mussulman can be a Yogi as a Hindu is. Respect Mohammedanism, Grandson. Love it. But grow on thine own trunk. Envy not another's branch and leaves.'

"Blessed Moradali! I loved the old man."

"And how he loved us!" I exclaimed. "But what else did Father do for thee beside tying thee to Moradali's coat tail?"

"He told me many things himself," said my brother. "But they were of the intellect. By coming in contact with his great and brilliant mind, I grew very keen-witted. I began to carry everything before me in the Christian school where he had sent me.

"As for the holy man, he prescribed for my cure. I could not abide one. All holy men seemed stupid to me. Until I was quite grown up, I despised holy men as cosmic loafers."

CHAPTER VIII

MY BROTHER'S STORY: THE SCHOOLBOY

"THE Missionary School to which Father sent me was the same as thine. Dost thou remember the lame teacher that taught the first English Reader? How ill-paid education generally is can be gauged by that poor old man's salary and training. He received 30 rupees [about £2] a month. He was taught a little English by an Englishman who once employed him as a clerk, but, since his pay was low, the wretched man never had any money to purchase leisure or books with which to improve himself.

"He had been teaching the same English First Reader from time immemorial. He knew that Reader as a mariner knows his compass. Unfortunately for him, and unluckily for me, the year we began English this Reader was replaced by a different primer. At home we all learned our lessons with our elders; the son of a pariah learnt his from his father as did the son of the warrior from his. How well it speaks for fathers we shall see presently.

"Perhaps because of his poverty and ill-fortune our teacher was a lazy man. When he was not asleep, he used to hit everybody at intervals. If our noise grew too loud to let him go on with his nap, he would suddenly get up from his chair and walk around the room, thumping every boy on the head for making so much noise. As he went back he would remark, 'Do not make another sound, for next time I shall hit you harder.'

"'But, sir, I did not make any noise,' one of the innocent protested.

"'Well,' he answered from his chair, 'I can't walk about the room all day in order to learn who made the noise. Hold thy tongue and behave. Haven't I hit thee hard enough?'

"At last the day arrived when the lesson began with the new primer. The first word in it spelled—PSALM.

"The teacher asked the first boy to pronounce it.

"The boy said, 'Pallum.'

"The teacher: 'Who taught thee that?'

"The boy: 'My father.'

"The teacher: 'Thy father! Why, he is an oil-vendor; he can't be right. Next.'

"The next boy answered, 'Sallum. My father taught me, sir.'

"The teacher: 'Thy father is a Darwan (door-keeper at a bank. He sees and hears English people. Yet his pronunciation of this word may not be right. Next!'

"More boys went on saying, 'Pallum' and 'Sallum.' Then came my turn. We all knew English, even my sisters, and I answered, 'Sahm.'

"At this he flew at me. 'What, thou darest to drop two consonants at once, both P and L? Thy family know English, yet thou canst mispronounce this simple word.'

"He hit me with his cane again and again. After several minutes, he thundered at the class, 'You are dismissed. Go home. Come back after you have learned your lesson.'

"The next day, when he came into the class, he said to me, 'I looked into the dictionary. Sahm is right.'

"'Then why did you hit me?' I asked.

"'Another word and I will hit thee again,' he

shouted, and with these words he resumed the lesson of *Psalm*.

"That tells the story of the horrors of education that I endured when I was sent to study the Christian religion by my father.

"The poor lame fellow coached pupils in the evening at home, in order to make a little more money with which to support his family. He was so hard-pressed by poverty that to-day, when I recall his almost featureless face, nothing but pity rises in my heart for him.

"Mankind always starves its teachers and manages thus to keep them sufficiently and safely ignorant. Not only that lame teacher, but others whom I met later were almost all of them so ill-paid that they were forced to do miscellaneous tasks outside the school in order to keep body and soul together. It is not at all surprising that they had no desire left for self-improvement.

"I was the most brilliant student of my class. I stood first in every subject. Mother grew very suspicious of it all. One day she invited me to meditate with her. After ten minutes of it she said, 'Son, I cannot even meditate because of thee.'

"I was startled. 'Why, mother?' I said.

"'If thou dost not abandon thy brilliancy in school, thy fate may be very bitter,' was her reply.

"'But, Mother, why should I not be brilliant? Father is brilliant.'

