attempt to penetrate or analyse. Reason here is lost in the sense of the Infinite. The search after the ideal is no mere matter of metaphysical speculation to the Rishi of the Upanishads. By the hardest *tapasya* he has passed from one stage of thought to another, risen to a higher and still higher realisation of the mystery of Being—and now, when he has penetrated into the very heart of the mystery, the deep, eternal silences are around him and the darkness of Infinite Light dazzles his vision, and, lost in wonder and ecstasy, he can only exclaim—'From whence all speech with the mind, turns away unable to reach it'." [1]

Perhaps the best way of attempting to grasp the spirit of the Vedanta as contrasted with the dry bones of its letter, is to inquire into the meaning which it possesses for the Vedantin himself. Among those who have given to the world glimpses of their innermost thoughts in this respect are three men representative of very different types—the late Professor Benoyendra Nath Sen, the polished scholar and fine product of Indian culture combined with Western education, to whom reference has been made above; Srî Ramkrishna Paramahamsa, the fervent devotee and type of India's ideal of renunciation; and Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, the inspired poet of Bengal, of whom one of his more recent biographers has said that his mind is the loftiest and most fastidious in India.

I

Professor Benoyendra Nath Sen

Professor Sen accepts the Hindu estimate of sruti which he defines as "the record of what is revealed to the soul of genius in the moment of

[1] The late Professor Benoyendra Nath Sen.

its highest exaltation"; and while he agrees with Sankara that the testimony of reason is conclusive in favour of the view that the universe is of the substance of Brahman—*i.e.* that the sensuous world is an aspect of God Himself—he also holds with Sankara that the testimony of revelation to the same effect possesses a force overwhelmingly greater than that of mere reason. "Had the texture woven by the World-Spirit in the loom of time not been the visible garment of God Himself—had the universe not been the self-revelation of God", the idea of God could never have occurred to the mind of man. "Shut up in the hard opaque prison-house of matter, with pleasure and death for his masters, man had never thought of God at all."

Accepting the monistic view of Sankara that Brahman is the sole ultimate reality, he faces the two questions of fundamental importance to which this view gives rise—How can the Infinite and Absolute admit of anything different from itself? and How can a world of sin and suffering proceed from a perfect God? And he finds an adequate answer to them in Sankara's doctrine of maya, the latter being defined as the power by which the "Infinite Enchanter has contrived to put His own substance, which must be of the character of the infinite and absolute, into this texture which is woven in space and time". In his explanation of maya he dwells upon two characteristics attributed to it by Sankara, first, that of manifesting itself through name and form, and secondly, that of being not determinable either by Being or Non-being.

The first of these characteristics gives rise to little difficulty. There is nothing of which we take cognizance throughout the length and breadth of the universe that does not present itself to our senses through form or name. The precise

meaning of the second characteristic is not, however, at first sight apparent. What exactly is meant when it is said of anything that it is not determinable either by Being or Non-being? Professor Sen explains that the characteristic of all knowledge of the universe is that it rests upon the superimposition of a concept upon the object, which attempts but is unable to express its true being. Hence it becomes necessary to change the concept the next moment as it seems that a truer realisation of the object has been attained; but this again has to be given up like the first, and thus the process of superimposition after superimposition goes on because the true being of the object is never reached. If we pause to consider the nature of manifested things, the meaning of the above passage becomes clear. Let us ask ourselves, for example, if the name or form under which a thing presents itself to us is rigid and constant?

The material objects which we see around us present themselves to us in the form of solid and inert mass, and under names appropriate to objects so constituted. And prior to certain recent discoveries in physical science we should have been justified in saying of these names and forms that they possessed the quality of "being", *i.e.* that the assumption that they corresponded to the objects with which they were associated was valid. Recent progress in physical science has shown, however, that the smallest particle of so-called solid and inert matter is a universe of infinitely minute entities in violent motion. This surprising discovery has provided a theme for many scientific writers in recent times. "There is now no matter," exclaims Dr. C. Nordmann in a fascinating exposition of the new physics associated with the name of Albert Einstein, "there is only electrical energy, which,

by the reactions of the surrounding medium upon it, leads us to the fallacious belief in this substantial and massive something which hundreds of generations have been wont to call matter." And his comment upon this new knowledge is interesting—"A strange—*in a sense an almost spiritual*—turn for modern physics to take".[1] Thus do we now perceive that in the very sphere in which our knowledge seemed to us to be absolute, the name and form which possessed for us the quality of "being" (validity) no longer do so, and in light of present knowledge would have to be characterised as "non-being" (invalid). And when we begin to think about it we perceive that what we are in the habit of regarding as absolutely true is in reality only relatively true; and that absolute truth lies beyond time and space. Standing in England and gazing up at the canopy of stars immediately overhead, I am convinced that I am looking upwards. But the man standing in New Zealand and gazing at the same moment in precisely the same direction is equally convinced that he is gazing downwards. Who is right? Am I or is the New Zealander? For me the name "upwards" is valid; for the New Zealander it is invalid. We label sensations with names such as heat and cold. Have these names any real validity? Is cold anything more than an absence of heat? And where precisely is the dividing line between the two? Can we mark any particular point on a thermometer at which heat exists (can be characterised as being), or ceases to exist (must be described as non-being)? And would the inhabitant of the Polar regions be in agreement with the denizen of the tropics on the point?

[1] "Einstein and the Universe", by C. Nordmann, astronomer to the Paris Observatory. The italics are mine.

The shattering of our preconceived ideas as to the nature of matter is not the only shock which has been administered to us in those regions of knowledge in which, until quite recently, we were wont to think that we had laid hold of truths which were absolute. We are now learning that the foundations upon which we had built up vast and elaborate structures under the belief that they were of immovable rock are in reality nothing but shifting sand. Professor Einstein, " by separating far more completely than hitherto the share of the observer and the share of external nature in the things we see happen ",[1] has convinced a large and important section of the scientific world that laws hitherto regarded as absolute, such as Newton's law of gravitation and the laws of geometry formulated by Euclid, are in fact only relatively true. The conclusions as to the nature of things arrived at by Professor Einstein and his fellow-workers in the domain of physics bear indeed the most remarkable resemblance to those arrived at by the sages of India in the domain of metaphysics.

From the mechanical let us pass to the moral sphere and ask ourselves if it is possible to lay down any absolute line between good and evil. It may be urged that conscience does so with unerring judgement. Whose conscience ? it must be asked. The Christian conscience cries a halt at bigamy. Does the conscience of the most saintly follower of Muhammad do so too ? The disagreement must be admitted ; but it may be said that this is a matter of social custom rather than of moral rectitude. What, then, shall be taken as the test of right and wrong ? Shall it be the taking of another's life ? The taking of life is not in itself regarded as morally wrong by the generality of mankind, for the death penalty

[1] Professor A. S. Eddington in " Time, Space and Gravitation ".

finds a place in the penal code of the most civilised nations. And if the actual taking of life is not wrong in essence, the circumstances in which it may be taken become a mere matter of opinion. I have mentioned how I was struck with the apparent absence of any sense of moral guilt on the part of certain members of the revolutionary party in Bengal who tacitly admitted having taken the life of a police officer. And, indeed, that the dictum that political assassination is no sin is at present widely accepted by large sections of the human race, is only too painfully demonstrated by comparatively recent events in Ireland, Russia and elsewhere. It seems, then, that there is no standard of universal application by which we may lay down judgements as to conduct, placing this or that act or motive in a particular watertight compartment labelled right or wrong. And in this view it is evident that the doctrine of maya is a good deal more than a simple statement that the world of time and space is illusory. It predicates a state of affairs under which ignorance or false knowledge (avidya) prevails; but it also affirms the evolution of knowledge. We may try to picture it in this way. The true nature of reality is hidden from our eyes by a veil of many folds (avidya). The evolution of knowledge may then be likened to the gradual lifting of fold after fold, that which lies behind the veil changing in appearance as the removal of each fold admits of a clearer view. If this interpretation of the doctrine is accepted, the distinction which the Vedantin draws between Brahman the Absolute, and Iśvara the personal God is seen to be a rational one. And it renders intelligible the changing conceptions of God, which have marked the different stages in the onward journey of mankind from savagery and superstition to the

highest civilisation and the most lofty inspiration hitherto reached.

This seems to be the meaning which the maya of the Vedanta has for Professor Benoyendra Nath Sen. And thus interpreted it provides for him the answer to the second question to which I have referred, namely, How can a world of sin and suffering proceed from a perfect God? "If sorrow had been only the soul of bitterness, and joy only the overflowing of bliss, you might have charged God with partiality in distributing joy and sorrow unequally. But if sorrow has in its depths a hidden fountain of joy, and joy rests on a basis of deepest pain, nay, even if within the darkness of sin there is a hidden power that maketh for righteousness—there is no inequality to complain of; but every object, high or low, great or small, is equally a reflection of the infinite in the finite."

To what, then, does he look forward? He rejects Sankara's theory of individual liberation because it seems to him to be inconsistent with the true nature of maya, and reduces Sankara in the end to the necessity of regarding the universe as utterly unreal,—a position which is contrary to his teaching in respect of everything apart from this one idea of individual liberation. It is not easy to fathom the beliefs and hopes which he cherishes, but such indications as he gives of them suggest an expectation of a gradual approach towards ultimate truth, during which those things which wear the appearance of evil and suffering in the half-light of imperfect knowledge will, with an increasing realisation of God, gradually assume their true appearance until the totality of things is blended in the perfect harmony which is God—the bliss which has actually been experienced by the seers who have known communion with the Infinite.

However imperfectly one may have understood his beliefs and aspirations, one can at least have no doubt that for him the Vedanta is something a great deal more than a flight of the mind, however daring, in the vast realms of speculation; something beyond an excursion of the intellect, however bold, into a subtle world of metaphysic; something transcending an exercise of the faculty of ratiocination, however brilliant; a thing of the essence of religion, a thing capable of ministering to that craving of the soul which turns away unsatisfied from the highest that the intellect by itself has got to offer. For him, with all his reverence for reason, there stands something which is higher than reason, something which can only be vaguely indicated by the word Faith. "For I hold it truth," he declares, "—this that the Upanishads teach—that the ideal of the Intellect is Wonder and Reverence. Not wonder and reverence at the sacrifice of knowledge, or in opposition to it; but when knowledge has been brought to its utmost height, even that of realising that Reason is the Lord of the universe, there is still a mystery beyond, into which the intellect must look, and lose itself in that mystery. I also hold it truth that the intellect in its highest operation is intuitive and not discursive. The operations of reason we can analyse and know, but towards the Infinite the only attitude that is possible is Communion. To those ancient Rishis the privilege was given not simply to speculate and speak about metaphysical abstractions, but with purified hearts and devoted souls to hold communion with that which is beyond all speech or speculation, and realise in that communion the highest bliss of life."

