

# AUM

Point out the " Way "—however dimly,  
and lost among the host—as does the evening  
star to those who tread their path in darkness.  
—*The Voice of the Silence*

## THE ARYAN PATH

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### THE "GITA" AND REINCARNATION

Krishna-jayanti, the birthday of Sri Krishna, will be celebrated on the tenth of this month. His instructions embodied in the *Bhagavad-Gita* are now accessible to the whole world, having been widely translated; but though it is generally admired as a philosophical treatise or a piece of literature, most of its readers have not recognized its significance as a practical guide to everyday life. The *Gita* has been rightly described as offering a living philosophy in which the vital issues of human problems affecting pain and joy, action and reaction, duty and renunciation are examined, and ways and methods are demonstrated as to how life should be rightly lived.

This world is a sick world, and the medicine that is required for its healing is the medicine of discipline. Every thoughtful and educated man tries to discipline himself to some extent, no doubt; but mere discipline, unless it be founded on a right basis, will not get anyone very far.

The *Gita* has a profound philosophical basis, and from it may be educed a correct way of life.

One of the pivotal tenets of its philosophy is that of Reincarnation.

As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the dweller in the body, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new.....Death is certain to all things which are born, and rebirth to all mortals.

The man whose devotion has been broken off by death goeth to the regions of the righteous, where he dwells for an immensity of years and is then born again on earth in a pure and fortunate family; or even in a family of those who are spiritually illuminated. But such a rebirth into this life as this last is more difficult to obtain. Being thus born again he comes in contact with the knowledge which belonged to him in his former body, and from that time he struggles more diligently towards perfection.

The quotations will help the reader better to appraise the two articles on Reincarnation which follow.



# REINCARNATION

[ Two philosophic minds—one English, another Indian—examine the vital and highly important doctrine, of Reincarnation. **Professor C. E. M. Joad** reviews some arguments of the late Cambridge philosopher, McTaggart, in favour of Reincarnation and raises objections which are ably handled by **Professor M. Hiriyanna** of Mysore ; he also offers a few highly important ideas which would aid unprejudiced Western thinkers if they would use these for purposes of their own meditations.—EDS. ]

## I.—A WESTERN THEORY

The object of this article is to state and discuss some of the arguments advanced by the English philosopher, J. M. E. McTaggart, in favour of the view that human beings enjoy a plurality of lives. McTaggart, who died in 1925, was an adherent of the Hegelian school of philosophy. He believed, that is to say, that mind is the sole reality, and the avowed purpose of his writings on philosophy was to expound and interpret Hegel to English readers. He was, however, an exceedingly unorthodox Hegelian, and the two most distinctive features of his philosophy—the plurality of human lives and the profound metaphysical significance of human love—receive scant attention from Hegel. To human love Hegel attaches little philosophical importance, and, though he would probably have subscribed to a belief in immortality, he would, almost certainly, have repudiated McTaggart's doctrine of the plurality of lives.

The doctrine has, indeed, been maintained with surprising rarity by reputable Western thinkers. Even the belief in the immortality of the soul, although it is, of course, a

cardinal tenet in the creed of official Christianity, has in the West had comparatively few *philosophical* advocates. I doubt, indeed, whether it has penetrated the consciousness of the West with anything like the same intensity as that with which it has been embraced in the East.

It is only with the coming of Christianity that the belief in the immortality of the fully personal human soul becomes widespread. This belief, however, maintains not a plurality of lives, but a complete transformation of being, as a result of which the incorporeal soul, released from the harassing and degrading integument of the fleshly body, passes into either an eternity of celestial bliss or an eternity of infernal torment. Roman Catholics add a third condition of posthumous existence, that of Purgatory, in which the soul is chastened and disciplined in preparation for its translation to the pure bliss of Paradise. What does the soul do in Paradise? It is not clear. There are vague references to harp playing, hymn singing and other modes, not very clearly stated, of worshipping God. But though it is conveyed that the eternal life of the human soul is



lived in conditions of ineffable bliss, the nature of the bliss is regrettably lacking in definiteness. With the decline of official Christianity and the rise of science, the belief in immortality has dwindled, and it is probably true to say that it is to-day held explicitly by less than fifty per cent of educated Westerners. Thus, a census of the beliefs of American scientific men taken a few years ago showed that a considerable majority rejected the orthodox Christian view of future existence, while among famous Western thinkers who have explicitly denied their belief in immortality are Einstein, Croce, Wells and Bertrand Russell.

McTaggart's belief in a plurality of lives is, then, something of a rarity in the West. He states the belief as follows: "The beginning of the present life in which each of us finds himself now, was not the beginning of his whole existence, but that he lived before it, as he will live after it." McTaggart's object was to show that any arguments in favour of the belief in immortality for the future make it likely that there has been pre-existence in the past, and "that each of us exists through all time—past and future—whether time is held to be finite or infinite." It is important to distinguish this doctrine from that which I take to be common to most Indian thinkers. Indian philosophy, so far as I am acquainted with it, maintains that there is, indeed, a plurality of lives, but that this plurality is a regrettable necessity imposed upon us by the law of Karma, in order that during these many lives we may compensate for

past sins. This law, an integral part of the moral machinery of the cosmos, condemns the human soul to a perpetual series of births and rebirths, until it has liquidated the accumulation of wrong-doing which it has stored up in its past lives. Thus, a man's status in one life is very largely determined, although his actions are never *quite* determined, by the tenor of his past lives, for which in his present life he is required to compensate. But this series of lives is never conceived of as eternal. Ultimately man will escape from the chain of births and rebirths which his present bondage to the craving of desires imposes upon him, and will pass into a desireless condition in which he will continue without change eternally. This desireless condition has been criticised by Western critics, on the ground that it is scarcely, if at all, to be distinguished from non-entity. Nevertheless, it is regarded by Indian thinkers as the wished-for consummation of existence, as being in fact life's ultimate goal.

Now, there is nothing of this in McTaggart. There is, that is to say, no suggestion that the series of lives lived by the same human soul will ever terminate, and no suggestion that we should wish it to terminate. As far as we can tell, it continues endlessly. This conclusion, he believes, can in the long run only be *established* by metaphysics. It would follow, that is to say, necessarily from a particular metaphysical view of the nature of man and the universe, a view which would have to show, as McTaggart believes it undoubtedly could be



shown, "that the nature of man was such that it involved a life both before and after the present life." The arguments that McTaggart gives in *Some Dogmas of Religion*\* are, however, of an ethical character, and are devoted to establishing the single point "that any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence."

Of these arguments the most distinctive are based on the significance of human affection. There is, first, an argument from the possession of particular individual characteristics at birth. As boys and girls begin to develop, certain natural qualities manifest themselves in them. These cannot be due to environment, since they often turn out to be different in people whose environment is the same; therefore, they must be in some sense innate. Now these innate characters are exactly like those which we see people acquire after years of training and experience in this life; for example, a special weakness in face of a particular temptation, a power of judging character, or of acting with decision in an emergency. The inference seems to be that these characters which are called *innate* are also the results of training and experience in previous lives. Now a special case of such an innate disposition is afforded by human affection, of which first love between young people, who, meeting apparently for the first time, experience an attraction as strong as that which is ordinarily generated only by years of familiarity and trust, is an extreme

example. The inference would seem to be that this "meeting for the first time" is *only* apparent. These apparent strangers have really been friends and lovers before, but in previous lives. Nor can the intensity of first love be written off as the effect of the so-called capriciousness of sexual desire. A milder but no less familiar instance of the same phenomenon is seen in the case of immediate friendship between members of the same sex, where no element of desire is involved.

But—the question immediately presents itself—since the chances of two persons who have loved in one life meeting in another are infinitely remote, how can the fact of first love be regarded as an argument for pre-existence? McTaggart's answer depends upon his metaphysical position, which entails a conviction of the priority of spirit in the universe, a priority which, I suspect, is not very far removed from a monopoly. If, McTaggart says, "immortality is to give us an assurance or a hope of progressive improvement, it can only be if we have reason to believe that the interests of the spirit are so predominant a force in the universe that they will find, in the long run, satisfaction in the universe." Now "the significance of love for spirit is very great." Therefore, the love of two people for each other must in a spiritual universe affect their position and status in the universe. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that the circumstance of their being brought into proximity in a

\* Published with an Introduction by C. D. Broad, in October 1930.



particular life does not depend upon mere chance. The proximity will be rather "a manifestation . . . of those relations which make up the eternal nature of the universe." In other words, it is the workings of spiritual law which brings lovers together.