"'He is, my son. All thy life thou wilt succeed, yet success may become the poisoner of thy soul. Let me tell thee the story of Jibana, who was not deluded even by the touchstone—the philosopher's stone—that turns iron into gold.'

'I said, 'But, Mother, it is not true that such a stone exists.'

"Mother answered without any hesitation: 'The Poet speaks as though it exists. Is not that enough? Never cast doubt on what the singer has put behind the song.'

"'Wilt thou tell me please what this Jibana did with the philosopher's stone?' I requested.

"'It is a story that abides in another story as the diamond heart of a witch lies in a box inside another box to which there is no key.

"'Long ago, when our prophet ancestor was preaching that God's radiance is love and that he who loves is as good a Mohammedan as he is a Hindu, in the city of Murshidabad where the Nawab of Bengal built his seven palaces of Beauty, Chaitanya preached in the market-place. He went thither to sell the people God for their love. One day the Nawab's Prime Minister, a Mohammedan grandee, came in his ivory palanquin that was delicate as lace and strong as the elephant's tusks of which it was made. The palanquin-bearers were preceded by guards, with gleaming shields of brass and sabres that glittered like diamonds. They cleared the way before the Minister's palanquin, but when they came upon the prophet preaching to the little group, they found the people so lost in the enchantment of listening to Chaitanya that, though the guards prodded the crowd with their sabre ends, the devoted listeners did not even turn their heads to see who was behind them.

"'The Minister signed to the guards to desist, and alighting from his nest of ivory, walked to the prophet to hear his words; but the listeners were still so wrapt in the thought of God that they did not see

this man dressed in jewelled robes like a lofty citadel of pride.

" ' The Minister was on the point of scattering the crowd with his whip made of threads of gold, but the Lord's word pierced his ears and nestled in his heart.

" ' He listened and still he listened. At last he knew that Chaitanya had revealed to him his own God—Allah! He began to cry in joy. He took off his jewelled robe and gave it to his guards, saying, " Put it on the next Minister of State. I go to sing the praise of God from door to door."

" ' From that hour he went with Chaitanya, preaching God to the world. And the Lord gave him a new name—Rupa Sanatan (The Radiance of the Eternal). It is said that wherever Sanatan went the world changed and put on the vesture of Godhood.

" ' At last when Chaitanya went away—some say he died, some say he went to Heaven direct—Sanatan could not bear to be without him. So he gave up preaching and went to Brindaban. There, on the bank of the black Jumna, he sat down to meditate and to commune with his Beloved. Rumours floated about that Sanatan had found the philosopher's stone and had power to do miracles.

" ' Now begins the next story. There was a young man named Jibana who lived near our own village. He was a Pundit. He knew so much that there was nothing left for him to know, which troubled him exceedingly. One day someone said to him, " Thou who knowest so much, tell me, hast thou the philosopher's stone? "

" ' Jibana answered, " No, I have not found it."

" ' The stranger advised him: " Go to Brindaban, seek out Rupa Sanatan. Ask him, and he will give it to thee."

" ' Next day Jibana went forth, as the song towards its echo and the arrow to the mark. But the way was long and the journey difficult. He had to cross thirteen rivers, seven oceans, and a hundred mountains before he reached Brindaban.

" ' They told him in the streets of the holy city that it was rumoured that Sanatan had not the stone, and Jibana was almost on the verge of giving up the search, but then he said to himself, " I am a man who knows all. Why not go and see that holy charlatan, and unmask his fraud to the people ? "

" ' That pleased his intellect and spurred him to the river bank where Sanatan lived.

" ' Sanatan that morning was meditating and communing with God. Jibana could not shake him out of his state into consciousness of the world, so he had to wait until the day was almost ended. When Sanatan finally opened his eyes, he found the man of all-knowledge standing before him.

" ' " What wantest thou of me ? " he asked in surprise.

" ' Jibana answered, " O Holy One, it is the touch-stone that turns iron into gold that I seek."

" ' " Whence comest thou ? " enquired Sanatan.

" ' " From Bengal," said Jibana.

" ' Sanatan smiled. " Such a long and difficult journey—thou deservest to have the stone. Dig in the sand yonder where I hid it when it was given to me."

" ' " Didst thou make no use of it ? " asked Jibana.

" ' Sanatan answered, " I left the home of use long ago, and I went out to my Beloved. Go dig that stone out ; thou mayest be he who knoweth how to use its magic."

