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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Cultural Origins of Asia . . .	1
II.	The Great Buddhist Cultural Migration: (*a*) From India to China and Korea .	13
III.	The Great Buddhist Cultural Migration: (*b*) From India via Korea to Japan .	31
IV.	Japan—the Modern Insular Synthesis of Continental Asian Culture. . . .	46
V.	Continental Cultural Movements: (1) Burma and Siam; Turkistan and Tibet	64
VI.	Continental Cultural Movements: (2) The Mughal Expansion . . .	93
VII.	The Island Cultures—Ceylon and Java .	108
VIII.	India the Mother of Asian Culture . .	122

CHAPTER I

THE CULTURAL ORIGINS OF ASIA

"Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment the broad expanse of love for the Infinite and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from the maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life."

These words form the first paragraph of a book entitled "The Ideals of the East" which

was published in England, in 1903. The writer of the book was Kakuzo Okakura, a Japanese scholar and artist of world-wide travel, who was sent to Europe and America by the Japanese Government in order to enquire into western arts, and returned a firm opponent of the westernisation then setting in in Japan, through which she threatened to barter her birthright of Asian culture for the poor exchange of material prosperity as it is valued in non-Asian countries.

I take this paragraph as the text of this study because, when I first read it after my return to India from a year's travel and work in the Far East, it gathered to a focus the clear but unrelated reflections which my mind had taken with regard to the cultural life which I had contacted—the culture of China and Korea touched lightly on the way to and fro, and the culture of Japan lived with intimately for ten months. Everywhere I was aware of elusive and flickering

indications which led back through external differences to internal relationships, with glimpses of some deeply hidden root in which differences and relationships were united, a root whose name I perceived to be *Asia*. Everywhere also I heard expressions of reverence for India, and was told that no public personage had ever received such a welcome in Tokyo as a visitor from the sacred land several years ago—Rabindranath Tagore. Indeed, just as the Christian of the British Isles looks to Palestine as the Holy Land, his spiritual motherland, the Buddhist of the Japanese Isles looks to India. And out of reflection on these things arose the mental image of a Great Being, having a mighty brain from which came forth the ideas that took to themselves incarnation in the religions of eastern Asia—Hinduism and Buddhism—with their intuition, their intellectual adventure, their elaborate psychology; a Being having also a mighty heart through

which thrilled the impulses that made for themselves instruments of expression in the religions of western Asia—Christianity and Islam—with their fervour of devotion, their warmth of humanity, and their emphasis on action; and I perceived that heart and head were not competitive in relationship, but complementary.

Asia is indeed one, and unique, in her mothering of the world's religious aspirations. But it is not my purpose to study the rise and history of religions as such; my aim, rather, is to study that intermediate activity of humanity which lies between its religious function and its daily life—the activity of culture, in which the glimpses and urge of a deeper life are expressed through the symbolism of the life that we know; in literature which uses words and images drawn from everyday life for the expression of a life beyond the day; in the arts which take the sounds and colours of

nature as means to the disclosure of "a light that never was on sea or land". We have apprehended the truth that there is a vast culture which bears the stamp of a quality which we have come to recognise as Asian; and the question raises its head, "What is that quality? Can it be put into a memorable phrase? How has that inner quality shown itself geographically as to its sources and historically as to its expression in the things of life?"

Okakura answers the first question. "The common inheritance of every Asiatic race," he says, "is love for the Ultimate and Universal," as distinguished from love for the Particular, which is expressed by races outside Asia. He also gives us a clue to the answer to the geographical and historical question when he states that it is this love for the Ultimate and Universal that has enabled the Asian races to produce all the great religions of the world.

In other words, the elaboration of the religions of the world which have stood the test of time was given to Asia because she was fundamentally religious. She expressed herself naturally in religion, while other peoples have had to take over one or other of the religions of Asia in order to express themselves. That fundamental religiousness of Asia shows itself in every atom of her life where it is truly Asian; so that the study of the geographical rise and historical development of Asian culture, with a view to realising its unity, must take into account the history of religion, since religion is both the shaper and the carrier of Asian culture. Let us glance then at the geographical rise of the great religions.

On the tableland of eastern Persia, (or it may be, as scholarship begins to surmise, on the peninsula now called Asia Minor) away back in the mists of antiquity, arose the primeval Aryan religion. From its ancient home it passed into

Europe, and built up, in contact with early cults, the primitive religions of Greece, Rome, Germany, Scandinavia, and the British Isles. These early religions have passed away, leaving hardly a trace of themselves in the life of to-day, but leaving certain cultural tendencies and aptitudes that may be seen by those who have opened eyes. One example will indicate these tendencies and aptitudes. When Saint Patrick carried the Christian gospel to Ireland in the fourth century, he found a people with a spiritual instinct that regarded the new teaching as but a variant of the old Celtic teaching, and merged the old Aryan faith with the new faith that was also Asian. For several centuries the old Brehon laws of Ireland (with their close affinities to Vedic laws as shown by the jurist Mayne in his book "Ancient Institutions") existed, but were ultimately overthrown by the Roman law of England in the seventeenth century. So subtly, however, had the Aryan

influence intermingled with the culture of Ireland that when, once again, at the opening of the twentieth century, the ancient Asian spirit touched Ireland through the philosophy of India, as conveyed to it through the works of Edwin Arnold and the Theosophical Society, there was an immediate response. Two poets (Æ and Yeats) found their inmost nature expressed in the Indian modes. They found also the spiritual truths that Asia had given to the world reflected in the old myths and legends of Ireland; and out of their illumination and enthusiastic response arose the Irish Literary and Dramatic Revival whose influence at its highest was purely spiritual.

On the Iranian plateau the Aryan genius expressed itself also in the Zoroastrian religion. From Iran the same genius passed over into India, and gave out the Vedas. Out of these arose Hinduism which absorbed the old Dravidian culture, the latter being a distributary of the

same main stream of religious culture which had managed to reach southern India at an earlier date. Out of Hinduism arose Buddhism.

Geographically, the next neighbour to the primitive Aryan culture is the Semitic. From its home in western Asia it sent out the original Arabic, Hebraic and Ethiopian (African) religions. But through the Arabic the Spirit of Asia passed into Islam, and through the Hebrew into Christianity; and through Christianity the Spirit of Asia once again found its way across Europe, and thence to America. To-day America is sending Christianity to Asia —sending spiritual coals to the spiritual Newcastle! Thus the Aryan chain encircles the globe; and the Spirit of Asia which, in the guise of Christianity, went on pilgrimage to "take up the white man's burden" of care for the Particular, "for the means, not the end, of life," returns to its ancestral home to find its

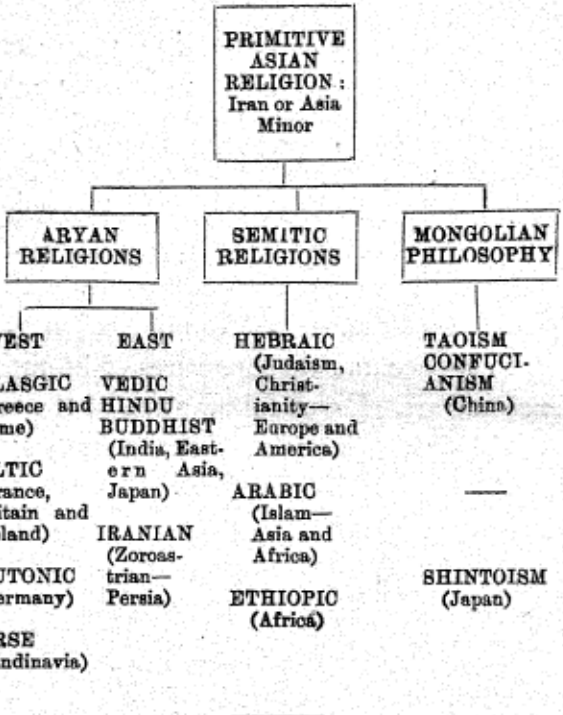
highest interpretation and fulfilment in the Asian "love of the Ultimate and Universal" which is the deepest truth of Christianity and of Asia.

In eastern Asia the primitive Mongolian religions were supplanted in China by the philosophical systems of Taoism and Confucianism. In Japan the cult of ancestor-worship remains under the name of Shinto, the Way of the Gods. In both China and Japan, Buddhism took root and flourished after it had migrated from its birthplace in India.

Four great religions, therefore, remain—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam; and all these arose in Asia. Out of these, four distinctive types of culture elaborated themselves, and during the ages that have elapsed since the distant Vedic era, the Genius of Asia has endeavoured through interchange to make what was one in origin approach towards unity in spirit and towards certain assimilations of

cultural expression. Eastern Asia has met Western Asia across the long trek of Central Asia. North has touched South across the mountains. Hinduism remained, with certain exceptions which we shall note in their proper place, the fixed point, with its tendency to absorb all into itself. Buddhism, under the Emperor Asoka (250 B.C.), became the religion of almost all India, and afterwards, like Christianity and Islam, moved outwards. These sought to give themselves to all, carrying with them their accumulated treasures of literature, science and art. Let us follow some of the main threads in the weaving of the vast web of Asian Culture.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION OF RELIGIONS FROM THEIR PRIMITIVE HOME IN ASIA



HINDU GUARDIAN OF A KOREAN BUDDHIST SHRINE

(A Living Korean Stands at the Foot)

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT BUDDHIST CULTURAL MIGRATION

(*a*) From India to China and Korea

As far back as the fifth century B.C. traders from China reached India through Burma and Assam, and opened the path by which Indian ideas of self-discipline by yoga practice reached China and influenced the cult of Taoism which was then defining itself.

In the year 139 B.C., during the Hang dynasty, a Chinese envoy went across Central Asia to the River Oxus and there found goods for sale which he recognised as products of his own state. He found on enquiry that they

came from India. This matter of trade with western India was deemed of sufficient importance to be reported to the Emperor of China; but there was another thing which, in the light of the future, was of still greater importance, which was mentioned to the Emperor, that was, an Indian religion known as Buddhism. This report was made in 126 B.C. Half a century later, Buddhism was introduced officially into China by the Emperor Ming Ti as the outcome of a dream which he followed up with a deputation to India. The deputation returned with two Buddhist priests who brought Sanskrit books and sacred pictures. A temple was built, and it and the imperial palace were decorated with copies of the pictures. The temple was called the Temple of the White Horse in honour of the favoured animal that had carried the beginnings of the new religion by the long and perilous journey from India. Thus began

the Buddhist influence in Chinese art which ultimately mastered it, and has, with modifications, characterised it to the present day.

Thirty years after the Chinese envoy's report we hear of the sending of a ship to the then newly annexed Cochin China, in order to gratify the Chinese court by bringing a supply of the coloured glass made in Kabulistan. It is a far cry thence, but Asian maritime adventure was probably as extensive as its coastline. A century after Christ we know that Chinese ships reached the Persian Gulf, and that envoys from the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius found their way to Canton in A.D. 226 and were followed by traders.

For some time the trade route across Asia was closed by the Parthian (Persian) wars, but when it was re-opened there went into China by it a number of Buddhist monks. These monks

went from Persia and Eastern Turkestan, from which fact we learn that Indian cultural influence had passed across the mountains in western Asia, over the ancient trade-routes that had carried the wares of China to the region of the Oxus, from a time earlier than the second century B.C., and along which Buddhist culture spread its influence and set its buildings and images, some of which have only recently been discovered, enclosing coins bearing the name of the Indian King Vasudev of Muthra.

Along with the main migration of Buddhist culture went influences from Hindu India which ultimately took their place in art, as we shall see in succeeding chapters, along with the art-expressions of Buddhist culture—thus obeying the Asian tendency towards assimilation.