The whole strength of this argument depends upon the assumption that long acquaintanceship and intimate knowledge breed love. But only too often the attraction which people feel for one another is conditioned not by their knowledge of each other, but by their lack of it. Familiarity is, indeed, only too often fatal to just those sudden attractions which McTaggart has more particularly in mind. McTaggart, I think, is altogether too optimistic in his attitude to human love. For example, when he is considering the *likelihood* as opposed to the *desirability* of a plurality of lives, he lays great stress on the deepening and strengthening of love. Nor, he thinks, is it necessary that we should remember our love of a person in a previous life, in order that our love of the same person may be strengthened in another. For "we know that love can be stronger and deeper because of past love that we have forgotten."

This brings me to the one general criticism which I have space to urge. I am disposed to agree with McTaggart that, if immortality is a fact, then pre-existence is probably a fact also. It seems to me to be quite incredible that what has no end in time should yet have a beginning, that, in other words, the number of eternal entities in the world

should be in continual process of enlargement. Yet it is precisely this that the orthodox Christian notion of the hourly creation of fresh supplies of new souls, each of whom is destined to eternal life, entails. Immortality, then, I am prepared to agree, probably entails pre-existence. Now there is one argument against pre-existence which always seems to me to have great weight. It is this. We admittedly do not normally have any memory of our previous lives. And if there is no memory, there cannot, it may be urged, be continuity of personality. In other words, though I may continue to survive and to be reborn, it is only by courtesy that what survives and is reborn can be called C. E. M. Joad.

McTaggart himself states this objection, "Without memory of my present life it is said my future life would not be mine. If memory ceases with the death of my body, I cease with it and I am not immortal"—and proceeds to answer it by pointing out that it is not necessary that we should remember our previous experiences, in order that our characters may be moulded by them: If the self persists through many lives, and if what has happened to it in past lives affects it in the present, then, he maintains, there is continuity of personality, even if there is no memory of the past events which have made the present personality what it is. Agreed! But it is not only on the score of memory that this objection lies. More important than change of memory is change of body.

Now, it is a fact that my person-



ality is at any given moment largely determined by my body and the state of my body. It is not merely that my body supplies me with most of my desires and emotions and all my perceptions, and that, if I were without the desires for food and sex, the emotion of fear and the perception of natural objects, my consciousness would be entirely other than it is. More important is the fact that the nature of my personality is very largely dependent upon the particular constitution of my body. An invalid has a different mentality from a healthy man, a hunchback from a straight one. Character is largely determined by the secretions of the ductless glands. An excess of adrenalin will produce a coward, a deficiency of thyroid a half-wit. In fact, by suitably manipulating these secretions science has already travelled far in the direction of moulding men's characters, making them choleric or timid, strongly or weakly sexed, almost at will. Finally, investigation into the cases of identical twins seems to show that the physical constituents of the initial germ cell play a part in determining the life and character

of the individuals who develop from that cell which cannot easily be overestimated. Now my body is a different body in each life; different, then, it seems to me, must be that whole equipment of tendencies, dispositions, emotions and desires which make up my character. If, then, I survive through a number of different lives, I, if the form of expression may be pardoned, must be a different person in each one of them. The only method of escaping from this conclusion with which I am acquainted is to draw a distinction between the real self which persists and the transitory self which varies from life to life, and which may be allowed to be dependent upon the body. But such a distinction, though many European and nearly all Indian philosophers have wished to make it, seems to me to be exposed to almost insuperable difficulties. It is, after all, the transitory self, not the real one, of which I am conscious. Now this objection, based on the intimacy of the relation between mind or soul and body, is not one with which McTaggart adequately deals.

C. E. M. JOAD

## II.—SOME INDIAN VIEWS

Belief in the immortality of the self is regarded as a necessary postulate of all religions. The Indians believe not only in it but also in pre-existence and reincarnation. This belief, in its triple form, has appeared to some modern

scholars as a dogma that has never been questioned but is merely taken for granted. Max Müller, for instance, writes\* that to a Hindu the idea that the souls of men migrate after death into new bodies of living beings seems so self-evident that he

1. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 104.



does not trouble to assign any reasons in support of it. That, however, is not the case, for we find the question occupying the attention of Indian thinkers from the earliest times. Thus it forms, at least in one of its main aspects, the chief theme of the *Katha Upanishad*; and, in later works also, we not unoften come across attempts to prove it, whatever view we may take of the value of those attempts. Before indicating the general character of the arguments advanced in favour of this belief, we shall refer to two objections that are usually raised against it.

The first objection is based on the fact that we do not normally remember anything of our past lives. This does not mean that our failure to remember the past proves its non-existence, for that would be to confound a thing with the consciousness of it. What it means is that, even if the existence of past lives be admitted, they would, in the absence of memory, form only a disconnected series with no sense of personal continuity accompanying them. A clear awareness of the persistence of the self through them all would, no doubt, transform our life profoundly; but forgetfulness in this respect need not disprove the continuity of the soul in the form in which it is implied in the Indian theory of transmigration. This theory is essentially the outcome of an attempt to account for the observed diversity in individual character, and it explains that diversity by assuming that the state of each self in the present life is largely, if not entirely, determined

by its own past. All that is required, if the past should exercise such influence upon the present, is that our thoughts and actions should leave behind them an impression which is sufficiently deep; and it is not necessary that we should also remember them afterwards. The experiences of our waking state, for example, influence our dreams although we do not, at the time of dreaming, realise that they do so; and the effects of the lessons learnt in boyhood (say) are seen in later life, although the lessons as such are forgotten. Similarly the experiences of an earlier existence may affect a later one, despite our being oblivious of what those experiences were.

The second objection rests on the view that the body is essential to the self. In its absence, it is contended, neither mental nor moral life is possible. There can, for instance, be no sensations, which are the foundation of so much of our experience, except through the instrumentality of the body. Now the body cannot be said to transmigrate, for it perishes at death once for all; and if the self also does not perish with it but survives, it is clear that it cannot at least remain the same. This objection overlooks the fact that the Indian schools of thought postulate, as the support of all psychical life, a psychical vesture for the self, which is other and subtler than the visible body and which, though its existence is not commonly realised, accompanies the self until it finds release. Release, in fact, is only release from it. Whether the self should not neces-



sarily remain embodied even in that condition is a question which we need not discuss, for we are concerned here with the problem of reincarnation and not with that of final release. This vesture serves as a link between the real self and its fleshly envelope which alone changes with each life, giving rise to the notions of death and rebirth. It is conceived differently in different systems, but all of them acknowledge it in some form or other. Speaking generally, it is in this intermediary that the dispositions of former lives are stated to be treasured up;\* and, since it does not change from one birth to another, there is no point in the criticism that man's soul must cease to be or, at least, change with the dissolution of his body at death. It is true that the visible body also is intimately connected with the self, but the contention is that its loss or replacement by another will not affect the *inner* life of the individual.†

One of the arguments in support of transmigration, commonly met with in Indian philosophical literature,‡ starts from the fact that all men are born with certain predilections, and deduces from this that, since they are not traceable to the present life, they necessarily point back to the experiences of another but forgotten existence as their source. And, as the same argument can be extended to that existence, it is concluded that there must have been in the case of every one

a series of lives, which has had no beginning in time. The readiness to suck the mother's milk, found in a new-born babe, is the example usually given to illustrate this argument. As another example, we may mention man's innate fear of death, which is explained as a sign of the many sufferings undergone on occasions of former death. Some of these congenital dispositions may perhaps be explained as purely physiological but not all. The infant's sucking of the mother's milk, for instance, cannot be so explained in view of the fact, pointed out by ancient Indian writers, that it involves a psychological factor, *viz.*, the exercise of will (*samkalpa*), in however rudimentary a form. Nor can it be ascribed, it seems, to heredity, for that principle leaves unexplained why a particular child should be born in a particular family. If the connection between the two is not to be a matter of sheer accident, it can be explained only by assuming a certain affinity between them and, in the very act of doing so, admitting the pre-existence of the self.