CHAPTER XIX

THE SPIRIT OF THE VEDANTA (*continued*)

II

RAMKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

A MAN travelling up the Hughli river from Calcutta is struck by the number of temples on its banks. They are built for the most part on a single model—a broad flight of steps leading down to the water to serve as a bathing ghât; a line of slate-grey shrines in whose architecture he will detect without difficulty, the curved roof of the Bengali cottage which is to be seen in many of the villages at the present day. These shrines dedicated to Shiva and containing the yoni and the liṅga emblematic of creation fashioned out of black stone, are identical in shape and size, and stand as many as a dozen in number in a straight line, along the river bank on either side of the porch or pavilion at the head of the bathing ghât. Behind these is a courtyard in the centre of which rises the main temple dedicated to Kâlî or some other incarnation of the deity. This is usually a building of imposing proportions, the main structure, which again follows the lines of the curved-roofed cottage, being surmounted by a cluster of pleasing cupolas.

The temple of Dakshineshwar, a few miles above Calcutta, is easily picked out by any one steaming up the river, by means of a group of

tall casuerina trees, which can be seen from afar, standing in the temple grounds. It was built by a pious Bengali lady, Rani Rasmani, in the year A.D. 1855, and it was here that the famous saint of Dakshineshwar spent the greater part of his life. Few men have made a deeper impress upon the mind of Bengal in recent years than Gadadhar Chatterji, known to history as Srî Ramkrishna Paramahamsa, and his chief disciple Narendra Nath Dutt, better known under the title of Swami Vivekananda. At a time when the craze for the ideas and ways of the West was at its height these men stood for the ancient ideal of the East, for renunciation in an age of megalomania, for simplicity at a time when discoveries in mechanical science were making life elaborately complex.

The bright sun of a January day lit up the temple buildings and gave charm to the well-shaded grounds in which they stood, as I was shown the various objects which had acquired particular sanctity on account of their association with the departed saint. Here in the north-west angle of the courtyard was the room in which he had passed the greater number of his days. In the grounds on the north my attention was directed to a clump of five trees, the banyan, the pîpal, the nîm, the amlaki and the bael, planted at Ramkrishna's request. Here, it was said, he spent much time in meditation and the performance of religious exercises. Next it was explained that the two main shrines in the centre of the courtyard were dedicated to Radha and Krishna, representing God incarnate as love divine, and Kâlî, the Mother of the universe, standing for the personal aspect of the Infinite God which appealed most strongly to Ramkrishna.

Standing in the temple precincts surrounded by a group of Indian admirers of the saint, all

eager to tell of his life and teaching, I found myself being carried away by their enthusiasm, and as I listened to their story I had little difficulty in conjuring up vivid pictures of the Master surrounded by his disciples, expounding his great doctrine of salvation along the path of self-surrender and devotion to God. The setting was there before my eyes. It required no great effort of the imagination to reconstruct events. One pictured the Master, a benign figure pacing to and fro along the terrace in the cool of the evening, halting now and then to engage in conversation with his disciples. As the shades of evening spread over the great courtyard one could see in imagination the lamps in the temple flaming into light, and the fragrant smoke ascending from the incense-burners as they were swung by the servants of the temple. And then one seemed to hear the sound of the evening service breaking in upon the stillness, the tintinnabulation of gongs, bells and cymbals echoing away over the murmuring waters of the holy river. Presently, as a silver moon rose in the sky, trees and buildings would emerge from the dusk of evening, thrown into sharp silhouette against the star-strewn background of the night. And appropriate to such a setting a venerable figure, bowing down before the Mother of the universe, rhythmically chanting the name of God, repeating the aphorisms in which were enshrined the guiding principles of his life; *Brahman Âtman Bhagavân*, God the Absolute, God of the yogi, God of the devotee are one; *Saranagata, saranagata*, I am thine, I am thine; *Brahma-sakti Sakti-Brahman*, God the Absolute and the divine Mother are one. Thereafter the gradual assemblage of the disciples—keen, responsive young Bengalis in the white cotton chaddar and dhoti of the country, their dark eyes glowing with enthusiasm—followed by

a discourse from the Master seated, cross-legged, in their midst.

* * * * * *

Born of Brahman parents on February 20, 1834, Gadadhar Chatterji found himself drawn to a religious life from his boyhood, and he became an assistant priest at the temple of Dakshineshwar from the date of its construction in 1855. He was no scholar, yet he possessed the power of attracting to himself men of light and leading of the day—Keshub Chandra Sen, Pundit Isvar Vidyasagar, Bankim Chatterji and Protap Chandra Mazumdar amongst others. The latter, one of the most devoted followers of Keshub Chandra Sen, seems to have been forcibly struck and a good deal puzzled by the influence which Ramkrishna exercised over educated men. "What is there in common between him and me?" he asked. "I a Europeanised, civilised, self-centred, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Müller, and a whole host of European scholars and divines? . . . And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same." And after due deliberation he comes to the conclusion that it is his religion that is his only recommendation. But his religion itself is a puzzle. "He worships Shiva, he worships Kâlî, he worships Rama, he worships Krishna, and is a confirmed advocate of Vedantic doctrines. . . . He is an idolater, yet is a faithful and most devoted meditator of the perfections of the One formless, infinite Deity. . . . His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcendental insight, his whole nature burns day and night with a per-

manent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling." [1]

He studied the doctrine of the Vedanta at the feet of one Tota Puri, a holy man who took up his abode at the temple for the space of nearly a year. But it was along the path of worship (bhakta) rather than by the way of knowledge (gñâna) that he sought for the solution of the mystery of the universe. By temperament he was a mystic rather than a philosopher. The narrative of his life and teaching recalls inevitably the emotional figure of Chaitanya. Like the great Vaishnava saint of Nadia he gave vent to his pent-up feelings in song and dance. Hymns to the deity sung by his favourite disciples reduced him to tears, and frequently induced in him a state of trance. He was subject to such trances from his boyhood, his first experience taking place at the age of eleven, when, according to his own account, he suddenly saw a vision of glory, and lost all sense-consciousness while walking through the fields. His knowledge of God was intuitive, and he never felt the need of systematic study. A discussion on the subject of the study of the Scriptures was once in progress among his disciples when he exclaimed, "Do you know what I think of it? Books—sacred scriptures—all point the way to God. Once you know the way, what is the use of books?" A young man, typical of the educated middle classes of the day, obviously proud of his scholarship and knowledge of books and men, proceeded one day to the temple, attracted by the growing fame of the saint.[2] On

[1] From a monograph entitled "Paramahamsa Ramkrishna", republished from the *Theistic Quarterly Review*.

[2] Professor M. N. Gupta, a teacher in Calcutta who subsequently became a devoted disciple of Ramkrishna, and under the *nom-de-plume* of "M." wrote an account of his life and teaching entitled the "Gospel of Srî Ramkrishna". He still resides in Calcutta, and appreciating the difficulty which I experienced in understanding certain tenets of the Vedanta, drew my attention to passages in the gospel in which

learning that he was no scholar and had no use for books, he expressed extreme surprise, and at his first meeting embarked upon an argument with him on the subject of image worship. Ramkrishna swept aside his scholarly arguments. "Why must you worry yourself about things above you and beyond your reach?" he asked. "Does not the Lord of the universe abide in the temple of the human body and know the innermost thoughts of men? Seek then to know and revere God. Love God. That is the duty nearest you."

Apparent contradictions were nothing to him. God is the Absolute, the One, the All, the Brahman of the philosopher. But that does not prevent Him from manifesting Himself in different aspects in His relations with the phenomenal world—as Krishna in His aspect of divine love, as Kâlî in His aspect of creator of the universe and saviour of mankind. And when you realise God, such things cease to puzzle. "Sir, is it possible to see God?" asked the scholar. "Certainly," came the reply. "Cry unto the Lord with a yearning heart and you shall see Him." It is clear from the testimony of his disciples that he himself constantly attained that pitch of spiritual exaltation which is called by the Hindus samadhi, a state of trance induced by God-consciousness—that communion with the Infinite enjoyed by the Rishis of old and spoken of by Professor B. N. Sen as the bliss of Brahman, which is beyond all words and above all reason.

The pantheism so congenial to Indian thought was his by instinct. He was in the habit in his younger days of plucking flowers for the daily worship in the temple. On one occasion, we are

were set forth the teaching of Srî Ramkrishna on the points in question. The sketch of the saint and his teaching which I have drawn in this chapter is based upon Professor Gupta's narrative.

told, he was gathering the leaves of the bael tree when a portion of the bark was torn from the tree. It seemed to him that a severe wound had been inflicted upon the Divinity which was within him, and was equally manifested in all things. So deeply was the idea of God immanent rooted in his soul that he never again picked the leaves of the trees. Difficulties put forward by man's reason were brushed aside. If they could not be explained by reason they were discounted by faith. From the point of view of pure logic, consequently, his explanations were at times lacking in conviction. His reply to the question why, if everything is but a manifestation of God, should some things be harmful is a case in point. He quoted the story of a devout young man who refused, when warned to do so, to move out of the way of a charging elephant. The driver shouted, but the young man said to himself, "the elephant is a manifestation of the Divinity", and instead of fleeing from him he began to chant his praises. When he was subsequently picked up and restored to consciousness, he explained why he had not moved away, but was chided by his guru in these words, "It is true that God manifests himself forth in everything. But if he is manifest in the elephant, is he not equally manifest in the driver? Tell me then why you paid no heed to his warning voice?"

With even scantier consideration he brushed aside the question of the apparent partiality of God. "Am I then, Sir," asked pundit Vidyasagar on one occasion, "to believe that we come into the world with unequal endowments? Is the Lord partial to a select few?" To which the Master replied, "Well, I am afraid you will have to take the facts of the universe as they stand. It is not given to man to see clearly into the ways of the Lord."