Between the middle of the third century A.D. and the end of the sixth, China was ruled by Tartar dynasties who made Buddhism the official religion of China, and in the wake of

their expansion westward carried the cultural influence of Buddhism as far as Russia.

During the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) when the Chinese Empire was consolidated, and Buddhism, which had gradually lost in India the position of supremacy it had enjoyed in the days of Asoka, made its home in China, there was much cultural exchange between the two countries. Refugee priests and artists from India found sanctuary in China. Three thousand Indian monks and ten thousand Indian families lived at one time in the capital, Lo Yang. These immigrants brought with them the perfected art-tradition of Ajanta and Ellora, the sources respectively of Buddhist painting and sculpture. They also gave a phonetic value to the Chinese characters for writing, and out of this innovation arose in the ninth century the simplified caligraphic syllabaries which are at present in use in Japan. At the same time bands of Chinese pilgrims found

their way to the holy places of Buddhism in India, collected mementoes and writings, and put on record the early geography of India. In its early years (about A.D. 658) the Tang power spread itself across the whole breadth of Central Asia across the Tarim basin and the valley of the Oxus, and even across the Hindu Kush mountains as far South as the Indian frontier. In its vast expansion it temporarily (that is to say, for about three hundred years) submerged the Turkish empire of western Asia. Ultimately, however, the Tang dynasty was broken up by feudal powers in five phases. Three of these powers were Turkish, and make another link between the culture of eastern and western Asia.

After half a century of turmoil and change, the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960-1280) reunited China, but a smaller China territorially than the Tang dynasty had ruled. Peace reigned, and the cultural elements that had

been gathered up in the previous thousand years began the process of give and take that has been the feature of religious interpretation and philosophical discussion in Asian hands. Confucianism, the traditional socialistic philosophy of the northern Chinese Tartars, was broadened. It took in elements from the Taoism of the south which had been influenced by Indian ideas as to the practical side of the religious life—*yoga*, the way to realisation of the super-personal. It gave out, through contact with the Arabs, the determinist idea that Islam systematised. Thus the cultural threads were spun and woven. In the controversies, during the Sung period, between the socialistic philosophy of Confucius and the individualistic philosophy of Laotse, the rivalry, though it had economic implications, was maintained at the level of the intellect. Material greed was as inoperative as the simple needs of an unacquisitive life would permit

Self-interest as a religious or philosophical ingredient was yet to be elaborated and reduced to a science—outside Asia. The Asian idea of human unity rooted in the spirit, with its practical application in a human comradeship that existed in the nature of things and was not contingent on adherence to any creed (an idea and practice which are the entwined roots of the religio-philosophies of India) had been epitomised out of the floating traditions of the people of northern China five hundred years before Christ. It had exerted its influence for fifteen hundred years, and had infused through the whole Chinese body politic the idea of communal service. Europe was astonished, in 1912, at what it regarded as the most backward of nations suddenly taking up the most advanced of political systems when it became a republic; but China had been a republic in all but name for a thousand years, a republic of mutual service and democratic spirit in the

mass of the people. To-day, according to Mr. Bertrand Russell, China is "the only country which counts education more precious than rubies—and is therefore regarded by non-Asian people as uncivilised."

While Confucianism and Taoism in the twelfth century were rivals in philosophical statement, they were mutual encouragers of the arts. Confucianism saw in the arts a short way to the living of the artistic life, a life compounded of social harmony and beauty. Music, no less than men, acted as conciliatory ambassador between groups of persons who had matters of difference between them. Poetry was made a happy link between political parties. Painting aided right personal conduct. Taoism laid stress on the arts as means to spiritual illumination; and out of Taoism, with its tincture of Indian Buddhism, arose later, as we shall see, some of the distinctive classical art-forms in Japan.

At the close of the thirteenth century the Mongolians overthrew the Sung dynasty, and scattered to the winds of Asia the fruits of a millennium's cultural evolution. But you cannot scatter fruits without scattering the seeds that they contain, and we learn that about 1256 a hundred Chinese artificers with their families were taken by one of the Mongol chiefs to Persia to prosecute their appreciated craft. In exchange for them some elements in western Asian art found their way to China, and showed themselves in Arabic scrolls on early Chinese painted porcelain.

For almost a century (A.D. 1280-1368) China lay under Mongolian domination. Her deliverance from the yoke of a ruder people came through a young Buddhist priest who roused the patriotic spirit of the people. The Mongolians were driven beyond the Gobi desert, and the Chinese dynasty of Ming assumed the sovereignty.

In 1662 another Tartar tribe, the Manchus, asserted its power in China. It established itself in the north, but it was never assimilated politically. In 1912 China proclaimed herself a republic, and to-day is struggling towards unity in organisation through the clash of northern and southern temperaments.

So much for the weaving of one aspect of Asian culture into the national fabric of another Asian people through the culture-bearing medium of Buddhism. Let us glance at the interweaving process in the arts themselves. We have seen that the influence of India on Chinese art began in the first century B.C. with the official carrying of Buddhism to China. Chinese palaces were then transformed by enthusiastic rulers into Buddhist temples, and temples and palaces were decorated after the Indian manner according to the paintings and images carried by the first Buddhist missionaries to China. Afterwards began the

process of variation that is the delight of the student of cultural migration and expression. The original canopy or umbrella of early Buddhist ceremonial, multiplied to indicate rank, passed through the brick *stupa* of Buddhist architecture into the wooden pagoda of China and later of Japan. Buddhist legend found its way into wall carvings in stone. Large figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva were set up. At the foot of an image of the Buddha, in the sixth century, there is an inscription which unites the spirit of devotion (*bhakti*) with the spirit of wisdom (*gnana*) —India united to China. Its first paragraph reads :

> Spiritual truth is deep and wide, of infinite excellence but difficult of comprehension. Without words it would be impossible to expound its doctrine, without images its form could not be revealed. Words explain the law of two and six, images delineate the relations of four and eight. Is it not profound and co-extensive with infinite space, beyond all comparison lofty.

As time went on, and the reabsorption of Buddhism into Hinduism in India set free the art-genius of Hinduism, representations of ideas not originally in Chinese Buddhist art made their appearance—the sacred bird *garuda*, the seven-headed serpent, the four Maharajas or guardians, and other figures.

Thus Hindu art joined hands with Buddhist art in China. But it did not stop there. It influenced the old Chinese cult of Taoism to such an extent that Taoist temples were copied from Buddhist temples, and their interior decorations made after the Buddhist manner. The Indian style was transformed into the Chinese. Even the distinctive Muhammadan style of mosque architecture is masked in China by an exterior in the Chinese style.

In other arts and crafts there are the tokens of cultural exchange between India and China, but a detailed reference to them would overweight our study.

We have to hark back to the middle of the fourth century A.D. in order to take up another of the main threads in the web of Asian culture. The Tartar dynasty was then in the seat of Chinese sovereignty. It had adopted Buddhism as the official religion. It carried its influence as far west as Russia, where still there are half a million Buddhists, and it was the channel for the passage of Buddhist culture into Korea, from whence it went over to Japan.

In the year A.D. 369 Korea was divided into three kingdoms, Koguryu in the north of the peninsula, Pakche in the south-west, and Silla in the south-east. From the king of one of the Chinese border kingdoms a message was sent to the king of Koguryu by a Buddhist priest, a Tibetan, recommending the new religion, and sending texts and images. The king of Koguryu accepted the religion, and appointed the priest-tutor to the Crown Prince.

The result was a stimulus to education and artistic crafts. The kingdom became such a centre of enlightenment that its neighbour kingdom of Pakche, in the year 384, asked the Emperor of China to send them a priest. This was done, the priest being an Indian of great learning and repute, Marananda. A century and a half later the king of Pakche recommended the Buddhist religion to the Emperor of Japan, with wide-reaching results.

Silla, the third Korean kingdom, received Buddhism about the year 424. The missionary priest, described as black, and probably a Dravidian Indian, lived in a cave and at his request, through the king, artists were sent for, to decorate the walls of his rock temple with sculptures. These decorations remain to-day, kindred not only to the Buddhist sculptures of India, but kindred also to the whole unbroken family of Indian art. Thus religion and art in Korea maintained their traditional

Asian comradeship. But they were not alone. Science studied the starry heavens thirteen hundred years ago from perhaps the oldest observatory still standing on earth. Wisdom and scholarship, poetry, skill in essay-writing and in caligraphy, received the highest recognition. Commerce linked the eastern peninsula of Asia, Korea, with the western peninsula, Arabia. So powerful an influence did the kingdom of Silla generate that, before its decline at the beginning of the tenth century, it ruled all Korea. Buddhist culture was the culture of the country, and it has to be remembered that that culture did not come to Korea *from* China, but *through* it from India. Its first missionaries, a Tibetan, an Aryan and a Dravidian, took with them the original impulse of religion and art which set upon the people of Korea that stamp of refinement and gentleness which is their main characteristic to-day. It was during this era, about the year 1218,

that the complete Buddhist scriptures were printed from wooden blocks, two centuries before the year in which history text-books record the fact that wood-block printing was discovered in Europe.

During the succeeding dynasty of Koryu, which lasted until the end of the fourteenth century, and the early years of the dynasty of Yi, which was terminated by the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, the externals of Buddhist religion and art suffered degeneration, and, in 1472, Buddhism was abolished, its place being taken to a considerable extent by a western Asian religion, Christianity, with a non-Asian interpretation. To-day there are signs of a Buddhist revival; rather is it truer to say that there are signs of a general revival which is touching all the faiths; and those who have observed the spirit of religious tolerance which rises naturally out of the fundamental Asian conception of the

to religious fusion and tolerance which persist in Japan to the present time, and to which we shall refer in a later chapter.

It was at this time that Japanese art, which had already been drawn out of its primitive limitations by the influence of China, responded to the new impulse. Temples began to rise, and artists, inspired to concrete representation of the Buddha (*Dai Butsu*—"more than man"), erected huge statues, cast in bronze, and made others, smaller in size, out of wood covered with lacquer. These beginnings of Buddhist art in Japan came through China and Korea; but later, as we have already observed, in the Gupta period of Indian history, Indian artists went direct to Japan, and carried on the work of infusing the spiritual quality of Indian sculpture into the strength of China which has been carried across to the Japanese island empire. Japan herself gave the touch of finesse, and thus completed the Asian trinity

of artistic quality—the spiritual intuition of India, the keen intellectuality of China, the æsthetic sensibility of Japan.

Buddhism was now (eighth century) the religion of Japan. The Emperor Shomu called himself the "slave of the Trinity"—Buddha, Dharma (the Law) and the Sangha (Order). It was he who erected the colossal Buddha at Nara, the largest cast-bronze statue in the world. It is said that the Japanese artist, Giogi, was dying just as the statue was nearing completion. A monk from India arrived, and was asked, as a native of the "holy land," to carry out the unveiling ceremony.

Japanese painting shared in the stimulus from India. Early in the eighth century the walls of the temple at Horyuji, near Nara, were decorated in the Ajanta manner, and to-day, under the jealous care of the authorities, these venerable paintings remain, the classical ancestors of the pictorial art of Japan, inspired by

India and executed by Korea. In the same temple are priceless treasures of that reign of twelve hundred years ago—numerous domestic articles, including inlaid (cloisonné) mirrors which, if they did not originate in India, did so in Persia. Music, too, in Japan spoke the soul of Asia. The musicians of the Imperial Court to-day (notwithstanding the encroachments of western music) play the ancient *bugaku* or dance music which originated in the era to which we are referring—a combination of the Hang music of China and of Indian music. The very name of the favourite Japanese musical instrument, the *biwa*, is said to have been derived from *vina*. And here let it be remarked that Indian music did not only travel eastward. It is declared that the original Greek modes, from which European music developed, had their origin in India.