There are other arguments, like the ethical one, based on the observed inequalities of human fortunes; but these being familiar, we may pass on to mention another, which comes from a rather unexpected quarter and is more in the nature of a suggestion than an argument. Kalidasa, in his

\* In the Nyaya-Vaiseshika system, for example, according to which the connection of the self with what is termed *manas* constitutes *samsara*, the dispositions abide in the former; but they are operative only until the self is dissociated from *manas*.

† Cf. *Gita*, II. 22.

‡ See, e.g., *Nyaya-sutra*, III. i. 19-27.



famous play of *Sakuntalam* (v. 2), refers to the strange fact that sometimes, when every circumstance favours a state of peace and contentment, the sight of a beautiful thing or the hearing of sweet music makes a person wistful, instead of serving as a source of pleasure to him. This apparent exception to the rule that a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, the poet explains as the consequence of the recalling, though only subconsciously, of some love or friendship of a former life which, now being past, gives rise to a feeling of melancholy. "The sadness sometimes felt by even happy persons at the sight of beautiful things and the hearing of harmonious sounds implies, to be sure, a vague reminiscence of the affections of a former birth which are deeply rooted in the heart." This phenomenon cannot be explained as a mere reaction to external stimulus or on any other general principle of that sort, for it does not occur in the case of all persons and may not occur again even in the case of the same person when he is in the presence of beautiful things.

So far we have concerned ourselves with the Indian view of reincarnation as explicitly stated in old works. But the best explanation, it seems, not only of the belief in reincarnation but also of that in pre-existence and immortality, is to be found in the Indian conception of *moksha* as the goal of life or the attainment of the highest spiritual value. The notion of *moksha* differs in different schools of thought, but it means in each of them "eternal

freedom" which results from the realisation in one's own experience of what it regards as the ultimate truth. Thus, of the familiar trinity of values, it is Truth that is considered supreme; and the other two, *viz.*, Goodness and Beauty, we may state by the way, are, in all systems alike, subordinated to it in one form or another.

Now the possibility of realising eternal freedom implies that the self, which is to realise it, is immortal; and the immortality of the self can be logically maintained only by granting its eternal pre-existence. This latter point, however, cannot be properly argued without reference to the nature of the self—a topic which cannot be considered within the limits of this paper. We shall therefore content ourselves with citing in respect of it the opinion of a modern thinker, that "any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence."\* In order to show how the conception of *moksha* leads to the belief in a plurality of lives, we have to point out that it does not compel us to admit the existence of God in the same manner in which it does the eternity of the self. This is the reason why so many of the Indian systems, while recognising an eternal self, are atheistic although, so far as popular beliefs are concerned, theism is quite as prevalent in India as anywhere else. Jainism and Buddhism, the Sankhya and the Mimamsa—all definitely repudiate the idea of God as commonly understood; and, in all probability, some of the other systems

\* McTaggart : *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 113.



also which now find a place for it in their world-scheme were atheistic to begin with. To admit a supreme God would, in their view, be to make the attainment of freedom in some way dependent on him and, so far, to reduce the importance of individual effort or, to state the same otherwise, to weaken the potency of *karma*. So orthodox a philosopher as Jaimini looked upon the doctrine of God as a heresy, and affirmed in its place the doctrine of the autonomy of *karma*.\* Even systems like the Vedanta, that believe in God, take care to represent the destiny of the individual as depending virtually on himself. If the final purpose of life is to attain true freedom, and if it can be accomplished only by one's own efforts, it follows that the self should pass through many lives. For this ideal, as conceived in all the systems, is so remote from man, as he finds himself here, that a single life is absolutely inadequate to its complete attainment. It is thus the poverty of man's present spiritual equipment taken along with the greatness of his final destiny that explains the belief in a plurality of lives.

The above view satisfactorily accounts for an important difference between the Indian and other con-

ceptions of reincarnation. It shows why the former does not stop at postulating a series of lives but also insists that it has an end. The purpose of reincarnating is not merely to suffer pain for past sins or to enjoy the welcome fruits of past goodness but also to prepare, through a proper development of character, for the ultimate realisation of the supreme value of life. In fact, rewards and punishments, according to the doctrine of transmigration, are meant only to serve as incentives to aspiration and achievement. The termination of the cycle of rebirths, it may be added, is not necessarily undesirable, as is sometimes assumed, for its conception is not the same in all the schools but differs according to their general outlook on life and the world. There are schools of thought, like the Nyaya and the Sankhya which are pessimistic and *moksha*, according to them, may be an unattractive consummation, for they conceive of it as isolating the self from everything else in the universe. But there are others, like the Vedanta, which are optimistic; and it is far from being undesirable in them, since their ideal is not lonely isolation but the attainment of complete and harmonious life.

M. HIRIYANNA

\* Cf. *Vedanta-sutra*, III. ii. 40.



# STATESMANSHIP AND ETERNAL THINGS

[ **Irwin Edman** of Columbia University writes upon a theme of great practical value to the modern world.—EDs. ]

Parliaments and sanctuaries are not often mentioned in the same breath, and the concerns of the politician making urgent decisions of the instant have hardly seemed to be those of the monk meditating on eternity or the mystic breathing enraptured indistinction with the One. Even the statesman taking long views is bounded by the practical circumstances of his time, while even the larger questions of peace and war, of social justice and of international co-operation seem removed from those themes of Nature and Destiny, from those musings upon timeless truth and infinite good which are the preoccupations of mystics and philosophers. Yet statesmanship and eternal things have a closer context than might at first be supposed, and philosophers and mystics have been the first, though not the only ones, to recognize their bearings on each other.

In Western thought (with which the writer is chiefly familiar) Plato was the first and remains the classical instance of a political philosopher who cannot even think of politics save in terms of philosophy. The informed reader scarcely needs to be reminded of how seriously Plato was concerned with the relation of the politics of time to the logic and the morals of eternity. The just life is possible only in the just state; the just state is an anagram of that perfect order which

only the disciplined—and therefore the detached—philosopher can contemplate. The only adequate statesman is the sound moralist and the true philosopher, “feeding on the pastures of truth.” The only effective rhetorician in the assemblies of men is, in the long run, he who knows the proper subject matter of political rhetoric—the Good. The most splendid oratory is empty and factitious if it is not the utterance of a just man speaking with sincerity and knowledge of what it behooves all men to know. The unjust king, we are told in the *Gorgias*, will have to plead his case before a higher court when he comes to immortal judgment, and Socrates advises his hearers even in this world to act with respect to timeless justice, just as in the *Phaedo*, on the eve of his own execution, he admonishes his disciples to live always as if their souls were immortal, whether they are convinced by his myth of immortality or not. Plato saw that any empirical considerations of political morality raise issues that transcend moments of human crisis and the provincialism of human perspective and concern. A considered polity demands a long view; the longest view is the perspective of the infinite, and any good aimed at or achieved in this world is an incarnation or an illustration of Good Absolute, which the ordered soul of



the philosopher has learned to behold—which alone can absorb his proportioned and enlightened passion. Progress on earth is movement toward a realization, necessarily incomplete, of that Perfect City, and Idea, birthless and deathless, in the Heaven of Ideas.

Plato was only the first in the Western tradition to see statesmanship as the administration in practice of a polity which was really the shadow of an essence, beheld by a philosopher educated to insight into metaphysical reality. Plotinus, the Neo-Platonic mystic, followed in his footsteps, though for him order in the State and in the Soul were not only incarnations of the order of the universe, but preparation of the soul of the philosopher to see that order clearly. For the Stoics, a rational commonwealth was "the dear city of Zeus," as for St. Augustine the community of believers was the City of God. For Spinoza, the civil order was a condition of that liberty in which the philosopher might experience the "Intellectual Love of God." For Hegel, the State was the realization of the Absolute.

But though these are perhaps sufficient and sufficiently impressive instances to indicate that philosophers have repeatedly been disposed to treat, and indeed have been insistent upon treating, political issues in terms of the ultimate principles of morals and metaphysics, it would be foolish to insist that social policy has always, or even often, been determined with reference to first and last things. Political philosophy has too often

been a gloss upon some brutality of action, and principles of justice have been invoked, as they are to-day, as apologies for cruelties, and as half-reasoned statements of unreasoned self-assertion. International rivalries, intra-national conflicts of class interests, the personal ambitions of political leaders, have often been conducted without obeisance to principles at all.