The value which he attached to ratiocination and inspiration respectively, is well illustrated by a scene which took place one afternoon in the presence of a number of his disciples in the grounds of the temple. "Is there any book in English on the art of reasoning?" he asked one of his Western-educated followers. He was informed that there were such treatises and, as an example, was told of that part of logic which dealt with reasoning from general propositions to particulars. He appeared to pay little attention to these explanations, which evidently fell flat upon his ear. And looking at him a little while after, his would-be instructor marvelled and became speechless. I give the description of the scene in his own words. "The Master stands motionless. His eyes are fixed. It is hard to say whether he is breathing or not. . . . The smile on his lips shows the ecstatic delight that he feels at the sight of the blessed vision. Yes, he must be enjoying a vision of unequalled beauty which puts into the shade the refulgence of a million moons! Is this God vision? If so what must be the intensity of Faith and Devotion of Discipline and Austerity which has brought such a vision within reach of mortal man?" The writer goes on to tell us that he wended his way home with this unique picture of samadhi and the ecstasy of divine love vividly reflected in his mind, and that there echoed within him as he went these words, "Be incessantly merged, O my mind, in the sweetness of his love and bliss! Yes, be thou drunken with the joy of the Lord!"

Ramkrishna did not dissent from the monistic explanation of the universe. It was only that he was driven by temperament to attach far greater importance to the Personal Aspect of God. The Absolute of Sankara could be realised; but only in perfect samadhi. On one occasion

half returning to consciousness from a state of trance he was heard exclaiming, "Yes, my Holy Mother (kâlî) is none other than the Absolute. She it is to whom the six systems of philosophy with all their learned disquisitions furnish no clue." But when a man returned from samadhi he became a differentiated ego once more, and was thrown back upon the world of relativity so that he perceived the world-system (maya) as real. Why? Because with the return of his egoity he was convinced that he as an individual was real; and "so long as his ego is real to him (real relatively) the world is real too, and the Absolute is unreal (unreal relatively)". He laid constant stress upon this.

The saint returning from samadhi could say nothing about the Absolute. "Once differentiated, he is mute as to the undifferentiated. Once in the relative world his mouth is shut as to the Absolute and Unconditioned." And since samadhi was not achieved by the average man, he must meditate upon and commune with the Personal God, for "so long as you are a person you cannot conceive of, think or perceive God otherwise than as a Person".

In Ramkrishna's own case this latter difficulty was undoubtedly a predilection as much as a necessity, for by temperament he was emotional rather than critical. "As a rule", he declared, "the devotee does not long for the realisation of the Impersonal. He is anxious that the whole of his ego should not be effaced in samadhi." And the reason which he gives is the one to be expected from a man of his temperament. "He would fain have sufficient individuality left to him to enjoy the Vision Divine as a person. He would fain taste the sugar in place of being one with the sugar itself."

His creed was summed up by him during a

visit to pundit Sasadhar in Calcutta one afternoon in 1884. Many paths lead to God, the path of knowledge, that of works and that of self-surrender and devotion. The way of knowledge is for the philosopher. His object is to realise Brahman the Absolute. He says "neti, neti" ("not this, not this"), and so eliminates one unreal thing after another until he arrives at a point at which all discrimination between the Real and the Unreal ceases. The way of works is that laid down in the Gîtâ, to live in the world, but not to be of the world; to practise at all times an exalted altruism. Neither of these paths is easy to travel in the present age. It is almost impossible in these materialistic days to get rid of the conviction that the self is identical with the body. How, then, can a man understand that he is one with the universal soul, the Being Absolute and Unconditioned? Similarly with the way of works. A man may form a resolution to work without expectation of any reward or fear of any punishment in this world or the next; but the chances are that consciously or unconsciously he will get attached to the fruit of his work. Let a man then choose the way of worship and seek communion with the Personal God, for the path of love, adoration and self-surrender to God is the easiest of all paths. It teaches the necessity of prayer without ceasing, it is in this age "the shortest cut leading to God".

Early in 1886 Ramkrishna was taken seriously ill. A graphic account of the suffering of his last hours in the garden of Cossipore surrounded by his disciples, is given by Professor Gupta in a passage of great pathos. He died not long after his fifty-second birthday.

Many of the young men who flocked to the temple at Dakshineshwar in the eighties of last century are preaching the gospel of the Master.

Those who, following his example, have adopted the path of renunciation have established a monastic order, the headquarters of which are at Belur Math on the opposite bank of the Hughli to Dakshineshwar, with branch monasteries in Bengal, the United Provinces and Madras. Associated with the monastic order which consists of sannyasins and bramacharins is a mission, these twin organisations standing for renunciation and service respectively, declared by the late Swami Vivekananda to be the two national ideals of India. The mission undertakes service of all kinds, social, charitable and educational. The monasteries are dedicated to the perpetuation through their spiritual culture of the great Ideal and Revelation which Srî Ramkrishna Paramahamsa embodied in his life.[1] One of these branch monasteries, the Ashram of Mayavati hidden away from the world in the vast labyrinth of the Himâlayas fifty miles north-east of Almora, is devoted exclusively to the study of advaita Vedanta, leading to knowledge of the Brahman proclaimed by Sankara, the absolute, impersonal and unconditioned God—the material and efficient cause of the universe.

Some of these men I have met at Belur Math. And having met them I know that it is for no colourless abstraction that they have renounced the world. Whether known as *saguna* Brahman (God Personal) or as *nirguna* Brahman (God Impersonal), it is to them the sole reality, the ultimate goal towards which sooner or later all mankind must direct its steps.

[1] First general report of the Ramkrishna Mission.

CHAPTER XX

THE SPIRIT OF THE VEDANTA (*concluded*)

III

Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore

The flat alluvial tracts of deltaic Bengal are bounded on the West by undulating stretches of red laterite frequently covered, where cultivation has not extended, by large areas of sâl forest. They have a general elevation of from 600 feet to 800 feet, and on approaching them from the plains of the delta you become conscious of a change of climate. The air is dryer and possesses, consequently, a greater sparkle. In the winter the surface of the land is hard and dusty, though the suggestion of aridity for which the nature of the soil is responsible, is tempered by green clumps of palmyra palms and thickets of cotton and mango trees marking the sites of villages.

To these wide spaces there came sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century an austere figure, driven restlessly to and fro over the land by an absorbing quest—no less than that of God. A man who had searched the Scriptures of his race for a clue to the unravelling of the mystery of creation; who had found in much of them nothing but "vain imaginings"; who had rejected the pure monism of Sankara with the same impatience that he displayed in thrusting from him the idol-worship, which seemed to him

to bulk so largely in the orthodoxy of the day. A man who, in the course of his quest had revivified the church founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy under the name of the Brahmo Samaj, and had promulgated for its congregation a new book of faith compounded of texts from the Upanishads and of the out-pourings of his own soul, with the significant title of Brahma-dharma. And having come he pitched his solitary tent beneath the beckoning branches of three tall trees which the curious traveller may see to this day. And in due course he raised amid these surroundings, far removed from the distracting din of the world of men, a temple of worship to which he gave the name of Shanti Niketan—the "Abode of Peace". That man was Devendra Nath Tagore, known to the people as Maharshi or the great saint, a man of whom it can be said with confidence that he found that which he sought.

With Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, in 1872, came to Shanti Niketan for the first time his son Rabindra, then a boy of eleven years. One can enter into the feelings excited in the sensitive mind of the town-bred boy by the great free spaces of this new world into which he had stumbled. "The only ring which encircled me", he wrote, when describing his feelings in later years, "was the blue of the horizon which the presiding goddess of these solitudes had drawn round them."[1] Indeed, the impression made upon his mind was profound and lasting. It was the appeal of Nature knocking at the door of his heart, that opened a way into the innermost chambers of his being, by which there entered an unbounded admiration and reverence for the simple life lived by the early Aryan settlers amongst the forests of the Ganges Valley. It was amidst such surroundings that had dawned

[1] "My Reminiscences", by Rabindra Nath Tagore.

"the golden daybreak of the awakenment of India's soul";[1] and he has described how a time came when he dreamed of that towering age above all ages of subsequent history in the greatness of its simplicity and wisdom of pure life. The ideals originating from this golden age he has defined in glowing terms, "ideals of simplicity of life, clarity of spiritual vision, purity of heart, harmony with the universe and consciousness of the infinite personality in all creation".[2] These ideals, he believed, still flowed underground in the depth of India's soil, and it was with the determination of bringing them to the surface for daily use and purification that he returned to Shanti Niketan nearly thirty years later with a handful of pupils, to found the school which has since acquired world-wide fame.

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A two-mile walk from the station of Bholpur, up a gradual ascent through the bright sunshine of a February morning, was pure joy. Standing at the gateway of the *ashram* was a tall, commanding figure clothed in ample robes of white. With a charming courtesy he welcomed us to Shanti Niketan. I was conducted straightway to a stone seat in a shady grove. In front of me was a stretch of ground smoothed and polished until it resembled the surface of a threshing floor upon which had been chalked out a circular design. This served for a place of assembly which might be said to correspond to the speech room of an English public school. A little behind me, standing under the trees, were grouped the teachers, all clad in white. In front of me were the boys of the school drawn up in a semi-circle on the edge of the design. All were dressed in yellow—the colour of spring. On my right was

[1] An introduction by Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore to Mr. W. W. Pearson's "Shanti Niketan". [2] *Ibid.*

a group of girls, pupils along with the boys at the school. Led by a pundit the gathering chanted Vedic hymns in Sanskrit with striking effect. The significance of the scene could not be lost upon any one acquainted with the outlines of ancient Indian history. Here was a reproduction in miniature of the conditions amid which the civilisation of India had been born, the life close to nature in the heart of the forests which provided the early Aryan settlers with all that they required. One recognised in all that one saw around one both a protest against the artificiality of modern life, and an offering of homage to the ideals and traditions of the past.

While the gathering was breaking up preparatory to the re-forming of the pupils in their classes, we wandered through the grounds and came to a rude seat beneath an ancient tree—a low stone block topped by two slabs of marble, marking the spot where Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore was in the habit of sitting in meditation during his life of communion with God. We then returned to the classes, each one of which had its allotted place in the grove. Each class consisted of a group of pupils generally small in number, seated along with its teacher in a circle on the ground. The cultivation of man's instinctive sense of beauty, or in other words a development of his understanding of the harmony pervading all creation, appeared to me to run like a thread through the whole scheme of studies. Music and painting naturally found an honoured place in the curriculum.