In the era in Japan to which we refer, literature shared in the widespread dissemination

of the Asian spirit through the spread of the Buddhist religion and culture. Poems that began a long succession have come down to us charged with the special genius of the Japanese race, charged also with the religious zeal of the time. Here is a translation which I have made of a little lyric by the Empress Komio (consort of the Emperor Shomu who raised the Nara *Daibutsu*—great Buddha):

> Flowers for the Lord:—but wherefore shed
> Defilement from these mortal hands,
> Or to the living give the dead?
> Here, in the windy meadow-lands,
> I offer these ungathered flowers
> To Buddhas whom the past set free,
> To Buddhas of the present hours,
> Wild flowers to Buddhas yet to be.

In the ninth century (the Kyoto period of Japanese history centring around the Mikado who, while regarded as spiritual head of the nation, was shorn of power and practically imprisoned in the western capital), there was felt in Japan through China a second cultural

influence arising out of the movement in India towards the fusion of Hinduism and Buddhism. A new sect arose in Japan which proclaimed the familiar Indian doctrine of the unity of all beings in the Absolute. The members of the sect directed their worship towards the Buddha, but held him to be but one of many manifestations of Divinity. They granted the efficacy of all disciplines towards spiritual realisation, and found truth in all forms of expression. Their own method was *mantric* (that is, they used the evocative power of epigrammatical phrases, frequently uttered, in special postures, at certain hours), and they called themselves the sect of the *Shingon*, the True Word. The influence of this sect on art was profound. It made eligible for art-expression all phases of life, and it gathered around the calm image of the Buddha a fellowship of divine figures taken straight out of Hinduism. Maheswara (Shiva) is there still with his symbolical trappings of skulls, snakes,

and tiger-skin. Kali, the dread Mother, is there, with blood-sacrifice chastened to offerings of the red-juiced pomegranate. Saraswati Devi, the goddess of learning, plays her *vina* in Japan. The Goddess, Lakshmi, divine patron of beauty and happiness, brings luck there as in India. The Japanese villager offers his earliest worship of the day to the Breaker of the Path, the elephant-headed divinity, called Shoden in Japan. These images remain with us to-day, and, in the midst of the confusion of modern Japan through the impacts of the non-Asian genius, speak to us of that era, over a millennium ago, when a new impulse in religion and the arts led only to a deeper enrichment of all life.

Up to the time referred to (the ninth century A.D.), Japanese culture had been inspired and guided from the Asian mainland but, with the opening of the tenth century and the Fujiwara epoch, a change took place. The Tang dynasty in China broke up under the

onslaughts of feudal powers, that kept the country in turmoil for fifty years and broke its diplomatic connections with Japan. The cultural effect of this turmoil was twofold. The culture of eastern Asia was carried to the borders of Europe on the one hand and, on the other, Japan was cut off from the continent and thrown back upon herself. Then she took upon herself the task of building up a purely national polity and culture, taking as material the heritage of her continental ancestry, but shaping it to the racial spirit that had incarnated in the island Empire of the Far East. The Japanese language, heretofore neglected in favour of the classical Chinese, and regarded as "only fit for women," became the favoured literary medium, and women writers of romance and satire, of philosophy and poetry, led the national awakening. A great movement of religious devotion, a reaction from theological discussion and asceticism, stirred the people.

The feminine aspect of Divinity was given prominence in the compassionate goddess Kwannon, a personification of the feminine qualities of the Buddha.

The effect of this psychological change showed itself markedly in the arts. Sculpture was toned down by a spirit of gentleness, while painting showed a growing ornateness, and both moved towards the future perfecting of those characteristics so admirably summed up by Okakura—"that tender simplicity, that romantic purity, which so tempers the soul of Japanese art, differentiating it at once from the leaning to monotonous breadth of the Chinese, and from the tendency to over-burdened richness of Indian art. That innate love of cleanness which, though sometimes detrimental to grandeur, gives its exquisite finish to our industrial and decorative art, is probably nowhere to be found in continental work". In this era were made the beginnings of the

Noh drama with its constant Buddhistic element intermingled with shadows of Hinduism.

The Fujiwara era closed in 1186. The feminine influence, good in itself, was degraded by sense-gratifying men into effeminacy, and the Fujiwara barons went down in the weakness of perverted culture before the uncultured but powerful family of Minamoto who established themselves at Kamakura, near Tokyo, and brought in a new era in the history of Japan. Feudalism was developed. The *samurai*, a military monastic order, was established, which sought liberation through the practice of mind-control taught by the *Zen* (*dyan*) sect of Buddhism. The people now began to assert themselves, and the philosophy of the Buddha became obscured by the smoke of threatened torment after death, as religion was distorted into an agent of popular suppression. Art suffered likewise from the hardening that comes of insularity. The *Daibutsu*, the

colossal Buddha of Kamakura built in this era, is not the personification of Buddhic calm, but a gigantic bronze Japanese in meditation. Painting takes on muscular strength and motion, instead of spiritual power or delicacy, and glaring realism in pictures of *post-mortem* punishment indicates a lamentable lowering of æsthetic sensibility.

Individual consciousness, heroic exploits, exalted human personality—these were the main forces of the era and, directed through the stern genius of the *samurai* and the nakedness of the *Zen* discipline, they found a simplified expression in the arts of the succeeding period, the Ashikaga, which has been called the classical era—1400 to 1600. The impulse of artistic creation, formerly largely directed towards the expression of spiritual ideas, was now turned towards decoration and personal use, with an austerity of purpose that devoted an infinitude of craftsmanship to the inside of a box or to

under-garments, and covered these with external simplicity. The effect of this on conduct showed itself in the development of the etiquette that is now characteristic of the Japanese people. In painting, ink takes the place of colour, and pictures become small.

A total reversal of this simplicity followed in the periods of Toyotomi and Tokugawa which terminated in 1868, with the restoration of the monarchy and the break-up of feudalism. During these pre-restoration eras the feudal barons vied with one another in the ornate decoration of their palaces, shrines and tombs, which, being made of timber, lent themselves to minuteness in carving and colouring. Egotism, the parent of display, prevailed, and carried the sword into Korea and China—rough return for the ancient gifts of religion and culture. The original cultural impulse had passed into modifications and around corners that hid its origin and deeper significances. Then came influences

from beyond Asia that have created the complexity of present day Japan—the scientific and commercial spirit of Europe and America. What will follow we cannot forecast, but the recollection that, only half a century ago, the barons of Japan were capable of a great act of renunciation, in order to restore the long overshadowed Mikado to his place of power, gives hope that Japan may still be capable of responding to the urge of the Spirit of Asia. However that urge may at present be obstructed, there is not lacking recognition of its presence. There are those in Japan who have read from the history of their arts that symptoms of degradation appeared when national egotism appeared, and Japan turned her back on the continent of Asia and began to "think Imperially". Yet, whatever pride and un-Asian separateness of spirit may now cloud the soul of Japan, she cannot escape her past as a cultural offspring of Asia, and even

in political disputation has to call upon that past as proof that her present is not so bad as it appears. For example, just as I write these pages comes a Japanese newspaper containing an article by the Prime Minister, in which he appeals to Japan's past as evidence that she is temperamentally non-militarist. He writes: "There is no art object of Japan which is not somehow related with the Buddhist religion, whether in paintings, sculptures or buildings. The masterpieces of Japanese art are Buddhist paintings, Buddhist images or Buddhist temples. These facts will tell most eloquently how peace-loving and devoutly religious the Japanese are." Whether the politician's reading of the facts is true or not, the fact of value to us is that, from the hand of the Prime Minister of Japan, comes the testimony that the fundamental thing in Japanese life to-day is the religious and cultural influence that it got from

Asia, and that the spirit of Asia gave India the blessed responsibility of first expressing. It is to be hoped that that fundamental influence will ultimately overtake the present craze for westernisation in Japanese art, particularly in painting, in which the typical Japanese exquisiteness of touch and æsthetic sentiment is degraded in the effort to work in the medium of oil. This medium calls for muscular and mental force not possessed by the Japanese race. Flagrant paintings in the nude are as remote from the Japanese genius as songs of sense-love from the Hindu genius. The recent restoration of the Ajanta influence in the work of a Japanese artist, who presents Siva and Parvati in Japanese style, may come to mean the salvation of modern Japanese art.

CHAPTER IV

JAPAN—THE MODERN INSULAR SYNTHESIS OF CONTINENTAL ASIAN CULTURE

JAPAN is, indeed, to-day an insular synthesis of Continental Asian culture. Into it, as into a receptacle, have gone as ingredients the Buddhist culture of India with the modifications gathered in its transit through China and Korea. Christianity went also to it, but going from non-Asian sources, has remained a foreign element. The primitive Asian ancestor-worship (a somewhat wrongly interpreted name) has persisted since pre-historic times. And a few months ago the funeral rites of an Indian

WALL PAINTING, HORYUJI TEMPLE, JAPAN

(By Korean Artists, in the Ajanta Manner)

teacher in a Japanese school were celebrated with full Hindu ritual by Japanese men (and women) who have adopted that religion. Let us look at the synthetic process in Japan as it shows itself in religion.

The position of religion in Japan to-day—or perhaps it is truer to say the position of Japan towards religion—is peculiar. The author saw it in a nutshell when he had the very special privilege, rarely granted to foreigners, of being an overnight guest in the home of one of the most highly placed officers of the Japanese army. The father was a quiet, gentle, devoted follower of the Zen sect of Buddhism (the sect favoured of the old samurai), as unlike a death-dealing general of many wars as one could well imagine, an adept, like all Japanese, at the game of matching flower-cards for each month and playing the game of the hundred poems. The mother was a keen Protestant, the daughter, a devout Catholic, the son an

unobtrusive and polite scorner of all "superstition"; yet in this Japanese family there was nothing but a spontaneous feeling of mutual affection. There was no sense of "tolerance," which is frequently only intolerance muzzled; there was just a natural taking for granted of freedom of belief, an attitude resting on the fundamental Asian concept of all the details of life as diverse expression of one Divine activity.

This case is not exceptional. He found similar relationships in other families, though not quite so excellently four-cornered. Every Japanese child, in fact, even if born in a Buddhist family, is placed under the protection of a Shinto deity. In Japan, you may be born after the manner of one religion and buried (or cremated) after the manner of another, and nobody will think a bit the worse of you. The daily newspapers regularly announce the *post-mortem* promotion of a deceased Buddhist from the fourth to the third rank of some particular

Order by the Emperor who, according to the Shinto belief, is God on earth.

The two main religions of Japan are Shintoism and Buddhism, which numerically divide the people in halves. Christianity (which seems to serve the purpose of periodically stimulating Buddhism to activity, even recently to the extent of Sunday schools) has hardly a quarter of a million adherents in a population of fifty-six millions. It has about twenty sects. There is no restriction to its work in any way, and many Japanese Christians occupy the highest positions in the island empire.