Even where statesmanship has been generous, disinterested and sincere, it has naturally enough, in the heat of action, had no time to consider the meaning of those principles by which it often implicitly has acted. The urgencies of events have been too pressing; the starving must be fed, the war must be won, the peace must be assured. What time, what leisure, what inclination or what excuse could a statesman in our time have for those brooding contemplations that occupy the philosopher in his study, or the mystic in his solitude? When the grosser problems of our day have been resolved, we are told, it will be time enough to meditate upon eternity. Time presses on us now, and the very life of civilization (which alone provides the conditions necessary to philosophy and poetry) is at stake.

The philosopher, pressed with such arguments; the contemplative, faced with such necessities, cannot help being given pause. He would be reckless and callous indeed who did not realize that that world of civil order, in which alone the spiritual interests of men can live, is threatened to-day as it has seldom been in the history of man upon



this planet. There are issues that cannot wait; there are ills that must be cured if there are to be mortal men left upon earth to dream immortal things. "The saint," as John Dewey once put it, "retreats to his tower while the burly sinners rule the world."

It is precisely this divorce between action and thought, between politics and philosophy, that has had, as a matter of fact, disastrous consequences for both. May it not be—fantastic though the suggestion may sound to the men of action—that it is precisely the short view, the hysterical response to an immediate situation, the refusal to think in the wider issues of morality and even of metaphysics, that have brought us to some of our present impasses? Statesmanship that acts in terms of a year commits a whole generation or whole generations of posterity. Politics, intensely practical in character, turns out, in the eyes of another generation or even another decade, to have been pursuing chimeras, or to have lived by illusions whose apparent reality was constituted simply by the intensity with which they were beheld, and the narrowness which excluded other views from the field of vision.

Even the most generous-minded statesmanship has suffered, too, especially in recent years, from a "near-sighted sincerity" with respect to political action. Ethics, Aristotle long ago insisted, was a branch of politics. It might be juster to say that politics is a branch of ethics. What, in a considered analysis, is the purpose of

political arrangements other than to provide the conditions in which the spirit may flourish? Political institutions are mechanisms, social arrangements are techniques. But mechanisms and techniques are not, or should not be, ends in themselves. The ends of politics lie in the domain of morals; the concerns of morals are with the free flowering of the life of man. Angels might live in a lyric anarchy, all singing, in spontaneous unison, the spiritual impulse that throbbed in each. Is it not toward such an angelic anarchy that political institutions are in essence dedicated? And would not the sense of such spiritual liberation and fulfilment, in animating the considerations of statesmen, remove politics from the short-sighted stupidities, the animal quarrels and, if nothing worse, the routine and formalism of earthly politics as we know them? Surely, behind each political faith, and certainly behind the favourite political passion of the English-speaking world—democracy—such an ideal is implicit, the vision of a society in which each spirit might lead its fulfilled and appropriate life, like the souls in Dante's Paradise, each fulfilling its own will in fulfilling the will of God. And what goods each spirit was directed toward involves questions broached by metaphysicians and mystics.

Precisely because statesmanship as practised in the contemporary world seems so uncognizant of the spiritual ends of statesmanship, the more sensitive and intellectual members of our modern commonwealths have retreated; the philos-



ophers, the artists and the mystics have fled from the world to the sanctuary, from time to eternity. Philosophy, which in the great ages has animated the political imaginations of mankind, has become an escape for the weak will and the delicate mind. The things by which the spirit lives have seemed to find little nourishment in the considerations which govern the political scene. "The ruffians," as one contemporary philosopher has said, "may be upon us some day when we least expect it, and philosophy may have to retire again to the sanctuary." There is, perhaps, in the current political situation, both international and within the borders of any and all nations of the world, little to encourage the sensibilities of the poet or the mind of the philosopher. Violence seems to animate political action and, even at its best, a narrow empiricism directs political thought. There is some excuse for the saint to turn his back on the market place and the philosopher to turn his eyes from the parliaments and chancelleries. Such flights have taken place before in the history of civilization. When the political commonwealths of Greece collapsed, there were refugees from actuality to the mystic philosophies and religions of the East and West. In the Middle Ages the sensitive in mind or spirit fled to the monasteries, as in our own

day they retire to universities. But the world keeps breaking in upon their meditations, and in some sense it is the world alone that makes these meditations possible. In the meantime, while these exiles brood upon the eternal, the transient affairs of men may break down so completely that all meditation may be impossible; there may be no retreats left in a society in chaos.

The moral would seem to be twofold. Statesmanship needs to be larger and more ultimate in its reaches than is fashionable at present, even among the enlightened and liberal. Politics, too, needs to be touched with the light that never was on sea or land. The philosopher, also, needs to be recalled to the affairs of men. It is not, perhaps, his business to provide a programme for the immediate problems facing mankind. But he is needed to enunciate in the light of his disciplined contemplation, the implications of that order and sweet reasonableness with which his mind delights to converse. He is needed to explicate those eternal relations of order and liberty, of clarity and equality which it is the ultimate business of statesmanship somehow to contrive to make pervasive in the world. The statesman needs to be reminded of eternity; the philosopher is needed to remind him.

IRWIN EDMAN



# LĀLITYA AND NĀGARAKA

## THE GODDESS OF REFINEMENT AND THE INDIAN ÆSTHETE

[ Those who look upon India only as a land of ascetics and yogis will be surprised to read how in this ancient country ordinary life was made attractive and charming. The article deals with a subject very little known, especially in the West. It is written by **Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri**, a high officer in the Judiciary Service of the Government of India who has made time to study and expound Hindu traditional lore—historical, philosophical and artistic.—EDS. ]

The ideals of womanhood vary from age to age but the charm of womanhood is ever the same. Sex was, is, and will ever be a puzzle but many “new” things in sex-ideology are really old and many “old” things are surprisingly new. Companionate marriage, birth control and divorce may not have existed before, but it is not to be supposed that therefore propagatory sex-urges alone existed. It is not true that in India sex was always reviled or looked down upon as a debasing factor in life. A civilisation which idealised Kāma as a *Purushārtha* cannot be decried as wanting in emotional refinement. Sri Krishna says in the *Gītā* that he is Kāma which is not opposed to Dharma. The *Bhāgawata* describes woman as man’s ally in his war of soul with sense. Manu describes her as the light of the home (*griha-deepthi*) and as worthy of respect, and says that there is no difference between Sthri (woman) and Sri (Goddess) in the household.

We see from Vatsyāyana’s *Kāma Sūtras* that neither the caste system nor the system of pre-puberty marriage is a hindrance to the refinements of sex and of æsthetic

emotions. Nor is the Āsrama system a hindrance because the super-sexual life was always regarded as the consummation of the connubial stage. Vatsyāyana allows marriages only with a virgin of the same caste and prohibits love towards women belonging to the different castes and married women. He recommends union with a woman on whom both eyes and mind are set. The bride should be younger than the bridegroom by at least three years. He says that the *Gāndharva* form of marriage is the best. He refers to marriage with girls as well as to marriage with adolescent and adult maidens. There is much controversy to-day as to which form of marriage the *Sruthi lingas* support. However that may be, the *Grihya Sūtras* and the *Dharma Sastras* show that the leaders of Aryan India preferred the system of marriage with virgins, and their wisdom is clear enough. Hindu marriages have had all along at least as high an average of happiness as the love marriages of the West. *Varana* (choosing a bride) is not courtship but entails as effective an exhibition of the desire to please. In the tender sportive-



ness of bridegroom and bride there is a natural charm which is often the sweetest recollection of age. In the *Nalangu* (mutual decoration by bride and bridegroom) *Poolā-chandu* (the tossing of the flower ball), etc., fun, now a disappearing factor in Hindu marriages, has made its contribution to the sweetening of life.

Vatsyāyana, Kālidasa and others give us beautiful descriptions of the peerless charm of modesty and bashfulness in women and especially in girls. Vatsyāyana says: "She does not look at him directly but shows bashfulness when seen." Kālidasa says in *Sakuntala* :—

When I was in front of her her gaze was withdrawn. Her laughter shone for some other ostensible reason. Her love being checked by her modesty, her passion was neither expressed nor hidden.