A study of the motive which impelled Rabindra Nath Tagore to establish this school and of the ideas underlying the plan of the experiment, provides a key to his philosophy. His own school days were days of poignant memories. The dreary monotony of school routine had preyed

upon his mind. A system devoted to the mere imparting of knowledge, as opposed to the development of the SELF, had entered like iron into his soul; and he had suddenly found his world—the world as God made it with its beauty, its music and its fragrance—vanishing from around him and giving place to wooden benches and straight walls which stared at him with the blank stare of the blind.[1] So wooden benches had given place to the lap of kindly mother earth, and straight walls to the varied lines of the Amlaki grove in the Abode of Peace; and the teacher sought not merely to impart information, but to bring the lives of those whom he taught into harmony with all existence. The mind of the author of this scheme was perpetually reaching back to the simple forest life of his remote ancestors, when the different elements in man, the spiritual, the intellectual and the physical were in complete harmony. The school of the present day, he declares, lays entire emphasis on the intellectual and physical, and thus unconsciously accentuates a break in the unity which is man's by nature. And when elaborating this view he gives us incidentally a simple statement of his creed—"I believe in a spiritual world—not as anything separate from this world—but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth, that we are living in God. Born in this great world full of the mystery of the Infinite we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance, drifting on the current of matter towards an eternal nowhere. We cannot look upon our lives as dreams of a dreamer who has no awakening in all time. We have a personality to which matter and force are unmeaning unless related

[1] "My School", a lecture delivered in America and republished in a volume entitled "Personality".

to something infinitely personal, whose nature we have discovered in some measure, in human love, in the greatness of the good, in the martyrdom of heroic souls, in the ineffable beauty of nature, which can never be a mere physical fact nor anything but an expression of personality."[1]

He was brought up, as he himself has told us, in a family where texts from the Upanishads were used in daily worship;[2] and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that the great central tenet of the Vedanta, the oneness of all, is the foundation on which his own creed is based. But his childhood was also spent in a circle where literature, music and art had become instinctive,[3] and it is not to be wondered at that this fundamental conception should have presented itself to his vision in the trailing draperies of poetry, rather than in the tight-fitting garment of philosophy.

The most connected presentment of his thoughts on religion is to be found in a volume entitled "Sâdhanâ," a word which may be interpreted as "the pathway of attainment". It is, however, very far from being a typical treatise on philosophy, and Professor Radhakrishnan is justified in his description of it as "a sigh of the soul rather than a reasoned account of metaphysics; an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy".[4] As in the case of so many Indians, the religious idea most immediately present to his mind is that of God Immanent. It is the constant companionship of this thought that causes him to pour forth his soul in hymns in praise of the beautiful in nature. Natural beauty moves him to song much as the joy of summer does the nightingale, and he sings with the same

[1] "My School." [2] "Sâdhanâ."
[3] "Personality." See also "My Reminiscences".
[4] "The Philosophy of Rabindra Nath Tagore", by Professor S. Radhakrishnan.

spontaneity and abandon. The title of the best-known collection of his writings, "Gitanjali", "song offerings," is significant. He loves and trusts the world, unable to look on it either as a delusion of the Creator—a reference to ultra monism—or a snare of the devil.[1] He becomes intoxicated with joy at his discovery of God in everything, so that his perception of the unity of man and nature in God surges up from the deep places of his being in eruptions of poetry. His conviction that "the ineffable beauty of nature" must be "an expression of personality" determines the character of the imagery in which he indulges. He delights to speak of still Night "standing silently at the window like a pilgrim of eternity";[2] of "the stars gazing in, witnesses through untold ages of countless death scenes";[3] of the gentle south wind "kissing away the weariness of the world", and "the scent of jasmine and bela filling the garden with rejoicing";[4] of "the living power hidden in the beauty of a little flower more potent than a maxim-gun";[5] of "the crescent-shaped beach (at Karwar) throwing out its arms to the shoreless open sea like the very image of an eager striving to embrace the Infinite".[6] And he believes profoundly in "an ideal hovering over the earth—an ideal of that Paradise which is not the mere outcome of imagination, but the ultimate reality towards which all things are moving".[7] And he sees this vision of Paradise "in the sunlight and the green of the earth, in the flowing streams, in the beauty of spring-time and the repose of a winter morning".[8] Indeed he asserts with complete conviction that "everywhere in this earth the spirit of Paradise is awake and

[1] Letter dated October 1891. [2] "Mashi." [3] *Ibid.*
[4] "The Skeleton."
[5] "Paradise", an address delivered by Rabindra Nath Tagore in Tokio and republished in "Shanti Niketan" by W. W. Pearson.
[6] "My Reminiscences." [7] "Paradise." [8] *Ibid.*

sending forth its voice ".[1] True beauty is something real, " not ", to quote his creed once more, " a mere physical fact, but an expression of personality ". And this being so, beauty can find its way to the chambers of a man's soul by different channels. Writing to a friend in December 1892 he tries to describe the beauty which for him is the reality lying behind a sunset. He draws attention to the silence which broods over earth, sky and waters, and he falls to wondering. " If ever this silence should fail to contain itself," he questions, " if the expression for which this hour has been seeking from the beginning of time should break forth, would a profoundly solemn, poignantly moving music rise from earth to starland ? " And then, as if after reflection, " with a little steadfast concentration of effort we can, for ourselves, translate the grand harmony of light and colour which permeates the universe into music. We have only to close our eyes and receive with the ear of the mind the vibration of this ever-flowing panorama." For beauty is not a mere thing of the senses. Only those who cannot steep themselves in it to the full think of it as such. " But those who have tasted of its inexpressibility know how far it is beyond the highest powers of mere eye or ear—nay, even the heart is powerless to attain the end of its yearning." [2]

Over and over again we find stress laid upon the reality and meaning of beauty. The subject upon which all his writings have dwelt is, in his own words, the joy of attaining the infinite within the finite.[3] And it is beauty that is the link between the two, for " the beauty of nature is not a mirage of the imagination, but reflects the joy of the Infinite, and thus draws us to lose

[1] " Paradise." [2] Letter dated June 2, 1892.
[3] " My Reminiscences."

ourselves in it ".[1] The colour, form and fragrance of a flower all have their utilitarian purposes. They are the finger-posts directing the bee to the honey; and the attraction which the honey has for the bee possesses also a utilitarian purpose, that of the fertilisation of the plant by the bee so that it may carry on the work of reproduction and thus save the world from becoming a desert. From the point of view of science all these attributes of the flower have their appointed purposes in the economy of nature, the sum total of which is the survival of the species. Birth, growth, reproduction and decay follow one another inexorably in obedience to iron law; colour, form and fragrance are but links in the unbroken chain of causation, which is the essence of the law. From a materialistic point of view the explanation given by science is all-sufficient. Every attribute of the flower has been explained, the sufficient purpose of each pointed out. Yet the philosopher is not satisfied. There is something which science seems to have overlooked. The idea of beauty which the flower conveys to us is something over and above that which is required of its various attributes from the purely utilitarian point of view. The beauty which is made up of the sum of its attributes is something which is outside the economy of nature. Every function of the different attributes of the flower could be performed just as efficiently without their sum-total constituting a thing of beauty for the joy of man. These two things—the functions of the flower and its beauty—are different aspects of the same thing; one of thraldom, the other of freedom. " In the same form, sound, colour and taste, two contrary notes are heard, one of necessity, the other of joy."[2] The man who sees the flower only from this first point of view has reached an

[1] "My Reminiscences." [2] "Sādhanā."

elementary stage of knowledge only—the first stage reached by Brighu Varuni during his inquiry into Brahman; the stage at which he reached the conclusion that from matter all these things are born, by matter when born they live, into matter at death they enter. The stage at which the doctrine of materialism seems to supply an adequate answer to the problem of existence. The man who perceives the flower in its other aspect has travelled with Brighu Varuni to the final stage reached by him in his quest—the stage at which he perceived that from bliss, or joy, all these things are born, by joy when born they live, into joy at death they enter. It is in this final conclusion that Tagore revels; and it is his whole-hearted acceptance of it more than anything else that justifies the student of his philosophy in ranking him as a Vedantin.

It is in this final conclusion reached by Brighu that we find the nearest approach which the Vedanta provides to an answer to the question why there should be a universe at all. In the Brahma sûtras the world system has been likened to the illusion produced by a magician. But this illustration of the nature of the universe not unnaturally provokes the further question why the magician should produce an illusion at all? It can be neither of necessity nor of desire, because the magician being the Absolute is, *ex hypothesi*, without attributes. The answer given in the sûtras is that it is due to *lîla*, a word sometimes translated as playfulness. The conception seems to be rather that of spontaneity. The Infinite manifests itself in the finite because to do so is inherent in its nature. The universe in the words of the late Professor B. N. Sen, is "the divine exuberance blooming into a perpetual efflorescence". For Tagore it is equally out of the fulness of joy that God manifests Himself as

creation. And if this be accepted, then the limitations to which God seems voluntarily to subject Himself need cause no surprise. For how could God exercise His power if He did not impose limitations upon Himself? Is it not by willingly imposing limits upon himself in the form of the rules of the game, and entering into definite relations with each particular piece that the chess-player realises the joy of his power? "It is not that he cannot move the chessmen just as he pleases, but if he does so, then there can be no play. If God assumes His rôle of omnipotence then His creation is at an end, and His power loses all its meaning. For power to be a power must act within limits." [1] And it is because joy cannot find expression in itself alone that it desires the law which imposes limitations upon it.[2] The joy of a singer expresses itself in the form of a song, and a song when analysed is found to be hedged around with limitations in the compass of each of its notes, and it is seen that if this were not so there could be no song. The Absolute is at all times greater than any assignable limit; but if limitation as such had never existed the Absolute would not have been complete. "On the one hand Brahman is evolving, on the other he is perfection; and in the one aspect he is essence, in the other manifestation—both together at the same time as is the song and the act of singing." [3] To refuse to recognise this is to ignore the consciousness of the singer, and to say that only the singing is in progress, and that there is no song. "Doubtless we are directly aware only of the singing and never at any one time of the song as a whole; but do we not all the time know that the complete song is in the soul of the singer?" [4]

It was, perhaps, inevitable in the case of a

[1] "Sādhanā." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

writer who has written for the reading public of three continents that the source of his inspiration should be questioned. Is that which he professes essentially Indian; or is it the offspring of Indian belief wedded to thought of an alien stock? Professor E. J. Thompson, while admitting that the idea of many incarnations is found in his poetry asserts that he has no belief in the most characteristic of all Hindu doctrines, namely, that of karma and transmigration. It is with some diffidence that I venture to question any statement in this connection made by Professor Thompson. There is, however, much in Tagore's writings to show that this essentially Hindu idea presents itself to him instinctively. It is present to his mind when he is most deeply moved. Thus in describing the feelings which he experienced on the occasion on which he was taken for the first time to the country, he writes that the bank of the Ganges welcomed him into its lap "like a friend of a former birth".[1] And in a letter dated May the 16th, 1893, he writes of his hopes and fears with regard to possible reincarnations. The thought that he may not be reborn in Bengal recurs to him daily; and he is assailed with a fear that he may be reborn in Europe where the life of leisure which he loves might have to be exchanged for a life of hustle.