Religious tolerance both public and private is, therefore, a leading characteristic of Japanese life. In its public aspect, it is even more significant than is immediately realisable from the simple statement of the positions held by Japanese Christians. It means more than did the granting of rights of citizenship to Catholics by Protestants, in Ireland, after bloody wars—

for Catholicism and Protestanism are two phases of a root religion; it is more than was the opening of the doors of Westminster to a Jew —for was not the founder of Christianity Himself a Jew? Christianity and the whole Japanese religious tradition are two unassimilable entities (as at present expounded), though the unassimilability is somewhat more emphatic on the Christian side; for, while the Japanese religious spirit is prepared to accept Christianity as a partner with Shintoism and Buddhism, on the quest for the Eternal, (while retaining the ancient recognition of the Mikado as the lineal descendant of the Sun Goddess and himself the image of the Divine on earth), Christianity, with its exclusive claims to Divine Revelation and personal efficacy vested in one Divine Being, cannot naturally consent to the position of mere partnership or to the royal recognition. "Christian missionaries, whether Catholics or Protestants, necessarily must

teach, or at least imply, that, except Christ, no man or woman, be he king or beggar, and she queen or rag-picker, is of divine parentage," wrote a missionary in a Japanese paper, in 1920, during a Sunday School Convention in Tokyo, with more zeal than tact, considering that he was enjoying the hospitality of the country ruled over by the king and queen against whom his finger was pointed. Be that as it may, the statement, which is a nut-shell presentation of Christian thought, brings out the fact that a general acceptance of Christianity in Japan would mean the total overthrow of Japanese idealism as it centres around the person of the Mikado, and an entire renunciation of Japanese habits of mind and action built up through two millennia of intensive insular culture. The recent westernisation of Japan is a small matter, the mere putting on during business hours of a foreign garment, which she may yet discard.

19093

To gain the world of power, and a place in the Big Five, Japan has not lost her soul; she has only covered up her *kimono*; her westernisation does not even touch her skin. The Christianising of Japan goes deeper. If Japan is to save her soul in the modern Christian sense she must lose all that at present constitutes her soul in the Japanese sense. When Japan becomes Christian after the manner of European and American interpretation of an Asian religion, she will have ceased to be Japanese and Asian.

With these considerations in mind, the tolerance of Japan on religious matters becomes a question of deep sociological interest. Tolerance between Shintoists and Buddhists we may set aside as a domestic matter; but the tolerance of Japan towards Christianity takes on world meanings, (though numerically it is a matter of a mere decimal four per cent), since it involves tolerance towards the religion professed

(the question of practice is not involved) by the two great political units with which the future of Japan is linked—America and the British Empire, a religion whose whole exposition is technically "an offence against the state," in its negation of the very pivot of the Japanese constitution, (the divinity of the Emperor), and therefore, in terms of the dictionary, "high treason". An English crowd in Hyde Park would (*mutatis mutandis*) give short shrift to a Japanese orator who struck (as the maker of the statement above referred to) at the deepest feelings of Englishmen with regard to their king. The Japanese, in similar circumstances, open their doors and politely bow the Christian to the most comfortable silk cushions around the national *hibachi* (firebox).

What is the explanation of this religious tolerance on the part of Japan? One component of the explanation is probably the fact that the Japanese, like the Chinese and Indians,

are polytheistic by nature. They accepted the simple doctrine and practice of the Buddha, but before many centuries had passed they had surrounded the image of the Perfect Man (*Dai Butsu*) with a retinue of figures from the Hindu pantheon, and both adopted and evolved a Buddhist pantheon. Now polytheism which ramifies from a central concept cannot be intolerant to any great extent, for even the ignorant followers of some special deity will sense his or her relationship with the other deities worshipped by other communities within the national totality. The feeling of multiplicity of deities caught up by a casual visitor to the East is an illusion, the mistaking of decimal parts for units. When Hindu sects quarrel, it is not on the authenticity and power of their respective divinities, but on such matters as monism or dualism in the cosmic process. Intolerance in its extreme forms is the natural accompaniment of a monotheistic

religion—the setting up of a single deity with exclusive claims to truth and power, and the consequent denial or validity to any other religion. This is not the Japanese or Asian attitude.

There are two other components of the explanation, as far as I can judge, both phases of the process of modernisation which Japan took up half a century ago and has carried out with such rapid and unexpected success so far as the status of power and wealth goes, a process which, by drawing Japan away from Asian principle to externally-induced expediency, has reduced her religious tolerance in some respects to the level of religious indifference, even as it has acted detrimentally on her arts. The first was political necessity. Japan, in order to win for herself a position of equality with other strong nations, had to revise her religious code. She even went to the extent of looking into Christian doctrine, and especially into Christian

practice, with a view to the possible adoption of Christianity as a national religion. She found this impossible. The next best thing was to take up a neutral position as to religious belief within her own borders. Under the Japanese Constitution all creeds are free. Here, however, arises an anomaly. The Emperor is the head of Shintoism, and the incarnation of the Sun Goddess who is the ancestor of the Japanese race. The whole social state is pivoted on the divinity of the Mikado,—this being the point of synthesis in all Asian thought as seen in the spiritual and temporal power of the Caliphs of Islam, and the attributing of domestic godhood to the father in the Hindu family. Some adjustment between the implications of this position and the declaration of religious neutrality on the part of the Mikado's Government was apparently necessary, and this found expression in a further declaration that there was no official

religion in Japan, and that Shinto had no sacred books, no dogma and no moral code. Disestablishment of Shinto was not contemplated as part of religious neutrality, for that would mean the disestablishing, so to speak, of the Emperor; but the sacred buildings of Shinto were neutralised in a pronouncement of the Bureau of Shrines.

The last component of the explanation of Japanese religious tolerance is the influence on modern Japan of the scientific materialism of Europe and America. This began quite early in the Restoration period, and had, as one of its chief mouthpieces, the founder of the first modern school (1856), now Keiogijuku University, Mr. Fukuzawa, who regarded religion as an excellent aid to personal and civic morality among the ignorant masses of the people, but quite useless to himself and the intelligent students whom he wished to influence. Mr. Fukuzawa, however, was supple enough

to make use of the help of Christian missionaries in the working out of his new educational schemes, but with considerable shrewdness he placed the organisation of his university in the hands of members of the least doctrinally objectionable sect, from the Japanese point of view, the Unitarians, whose attitude to the founder of the Christian faith did not clash with the Japanese attitude to the Mikado. Later, the influence of Herbert Spencer made itself felt in Japanese thought, mainly, I believe, through Lafcadio Hearn who was a close student of the philosopher. One of the most interesting reliques of that exquisite soul is his complete set of Spencer which is, as I have seen, carefully looked after by his widow, in their old home at Shin Okubo, on the outskirts of Tokyo, where everything is kept as it was in Hearn's lifetime. But a still more interesting object, and one eloquent of the Asian synthetic tendency, is the family shrine sacred to the

spirit of the Grecian Irishman who became a Japanese, wrote in exposition of Buddhism, and was absorbed by Shinto and set among the Ancestors, who, being dead, yet speak.

These two external influences in Japan have influenced the development of a considerable amount of religious indifference, which is engaging the attention of the authorities, as well as of private observers. In an official document, published just before the dedication at Tokyo, early in 1921, of a shrine for the spirit of the great Mikado of the Restoration, there is a very thinly veiled adhesion to the recently imported method of employing religion, not as the highest expression of human aspiration, but as an aid to civic morality among the unintelligent. The document referred to speaks of the impromptu irresponsibility of the prayers offered at Shinto shrines which runs even to the repeating of

Buddhist prayers. Taking example from Christian and Buddhist precision in prayers, and embracing the opportunity of emphasising the matter presented by the opening of a new national shrine which would attract millions from all parts of the country, the officials of the Shrine Bureau of the Home Department have put their heads together with a view to composing a suitable Shinto prayer, which, they say, preliminarily, "should be brief, and should embody the virtues of the Meiji Emperor". The document concludes: "As soon as the prayer is worked out, the officials propose to popularise it, and employ it in guiding the mind of the people in the right direction. The authorities will afterwards take up the task of devising prayers for use at other Shinto shrines."

Under the surface of Japanese life there are movements towards the unification of religion. A Minister of State periodically calls a

conference at which representatives of all the faiths attend—except the Christian.

Such is the religious position in Japan to-day. A revival of Shinto worship may be officially worked up. On the other hand, Buddhism is showing new activity, and is utilising the drama for the teaching of Buddhist truths. Christianity, too, is active, but that is a normal feature of propagandist exotic religion everywhere. The future evolution of religion in Japan apparently lies between the two ancient faiths of eastern Asia, which have acted and reacted on one another for nearly two thousand years and built up between them the composite entity known as Japan; the one (Shintoism) directing the thought of the people towards superhuman powers, the worship of their ancestors, and the deification of the head of the State; the other (Buddhism) laying the foundations of morality and æsthetics. From the advent of Buddhism in the

sixth century Shintoism underwent decline. It was practically absorbed by Buddhism, deities, ritual and all. An oracular Shinto utterance of the early thirteenth century shows how complete the identification of the two religions had become, when the powers working in the human heart were regarded as a trinity springing out of Buddhism, Shintoism and human nature. Says the oracle :

> Loving-kindness is of the Buddhas ;
> Uprightness is of the Gods ;
> Error is of the sons of men.
> Thus in the same heart there is a threefold division.

This is practically a statement in brief of the special contributions of the two religions to Japan : culture (which is the sweetener and purifier of life) from Buddhism which gave to Japan the arts for which she is uniquely famous ; law and order from Shintoism, for the social fabric hangs from the girdle of the

Sun Goddess, and the worship of the Ancestors so ramifies through every phase of national polity that it has become a saying that: "Japan is ruled by the dead."

CHAPTER V

CONTINENTAL CULTURAL MOVEMENTS

1 : Burma and Siam ; Turkestan and Tibet

The great river of Buddhist culture, moving from its source in the Ganges valley of northern India across the vast empire of China to Korea, and springing to life in the island empire of Japan, sent out fertilising distributaries on both its banks. We shall now study the influence of the Buddhist awakening in those countries which lie to the south of the main stream in the south-east corner of Asia, and on its left Bank north of the Himalayas.

In Burma, as in practically all of inhabited Asia, a primitive cult of psychism held sway. Its traces are found in India and China, and it shaped the early mental and emotional moulds of the large populations which developed in the western areas of China. Philologically these races are catalogued as Indo-Chinese. Anthropologically they are called Mongoloid. That is to say, they are externally more Mongolian than Aryan, having the almond eye and yellow skin common (with variations) to the peoples of the eastern ranges of the Himalayas and Tibet. Internally, the Aryan element predominates. The physical body of Burma came, as scientists suppose, on a great early wave of humanity from the western areas of China which found the upper Irrawaddy river, and flowed along with it down to the plains, and the delta, and the sea-coast, from which India could be seen, if sight were longer and the earth flat. Another part of the migratory swarm climbed skywards

up the Himalayan slopes and found a home in Assam and Tibet.

How long ago this movement of humanity took place no one can say. At any rate it ante-dated the cultural awakening of Buddhism. There was a large Burmese population ready when the new religion and art moved outwards from its Indian source. Burmese tradition speaks of immigrations of groups of the warrior caste (*Kshatriya*) from India across the Bay of Bengal. This tradition is regarded as receiving confirmation from the presence of such a place-name as Maurya (the family name of the Buddhist Emperor Asoka) on the land route from India. The name may have been given to the place contemporary with the coming of Buddhism—but it may also have been given later in sentimental retrospect. There is the same limitation to the acceptance of the tradition that the old royal family of Burma went back to the Buddhist royal families of India. The

family tree may have undergone a process of grafting. The fact that the Burmese alphabet was taken from the Samskrt of India, through the Pali language of Upper India, (which is still the official theological speech of Buddhism as Latin is of Catholicism in Europe), gives surer ground for the assumption that Buddhist culture superimposed itself at an early date on the primitive cult of psychic mediumism, which anthropologists, with persistent unimaginativeness, call "superstition" and "demonology," when it was but an unsophisticated form of spiritualistic séance, even as the oracles of Greece were a form of the trance-speaking so common to-day in Christian countries.