The Hindu poets describe also how the lover should learn to enjoy the bashfulness of the beloved and overcome it without bringing about the extinction of modesty. Equally full of the discernment of charm is the description of the silent but eloquent signs by which bashful girls and women reveal their affection. Kalidasa is an expert in this. In all his poems and plays we have exquisite descriptions of manifestations of love.

A fit husband for the Indian woman of delicacy and charm was the *Nāgaraka* or the man of urban refinement as described at great length by Vatsyāyana in his *Kāma Sūtras*. He is a man of art but not of artifice or of artificiality. The *Nāgaraka* is a fine man. We town-dwellers of to-day have to learn

much from the ideal *Nāgaraka* of old. He owns an attractive house which has a beautiful and spacious garden with a tank, or at least a big well. The garden should have *Sthandilas* or raised platforms full of shade and scented sweetness. There should be a swing in a leafy arbour. The floor of the house should be cool and smooth. The *puja* (worship) room should be the most attractive and beautiful portion of the house. The kitchen should be not only clean but charming, situated in a corner of the house. The house must have a terrace where man and wife can enjoy the moonlight and learn to mingle the beauty of human life with the beauty of Nature's life. How dull and drab we are to-day and how divorced is human life from Nature's life! Further the walls in the house should be so polished as to reflect the image of the ladies. Even the roof should be polished. In palaces (*harmyas* and *prāsadas*) there should be golden pillars and floors inlaid with corals and gems. Vatsyāyana says that in the walls there should be secret passages for cool water to circulate and take away the heat. There is reference also to *Samudragrihas* or houses surrounded by water in such a way that they looked like "precious stones set in a silver sea." Kālidasa refers in his *Raghuvamśa* (XIX, 9) to secret pleasure houses surrounded by water.

This is not all. Vatsyāyana says that in the bedroom there should be two couches with clean soft beds, sinking in the middle and having pillows at the head and at the foot.



The image of the favourite deity should be at the head. A shelf should contain cosmetics, scents and other toilet accessories. He refers also to garlands and spiced and scented betel leaves and nuts. On brackets made of elephant-tusks (*nāgadantaka*) there should be placed the *Vina*, painting accessories, poetical works, etc. There should also be chess-boards. Outside the bedroom there should be an aviary where parrots and other birds are reared. Vatsyāyana is so modern as to say that the Nāgaraka should have quiet spots in his house where he might amuse himself by working with the chisel or the lathe. If he were alive to-day he would have recommended the *charka*. A Nāgaraka is not an idler nor a voluptuary nor a libertine, but a man of taste and refinement, a worker and a patriot to boot.

In fact a Nāgaraka's daily life, as described by Vatsyāyana, is attractive to a degree. A Nāgaraka should get up early in the morning and prepare for his ceremonial duties and prayers. He attends carefully to his teeth. He gets shaved often, though not daily as is the fashion now. The Nāgaraka's bath is a special rite. He is massaged and shampooed well and he uses scented soaps as also *anulepana* (fragrant ointment). How many among us smell unpleasantly and offend the senses of others unwittingly! He should not put on too much scent because that is bad taste. He should scent his dress in *dhupa* or incense. Vatsyāyana even commends a lip-stick to men. On the whole we had better leave it to the ladies!

The Nāgaraka chews scented betel to perfume his mouth. He attends to his hair and wears rings on his fingers. Manicuring as a fine art was known to him, though it is now neglected in India. The love-poems of India refer particularly to nail-marks on the person of the beloved. He must have always a scented handkerchief.

Vatsyāyana refers also to the Nāgaraka's diet and drink but we may pass them by. It is however worthy of mention that the Nāgaraka likes sherbets and fruit-juices and even wines. He takes a short siesta after his mid-day meal. He keeps *kokilās* (cuckoos), peacocks and monkeys, and sports with them for a while. He enjoys his evenings by taking part in games of skill and endurance and passes the early portions of the night with music and dancing and at the theatre.

The Nāgaraka was never a lonely person. With like-minded friends he took part in processions and gatherings, garden parties, music and dance parties and the like. Vatsyāyana refers to *Samājas* or gatherings in the Saraswati temple where musicians and dancers would perform. In social gatherings the Nāgarakas would show their skill in composing impromptu verses and in music. Sixty-four arts (*Kalās*) were known. The faculty of light and humorous yet refined speech can be acquired only in such gatherings of refined men and women. We can well realise why it is lacking in India to-day and why we find more of it in the West. The great cities of ancient India abounded in beautiful parks and gardens where the



*élite*, both men and women, could meet in groups and have the joys of refined talk. We are only now moving in that direction but without much vision or energy as yet. Garden picnics, music parties and theatricals were called *udyānāyātras* and were frequent in the towns and cities of old. They are unknown in our urban centres to-day. The *Rāsakrida*, so famous by its description in the *Bhāgawata*, is but the sweetest amidst the many sweet diversions of ancient India.

Let no one suppose that in this round of pleasures the man of refinement or his wife forgot the duties of life. The queen of the household was also its servant. The king of the household too was the servant of all and especially the servant of God. The husband and the wife were one in mind and in heart. In Aja's lament in the *Raghuvamśa*, he calls Indumati his dear disciple in the arts. A woman should always speak in a low and sweet and gentle voice. She should never appear before her lord in ugly apparel or without ornaments. When he is absent from home, she discards her finery and resumes it when he returns. The worship of the deity is her special care; she knows all the holy days and ensures their observance by her lord. She takes charge of his income, spends wisely and keeps accounts. She even prevents extravagant expenditure by him. She supervises the work of the servants and keeps them under control but treats them with respect and kindness. She is in charge of the garden and keeps it trim. She supervises the kitchen

and attends to spinning and sewing.

The women generally lived in the second apartment of the house (*antahpura*). Modern criticism calls this seclusion, but the *antahpura* was meant only to screen the women from the vulgar gaze and secure for them the most shady, cool and quiet portion of the house. Indian women, at any rate before the Muslim conquest of India, were not prevented from going out for social life or for amusement. In South India the *ghosha* system was never known. But the ideal of women living in inner apartments is a vital idea in India even to-day.

It is no doubt true that the *Ganika* (courtesan) accomplished in the arts of music and dance was much in evidence in ancient India. But it is not right to confuse such *Ganikas* with prostitutes. Vasantasena as described in Bhasa's *Charudatta* and Sudraka's *Michchakati* were women of loyalty, refinement and nobility of feeling. The best *Ganikas* used to spend large sums on religious and charitable purposes. They could attain a skill which women of the household, engrossed in the many cares of domestic life, could never hope to attain or to keep. In modern India, *Ganikas* are almost defunct, but prostitutes seem to thrive despite social reformers, vigilance associations and Brothel Acts.

Sex values in the West have undergone a profound change but it is open to question whether the modern age has increased refinement while lessening morality. The West has complicated the economic life and disintegrated the family. Bertrand Russell says in his *Mar-*



*riage and Morals* : " A sex-relation is better when it has a large psychological element than when it is purely physical." But is there such preponderance ? He pleads for a greater sexual freedom for artists in the interests of art. He says:—

Nothing in America is so painful to the traveller as the lack of joy. Pleasure is frantic and bacchanalian, a matter of momentary oblivion, not of delighted self-expression.

*If a Society relaxes sexual discipline in the interests of joy and art, it is running great risks all round.* If in the interests of sexual discipline it throws away the joy of life, then also there is a missing of the true purposes of life. That society is the best in which sex brightens life and art *without blighting the soul*. In modern societies the soul is largely at a discount. But somehow when the soul is starved the beautiful in life seems unable to thrive, however sedulously it is sought and kept. Thus it does not appear that the modern attitude towards womanhood has increased the joys and refinements of life, while it has definitely weakened the

sense of duty and the consciousness of the supremacy of soul.