Other assertions have been made definitely charging him with drawing his inspiration from Christianity. Such charges have been challenged in their turn—notably by Professor S. Radhakrishnan. The professor quotes a writer in the *Spectator* of February the 14th, 1914, as saying that Tagore has employed his remarkable literary talents in teaching borrowed ethics to Europe as a thing characteristically Indian; and a Christian missionary as claiming that his God whether he

[1] "My Reminiscences."

be explicitly Christ or not is at least a Christ-like God.[1] Whatever degree of truth there may be underlying such assertions, Professor Radhakrishnan is undoubtedly on sound ground when he points out that it is inconceivable that Tagore could accept any form of theism which identified its God with a part of the universe only—which set up two opposing forces, good and evil, allying God with one and altogether dissociating Him from the other. His view of good and evil is essentially that of the Vedanta, and there is little difficulty for all the difference of language, in identifying it with that of the late Professor B. N. Sen. Evil is due to limitations in the moral sphere; and once his explanation of the universe as the manifestation of the Infinite in the Finite is accepted, it is seen that such limitations, or in other words, Evil, must exist. And the question of real importance is not why imperfection exists, but whether imperfection is the final truth—whether evil is absolute? Neither Professor Sen nor Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore has the smallest hesitation in replying to this question in the negative. A river has its limitations in its banks. But would any one suggest that the banks are the final facts about the river? Is it not rather these limitations that give to the river its onward motion? "The current of the world has its boundaries otherwise it could have no existence; but its purpose is not shown in the boundaries that restrain it, but in its movement which is towards perfection."[2] These limitations to which the Infinite subjects itself in order that it may experience the joy of self-realisation wear different appearances under different circumstances—evil in the moral sphere, suffering in the physical sphere, error in the sphere of intellect. If these

[1] The Rev. Mr. Saunders in the *International Review of Missions*, 1914.

[2] "Sādhanā."

limitations are looked at from this point of view there is little difficulty in perceiving that they have no permanence, or as Sankara would put it, that they possess only a relative reality. "To go through the history of the development of science is to go through the maze of mistakes it made current at different times." [1] Yet no one believes that the real purpose and achievement of science is the dissemination of mistakes. On the contrary, "the progressive ascertainment of truth is the important thing to remember in the history of science, not its innumerable mistakes. Error by its nature cannot be stationary; it cannot remain with truth".[2] It is shed like an outworn garment as soon as it has accomplished its purpose; for "it is the function of our intellect to realise the truth through untruths, and knowledge is nothing but the continually burning up of error to set free the light of truth".[3] In the same way "our will, our character has to attain perfection by continually overcoming evils".[4]

Belief in the infallibility of the Vedas had been jettisoned by Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore in 1845. He and his associates in the Brahmo Samaj breaking away from the Sankara tradition, had then agreed that Reason and Conscience were to be the supreme authority, and the teachings of the Scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonised with the light within them.[5] To Rabindra Nath Tagore the light that is within him is a very real thing. "The vision of the Supreme One in our own soul is a direct and immediate intuition not based on any ratiocination or demonstration at all" [6]; and in the same way man has felt in the depths of his life that what appears as imperfect is the

[1] "Sâdhanâ." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*
[5] See an introductory chapter to the autobiography of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore by his son Satyendra Nath Tagore.
[6] Sâdhanâ."

manifestation of the perfect. And for an analogy to illustrate his meaning he returns to the singer and his song. "A man who has an ear for music realises the perfection of a song while in fact he is only listening to a succession of notes." [1] Joy is the cause of the song, the succession of notes is the means by which the song manifests itself; the song made up of each note which is in itself imperfect, is the perfect whole.

Is there any place in the scheme of things as thus interpreted for free will? Or does it follow from the belief that the universe is a manifestation of the Infinite in the Finite—a voluntary subjection by the Absolute of its absoluteness to limitations for the purpose of self-realisation—that man is subject to iron law? Are the limitations in their nature inexorable? Is man the mere sport of undeviating law? In his physical and mental organism where he is related to nature Tagore holds that he is. But in his soul a thousand times no. For what is the soul of man but *will* seeking manifestation in *will*—experiencing self-realisation as *will*? It is only in respect of man's SELF that anarchy is permitted. There could be no joy if *will* manifesting itself as the *will* of man were bound, for then there could be no freedom. The armed forces of God, the laws of nature, stand outside the chamber in which dwells the SELF of man "and only beauty the messenger of his love finds admission within its precincts".[2] If freedom is a reality—and without freedom there could be no joy—it follows that God's relation with the SELF of man is one of love and not of authority, "for this SELF of ours has to attain its ultimate meaning which is the soul, not through the compulsion of God's power, but through love and thus become united with God in freedom".[3] For

[1] "Sâdhanâ." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

Tagore, let it be said once more, the teaching of the Taittirîyaka Upanishad is valid for it harmonises with the light that is within him:— "From bliss all these things are born; by bliss when born they live; into bliss they enter at their death".

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However halting and imperfect the above sketch may be, however inadequately it brings before the mind of the reader the nature of the beliefs which it attempts to portray, it at least makes clear, I hope, that for the Indian the religious scriptures of the country are of living importance, and that they should be treated by Western inquirers as possessing something more than a "merely retrospective and archæological interest" fit only to be exhibited in labelled cases as "mummied specimens of human thought and aspiration preserved for all time in the wrappings of erudition".[1] It is the case, I fear, that the coldly critical and severely analytical mind of the West is prone to seize upon the skeleton of logic upon which the body of the Vedanta is built up, and to ignore the blood of faith and inspiration which courses through its veins, imparting vitality to the whole corpus of the doctrine. It is doubtless easy enough for the logician to dissect the central tenet of the Vedanta, namely, that Brahman is One without a second, and to prove therefrom that the God of the Vedantin is a colourless abstraction. He can point out that since the above definition rules out the existence of any object to be cognised, it follows that there can equally be no subject to cognise, for if there is nothing to cognise how can the act of cognition take place? Whence it follows that Brahman, being neither subject nor object must be—if it is anything at

[1] Introduction to "Sâdhanâ."

all—pure cognition; not the knower or the known, but the knowing, or in other words not an entity possessing intelligence as an attribute but pure abstract intelligence itself. With equal plausibility he can point out that the bliss by which term Brahman is also described can be nothing but insensibility, for active enjoyment predicates a subject to enjoy and an object to be enjoyed. Basing himself upon the premises which he finds in the sûtras he can—as Jacob has done—legitimately depict the Supreme Being of their teaching as "a cold impersonality, out of relation with the world, unconscious of its own existence and of ours and devoid of all attributes and qualities". And he can continue his criticism in the words of the same writer and point out that "the so-called personal God, the first manifestation of the Impersonal, turns out on examination to be a myth; there is no God âpart from ourselves, no Creator, no Holy Being, no Father, no Judge—no one, in a word, to adore, to love or to fear. And as for ourselves we are only unreal actors on the semblance of a stage."[1]

It has already been stated in Chapters XV. and XVII. that the Vedantin, if he is an adherent of the advaita school, accepts these conclusions, and it has now to be added that he is wholly unmoved by them. Dreamless sleep is accepted as the earthly analogy of a realisation by the individual soul of its identity with Brahman. Only for the Vedantin and the Western critic the words possess different values. The nature of deep sleep is discussed by Sankara in his comments on the 18th sûtra of the 3rd pada of the 2nd adhyaya, in the following words: "The objection that sleeping persons are not conscious of anything is refuted by Scripture where we

[1] See chapter iii. of Dr. Sydney Cave's "Redemption, Hindu and Christian".

read concerning a man lying in deep sleep, 'and when there he does not see, yet he is seeing though he does not see. For there is no intermission of the seeing of the seer because it cannot perish. But there is then no second, nothing else different from him that he could see (Bri. iv. 3. 23). That means: the absence of actual intelligising is due to the absence of objects, not to the absence of intelligence; just as the light pervading space is not apparent owing to the absence of things to be illuminated, not to the absence of its own nature." The conclusion that Brahman is pure intelligence is also accepted. "Intelligence alone constitutes the nature of the self. . . . Hence the soul manifests itself in the nature of pure intelligence, free from all manifoldness, calm, not capable of being expressed by any terms." [1]

These things cannot, in fact, be defined by human language. They are such that from them in the words of the Rishis of old, "all speech with the mind, turns away, unable to reach them". And it seems to me that if they are to be measured in accordance with the limited and imperfect standards of such logic as the human mind is capable of, the Vedantin can employ such standards as effectively as his critics. Could he not ask, for example, if perfection is not the ultimate goal towards which humanity irrespective of race or creed, is necessarily striving? And if he were to receive the obvious assurance that this was so, could he not, employing the weapon of logic relied upon by his critic, point out that perfection is necessarily One without a second, since logic insists that where there is duality there must be difference, and where there

[1] Sankara's commentary on sûtras 6 and 7 of the 4th pada of the 4th adhyaya.

is difference there must be superiority and inferiority, and where there is inferiority there cannot be perfection ?

For a true appreciation of the spirit of the Vedanta a man must bring to bear upon its study faith, reverence and insight, or he will inevitably lose himself in a jungle of mere words.

EPILOGUE

In the body of this volume I have endeavoured to describe the birth of modern India and to analyse the influences which are now shaping her growth. The conclusion to be drawn from what has been written is that a struggle is in progress between two main influences for the acquisition of the upper hand in determining her future—inherited tendencies and acquired characteristics. The period of growth, so far as it has gone, has produced individual cases in which one or other of these two influences has been in the ascendant, to the almost complete exclusion of the other. Examples of the triumph of acquired characteristics over hereditary tendencies are to be found in the case of a number of the Anglicised Indians, particularly of the second generation of Western educated Bengalis, of the nineteenth century. Cases of the reverse process where inherited tendencies have vanquished acquired characteristics have been seen of late. Mr. M. K. Gandhi may be taken as an outstanding example. If between these two extremes there exists a golden mean, it must be the offspring of a reconciliation between these two forces.