Burmese Buddhist culture grew with the growth of the old Burman Empire. In the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, (just when mediæval Europe was covering itself with magnificent cathedrals), Burmese genius and devotion was blossoming into the architecture

and sculpture so impressive to this day in the remains of the ancient royal city of Pagan. At the end of the thirteenth century, the Mongolian Tartar power under Kublai Khan overthrew the Burmese dynasty and destroyed the royal city. But the old culture from India survived. To-day Burma is ninety per cent Buddhist, though its Buddhism is not the simple code and practice of the Lord Gautama, but has elaborated itself into a complex theology, metaphysic and ritual, with a slight reminiscent admixture of the primitive psychism of early Asia.

Burma is called "the land of pagodas," and though this striking type of architecture seems remote from the Buddhist stone architecture, so well known, it is, as already pointed out, an adaptation of the *stupa* and umbrella of early Buddhist times. Burmese painting, removed from the cultural influence of both Muhammadanism and the post-Buddhist developments of

Hindu painting, evolved along lines of its own. The study of it, however, in its bearings on Asian arts as a whole, is not at present possible, materials for the purpose being, as yet, scarce.

Such materials will be available before long. European art-lovers, with their special genius for research and critical exposition, are now turning their attention to the study of Asian cultural movements, and are receiving the help of their more abstract-minded Asian brethren. This increased interest in the study of Asian art, as such, has arisen out of the recent growing perception in the West that art is, after all, art. Formerly the respect of European art-critics went to the sculptures of the Gandhara epoch in Indian history, which followed the invasion of Alexander the Great, about 330 B.C., and was at its height at the opening of the Christian Era. These sculptures were Greek in form, though they presented Buddhist ideas. Western art, caring more for presentation than content,

and having a natural bent towards such presentations as reflected its own genius, naturally fixed its eyes on the Græco-Buddhist figures of Gandhara, and failed to contact the significance of purely Indian art. Recently, however, the Soul of Europe has shown signs of chafing against an art-method and attitude that left too few interstices for the soul to shine through. The old complaint against Indian art that it lacked perspective and was not true to anatomy has died away among the more intelligent students of art, who have come to a perception of the truth of an emotional anatomy and a spiritual perspective that raise art from the work of the amanuensis to that of the interpreter. Thus shaken free from formalism, European art is itself becoming more Asian than Asian art in its dealings with anatomy and perspective, and European art-criticism has entered upon an enormous new field of research, and articles in art-magazines give

promise of future rich contributions in book form.

One such article from the German of E. A. Voretzsch, translated into English by Professor H. C. Chakladar, in the admirable and valuable Calcutta art-quarterly, *Rupam*, is indicative of this wider study, and carries us from our reference to Burma to the neighbouring country of Siam. We quote the following paragraph which is specially apposite to our study of the process of unification in Asian culture:

> With regard to what relates to Siam, a national art has so well developed in this country—an art which at the present day has separated itself distinctly from all the other arts of the neighbouring countries: its origin, its roots, lie in Indian art. As in all other countries, in Siam art has followed religion. Buddhism, however, must have been flowing into Siam from India, from the time of Asoka (273-232 B.C.) onwards, and far on into the first millennium after Christ. If we take the time of Asoka as the first period when the wave of Buddhism flowed into Siam, then the Gandhara period is to be recognised as sending forth the second, the Gupta empire (about A.D. 359-650) the third, and the influx from Ceylon in

the thirteenth century has to be regarded as its fourth great wave. The paths that the stream followed are likewise fourfold: it came by land through Assam and Burma into northern Siam, and by sea through Bengal and Orissa from the Madras coast, and ultimately from Ceylon through the Malay peninsula and the valley of the Menam. It is interesting to enquire which period of Indian art has exercised the most enduring influence on the art of Siam, and what was the broadest road by which Indian art reached Siam. This is, without doubt, the period of Gupta art, and the main path followed was probably the northern one by land.

We have seen that, as early as 139 B.C., Indian traders carried the commercial products of China to Central Asia, and with these products carried the religion of India. In matters Asian, trade does not "follow the flag," nor does the flag follow trade. Commerce and religion go side by side in Asian (especially in Indian) thought and activity. Religion is the commerce of the *jivatma* (the individual soul) with the *paramatma* (the oversoul or God). Commerce is a function of the Divine activity,

therefore essentially religious. And with religion goes culture, not as an appendage but an integral element. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Chinese envoy who discovered his own country's products re-exported to Central Asia by way of India, (probably through the age-long traditional enterprise of the merchants of Sind), should not only report this fact, but also have to report the presence in Central Asia of Indian religion and art—that is to say, the new Buddhist religion and Buddhist architecture and sculpture. A glance at a physical map of Asia will show the natural trade route up the valley of the Indus to Upper Sind where, north-westward, by the Khaiber Pass and Kabul, human enterprise crossed the mountains into the valley of the Oxus, and north-eastward, through Kashmir and the Karakoram pass, into the Tarim Basin.

The latter region is of importance in our study because of the discovery, within the last

few years, of a large quantity of archæological materials in an excellent state of preservation —thanks to the kindly protection of the blown desert sand which probably has vast stores of revelation in its treasury for the future to confirm the substance of legend and tradition by the dumb but eloquent and incontrovertible testimony of sculptured stone. The region referred to is the oasis of Khotan in the south-west corner of the Tarim desert, and, from the point of view of India, just over the Karakoram mountains which join the Hindu Kush and Kwenlun ranges. This oasis lay on the ancient land route between eastern and western Asia. Merchants from China rested there on their long caravan journey. A century and a half B.C., Khotan was politically related to China, probably through the offices of the envoy already mentioned; but general and local tradition point to India for the parentage of the kingdom of Khotan. It is stated that the

kingdom was founded by the subjects of King Asoka whom he banished in punishment for the blinding of his son Kunala. This was about the middle of the third century B.C. But the Khotanese people are not satisfied with a mere historical ancestry, and claim descent from Kubera (brother of Ravana), king of the Yakshas (demons), and God of Wealth. The historical ancestry is not quite certain, but if Buddhism did not go with the banished colony, it went very soon after it, probably in the reign of King Vijayasambhava, and remained the dominant religious and cultural influence through political changes—through annexation in A.D. 102 by Kanishka, a king of the Central Asian dynasty who ruled northern India after the break-up of the kingdoms of the Greek and Persian invaders, and who, like Asoka, embraced Buddhism; through the suzerainty of China to A.D. 791; the suzerainty of Tibet to the eleventh century, when Khotan

passed under Muslim control as part of Eastern Turkestan, and Khotanese Buddhism passed from the category of religion to that of archæology.

For centuries, practically all trace of this ancient centre of Indian culture beyond India was lost among the secrets of the blown sand of the Tarim desert. Local tradition preserved a memory of holy places and, here and there, as the wind slowly shifted the sand billows, a wizened timber would show itself like a beckoning finger of a submerged civilisation but carried no meaning to the mind of the occasional desert wanderer. In 1866, however, the accidental shifting of the bed of an irrigation canal brought to light the signs and tokens of a vanished town. Archæologists became aware of this disclosure. The site was presumed, and ultimately proved, to be that of the vanished capital of the old kingdom of Khotan. Relics were found—objects in terra

cotta and stucco and bronze, bearing decorations resembling those of both the Gandhara period (usually called Graeco-Buddhist) and the Ajanta period, together with fragments of *stupas* (domed structures for holy relics) and shrines, ornaments and precious stones. These found their way into collections, but in a manner more or less vandal and uninformed. Ultimately, in 1900, Dr. M. A. Stein, of the Indian Educational Service, was sent to make a systematic exploration of the region and, in 1907, the results of his enthusiastic labours were published by The Clarendon Press under the title *Ancient Khotan*. This book is the main source of the information compressed into the following paragraphs.

What these dynastic movements meant in the process of cultural exchange and unification is indicated by the writer of the book referred to. It is certain (he points out) that, under the Tang dynasty, the extension of

Chinese power westward not only benefitted intercourse with the Indian home of Buddhism and its old seats in Central Asia (such as the kingdom of Khotan), but also facilitated the spread into China of other religions from western Asia. Zoroastrianism and Christianity moved eastward. "We know, (says Dr. Stein), that in A.D. 621 the first fire temple was erected at Chang-an, and ten years later the cult of "the Celestial God," *i.e.*, of Ormazd, was preached in the (Chinese) empire by the magian Ho-lu. The famous inscription of Hsi-an-fu, the old Chang-an, attests the arrival of the first Nestorian (Christian) missionary, A-lo-pen, in A.D. 635, with sacred books and images, and the official approval of the doctrine preached by him in 638 by an imperial edict. It also shows that at the time when it was inscribed, (A.D. 721), the connection of the Nestorian communities under the Bishop and Pope of Tzinisthan (China) with the

Patriarchal See of the Church, in distant Persia, was still maintained."

Khotan, from its position as a resting-place on the long desert route from East to West, felt the influence of these political and cultural movements; but it is remarkable that, as our author points out, while in the painted panels of the rediscovered Khotan Buddhist shines there are indications of Persian influence, Khotan Buddhism remained under the dominance of Indian models in its sculpture and wall-painting, though it naturally made some concession to local features and adorned both the sacred and secular figures of the Buddhist tradition with high cheek bones, oblique eyes, and short flat noses—for the Khotanese people, while mainly of Aryan stock, have traces of Turkish and Tibetan intermixture. Not only, also, was their religious art predominantly Indian, but India entered into their daily expression in speech. We are informed by

our author that an Indian language closely allied to the old *prakrits* of Northern India, (popular language as contrasted with Samskrt, the language of education), was in daily use for administrative purposes throughout the Khotan region about the middle of the third century A.D., and that this documentary language was probably widely known.

It is not within the scope of this study to deal in detail with archæological remains save to the extent that they bear on the matter of the cultural unity of Asia. Those who feel the call of discovery, who respond to the thrill of intellectual and spiritual adventure, can turn to the book under notice and peruse the lists and photographs of shrines, sculptures, frescoes, articles of religious and domestic use; and wonder, (in the face of this late gift from the hand of Oblivion with its suggestion of what may yet be in store for research), if there is not a deeper significance than mere

"superstition" in the tradition attached to a cave in Khotan, blocked by debris on the side of Mount Gosringa, that within the cave there is an Arhat awaiting in trance the coming of Maitreya Buddha. The gift of Khotan to modern knowledge of ancient Asian culture not only adds to our realisation of the extent to which the cultural boundaries of India exceeded the geographical and dynastic, but adds to the evidence that the association of purely Hindu and Buddhist presentations in art, which followed their first separation, was not casual, but characteristic of the Asian genius for assimilation. We have seen that the Buddhist kingdom of Khotan traces its ancestry back to Kubera—a figure in the Hindu pantheon. Its walls bear also the painted figure of the elephant-headed Hindu deity, Ganesh, God of Wisdom, side by side with frescoes of the Bodhisattva of Buddhism.

Dr. Stein also found in the Khotan region a number of well-preserved documents (in the

midst of many hopelessly ruined) which add a vivid and direct human note to the esoteric voice of painting and sculpture. Official Chinese documents were discovered which it was found possible to date from the middle of the eighth century A.D. At Dandan-Uiliq, some distance north-east from Khotan, he came across what is probably the oldest known document in modern Persian—an early eighth century complaint by a Jewish sheep-dealer that some one had got the better of him in a transaction, and appealing to the Government purveyor to relieve him of excess stock. Manuscript treatises on Mahayana (greater) Buddhism were found, and documents in the upright Gupta script of the seventh and eighth centuries. From one such comes the authentic voice of Asia across twelve centuries of desert silence:

> Although one may have many pleasant friends, relations and kindly companions, he who instructs us in the way of virtue is the highest friend, whoever he be.