" ' Jibana hastened to the spot. Lo ! Hardly had

he dug a foot of sand when the jet black stone gleamed out like a light. Jibana took it from its grave and hastily put it against an iron amulet that he wore on his arm. Behold the amulet turned into gold as men become gods in a dream. He tried it on a bit of iron that he had on his coin string. That, too, turned into gold as men become gods in a dream.

" ' Suddenly, he looked up, raising his eyes from the stone ; he saw Sanatan starting a new meditation and preparing again to plunge his heart and mind into the ineffable unseen. He shouted, " Wait, wait."

" ' Sanatan withdrew his soul from the very threshold of the dark chamber where God abides.

" ' " Please go with thy stone," he said. " My Beloved awaits my coming—I must to the trysting-place. Go, ere yon sun sinks to his rest on the couch of evening ! "

" ' Then a strange thing happened. Jibana flung the philosopher's stone into the deep, deep river saying, " I have no need of it."

" ' " Why such conduct, friend ? " said Sanatan, still pausing on the threshold of the infinite.

" ' Jibana answered, " Thou who didst find that stone hast but one use for it—to give it burial in the sand. Wherefore ? Because thou wouldst search for something more precious still ! Why then delude me with a stone, when it is in thy power to reveal to me that which thou seekest ? "

" ' So, my son,' Mother concluded, ' Jibana was vouchsafed the Vision of God by Sanatan, the Mohammedan disciple.'

" ' It is a good story, Mother,' I said.

" She answered, ' What wilt thou do if thou dost find the stone that turns iron into gold ? '

"That question puzzled me, but, before I could formulate an answer, she spoke again.

"'What we find is but a step to what we cannot find.' Then she added hastily: 'Thine eyes are heavy with sleep. Let the story of the stone perish—sleep sleep, O infinite!'"

These endless stories were the backbone of my brother's education, which helped to make him the remarkable man he is. I repeat so many of them here in the hope of giving the reader some idea of the constant appeal to the imagination of the individual soul that a wise Hindu woman, like my mother, tries to make in teaching her child. No two of our large family were taught alike. It was an individualistic training, and these stories, some of them apparently so slight, were the means by which our mother presented truth to our young minds. They were the polished mirror in which we learned to read not only our own eager young faces, but, as time went on and we looked deeper, the brooding tender gaze of her who held so patiently the glass for us where it would best catch the light.

"I remember most vividly what Mother told me about the North Star," said my brother, "the fellow that neither rises nor sets. He used to worry me, and so, one day, I asked her why that star called Dhruva never went to bed.

"She answered, 'He needs neither food nor rest. When Dhruva was a child, his father, who was a wicked king, disinherited him from the throne and Dhruva and his mother went away into the wilderness to live.

"'When Dhruva was about ten he asked his mother who his father was. The queen was loth to tell him of her wicked Lord, but Dhruva insisted, day after day, asking "Who is my father?"

" ' At last the queen told him the story.

" ' Dhruva said, " But, Mother, I want my throne. And I want thee to rule as the goddess of my palace."

" ' The queen laughed at her son.

" ' But Dhruva was not an ordinary child; he was not to be put off with a jest. So he kept on urging her to tell him how he could get back his throne.

" ' She could not very well ask him to go to war with his own father, so she said, " If thou wilt sit thee down and call upon God without moving till He answers, thou wilt receive back thy throne."

" ' Immediately, Dhruva began to meditate and call on God. Days passed, two months passed, yet Dhruva never moved, neither ate nor drank. His mother grew frightened, but no mother should come between her child and his God, so she sat idle near him, herself neither eating nor drinking, but praying also to her God.

" ' At last Dhruva's mind and prayers reached God, and God spoke to him in that hieroglyphic of Silence that those who see Him understand, saying, " Why seekest thou, O Dhruva, to win an earthly throne? "

" ' " But it is my mother's honours and my own inheritance that I desire," answered the boy.

" ' God answered, " Nay, Dhruva, an earthly throne is not worthy of thy intent Spirit. From this day on thou shalt rule over my stars in the infinite firmament. Thou shalt be the lodestar to which all stars will pay homage as they dance around thee."

" ' " But my mother? " asked Dhruva.

" ' The Lord answered, " She shall rule above thee invisible to the world. She shall be the lodestar of Immortality. Souls that come to me, after the body dies, shall be guided by her unchanging presence at the threshold of the Inscrutable."