Such a golden mean should not be beyond the genius of India, for it was one of the greatest of Indian sages who preached and popularised the essential wisdom of the Middle Way. "What do you think," asked the Lord Buddha of one who played upon a lute, "if the strings of your

lute are too tightly strung, will the lute give out the proper tone and be fit to play? Or if the strings of your lute be strung too slack, will the lute then give out the proper tone and be fit to play?" And on receiving the answer: "But how if the strings of your lute be not strung too tight nor too slack, if they have the proper degree of tension will the lute then give out the proper sound and be fit to play"? The lute-player assented and received this exhortation: "In the same way energy too much strained tends to excessive zeal, and energy too much relaxed tends to apathy. Therefore cultivate in yourself the mean."

But if we are to urge the Indian to cultivate the mean—to avoid giving too loose a rein to his inherited tendencies on the one hand, and on the other to adopt with a wise discrimination the garb of a civilisation and culture that are not his own—we must also ourselves remember that the Indian is not as inanimate clay to be moulded at the potter's whim, but a complex living organism with a strong distinctive individuality of his own. An educationalist who has had long personal experience of Indian boys of the upper classes does not hesitate to say that the Indian boy's mind is nearly the antithesis of that of the English boy. He finds his mind, in fact, precisely of the type that one's study of ancient Indian culture would lead one to expect,—"highly imaginative and delighting in subtleties . . . at home in mental speculations which are nearly inaccessible to his Western schoolmates". More definitely still he describes the average Indian boy of his acquaintance as having "a great reverence for abstract truth, the field of concrete fact only appealing to him as a stepping-stone to the field of abstract thought". And realising the significance of differences so profound, he argues that a

system of education must be evolved in India to suit the Indian boy. "Take what is best and most effective in the Western systems, and in as much as they are adaptable adapt them to the East; but these can only be accessories; the essential and more substantial parts of the Indian system must be Indian and suited by their nature to the nature of the Indian mind." The India of thirty years hence, he observes, will in the main be what the Indian boys of to-day will make it, and the closer the understanding between the governing and the governed the better. "The highest degree of this understanding will be obtained in India, not by merely grafting upon the Indian mind foreign methods of thought necessarily uncongenial and artificial, but by giving the fullest development to the indigenous plant of the soil. This must be borne in mind and adhered to in the planning of the Indian school system, mapping out the curriculum of studies and defining the lines along which these are to be pursued." [1]

The course thus indicated by the Rev. T. Vander Schueren is already being pursued by Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore at Bholpur. I have referred to this interesting educational experiment in Chapter XX. When I was at Shanti Niketan early in 1920 the founder was already dreaming dreams of a large expansion of the original scheme. The school was to become a university, not an educational store stocked with foreign imports, at whose counter India stood as a beggar bent upon borrowing that which she had ceased to desire to produce herself, but a living organism, drawing its vitality from the soil on which it stood. India must shake herself free

[1] The Rev. T. Vander Schueren, S.J., in a monograph entitled "The Education of Indian Boys belonging to the Better or Upper Class Families", November 1919.

of the lethargy which had sapped her vitality and left her content to become a passive mimic of others. She had her own contribution to make to the progress of the world. But before she could do so she must search in her own household for that which she had mislaid. The first step must be to secure a true understanding of all the real wealth that had been produced and cherished by every section of those who composed the varied life of India. "With the realisation of the ancestral wealth of our own culture comes our responsibility to offer to share it with the rest of the world." [1] The university which was growing in the mind of its architect was to be at one and the same time a centre of research into the past, and a great hostelry at which all who desired to accept the gifts which Indian culture had to offer would be freely welcome. A resuscitation of Indian civilisation was to be the main work to be carried out, but with no narrow end in view, for the new university was to be an example of education established "on a basis, not of nationalism, but of a wider relationship of humanity".

Research was already in progress. In the library I found a Sanskrit pundit at work, intent on proving that the idealistic monism of Sankara drew its inspiration from Buddhist sources, and later on I came across a Buddhist Thera thumbing the dusty pages of ancient pali manuscripts. I saw the paintings of pupils at the school, and I listened to the performance of an expert Indian musician. There was one skeleton in the cupboard and that was the matriculation examination of the Calcutta University, for which the parents of some at least of the boys insisted on their sons being prepared. And when once a boy entered the matriculation classes his interest in

[1] The *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* for May 1913.

painting and music evaporated, for these things possessed no mark-earning value.

Great strides have been made since my visit early in 1920. The matriculation classes have gone, the university planned by Rabindra Nath Tagore has come into existence under the title of Visva Bharati, with Pundit Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya Sastri as its first Principal; great oriental scholars from the West have received and have responded to the invitation of its founder to accept its hospitality, among those who have already done so being Professor Sylvain Levi, M. Benoit and Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Mlle. A. Karpellez and Dr. Winternitz.

It is not in the sphere of education only that we have woven upon a Western warp where we might well have produced a more harmonious blending in the pattern upon the loom had we worked upon an Indian frame, introducing such alterations as seemed desirable by the use of Western thread amid the woof. Indeed, it is in our work in India more than elsewhere, perhaps, that we are likely to be held by the historian of the future to have suffered from the defects of our own qualities. Emerson was a great admirer of the vigour, the determination and the self-assurance of the English people; but with unerring insight he pointed to certain failings which were the outcome of these qualities, when he asserted that the Englishman's confidence in the power and performance of his own nation made him provokingly incurious about others. I have shown elsewhere[1] that in our confidence in the superiority of the system of local self-government which we have evolved for ourselves, it did not occur to us that there could be any other which India might prefer; whereas a people more diffident might well have sought, and had they

[1] In chapter xi. of "India: A Bird's-eye View".

done so would certainly have discovered, the foundations of an indigenous system laid firm in the soil of India by Indian genius long centuries before, upon which to build a structure more in consonance with Indian aptitudes and tradition. Has not experience in this case proved that in our attempts to bring East and West, India and Great Britain together, to weave into the tapestry of Indo-Anglian history, so to speak, the threads of Indian and British theory and practice in the science of government and the art of life, we have tended to make too large a use of the material of the West?

At the present time we are making herculean efforts to establish in India in the higher sphere of government, a constitution modelled as faithfully as possible upon our own. Is it certain that a constitution which has been evolved gradually with our own growth from childhood to nationhood is the one best suited to the genius and the circumstances of the Indian peoples? There are, at any rate, Indians of widely differing schools of thought who entertain serious doubts upon the point, and who are clearly far from thinking that the possibilities of political science have been exhausted with the evolution of the democratic constitutions of the West. Nearly a quarter of a century ago Mr. B. C. Pal sounded a note of warning. With impressive emphasis and unwavering insistence he asserted that to ignore the peculiar genius of a people in schemes of reform, whether of their political or their social institutions, was "to foredoom those schemes to failure, to court disappointment and to risk disaster". And he added that reform on national lines involved "the recognition of and due obedience to the supreme genius of the nation in devising means for its advancement".[1] More

[1] In a paper entitled "Reform on National Lines," published in December 1901.

recently Mr. C. R. Das has expressed the opinion that "a highly centralised form of parliamentary government is contrary to the economic, social and religious nature of India". But beyond asserting that "the organisation of village life and the practical autonomy of small local centres are more important than either provincial autonomy or central responsibility", and that "the ideal should be accepted once for all that the proper function of the central authority, whether in the provincial or in the Indian Government, is to advise, having a residuary power of control only, in case of need, and to be exercised under proper safeguards", he has hitherto said little in public from which any idea can be formed of the sort of constitution which he has in mind.

A constructive contribution towards the solution of the problem of Indian Government comes from an entirely different quarter. In the autumn of 1922 an announcement was made by order of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore of certain developments in the constitution of the State upon which he had decided, and of the appointment of a Committee to work out the details of the plan. The Committee under the chairmanship of an eminent scholar of Bengal, Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University, issued its report in March 1923. The goal at which the Committee aimed was a constitution which, while taking cognisance of present-day tendencies throughout the world, should yet be based upon Indian rather than upon Western theory, and give expression to Indian rather than to European ideals. The report is of particular interest, therefore, at a time when we ourselves are engaged in setting up machinery by which the government of the vast continent which we have shouldered for so long, is to be transferred gradually to its many peoples; and

for the benefit of those who may be sufficiently interested I have drawn up an appreciation of it which I have added as an Appendix to this volume.

I do not suggest that a constitution suited to a self-contained Indian Native State such as Mysore in which the position and prestige of an hereditary ruler are factors of paramount importance, would be equally suited in all its details to British India. But the scheme is based on principles which are capable of general application. The actual process of law-making; the organs by which that process is to be carried out, and the constitution of these organs, could be adopted where conditions varied widely from those prevailing in Mysore; and an outline of the recommendations of the Committee on these points is, therefore, relevant here.

The process of law-making is regarded as a threefold one. The first part of the process consists of the presentation of matters in respect of which legislation seems to be required. Such presentation should be made by the people themselves, and the organ designed to give effect to this part of the process is a Representative Assembly so constituted as to be an epitome of the people. Its members are expected "to articulate the intuitive and unsophisticated views and wishes of the people".[1] The second part of the process is a technical one, namely, the scientific examination of legislative proposals before they are submitted to the legislature; and the machinery by which this task is to be discharged consists of Standing Boards of experts so constituted as to be qualified to advise both the executive government and the legislature. The final part of the process—the actual discussion and amendment of draft bills—is to be performed

[1] This and other quotations are from the report of the Committee.

by a body much smaller than the Representative Assembly made up of persons of knowledge and experience, a body which would be not so much an epitome of the people as "an assembly embodying the collective wisdom and virtue".

The means by which it is sought to make of the Representative Assembly an epitome of the people, deserve attention. Territorial constituencies provide a general basis on which to build up a system of popular representation; but there are other considerations in addition to the mere accident of an individual's residence in a particular locality which must be taken into account. "Neighbourhood", argues the Committee, "is no doubt a vital bond . . . and territorial electorates are a necessary basis of representation . . . but the ties of common interests and common functions that bind men into groups and associations independently of the tie of neighbourhood, acquire greater and greater importance with the more complex evolution of life and society. . . . A citizen of a state is a citizen not merely because he resides in a particular locality, but really by virtue of the functions which he exercises and the interests he has at stake in the body politic." The constituencies should, therefore, be not territorial only, but vocational as well. Those who are familiar with the social organisation of the Aryan settlements in the Ganges Valley two thousand years and more ago,[1] will see in this idea a reaching back to the guilds and other corporations which were one of its outstanding features. The Committee itself claims the support of the ancient Sanskrit works on political science for its contention that representation of this kind is in strict accordance with the political genius of the Indian peoples.