But moving as these written remains of Khotan are in their antiquity and their suggestiveness, they are youthful by the side of the records of Indian culture which come to us from western Asia, from the plain of Mesopotamia, watered by the classical rivers Tigris and Euphrates. When the complaint of the Jewish sheep-dealer was made twelve centuries ago, the treaty between the Hittites and the Kingdom of Mitani in Mesopotamia, whose first passages are an invocation to deities including the Hindu Gods, Varuna and Indra, was already two thousand two hundred years old. Both of these voices, Hindu and Buddhist, from the long buried past have made themselves heard once more almost simultaneously. Dr. Stein published his Khotan expedition report in 1907. In the same year, in excavating at Boghaz Khan, in Mesopotamia, Professor Winckler unearthed the tablets recording the treaty referred to. Scholarship has assigned to these

the date 1400 B.C., a date roughly in agreement with those assigned to the events of the Old Testament. These inscribed tablets, and others discovered at Tel-el-Amarna, disclose the fact that in the upper valley of the Euphrates there existed a people worshipping the same deities as are worshipped in India to-day, a people in diplomatic contact with one of the tribes which figure in the Hebrew scriptures as feeling the impact of the Children of Israel in their onward march. Thus that land, remote now from the main centres and streams of culture, attains, in the light of modern scholarship, the double dignity of association with the early days of two of the world's great religions, the Hebraic and the Hindu.

Indologists are not yet quite at one on the question which naturally arises out of these discoveries, the question as to whether these evidences of early Hindu culture arose in or near the valley of the Euphrates, or travelled

from India. One view, voiced by the Persian scholar, Professor E. Meyer, is that the appearance of the Hindu deities, Varuna and Indra, takes us back to a time prior to the vast centrifugal movement of the Aryan race, a movement which, with its centre somewhere not far from the physical centre of the Eurasafrican continent, ultimately found its circumference at the ends of the earth. Another view, that of Professor Jacobi, is that the Gods of the treaty tablet belonged to the Rigvedic era. The latest published contribution to the discussion of the question which has come to hand is (significantly of the new era of India's rehabilitation as the Mother of Cultures) the first transaction of the Indian Institute recently attached to the Royal Frederick University of Norway. This transaction is a paper by Dr. Sten Konow, formerly Epigraphist to the Government of India. In it he reviews the various hypotheses which have been propounded on the subject of

the Mesopotamian traces of Hindu theology, in the light of all the available data, and concludes that the Hindu deities of the Mitani-Hittite treaty of 1400 B.C. were expressions of a religious culture which had been matured in India itself and been carried beyond her frontiers inland, even as in later centuries it was carried to the islands of the ocean. This conclusion bears not only on the specific question under consideration, but also on the date of the Rigveda, which must, if the conclusion is established, confirm the already prevalent idea that that collection of Aryan hymnology had taken definite form long before the fourteenth century B.C. These geographical and chronological questions, however, interesting and important though they be, are aside from our study save in so far as they contribute to our apprehending of the tendency towards exchange, intermixture and unification which has been and is, as it is the

object of this study to show, a characteristic of Asian culture.

We have observed that the Tarim basin lay on the old trade routes between eastern and western Asia, and formed the natural channels of admixture by the cultural currents. But these routes, following the natural tendency of travelling feet to take the line of least resistance (also of least climbing and exposure), skirted the northern edge of the great plateau of Tibet, which, though technically in the sub-tropics as regards location, is exalted to the rare ether above the perpetual snowline. In the process of dynastic changes, which are less scrupulous in relation to the comfort and convenience of their instruments than commerce or culture, Tibet came successively under the political influence of China on the one hand and the Turkish aggregations on the other. But in the old days it was a *cul-de-sac* with its mouth open towards India. Into it went the Tantric practices of

India which commingled with an indigenous system belonging to the necromantic cult of Shamanism that had prevailed in remote times from the Altai mountains to the east coast of Asia. This cult in Tibet, known as Bonism (*pon*, "pure") was, like the primitive Shintoism of Japan, somewhat voluminous in ceremonial but vague in principle. It was, like Shinto, devoid of metaphysic or ethic, and was almost entirely given to communication with discarnate beings. Bonism, as it existed before Buddhism, followed the Tantric cult across the Himalayan passes, was a mixture of local and transplanted North Indian psychism. About the beginning of the seventh century A.D., the Tibetan king sent a messenger down into India to learn the Indian script and bring back copies of the Buddhist scriptures. The messenger so far succeeded in his mission that he provided his country with a script based on the then prevailing script of

northern India, and through this script translated the Buddhist sacred writings into Tibetan speech. The effect of the impact of Buddhism on the established Bonism was to vivify the latter. It passed from vagueness into definition by absorbing some of the Buddhist ethic. And it gave as much as it took. The abstract and impersonal system of morality and discipline presented by Buddhism did not long withstand the anthropomorphic tendency of human nature. Mankind, in the depths of its nature when civilised, and near the surface when uncivilised, knows instinctively that the hidden Thing after which it is searching is not a system of thought but a reality of consciousness; not a code but a Being. The Bon theology invaded the Buddhist morality. A Buddhist pantheon grew round the central figure of the Enlightened One, and some members of the pantheon were Bon divinities very thinly disguised. Out of this Tibetan

Buddhism (which was two parts Indian in its purely Buddhist and Tantric elements, and one part local in its primitive Shamanism) the system of Lamaism arose, and its rise came through the process of exchange in religious culture. At the end of the twelfth century, the nomadic Mongolians were made into a powerful and destructive entity through the organising genius of Chinghiz Khan. In his victorious progress from Mongolia westward (his successors ultimately penetrated into Central Europe) he set his heel on Tibet. But time brought its change. A ruling grandson of the conqueror became a convert to Buddhism in Tibet. He placed the sovereignty of the country in the hands of a Buddhist abbot who thus, like the Pope of Rome in former times, and the Caliphate of Islam, was endowed with both spiritual and temporal power. The hierarchy thus established became fixed, and prevails to this day. But, whatever its political alliance, the

sentiment of Tibet turns towards India so strongly that, though the Tibetans are predominantly Mongolian in race, they trace their ancestry back to an act on the part of Avalokiteswara, one of the supreme personages of the Buddhist pantheon, who (according to almost Darwinian prevision on the part of the Tibetans) sent to Tibet an ape which married a *rakshasi* (she-demon), and peopled the country with monkey-offspring which in the course of time reached the rank of human beings.

But while the position of Tibet in the early days of Buddhism gave that faith the opportunity of fixing itself in the Himalayan kingdom, the subsequent incursions of China from the east and the Muhammadan power from the west did not fail to leave their impress on the art of Tibet. That art is referable back to India as its source; but it is only lately that art-criticism has arrived at the perception of the fact that, while Indian Buddhism gave

to Tibetan art its soul, China and Persia contributed to the decoration of its physical body. The bird of Indian spiritual idealism is feathered by the æstheticism of Iran and Cathay.

CHAPTER VI

CONTINENTAL CULTURAL MOVEMENTS

2. The Mughal Expansion

Muhammad, the Prophet, (may he rest in peace!) was born in Mecca, in Arabia, in the year A.D. 570. At the age of forty he was impressed with a mission to preach the doctrine of the One God. Desert isolation had turned the religious spirit of the scattered people into a number of fantastic cults far removed in thought and practice from the devout simplicity and direct relationship with the God of their ancestor, Abraham. The Prophet had no more ambition than to recall his kindred to that

achievements as generals and viceroys. The "slave kings" ruled from 1206 to 1290. Early in the succeeding dynasty the Muslim power began its southward expansion, and in a quarter of a century had spread to the southern point of India. But such a vast empire could not, in the condition of the times, be centrally controlled. Bengal, conquered in 1200, was independent in 1340. Ten years later Southern India also was free. Kingdoms shaped themselves under independent princes, and the sultanate of Delhi shrank back to Delhi itself, while the Hindu power reasserted itself over wide areas.

During this era of expansion and contraction, the forces of culture were at work, laying the foundations of the great age that was to come. The sultans of Delhi, of Turkish lineage, built massively, and patronised Persian and Arabic literature and music. Elsewhere, Hindu taste and technique influenced Muhammadan arts

and crafts. The process of exchange was well under way when, in 1525, Babur, half Turk, half Mongol, descended from Afghanistan upon his fellow-Muslims, and in five months was proclaimed Padshah and again expanded the central Muslim power to Bengal and Bihar.

Thus began the great Mughal dynasty. In the person of Babur, through his Turkish and Mongolian ancestry, the eastern and western sides of Central Asia were united. At his Court his Mongolian grandmother exercised almost a dictatorial influence, and Persian and Arabic culture found expression through Babur's own poetry and prose. His son and successor, Humayun, kept close to the Persian tradition. He visited much in that Country at the time of its golden age in pictorial design and colour. His tomb at Delhi carried the saracenic type of architecture from Central Asia into India, and made possible the

subsequent culmination of Asian building in the Taj Mahal.

Then came that king among kings, Akbar, (1556-1605) well styled, " the Great ". Great in himself, he touched everything about him to greatness, and his secret was his power of synthesising diversities by recognising their deeper unity, and by giving all urge to expression free course. Born to the rulership of an empire that existed through constant struggle, he led a life of practically unceasing activity. He was a superb sportsman and adventurer—and he carried the spirit of adventure and risk into his mental life. He lacked the training for personal reading; but the deprivation of contact with cold books sent him into the warm contacts of the living voice. He called, for the satisfaction of his hunger for knowledge and the speculation that is the food of the synthetic mind, representatives of all the systems of religion and philosophy in his empire. Direct

exchange of thought, which gave the credal exponents the sectarian hope of a convert, acted otherwise on Akbar. He is said to have caught in a vision a glimpse of the One Life Truth seeking expression through the various intellectual systems, and in his co-ordinating brain he evolved a religion which he called "The Divine Unity" and considered capable of universal exercise. He adopted the belief in reincarnation. He mastered the ritual and teaching of the various religions, and he appointed Jesuit (Christian) priests as tutors to one of his sons. The Mughal Empire under Akbar was far from being a synonym for militant Muhammadanism. Its central impulse was not credal but cultural —and the genius of culture is freedom of expression making a wider and wider synthesis of harmoniously adjusted variety.

We see this great spirit in Akbar's attitude to art and artists. He set them free from the restrictions imposed upon them by the tradition

that the Prophet had condemned painting as a human assumption of the prerogative of creation which belongs to God alone. In the exercise of his skill, (the Emperor argued) the painter learned humility by realising his inability to give life to the figures he painted. He gathered about him under his personal weekly supervision a number of artists, some from Persia, but most from Hindu India, and in doing so made the nexus through which was achieved the synthesis of the purely Persian genius for design and colour; the Chinese genius for fluidic lines which had found its way into Persian painting; and the Hindu genius for the portrayal of human emotion and the symbolical indication of the invisible worlds.

Mughal architecture in the reign of Akbar enjoyed the same inspiration and encouragement as painting. His father and grandfather had transplanted the culture of Persia into India. Akbar set free the bees of art to carry

out a process of natural hybridisation, the result of which was not a hybrid growth but a new synthetic efflorescence of the creative spirit of culture in which Arabian and Persian genius contributed their tinctures and shapes to a plant that, root and branch, was Hindu-Buddhist and that drew its sustenance from the soil and climate of India. The great mosque at Fatehpur-Sikri is placed, after the Hindu manner, with its door to the east, this being the auspicious position of Hindu temples. The Emperor's throne in the private hall of audience is a reproduction of the throne of the Hindu "Preserver," Vishnu, whom the Indian ruler (preserver) stands for on earth. The very founding of this city of amazing architectural wealth and beauty was Indian in spirit—a thanksgiving for the birth of a son, which boon was regarded as having been a reply to the prayers of a saint who lived on the spot around which the Emperor built his "city of victory". His life was a

building, housing and co-ordinating of many interests and enthusiasms, and, when he died, his body was laid in a tomb (designed and begun by himself) which stands as an image of his life—a many-storied building made after the manner of the Buddhist-Hindu monastery.