Is it too much to hope that in these days of storm and stress, of unemployment and political unrest, we can catch a little of the repose and refinement of earlier times ? Let us not pride ourselves on our cultural attainments to-day. We have not to-day much cultural achievement to boast of. The days of Vatsyāyana and Bhāsa, of Kālidasa, Sudraka and Amaruka had a spaciousness and a sweetness which we may well envy in our more troubled and joyless times. We may not have our *Dhīrodatta* and *Dhīra Śānta* heroes again, though I think otherwise. Can we not have at least our *Dhīra Lalitas* once more ? Kālidasa says in his *Malavikāgnimitra* that ladies have a natural sense of the sweet and the refined and the picturesque (*Lalita gnāna*). Shall not the Eternal Feminine reassert itself like "a fountain of sweet water in the sea" and shall not the presiding deity of *Lalitya* (refinement) rule and sweeten our national life again ?

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI



# THE THEOSOPHY OF IAMBLICHUS OF SYRIA

## AN EARLY MYSTIC OF THE NEO-PLATONIC SCHOOL

[ **Dr. Margaret Smith** has prepared for us four essays the first of which on Ammonius Saccas was published in our May issue. Here we print the second one—on Iamblichus. H. P. Blavatsky states that “Correct biographies of him have never existed because of the hatred of the Christians; but that which has been gathered of his life in isolated fragments from works by impartial pagan and independent writers shows how excellent and holy was his moral character, and how great his learning.”—Eds. ]

Iamblichus (Jamblichus), the chief representative of Syrian Neo-Platonism, was born about A. D. 280, at Chalcis, in Coele-Syria, and died about A. D. 330. He belonged to a wealthy and illustrious family and studied under Anatolus, and afterwards under Porphyry, the pupil and editor of Plotinus, at Rome. He then settled down as a teacher at Chalcis and gathered round him a considerable group of disciples drawn from different countries and nationalities, who were attracted by his reputation for sanctity and for knowledge of the Divine mysteries. Of him one of his biographers writes :—

Iamblichus shared in an eminent degree the Divine favour, on account of his cultivation of justice, and he obtained a numerous multitude of associates and disciples, who came from all parts of the world, for the purpose of participating in the streams of wisdom, which so plentifully flowed from the sacred fountain of his wonderful mind.

He was a man of genial disposition, socially accessible and living on familiar terms with his many disciples, in whose company he used to pay an annual visit to the baths of Gadara.

He lived the life of an ascetic, contenting himself with a diet of

extreme frugality and simplicity, but during his repast, we are told, he “exhilarated those who were present by his behaviour and filled them, as with nectar, by the sweetness of his discourse.” In his lifetime, he was accredited with miraculous powers, though he himself repudiated the suggestion.

His disciples included men who afterwards became famous as teachers of Neo-Platonism—Sopater of Syria, who succeeded Plotinus in his school of philosophy, Aedisius, Eustathius the Capadocian, the Greeks Theodore and Euphrasius, Priscus and Sallust. His influence upon those who came after him was great, and he was regarded with the greatest respect by such writers as Chrysanthius and Maximus, as well as Proclus (412—485). Of Proclus it was written :—

He was illustrious as a mathematician and as an astronomer: he was the first among existing philologers; he had so comprehended all religions in his mind and paid them such equal reverence, that he was as it were the priest of the whole universe: nor was it wonderful that a man possessing such a high knowledge of nature and science should have this initiation into all sacred mysteries—such a man was Proclus in whom are combined and from whom shine forth in no irregular and uncertain rays all the



philosophical lights which have illustrated Greece in various times; to wit, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.\*

The famous Bulialdus speaks of Iamblichus as a man of the greatest genius, while the Platonists who succeeded him gave him the epithet of "divine." The Emperor Julian, who reigned from 361 to 363, went so far as to say of Iamblichus that "he was posterior indeed in time, but not in genius, to Plato."

Iamblichus was, in fact, a learned scholar and a considerable philosopher, though his bent lay rather in the direction of speculative and mystical theology than of philosophy proper, and he evolved a theosophy of the Gnostic type. He was the exponent of Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions, and his doctrines, in addition, shew plainly the influence of Oriental ideas. He was a copious writer, his works including commentaries on the *Parmenides*, *Timaeus*, and *Phaedo* of Plato, and the *Analytica* of Aristotle, a treatise on the Chaldaean theology, and treatises on the Soul and on Nature, all of which have been lost. Those of his writings which are extant originally formed part of a great work entitled, "Treatise on the Pythagorean Philosophy," and include a life of Pythagoras, an exhortation to the study of Philosophy (the *Protrepticus*) and three mathematical treatises. To Iamblichus also was ascribed the celebrated book *De Mysteriis*, the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldaeans and Assyrians, which is the

refutation by "Abammon" the Master, of the arguments contained in an epistle of Porphyry to the Egyptian priest Anebo. It is unlikely that this *Book of Mysteries* is the actual work of Iamblichus, though Proclus held it to be his, but it certainly emanated from his school and represents the views and aims which his disciples had derived from him, and may therefore be taken to represent the teaching and doctrine of Iamblichus.

The teaching of Iamblichus and his school on the nature of the Ultimate Reality, is based on that of Plotinus. That Reality is the One, transcendent and incommunicable, unmoved and immutable, alone in His Unicity, supremely perfect, Absolute Goodness, the Primordial Cause, the Sole Source of all things. But though God is thus transcendent and Absolute, and no limitations or divisions are consistent with the Divine Nature, yet He is also immanent. All things, says "Abammon" are full of divinity, for "God illuminates heaven and earth, holy cities and places, divine shrines, just as the sun illuminates all the corners of the universe which he looks upon."† The One is the Godhead, unlimited, infinite, above all principles of being and intelligence, and between the One and the many Iamblichus places a second super-existent unity, God manifest in action, the Demiurge or world-creating potency, the light communicating itself, "a monad from the One," which is prior to essence and the principle of essence, a Mediator between the Absolute

\* Cf. F. D. Maurice. *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*. I, p. 117.

† *Book of Mysteries*, Sect. I, Cap. 8.



Reality and the universe. From this God of gods, the King, entity and essence are derived, and He is the principle of intelligibles; below him, again, are many gods, intellectual, supramundane and mundane, and various orders of archangels, angels, demons and heroes, distinguished in nature, power and activity.

The human soul, in the teaching of Iamblichus, stands midway between the supernatural and the natural and has a twofold relation, one to God and one to the body. It is possessed of reason, a Divine attribute not possessed by the lower creatures, and it can therefore behold the Divine Beauty, and has within itself a consciousness of God and a desire to ascend unto Him. For the soul in itself is ingenerable and incorruptible; and though, when it is joined to a body, it must be involved in the suffering of existence, being "complicated with the indefiniteness and diversity of matter," yet the soul itself is immutable and essentially more excellent than that which suffers. The soul is the real Self, and therefore knowledge of the soul is knowledge of oneself. The highest part of the soul and the best is the intellectual principle, that part which is Divine and "for the sake of this and of the thoughts which it energises, all else exists." Knowledge of the Self will enable man to make use of the good things in life which, without the wisdom to know how to use them, are not goods but evils. So the body is to be cared for and controlled for the sake of the soul and its ruling powers.

In the *Book of Mysteries* the

Master Abammon asserts that man has fallen from the Vision of God, that he can only be blessed by returning to that Vision, and therefore in this book he wishes to shew the gradual steps by which man can be led onward and upward until the soul, freed from the complications and hindrances of matter, can enter into communion with the Divine. "The perfect good is God Himself: the good of man is unity with Him." That which is merely natural is determined, "bound by the indissoluble chains of necessity which men call Fate," as distinguished from the supernatural, the Divine, which is bound by no such laws. Yet even the natural, which has itself been ultimately derived from the supernatural, can be affected by it. So that Iamblichus maintains that from the supernatural "a continual stream of elevating influence flows" to the natural, interfering with the laws of necessity, and turning to good ends what is imperfect and evil. Evil he holds to have been generated accidentally, by a mis-directed will.

The soul, in its unregenerate state, is subject to the law of necessity, by which it descends periodically into a body and reascends; and until it has reached complete purification, it is subject to rebirth in a new body, and descends wholly, becoming a composite nature once more. Being immortal, it can find no escape from ills and no salvation except by acquiring as much goodness and insight as possible, until it shall at last ascend in purity and escape from the necessity of rebirth.