[1] Described in chapters iii. and xi. of "India: A Bird's-eye View".

The ministers who form the Executive are the agents of the Ruler of the State, chosen by him as his advisers, and they are, therefore, neither responsible to nor removable by the legislature. And in this respect the new constitution of Mysore is essentially monarchical. It is a monarchy, however, which lays no claim to absolutism, for the ruler, according to the theory upon which the scheme is based, rules by virtue of his representative character; and a referendum to the people—as represented in the case of Mysore by the Representative Assembly—is the means whereby the unity between the ruler and his people is made real and effective. The referendum, consequently, is regarded as fundamental in the constitution, and it is by its operation that the primacy of the people is assured. Under such circumstances there is no *a priori* reason why the head of the State should be an hereditary monarch. The position could equally well be filled by an elected head in a non-monarchical State or by the representative of the King Emperor in a province of British India. Indeed the adoption of some at least of the principles embodied in the constitution of Mysore had been urged for British India before ever the Committee had been appointed, by so gifted an Indian statesman as His Highness the Aga Khan. Both in his writings and in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee which was concerned with the framing of the Reforms Act of 1919, he made it abundantly clear that in his considered opinion an Executive irremovable by the legislature, but brought into close organic union with the people by means of the initiative and the referendum, was far better suited to India than the British model. "The Indian peoples," he asserted, "with an instinctive sense of their need, have asked for self-government within the Empire,

not for Parliamentary institutions on the British model." And he went further and pointed out that none of the draft schemes prepared by Indians, from that of Gokhale to the joint representation of the National Congress and the Moslem League, hypothecated full and immediate responsibility of the Executive to the legislature.[1] The employment of the word "responsible" in its technical constitutional sense in the famous Reforms Declaration of Parliament was in his view unfortunate, because it carried the technical meaning of a government responsible for its existence to an assembly elected by the people, whereas the ministers should be responsible *through the Governor to the Crown and, so far* as tenure of office was concerned, free from the control of the legislature. "It would be a disaster," he declared, "for India to be forced into the narrow form of constitutionalism that developed with its essential condition of two great rival parties in England through historical and natural causes."[2] These representations left unshaken the conviction deeply rooted in the British mind that the British model must be the best; and once again the British Parliament provided justification for the criticism passed by Emerson upon the British people.

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There is, then, ample evidence derived from many spheres of modern Indian life—from that of political science of which the constitution of Mysore is an example, from that of education of which the Visva Bharati provides an illustration, from that of literature as witness the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, of Rabindra Nath Tagore, of Miss Sita Devi and other well-known Bengali writers of the present day, and from that

[1] See "India in Transition", by His Highness the Aga Khan, published in 1918.

[2] *Ibid.*

of art [1]—of the existence of something which has all the appearance of an Indian civilisation, the direct descendent of and heir to that born and nurtured on Indian soil, but vivified and to some extent modified by contact with the thought of the West. Do these things represent living growths or are they artificial products—the result of clever but mechanical dovetailing together of pieces organically unrelated to one another, held together by no more intimate a tie than that which binds the stones of a mosaic? There are some who maintain that no more intimate union than this is possible between the genius—or, as Mr. Pal would say, the thought-structure—of one nation and another. "Growth is a question of organism", declares Mr. C. R. Das, "and you cannot grow into a different thing from what you are unless the seed and germ of this different thing is already present in your organism", and in further illustration of his contention, "just as no permanent union can be effected by gluing together two separate physical things, so no permanent union can be effected by importing special features from the life of a foreign nationality and seeking to graft them upon the genius and character of our own nation".

I have no desire to embark upon a discussion of vexed questions of heredity to which the science of biology itself has not yet given its final answers. Nor is there any need of doing so, for few will deny that the intellectual outlook of the educated Indian of the twentieth century has been modified by a hundred years of contact

[1] "Mr. Mukul Dey is a young Indian artist belonging to that Calcutta school which seeks to revive the traditional styles and motives of Indian art. With a view to strengthening his draughtsmanship and science he came to England and studied at the Royal College of Art, where he has gained a diploma. He has not, however, Westernised his art, and has a devout admiration for those great classics of Indian painting, the now famous frescoes in the rock temples of Ajanta." The *Morning Post* of February 5, 1924.

with the thought-structure of the West. Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore is an outstanding product of Indian genius; yet Mr. Das would hardly suggest, I imagine, that the thought-structure of this great figure in the world of literature would have been precisely what it is had no contact ever taken place between India and Europe. A far truer appreciation of the realities of the problem, surely, was displayed by the late Sir Asutosh Mukherji when he established the post-graduate department of the Calcutta University. Speaking of his hopes and beliefs concerning this enterprise, he characterised the doctrine held in some quarters that what is foreign should be excluded from the field of Indian education as "hateful", and the claim that what is Indian must necessarily be the best, as "ignorant and presumptious". And he summed up his argument in the following words: "The root of the matter is that though the things which have universal human value are the things of most importance in education, the universal can be fully apprehended only where it lives in concrete embodiments. Consequently, while we recognise and appropriate all that is wholesome in the culture of the West, we are equally concerned with the preservation and development of the organs of our national culture and civilisation." [1]

The India of to-day is giving birth to men great in science—that branch of the tree of knowledge which has been in special degree a gift to India from the West. Sir J. C. Bose is one, Sir P. C. Roy is another. No one would ever dream of describing these men as in any respect un-Indian. The latter in particular has been closely identified in recent years with movements

[1] Address at the convocation of the Lucknow University on January 7, 1924. This was one of the last pronouncements made by him before his sudden and tragic death early in the summer of the same year.

which are essentially nationalist. Among the younger men is Dr. J. C. Ghose, less known as yet to the general public, but known already in scientific circles in the West for valuable original work which places him in the front rank of the physico-chemists of the day.[1] The thought-structure of the race as represented by such men has unquestionably been modified by the changed mental environment which has arisen out of the contact effected between India and Great Britain. Have they for this reason been uprooted from their own cultural and intellectual soil? Surely not. It is true that there is an extreme school of thought in India which would dissociate the life of her people altogether from the science of the West; but this school derives its teaching in the main from Mr. M. K. Gandhi, who in his turn has been profoundly influenced by the teaching of Tolstoy. In his condemnation of railways, for example, Mr. Gandhi asserts that God set a limit to a man's locomotive ambition in the construction of his body, and after observing with pained disapproval that man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit, added that God had gifted man with intellect that he might know his Maker, whereas man had abused it so that he might forget his Maker.[2] To any one less curiously dogmatic on such matters, it would surely have occurred that God had also equipped man with the brain that discovered and then applied the locomotive power locked up in steam.

If this attitude towards progress were typical of the genius of India, then her future would be dark indeed. Happily it is exceptional rather than typical. Nothing impressed me more when visiting the high schools and colleges of Bengal

[1] In particular for his theory of electrolytic dissociation.
[2] "Indian Home Rule", by M. K. Gandhi, second edition, p. 47.

than the demand which has arisen in recent years for instruction in chemistry and other physical sciences. Nor shall I easily forget the enthusiasm which was aroused when Sir Jagadis Bose dedicated the Institute in Calcutta which bears his name to the Indian nation. In the course of his dedicatory address he said: "It is forgotten that He who surrounded us with this ever-evolving mystery of Creation, the ineffable wonder that lies hidden in the microcosm of the dust particle, enclosing within the intricacies of its atomic form all the mystery of the cosmos, has also implanted in us the desire to question and understand". Therein is to be seen the difference between the Indian lost in the mazes of an extravagant extremism and the Indian who has chosen the middle way. But more than that. Sir J. C. Bose stands to-day a living witness of the success with which, in spite of Mr. C. R. Das's denial, "the special features from the life of a foreign nationality"—in this case the analytical methods of experimental science—can be "grafted upon the genius and character" of the Indian nation. For with all his wonderful grasp of the scientific methods of the West he remains essentially a product of Indian genius. He draws his inspiration from what Mr. Pal has described as "the particular World idea" of the Indian race, the idea that is to be "the corner-stone of the new Indian nation as it was of the old Hindu race"[1] —the idea of an all-pervading unity underlying the apparent diversity of the universe. Over and over again in speech and writing he has given expression to this thought. "The excessive specialisation of the West has led to the danger of our losing sight of the fundamental truth that there are not sciences, but a single science that includes all." In his investigations into the

[1] See the Prologue.

action of forces upon matter he tells us that he was amazed to find boundary lines vanishing, and to discover points of contact emerging between the living and non-living. He can conceive of no greater contribution to knowledge in the realm of science than the establishment of a great generalisation "not merely speculative, but based on actual demonstration of an underlying unity amidst bewildering diversity". And straight from his heart comes the cry: "Shall this great glory be for India to win?"[1] And speaking at the Institute in Calcutta at which research on the lines marked out by his own life's work is being vigorously prosecuted, he has said: "Here will assemble those who would seek oneness amidst the manifold. Here it is that the genius of India should find its true blossoming."

The last time I saw him before I left India was once again within the precincts of that building which some years before, I had heard him dedicate "not merely a laboratory but a temple". A laboratory, for within its walls would be carried on investigation with those marvellously delicate instruments which have excited the admiration of scientists throughout the world—instruments of such amazing sensitiveness, that variations in the rate of the growth of plants so minute as one-fifteen millionth of an inch per second have been detected—along the lines which he has made peculiarly his own; a temple, for there are other truths which must remain beyond even the supersensitive methods known to science, truths which can only be revealed by faith—"faith tested not in a few years, but by an entire life". He was standing beneath a picture which I have heard described as an "allegoric masterpiece", the picture of two figures, those of Intellect feeling

[1] See an address delivered by Sir J. C. Bose at the foundation of the Hindu University at Benares in February 1916.

the sharp edge of the sword with which he has to cleave his way through the dense darkness of ignorance, and his bride Imagination inspiring him to effort with the music of her magic flute. It is the work of Nanda Lal Bose, one of the masters of that school of Indian painting whose birth I have described. He was the scientist speaking of what had been accomplished in the Institute. He passed on to say something of his hopes for the future. His face was lit up by the fire of enthusiasm, and expression and voice alike became those of the seer—of the man with a message for mankind. There could be no shadow of doubt that in treading the pathway of the golden mean he had not merely retained, but had enhanced the value of his Indian parentage, or that in the empirical knowledge of the West he had found the complement of the intuitive knowledge of the East. But let him speak for himself. Telling the world long since of his discovery of the thinness of the partition between organic and inorganic matter, he said: "It was when I perceived in them (the results of his experiments) one phase of a pervading unity that bears within it all things—the mote that quivers within ripples of light, the teeming life upon our earth, and the radiant sun that shines above us—it was then that I understood for the first time a little of that message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago:

"'They who see but one in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto them belongs eternal truth—unto none else; unto none else!'"