Akbar's successor, Jahangir, (1605—1627) his son by a Rajput (Hindu) princess, had nothing of his father's virility of mind and body. So much as he might have had by birth he reduced by intemperance. The creative spirit in art, for which Akbar stood, moved into proud elaboration, ornateness of decoration, and weakness of construction, even as the great age of Japanese art passed into the gaudy profusion of the Tokugawa era. Jahangir cherished the ambition to win back to his dynasty the lost territories of Central Asia and South India, but, while he failed in his larger design, he held together the Mughal Empire in India with little expenditure of energy on his

own part. He had both time and means to indulge his keen artistic instincts, which he did to the full. His court was crowded with warmly patronised artists, and he was proud almost to foolishness of his ability as an art-critic. Portraiture (despite prohibition by the Koran) was specially developed. The dominance of his Persian wife, Nur Jahan, is seen in the feminine character of her exquisitely decorated, but architecturally derivative, apartments in the palace at Agra.

But while architecture as a whole gradually fell, as regards form, from the great days of creative activity and strength in the reign of Akbar, it arose in the reign of Shah Jahan (1628—1656) into a supreme expression of beauty—the Taj Mahal. The circumstances, political, æsthetical and personal, conspired towards what Mr. E. B. Havell has called "the glorious consummation of a great epoch of art". A powerful empire had established

itself in a country of vast natural resources. It had brought together the creative genius of practically every cultural unit in Asia, and in the solvent of Hindu culture had produced a new artistic unity—not Persian or Islamic, not Hindu only, nor yet a mechanical mixture of these, but Indian. The unstinted and intelligent patronage of a succession of open-handed Emperors had stimulated the arts to higher and higher achievements. Form had been perfected in the reign of Akbar; decoration in the reign of Jahangir. Both were handed over to to Shah Jahan at their highest point. Their combined achievement went to the creation of mosques and palaces in Delhi and Agra that are miracles of beauty in stone. Then, just as decline began to show itself in mere elaboration and softness, the great moment came. The eager nature of Shah Jahan had centred about the Empress, Mumtaj Mahal, in a life of unbounded love. At the zenith of life the

Empress died. Shah Jahan was overwhelmed in sorrow as deep and as lasting as his love for her, and out of his love and sorrow arose his purpose to build to her eternal memory, and as a fitting casket for her body, the most beautiful Mausoleum in the world. With a wave of his hand Shah Jahan drew into the vortex of his purpose the cultural genius of Asia. Master-craftsmen came from all parts of the Mughal Empire. Under the supervision of the bereaved Emperor they gave shape to his idea, and in twenty years the peerless Taj stood complete—a perfect unification of the architectural culture of Asia; a unification also of the art of the painter and the builder in the assimilation to architecture of the painter's power of line, in the entrancing outlines of the building, and his skill in design, in the inlaid decorations. The dream of Shah Jahan was fulfilled, and the Taj stands to-day, in all its overwhelming chastity, more like a palpitating Being exhaling the

perfection of feminine beauty, than a thing of stone—the expression of an epic sorrow and love transmuted by the superlative genius of a people into the sublime paradox of everlasting joy.

With the accession of Aurungzeb (1658—1707) the Mughal Empire made its last great effort at expansion—and then began to disintegrate. The new Emperor did not share the liberal religious attitude of his three predecessors. He acted as a narrow sectarian, dismissed Hindu craftsmen and artists, and started a campaign of religious suppression throughout the empire. The effect of the divorce of Mughal art from the Hindu genius was disastrous. The great era was at an end —but its architecture and painting remain, precious testimonials to what Mr. Havell calls "the synthetical power of the Hindu artistic genius"; testimonials also to the tendency towards unification in Asian culture when it is

free to respond to the full implication of the truth of the One Life animating all varieties of activity. Aurungzeb fell away from the true Asian spirit; and it is one of the ironies of history that his brother, Dara Shikoh (who, but for his pre-occupation with book studies, might have occupied the throne of Shah Jahan and continued the liberal traditions of his house) lives in history as an exponent of the essential unity of esoteric Muhammadanism and esoteric Hinduism.

CHAPTER VII

THE ISLAND CULTURES

Ceylon and Java

To-day, under the sway of a non-Asian idea, which regards differences in political organisation as the expression of fundamental differences, certain dwellers on the island of Ceylon will show resentment if you speak of them as Indians. Nevertheless, as Dr. Coomaraswamy phrases it, "Ceylon, from the standpoint of ethnology and culture, is an integral part of India". There are few among the educated classes who would care to own blood-kinship with the aboriginal inhabitants of the island, yet these are the true originals; the rest are,

by race, of the continent; some, children of an Aryan immigration from the valley of the Ganges several centuries before the third century B.C., and speaking the Pali dialect of Sanskrit, others, children of the Tamil country of Southern India from which the first incursions came in the second century B.C. and left their mark on the north end of the island. They were Hindus by faith and language, sharers of what was then the world's loftiest civilisation and most influential cultural agency after "the common endowment of 'Early Asiatic' culture, which once extended from the Mediterranean to China and as far South as Ceylon" had defined itself into several large cultural units.

Between the Dravidians of Ceylon (Singhalese) and their kindred in Northern India communication had been kept up, and when, in the closing years of the fourth century B.C., King Tissa of Ceylon succeeded to rulership, he sent his greetings and splendid gifts to Asoka, the

great Emperor whose sway stretched from almost the southern point of India far into Central Asia. Asoka sent gifts in return, but, like the Chinese envoy and the Korean king referred to in a previous chapter, the Emperor, who had renounced the power of the sword and ruled by the law of the Spirit, sent word to King Tissa that he had embraced Buddhism, and recommended the Ceylon king to do the same. Along with his recommendation the Emperor sent his son, Mahinda, to carry conviction by explaining the new doctrine. In a short time Buddhism was the established religion of Ceylon, and remains so to-day.

With Buddhism came Buddhist culture and art—though to speak of the cultural components of Buddhism as separate from the religion is to set up a mental fallacy. The conversion of King Tissa was celebrated by the building of a monastery at the rocky hill of Mihintale which lifts itself sheer from the level land to

the height of a thousand feet. Here began the vast work in architecture and sculpture which, extending to the royal city of Anaradhapura, eight miles west of Mihintale, developed into one of the world's artistic wonders.

At this period the island of Ceylon occupied a specially favourable position in the Asian maritime world as the central point between East and West We have in other chapters referred to the passing to and fro of merchants and embassages between Arabia and Korea. The result to Ceylon of the commerce thus set up was a state of prosperity not rivalled, it is said, by any continental country. And out of the wealth of the island allied to the spirit of religious devotion and craft-enthusiasm arose peerless temples, monasteries, dagabas for the holding of sacred relics, palaces, statues and carvings "of which the very ruins are tremendous" in their intensity of devotion, skill, industry and beauty.

With the royal patronage of Buddhism by Asoka, religious art passed from its early perishable stage of clay and wood, and became a masonic art with bricks as its material. Doctrinally it abjured Brahmanism, but garnished its outer manifestations with the symbols of early Hindu art. Sculpture and painting were condemned in the sacred teachings, but the sculptor and painter were soon essentials of the developing Buddhist culture, and later became monks. It is pointed out by Mr. Havell that in the rock-cut monasteries at Ajanta "there is a progressive series illustrating the development of Buddhist art from about the second century B.C. to the seventh century or later". A similar progression is seen in the architecture and sculpture of Ceylon, from the early simple dome of the dagaba, to the "Gupta style" of the beginning of the fourth century A.D. to the beginning of the seventh, to which era the most important sculptural remains of

Anuradhapura belong; and on into the era of the Hindu revival, the classical era, whose craft glories are shared by Ceylon along with the island of Java and the monolithic sculptures of the caves of Ellora and the rocky coastal city of Mamallapuram.

In all these remains in Ceylon the synthetic spirit is at work in varying degrees, linking up Northern India with Ceylon, and Ceylon with Java, in the joy of artistic creation as part and parcel of the religious life, that is, of life itself for, in Asian thought, life itself is religion. A colossal statue of the Buddha at Anuradhapura, says Mr. Havell, "shows the same great sweep of life and masterly generalisation of form which distinguish the classic paintings of Ajanta and those of the allied Singhalese School of Sigiriya."

The wall paintings on the steep sides of the rock fortress of Sigiriya in Ceylon, to which the parricide King Kasyappa retired in the fifth

century A.D. are, as stated above, allied to the Ajanta School. They differ, however, from their continental affinities, in being exclusively human in subject—a procession of royal ladies to a shrine. "The finest of the figures," Mr. Havell points out, "are drawn by a master's hand, swift and sure, but swayed by the impulse of the moment . . . These exhibit the best qualities of the Ajanta paintings and of the great Masters of China and Japan"—that is, a loftiness of idea, and dexterity of execution that are only possible when art and religion are one. The English occupation of Ceylon in 1815 deflected the Singhalese genius, but some impulses from the traditional culture of the island still assert themselves in art-crafts, notably at Kandy, which was the capital from the sixteenth century.

The island of Java lies two-thirds of the distance between India and Australia, and is roughly the limit of expansion of Asian cultural

influence beyond the continent—an influence here directly Hindu (in addition to Buddhist), for Java was a resting-place for Hindu merchants, mainly Vaishnavite, from the east coast of India on their journeys to and from the Far East. Some of these merchants settled in Java: colonies of Hindus are known to have existed as far back as the second century A.D. By virtue of a civilisation superior, in the Asian sense of cultural superiority, to that of the earlier population (itself by its own tradition a population of immigrants) the Hindu colonies became the ruling powers—but their rule was not founded on force and continued in exploitation. Later came Buddhism—again a cultural invasion; and it must be borne in mind in all study of these early movements that defined the future trend of Asian evolution, "the sole endeavour of expansion" that India attempted, was, as Mr. Arabindo Ghose has pointed out in his Article "A Defence of Indian

Culture," (in *Arya*, No. xxiii): "the expansion of her culture, the invasion and conquest of the eastern world by the Buddhistic idea and the penetration of her spirituality, art and thought-forces. And this was an invasion of peace and not of war, for to spread a spiritual civilisation by force and physical conquest . . . would have been uncongenial to the ancient cast of her mind and temperament . . . A series of colonising expeditions carried indeed Indian blood and Indian culture to the islands of the Archipelago, but the ships that set out from both the eastern and western coasts were not fleets of invaders missioned to annex those outlying countries to an Indian empire, but of exiles or adventurers carrying with them to yet uncultured peoples Indian religion, architecture, art, poetry, thought, life, manners."