The Way of Salvation, then,



which leads to that union with the Divine which is the goal of the soul, is to be found in the soul's surrender to that which is Divine within itself. This can be attained by a twofold purification, that of discipline, which purifies from outward evil, and knowledge, that philosophy which purifies from the evil within. Iamblichus writes:—

A temple, indeed, should be adorned with gifts, but the soul with discipline and as the lesser mysteries are to be delivered before the greater, thus also discipline must precede philosophy.\*

Pythagoras had said, "It is proper to sacrifice and to adore, unshod," and this exhortation Iamblichus holds is to be interpreted symbolically.

Sacrifice and adoration should be performed not only in the body, but also in the energies of the soul: so that these energies may neither be detained by passion, nor by the imbecility of the body, nor by generation, with which we are externally surrounded. But everything pertaining to us should be properly liberated and prepared for our participation in the Divine.†

This is liberation from the oppressive power of Nature, for by this purification the soul withdraws from connection with the sensuous world and dependence on Nature and Destiny.

In addition to the discipline of body and its activities, there is also the discipline of mind and spirit which comes through philosophy, for philosophy has for its aim that insight which is gnosis, and enables the soul to attain to its final good. Philosophising, says Iamblichus, is

a kind of dying, in order to live, death being nothing but the separation of the soul from the body in order that it may live a life by itself. The soul can never perceive truth in all its purity until it has attained to this release. In order that the soul may be prepared for that perfect knowledge—when it shall know as it is known—and be prepared to approach as near as possible to that knowledge here and now, it must be purified from all that arises from the body, from common desires and fears, from all anxiety about earthly needs, from the hindrances to progress which arise from what is external and natural. It is by the insight reached through philosophic purification that the soul acquires the virtues of courage, temperance and justice.

Philosophy not only purifies the soul from the evils within, replacing the vices by virtues, but it thereby purifies its relations with other souls, for justice implies the giving to others of what is their due. Of all kinds of knowledge, Iamblichus holds, philosophy alone is free from envy and does not rejoice in the ills of others, for it shews that men are all akin and of like affections and all are subject alike to unforeseen changes of fortune. Therefore philosophy exhorts men to human fellowship and mutual love.‡

Those who are truly "initiated" when they reascend, so that they are no longer under the law of necessity and rebirth, are those who have become purified thus, through

\* *Protrepticus*.

† *Ibid.*, Third Symbol.

‡ *Protrepticus* 21.



philosophy. The special function, then, of philosophy, is to set the soul free from the evil accretions which are the result of birth and rebirth, and to liberate that energy within it which is Divine, that principle which is superior to all nature and generation, "through which we are capable of being united to God, of transcending the mundane order and of participating in eternal life, and the energy of that which is super-celestial."

Through this principle, therefore, we are able to liberate ourselves from Fate. For when the more excellent parts of us energize and the soul is elevated to that which is better than itself, then it is entirely separated from things which detain it in generation, departs from subordinate natures, exchanges the present for another life and gives itself to another order of things, entirely abandoning the former order with which it was connected.\*

This indwelling of God imparts health of body, virtue of soul, purity of intellect, and elevates everything to its proper principle. It annihilates that within the soul which is cold and destructive; that which is hot it increases and renders more powerful and predominant, and causes all things to accord with soul and intellect and gives light and "intelligible harmony."† In connection with this latter idea, the Master Abammon holds that sounds as such can have no influence in bringing about a state which is so entirely Divine, but the soul, before it was combined with the body, was an

auditor of divine harmony. The sounds of music indicate the inner harmony between the soul and God and in them it recognises this harmony and recollects that heavenly music, and so by earthly music may be enabled to ascend towards that harmony and be prepared to receive full inspiration.‡

In this ascent towards its Source, the soul is helped by prayer, not the prayer of supplication, but the prayer of contemplation, of which the writer of the *Book of Mysteries* states:—

The continual exercise of prayer nourishes the vigour of our intellect and renders the receptacles of the soul far more capacious for the communications of God. It likewise is the divine key, which opens to men the Holy of Holies; accustoms us to the splendid rivers of supernal light: in a short time perfects our inmost selves and disposes them for the ineffable embrace and contact of the Divine: and does not desist until it raises us to the summit of all. It also gradually and silently draws up all that is within our soul, by divesting it of everything which is foreign to a Divine nature, and clothes it with the perfections of the Supremely Perfect. Besides this, it produces an indissoluble communion and friendship with the Divine, nourishes a Divine love and inflames the divine part of the soul. Whatever is of an opposing and contrary nature in the soul it expiates and purifies: expels whatever is prone to generation and retains anything of mortality in its ethereal and splendid spirit: and it perfects a good hope and faith concerning the reception of Divine light.

So this contemplative prayer becomes the seal of that ineffable

\* *Book of Mysteries*. VIII.

† *Ibid.* II. 6.

‡ *Book of Mysteries*, III, 9. Cf. al-Ghazālī speaking of those who live the unitive life in God, "if sweet music breaks upon their ears they pass from it to (the thought of) the Beloved—for from Him is all that they hear and He hath made them deaf to all words save His."



union with God, whereby the soul is irradiated with the Divine Fire.\*

Only thus can the soul attain to felicity, to salvation and release from the bonds of necessity and fate, to the essence and perfection of all good which is found only in God. Only so can the human soul hope to participate in the Divine life and become united with God, the Giver of all good. "There is a time," writes Abammon, "when we become wholly soul, are out of the body and sublimely revolve on high, in union with the immaterial Divinity." Such a soul has obtained the Divine life instead of a human life: it is wholly possessed by God. It has entered the ranks of the "initiated," those released from the law of Necessity, who are no more subject to rebirth. This is the end of the Path, of the ascent of the soul to God.

So the writer of the *Book of Mysteries* closes with the prayer that he and those for whom he writes may hold fast all right thoughts, that they may ever be granted a knowledge of the truth, may be vouchsafed a more perfect participation in that Divine gnosis wherein consists the blessed attainment of all good, and finally may be granted the enjoyment of sympathy and fellowship one with another.

The mode of thought represented by Iamblichus and his immediate disciples dominated Neo-Platonism

from this time onwards and, after his death, his school dispersed itself over the whole Roman Empire. His followers were the associates and teachers of the Roman Emperors; it was under two of them, Maximus and Chrysanthius, that the Emperor Julian pursued his philosophical studies, and some of his disciples committed their teaching to writing, notably Sallust and Theodore. In the revival of Neo-Platonism in the fifth century at the Alexandrian School, of which the authorised exponent was Hypatia, it was the tradition of Iamblichus which she followed and expounded, until her brilliant career was brought to an end by the fanaticism of the Alexandrian mob in A.D. 415. It was by means of the teaching of Iamblichus and its dissemination in such a Christian centre as Alexandria, as well as in his own native land of Syria, that the Christian church became indoctrinated with Neo-Platonic mysticism, and this was conspicuously so in the writings of the famous mystic of the end of the fifth century, Dionysius, the pseudo-Areopagite, probably a monk of Syria. His works contain a doctrine of gnosis based on the teachings of Iamblichus and Proclus, so that through him Iamblichus may be said to have had a profound influence on later Christian thought in the direction of mysticism and pantheism.†

MARGARET SMITH

\* *Book of Mysteries*, V, 26.

† For the Life of Iamblichus, Cf. Eunapius.; F. D. Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*; J. E. Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship*; T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*.

For his teaching, Cf. *On the Pythagorean Life*, Greek Text, edited by A. Nauck, translated by T. Taylor; *The Book of Mysteries*, Greek Text and Latin Trans., edited by T. Gale, translated by T. Taylor; *The Exhortation to Philosophy*, Greek Text, edited by T. Kiessling.



# THE SONG OF THE HIGHER LIFE

## IX.—THE YOGA OF THE IMPERISHABLE ETERNAL

[ Below we publish the ninth of a series of essays founded on the great text-book of Practical Occultism, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Each of these will discuss a title of one of the eighteen chapters of the Song Celestial. The writer calls them "Notes on the Chapter Titles of the Gita"—but they are more than notes. They bring a practical message born of study and experience.

This particular study is on the eighth chapter entitled Akshara-Brahma-Yoga.