APPENDIX

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN MYSORE

MEMORANDUM SUMMARISING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

THE Report of the Committee sets forth proposals for framing a Constitution which, while taking cognisance of present-day tendencies throughout the world, yet seeks to base itself upon Indian rather than Western theory, and to give expression to Indian rather than to European ideals. The basic fact of such a Constitution is the existence of the Head of the State as the supreme executive head as well as the source and sanction of law; and in the view of the Committee this provides the key to the fundamental difference between a typically Indian form of Government and a modern democratic Constitution, such as that of Great Britain. The one is unitary in origin and in fact: the other dualistic in origin, if not at the present time, altogether so in practice. For if the British Constitution has "reached a basis of unity under an arrangement by which the Cabinet controls Parliament *de facto*, while Parliament controls the Cabinet *de jure*", this does not alter the fact that it is the product of a system under which sovereignty was divided between two originally separate elements, namely, the Head of the State and the people composing the State.[1] In the case of a unitary State the Head

[1] Strictly speaking the Indian constitution had a pluralistic origin, as a reference to chapter xi. of the first volume of this series ("India: A Bird's-eye View", pp. 132-138) will show. But the Committee when speaking of the Mysore Constitution as being unitary *in origin* is referring to the period when the State proper had come into existence and not to those earlier days of guilds and other corporations before the rise of kingship. When once the idea of "the state" had arisen, "the monism of the Hindu mind", to quote the words of Dr Seal in a letter to me on the subject, "stamped its impress on the polity by emphasising the need of the monarch as the wielder of *Danda* (sanction, punishment) for the preservation of *Dharma* (the Law of Laws); and in the end the latter-day Indian states in practice became monistic and absolute".

thereof, as the symbol of *Dharma* or the law, is regarded as representing the people "directly and primarily in his person . . . and as standing in a more direct and vital relationship to them" than the members of any representative body. He may seek the advice of individuals or of corporations; he may delegate his functions to individuals or to chambers; but he remains the head of the body politic, such other limbs as may evolve or be created being but subordinate members—"organs of one Will centred in the Head" wherein resides "the permanent reservoir of law-making power".

This being the recognised position of the Head of the State, the object of the introduction into the Constitution of other bodies is in the main to provide machinery for perfecting the process by which effect is given in the domain of legislation and of administration, to the one undivided Will of the State. Those bodies of the ancient Indian polity to which reference is made in the Report—the village assemblies, the guilds and other similar associations—having disappeared, new bodies must be created for this purpose. And to this end, in the view of the Mysore Committee, the process of law-making may most conveniently be treated as a threefold one, each part of the process being assigned to a separate organ. The first part of the process is the enumeration of matters in respect of which legislation is desirable. Legislation having been decided on, the next part of the process consists of a technical and expert examination of the matter, and, finally, there is the actual work of discussion and amendment in the course of which the measure assumes its final form for presentation to the Head of the State for ratification or, if he thinks fit, rejection.

The Committee found the rudiments of these three organs already in existence in Mysore, having grown up "under the silent forces of natural evolution", and proceeded to make recommendations for their formal incorporation in the Constitution. The first of these organs, to be known as the Representative Assembly, should be so constituted as to be an "epitome of the people", and as such its functions should be to voice the popular will in all the acts of Government affecting the life of the people. It should serve two important ends—the initiative and the referendum. Its members would "articulate the intuitive and unsophisticated

views and wishes of the people". It would not perform the actual work of legislation, but would express its opinion on legislative measures both before and after they had been dealt with by the organ—namely, the Legislative Council—to which this function is assigned. It should be in fact a "conference of the delegates of the whole people". The number of members suggested for this body is 250.

The actual work of legislation should be performed by a smaller body of fifty members, consisting of persons of knowledge and experience, a body which would not be so much an epitome of the people as "an assembly embodying the collective wisdom and virtue"; while work of a more technical character—the scientific examination of legislative proposals before they are submitted to the legislature, and of proposed administrative action, etc.—should be discharged by Standing Boards of experts constituted for advising the Government and the legislature.

One of the most interesting features of this machinery is its suggested composition. In the case alike of the Representative Assembly and the Legislative Council, the Committee urges that representation should not be merely general, but should include minorities and a variety of interests as well. The Constituencies, that is to say, should be not merely territorial, but vocational. This is an essentially Indian tradition going back to the days of the guilds and caste corporations, and great stress is laid upon it in the Report. "Neighbourhood is no doubt a vital bond . . . and territorial electorates are a necessary basis of representation . . .; but the ties of common interests and common functions that bind men into groups and associations independently of the tie of neighbourhood, acquire greater and greater importance with the more complex evolution of life and society. . . . A citizen of a state is a citizen, not merely because he resides in a particular locality, but really by virtue of the functions he exercises and the interests he has at stake in the body politic."

The ancient Sanskrit treatises on political science—the Arthashastras—are quoted in support of the claim that representation of this kind is in accordance with "the political temper and political genius of the Indian peoples". But continuity is not the only advantage urged for such a system. The greatest advantage

claimed for it is that it is bound to work for the softening of differences in general, and of communal differences in particular. The dividing lines of the professions—so runs the argument—cut across those of the communities. "So far as rigid communal barriers in the matter of vocations and functions are breaking down, and a free inter-change and inter-flow are being established in society at large, the representation of interests and functions on a non-communal and non-ethnic basis will be an influence for unification and concord".

For the present it is suggested that provision should be made for the representation of seven or eight different interests, to be spread over fifteen seats in the Representative Assembly; but a large development of this element in the composition of the Assembly is aimed at in the future, and the number of different interests which the Committee would like to see specially represented, includes agriculture, manufacture and trade, land and capital, law, medicine, engineering and teaching, labour, social service, women and children, the depressed classes, and even dumb animals.

Prima facie one would have expected that the particular category of interests which bulks so largely in India and which has proved a source of so much difficulty where it has had to be fitted into the framework of the parliamentary system which is being established in British India, namely, the communal, would have been regarded as the most important of the special interests to be provided for in an Indianised form of a modern Constitution. But this is not so.

The Committee draws a sharp distinction between the "function groups" described above which "form no *imperium in imperio*, no independent centres of the citizen's loyalty or allegiance conflicting with the growth of the national sentiment or with a sense of the common weal", and the different communities with "creeds and customs that sunder", which constitute "so many independent and original centres". Nevertheless—though the Committee was far from unanimous as to the means by which it was to be achieved—it was recognised that some scheme must be devised to afford protection to communal minorities which were proved in practice to be unable to secure representation through the ordinary electorates. The device of communal electorates, adopted in British India in the case of the Mohammedans and

the Sikhs, after being condemned in vigorous terms by the chairman, was rejected by the Committee, though the scheme eventually adopted by the majority, necessarily possessed certain features in common with the system which was condemned. Briefly it was laid down that any minority community of not less than 20,000 souls, failing to obtain representation through the general electorate, should be entitled to representation through special electorates consisting of such *bona fide* associations, numbering not less than 100 members, as had been established for the advancement of the communities. The chief advantages claimed for this scheme are, first, that it displays no discrimination in favour of, or against, any particular community. The measure of protection which it affords is offered to any community which is proved by experience to require it. Secondly that it will act as a stimulus to the communities affected by it, since representation will only be accorded if suitable associations conforming to certain prescribed conditions are established. And finally, that sooner or later the scheme will automatically work itself out as the progress made by the various minority communities enables them to obtain representation in the ordinary way. This result will be hastened when the general standard of education and political experience permits of the introduction of some form of proportional representation. It is thought that some ten or twelve out of about thirty minority communities will secure representation through the general electorates from the start.

These different bodies, as has been pointed out, have been designed to facilitate the translation into concrete form of the one undivided Will of the State. They have no power to tap " the permanent reservoir of law-making power " vested in the Head of the State. For the " constitutional unity between the Head and his people is the central fact in an Indian state like Mysore, built on the unitary plan ". It follows from this that the executive or ministry is not responsible to, or removable by, the legislature, for the ministers are the agents of the Head of the State chosen by him as his advisers, and responsible to him. And the wisdom of this conception of the unitary state—of this close organic relation between the sovereign and his people—is extolled on various grounds, but particularly on this, that it works for the perpetuation of *dharma*, that is

to say of righteousness or the moral justice which is the lawful due of every individual of whom the State is composed. For "no Court of Areopagus, no Justiza of Aragon, no Federal Supreme Court, no Hague arbitrations, nor any other machinery that ever has been invented by man has served as a material check on that most perfect of all tyrannies, the irresponsible will of the majority in any democracy". The only safeguard against such tyranny is the willing homage of all wills in the State to the Law of Laws, King Dharma, the inscrutable and inexorable Ruler of the Universe, of whom the Head of the State is the Representative on earth. And if it be objected that such a constitution is in effect nothing but an autocracy hiding behind an ingenious camouflage, its authors reply that this is not so, for the crucial feature of the constitution—the means by which the primacy of the people is secured and the unity between them and the Head of the State made living and effective—is the referendum. It is this right of initiative and referendum vested in the General Assembly of the delegates of the whole people that constitutes the pivot upon which the machine of government is poised, for without it "the one undivided Will of the State" could neither be ascertained nor *a fortiori* given effect to.

The Committee was precluded by its terms of reference from dealing in any detail with the reorganisation of local self-government. But in touching briefly upon this question, which it regards as one of the highest importance, it urges the re-construction of the machinery of local self-government on lines according with ancient Indian sentiment and tradition. Until the edifice of local self-government is rebuilt on a foundation of bodies characteristic of the ancient Indo-Aryan polity, such as village panchayats and guilds, local self-government will remain "an exotic, unacclimatised and unrooted on Indian soil". With the re-creation of such a foundation on which such bodies as District Boards may rest, there will come into existence the "true Jacob's ladder" giving access to "the democrats' Heaven". This is the plan of Indian rural organisation, "which is still visible in outline, however dilapidated may be the walls; and", in the opinion of the Committee, "it may even now be restored with some facings and buttresses from modern county council developments in the agricultural countries of the West"

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