In Java, as everywhere over this colossal empire of culture (whose axis was laid from

the Kingdom of Khotan in Central Asia to the Kingdoms of Java) the creative urge found full expression in life and art. Traditions (chiefly by way of Chinese travellers) tell of groupings of human beings enjoying physical and spiritual prosperity, and of buildings devoted to the worship of deities, knowledge of whom was brought from India. A sculptured inscription on the neighbouring island of Sumatra tells that a king of Java built a seven-storeyed temple to the honour of the five Dhyani Buddhas. This was apparently the Borobodoer. For centuries, oblivion (in the shape of accumulations of ash from the ever-active volcanoes of the island, and overgrowths of lusty jungle, where heat and moisture and fertile soil make growth untameable) covered the civilisation of ancient Java and its tangible remains until just a hundred years ago when its temples and sculptures began to be unearthed. Even yet new ruins are being recovered

from the jungles of the interior—but what has already been laid bare has driven sober officials and scientists to the verge of poetry. "The interior of Java contains temples that, as works of labour and art, dwarf to nothing all our wonder and admiration at the pyramids of Egypt," said Sir Stamford Raffles, the British Governor from 1811 to 1816, when Java was once again disclosing itself.

The state of Java socially (that is to say, in the Asian sense, religiously), about A.D. 414, is indicated in the report of the Chinese traveller, Fa Hien, that there were "many heathen and many Brahmins in the country, but very few Buddhists". Later, the proportion of Buddhists increased, but it is doubted by scholars whether Buddhism ever became predominant. It seems more likely that Hinduism (both Vaishnavite and Shaivite) existed side by side with Buddhism. In one of a series of articles in "To-morrow" (Dec., 1921)

on "Relics of Ancient Hindu Culture in Java," Mr. J. Huidekoper summarises the matter as follows, and emphasises the point apposite to our study: "Evidence from the temples themselves supports the view that the two religions existed amicably side by side, for Shaivite temples have among their sculptures many Bodhisattvas, and the Buddhist temple friezes contain many distinctly Shaivite symbols. Indeed the fact that comes out most strongly from the remains of this Middle Java civilisation is the religious tolerance of the time. Shaivism (and to some extent Vaishnavism) and Buddhism lent each other their symbols and emblems: a Buddhist *stupa* at Chupuvatu is in the form of a lingam, and we find a Javanese prince of the thirteenth century bearing the name Shiva-Buddha, while an old Javanese saying runs: "Shiva is the same as Buddha". In the great Borobodoer, (for descriptions of which we have to refer readers

to other books, as a detailed account is beyond our space and purpose) statues of the Buddha, Shiva and Vishnu are placed side by side.

The architecture and sculpture of Java are, as already stated, linked up with Ceylon, Ellora and Mamallapuram. Mr. Havell sees its decoration as a translation into stone of what Ajanta expressed in colour. But Indo-Javanese plastic art ended with the Muhammadan conquest of the Island in the fourteenth century.

In Java there existed, side by side with architecture and sculpture, a form of drama wholly Indian as to subject and mainly Indian as to technique. The royal house (descendants of the last Mussulman rulers) supports this drama, and princes and princesses take part in it. The subjects come, in one of its phases, from the Hindu epics of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* —a fact of considerable significance as regards our thesis of the unifying

tendency in Asian Culture. Mussulman religious zeal in times of stress has laid violent hands on Hindu images; yet in the Javanese drama we have the Hindu drama, with Hindu costuming, embodied by Mussulmans. The Javanese drama, like the traditional drama of India, is practically an extension of dancing; and when we recall the Noh-drama of Japan (which is called a dance, not a drama, by the Japanese) with its rhythmical suggestiveness, and its strong religious element, we can see that the art of the stage, no less than of stone, carried the genius of Asia far and wide.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIA, THE MOTHER OF ASIAN CULTURE

In all this process of exchange and unification between the main cultural groups with the grand unit of Asian Culture, the influence of India is felt. In Asia all roads lead to India —or, rather, all roads lead *from* India.

You may feel your way along the great concentric thread in the web of Asian culture from Russia to China, and you will touch on the way radiating threads from the Indian centre, at Samarcand, at Tibet and elsewhere. Within the era of cultural exchange India takes the place of originator, not through seniority, nor by force, but by the silent and deep pressure

of the basic truth which it has been given her to utter, the truth of the unity of all things in the Divine Mind. And this truth has found its expression in action in the simple perpetual attitude of *give, give, give.* That is the business of a fountainhead. Its subsequent waters may be turned into the heady wine of ethical disquisition in China, or may turn the wheels of handicraft in Japan; but the fountainhead may be only truly itself by simply flowing. India announces, so to speak, the fundamental attitude of the Water of Life—to *flow*, "without money and without price"; and the wells of the world's inspiration and knowledge are kept sweet because of that flowing; and the flow is itself but the response to the far-off call of the ocean, in which all the streams of humanity will find their unity, and all the winds of human passion be folded in a "peace past understanding".

But India has been not only an originator in her sending forth of the religious and cultural

impulse of Buddhism and of Hinduism, and in her transmutation "into something new and strange" of the various cultural impulses that came to her from outside, as bird to the mothering shelter of her branches. She has not sat high among the cloudy sources of things in eternal contemplation. She, too, has searched out the Particular, but her search has not been for the thing itself but for its indications of her open secret of the involved Divinity. To religion, philosophy and the arts she has given richly. She has given richly also to the exact sciences. Okakura summarises her contribution to science thus, and links up the eighth century with the twentieth :

> In India (in the seventh century) we catch a glimpse of the great river of science which never ceases to flow in that country. For India has carried and scattered the data of intellectual progress for the whole world, ever since the pre-Buddhistic period when she produced the Sankhya philosophy and the atomic theory; the fifth century, when her mathematics and astronomy find their blossom in Aryabhatta; the seventh, when Brahmagupta uses his

highly developed algebra and makes astronomical observations; the twelfth, brilliant with the glory of Bhaskaracharya and his famous daughter, down to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries themselves with Ram Chandra the mathematician and Jagadis Chunder Bose the physicist." (This was written in 1902, the year of the publication of Bose's *Response in the Living and Non-Living.*)

English authorities on these matters appear to perpetuate an error with regard to Bhaskaracharya which we refer to because it brings out an important point with regard to India's contribution to science. The poet Longfellow in his novel *Kavanagh* refers to Bhaskara as the author of *Lilavathi*, a treatise on mathematics, called after his daughter. But it appears that Bhaskara was both mathematician and astronomer. In his work *Suryasiddantha*, in the twelfth century he posited that the earth moved round the sun. This was probably at least three hundred years before Copernicus (1473—1543) re-discovered for Europe the ancient heliocentric theory which Pythagoras

had accepted centuries before Christ, and which is claimed to have been known to the early Aryans from certain references to the fixed position of the sun in the *Rig-Veda*. Bhaskaracharya was the first to interpret the ancient Indian works on astronomy and astrology in clear mathematical terms. This enabled Varahamihiracharya to produce his astronomical treatise *Brihajjatakam*. His son, Sripathyacharya, and other scholars, compiled a book of mathematical problems. Lilavathi, his daughter, assisted in the compilation, and the book was called by her name.

In the seventh century, to which Okakura was referring, "the whole energy of Buddhism," as he says, "was thrown upon this scientific research into the world of the senses and phenomena, and one of the first outcomes is an elaborate psychology treating of the evolution of the finite soul in its fifty-two stages of growth and final liberation in the infinite. That the

whole universe is manifest in every atom; that each variety, therefore, is of equal authenticity; that there is no truth unrelated to the unity of things; this is the faith (Okakura declares) that liberates the Indian mind in science, and which even in the present day (1902) is so potent to free it from the hard shell of specialism that one of her sons has been enabled, with the severest scientific demonstration, to bridge over the supposed chasm between the organic and inorganic worlds. Such a faith in its early energy and enthusiasm was the natural incentive to that great scientific age which was to produce astronomers like Aryabhatta, discovering the revolution of the earth on its own axis, and his not less illustrious successor, Varahamihira; which brought Hindu medicine to its height, perhaps under Susruta; and which finally gave to Arabia the knowledge with which she was later to fructify Europe.

But while we recognise India as the Mother of Asian Culture, it would be wrong to leave the matter with the assumption that the fact is a purely geographical one. Such an assumption, indeed, would be at variance with the fundamental concept of the unity of all diversity in the One Life. The teaching of Asia and of India is the universality of this One Life. It happens, however, that in climate and physical conditions India offers a manner of living that is specially favourable to the repose in which one can "loaf and invite the soul," as Whitman puts it. The distance between the necessities of life and their supply is smaller than elsewhere, and the consciousness is freer to obey the ancient, Asian injunction: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." A critic remarked: "Renunciation is easy in India." The remark was made with an air of disparagement—but in the Indian view there is no virtue in making renunciation difficult: it is simply a

condition for the attainment of outer ease in which the inner life may have a chance of manifesting itself. In these conditions India has had time to glimpse the Life behind life, and in the light of this vision has exerted an influence toward assimilation. Says Dr. Coomaraswamy: "I do not forget that in almost every art and craft, as also in music, there exists in Hindustan a complete and friendly fusion of the two cultures (Hindu-Buddhist and Muhammadan) . . . The non-sectarian character of the styles of Indian art has always been conspicuous; so that it is often only by special details that one can distinguish Jain from Buddhist *stupas*, Buddhist from Hindu sculpture, or the Hindu from the Mussulman minor crafts". That tendency to fusion brought Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian elements into a new unity in the eighteenth century palace of Tirumal Naik at Madura, even as Krishnadevaraj has united

Indianised Saracenic art with South Indian art in the beautiful buildings, still glorious in lowly decay, of the city of Vijayanagar of the sixteenth century. The same synthetic tendency is seen in the paintings of the modern Bengal school. It sings out in the poetry of Tagore as in his "Morning Song of India":

> Day and night thy voice goes out from land to land calling the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round thy throne, and the Parsis, Mussulmans and Christians . . . Thou bringest the hearts of all people into the harmony of one life, thou Dispenser of India's destiny.

Two apparent contradictions to this recognition of unity face us—the caste system and polytheism. But the caste system was itself a recognition of Hindu unity—a functional division of labour for the sake of the whole. A future life might bring a change of caste. The holy man rose above caste. Many saints were born outcaste. And as to polytheism, it is generally assumed that the worship of

superhuman entities, and of one or other of the aspects of the fundamental Trinity of Hindu theology, denotes an absence of belief in a Supreme Divine Power. So unimaginative a document as the Census Report of 1901 gives the official lie to such an assumption. The Census Commissioner had asked the Superintendents to make special enquiries as to belief in a Supreme Being. The quest was reported on as follows: "The general result of my enquiries is that the great majority of Hindus have a firm belief in One Supreme God, called Bhagawan, Parameshwar, Ishwara or Narayana." In the proliferations of a vast civilisation, vast in unbroken age, in extent, in population, there are bound to be defects, ideally; but that (as an Englishman long resident in China put it), "oriental civilisation is a type *sui generis*, with national differences, just as western civilisation is a distinct type with individual peculiarities," is a fact that

impresses itself through travel and study; and observation and thought disclose the fundamental attitude of oriental civilisation (defects and varieties notwithstanding) as recognition of the spiritual unity of the human race, and its oneness with the Divine Life. The spirit of Asia and of India speaks in the Upanishat which says: "Whoever beholds all living creatures as in Him, and Him—the Universal Spirit—as in all, henceforth regards no creature with contempt." The Lord Buddha said: "Be like unto brothers, one in love, one in holiness, and one in zeal for the truth." The Christ said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." The Prophet said: "Fear God with all your might, and hear and obey; and expend in alms for your soul's weal, for whoso is saved from his own greed shall prosper." These are not four separate and mutually exclusive truths, but one truth in its

two aspects of principle and practice—the truth that there is one Divine Power energising the multitudinous activities of the universe, and arising out of that truth an attitude of kinship to all creatures irrespective of distinction. This truth is taught in the Asian religions, it is expressed in the culture of Asia, and out of that truth alone and its practice in every detail of life will come the abiding peace for which the war-weary peoples yearn.

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