**Sri Krishna Prem** is the name taken in the old traditional manner prevailing in India by a young English gentleman when he resolved to enter the path of Vairagya, renouncing his all, including the name given to him at birth. He took his tripos at Cambridge in Mental and Moral Sciences and is a deep student of Indian Philosophy. Away from the world but serving it with faith he lives in the Himalayas, and is esteemed highly for his sincerity, earnestness and devotion—EDS. ]

The further the disciple proceeds upon the path, the clearer the Light that comes flooding into his heart. The last chapter (the seventh) ended with the mention of some technical terms which are now seen to refer to the Ladder of Being, the Rainbow Bridge, down which the Soul has come and up which it must return. This Ladder has been described in various terms in all the ancient traditions—for instance, the Sephirothal Tree of the Kabala—but the disciple who has reached this stage can read the various symbols that the Teachers have employed, for the reality behind them all is one.

Beyond all, and alone, stands the Supreme Eternal, the Imperishable *Brahman*, dark in Its utter mystery, the Root of all that is, was or shall ever be. Neither subject nor object, neither knower, knowing nor known can exist in the unspeakable Being of That which is beyond all names.

All manifestation springs from the self-limitation of that *Brahman*. *Brahman* as subject sees

Itself as object and thus we get the first though still unmanifest duality. The essential nature (*swabhāva*) of the One as transcendent Subject, here called *adhyātma*, separates out, as it were, leaving the other aspect of the *Brahman* to stand as the eternal Object, *Mūla-prakriti*. This *Mūla-prakriti*, the unmanifest basis of all objectivity, is, from its very nature, the source of all the manifested Many. Reflecting, as it does, the Light of the One *Atman*, It is the root of all plurality. In Its dark being lie all the seeds of action, seeds that, under the Sun's bright rays, will shoot and grow into the great World Tree.

Because It is thus the root of all action, the *Gita* terms It "*Karma*," but it should be borne in mind that It is not any sort of primordial "brute matter" existing in its own right as speculated on by nineteenth-century scientists, but merely the objective aspect of the *Brahman*, the unmanifest Substratum in which forms live and move and have their being. It cannot



stand alone apart from the *Brahman* of which It is an aspect, in a sense even, an abstraction. It was a failure to perceive this that led the later *Sāṅkhyas* into dualism. Remove the dualistic knowing\* and the *Mūla-prakṛiti* collapses into the *Brahman* of which It is but the appearance. If the Brahman is to appear as an object at all it is only as the *Mūla-prakṛiti* that it can so appear.

Passing now to the manifested Cosmos (verse 4), we find that the interaction of these two, the Unmanifested Subject and the Unmanifested Object, gives rise, on the one hand to the changing world of forms, the "perishable nature," (*adhibhūta*), and, on the other hand, to the witnessing Consciousness, the One Life, the *adhidaiva*, termed in the *Kathopanishad* the Great *Atman*.†

Then comes the *adhiyajña*, the Mystic Sacrifice by which Krishna, the One Life, unites Himself with the passing forms. Just as the Unmanifested Two find their unity in the Supreme Unmanifested *Brahman*, so do the manifested Life and Form find union in the sacrificial act of Krishna. This is that Mystic Sacrifice mentioned in the *Rig Veda* in which the *Purusha* was dismembered to create the world of beings, and this the crucifixion of the Christ, pouring His life-blood on the Cross of matter, redeeming thus the duality of the world.

The One Self, seeing Itself reflected in the myriad forms, willed by Its mystic *yoga* to identify Itself with them and share their limitations. Thus were the individuals formed, the central being of men, sometimes termed (higher) *mānas*, sometimes *ahankāra*, the scattered limbs of the Divine Osiris. These are the Immortal Sparks, the Shining Thread, dying in myriad forms and yet, unseen, passing from life to life in age-long immortality.

This "Sacrifice" has also been described in the *Poemandres* of Hermes Trismegistus:—

He [ the Cosmic Man ], beholding the form like to Himself existing in Her water, loved it and willed to live in it; and with the will came act, and so He vivified the form devoid of reason. And Nature took the object of her love and wound Herself completely round Him and they were intermingled; for they were lovers. And this is why beyond all creatures on the earth man is two-fold; mortal because of body, but, because of the essential Man, immortal. (G. R. S. Mead's translation.)

On account of this twofold nature of man it is of great importance that the disciple should at all times, and especially at the critical hour of death, identify himself with what is immortal in him, with the Undying Krishna within and not with the mortal form which constitutes his body. Imagination is the power which wields the universe. From imagination sprang the dualism of

\* This dualistic "knowing" is, however, not individual but cosmic. It springs from that mysterious extra-cosmic Something called by various schools the Will of God, *līla* (the Divine Play), Eternal Law or Maya. All these names express some aspect of It but, being beyond the manifested Cosmos, It is beyond the reach of words. Its nature is too mysterious to be speculated on but Its reality is proved by the fact of manifestation's having taken place at all. In attempting to describe It Shankara was forced into paradox and contradiction while the Buddha preferred to keep silent altogether.

† Also known in some traditions as the Third Logos.



the Cosmos and through imaginative union came about the Mystic Sacrifice. As a man thinketh, so shall he become. Therefore is it of such supreme importance how the disciple uses his imagination. Identifying himself in thought with the perishable body he shares the latter's death, while, if he can unite himself with what is Deathless, he will partake of immortality.

There is no appeal here to the authority of ancient texts. It is plain fact of which, as the *Gita* says, "there is no doubt at all." To him who doubts it only needs to say "Make yourself ready, try it and reap the fruits." Try it and see; you are the immortal Spirit.

Thou wast not made for death, immortal bird !  
No hungry generations tread thee down.

But, as in the ancient myth, the elixir of immortality must be churned from out the Cosmic Ocean. How will the Soul's immortality benefit him who thinks he is the body? It is useless to rely on any mere deathbed thoughts. Only he who in life "strives with continual practice" to know himself as that which is immortal can meet the illusions of the death hour with unruffled mind and place his being in the Deathless Spirit, treading the Bridge of Souls to the Eternal.

Five are the stages on the Rainbow Bridge, five gates of consciousness through which the soul must

pass ( Verse 9 ). First comes the Ancient Seer,\* the world creator, Brahmā the Demiurge, red-coloured with desire. It is the Light we know as the desire consciousness, the Light that shines through the senses, inner as well as outer, for this it is that makes the world of beings and from this point must the ascent commence.

Next comes the Inner Ruler, smaller than the small. This is the inner "Point" mentioned in chapter five, the Higher Self, shining in the pure Mind. He sows the field and He reaps the harvest ; happy the man ruled by that Inner Lord !

Above this comes the *Buddhi*, All-Supporter, the luminous Sea in which the separate Sparks are all united in one Living Flame. It is the Light that shines above the Mind, uniting individual points of view in one all-seeing Wisdom. It is the Vestibule that leads beyond to the Great Being of unimagined form, the Cosmic Ideation which is Krishna,† the farthest edge of manifested being. This is the Plane of the Creative Word and he who has attained this lofty height can hear the thunders of that mystic Sea, breaking upon the beaches of the worlds "and hear its mighty waters, rolling evermore."

Beyond it lies the dark unfathom-ed mystery of Unmanifested Nature and, beyond again, burns the White

\* The use of the word *kavi*, seer or poet, ( also applied to the poet-seers of the Vedas ) shows how essentially the creative process is conceived as one of imagination. This level is the same as that of the Gnostic Ilda-Baoth. The word *Brahma* is also used in another sense (e. g., verse 16 of this chapter) where it stands for the highest level of manifested being, the plane of the Creative Word, the Cosmic Ideation. There need be no confusion about this double use. Both signify the creative Power, in the one case on the level of the unity, the *manifested* unity : in the other case on the level of plurality, the plurality which is the world of beings.

† Only in one aspect of course. Throughout the *Gita* Krishna identifies himself with different levels at different places.



Light, the Sun beyond the Darkness, the calm and peaceful Light of the Unmanifested *Atman*.

Beyond, once more, is the Supreme Eternal, the Nameless Mystery symbolised by the one-syllabled *Om*. He who can tread the path of Consciousness sinking the senses in the mind, the mind in *buddhi*, *buddhi* in the "Great Self" and then go on Beyond,\* enters the bliss of that Supreme Eternal and comes no more to birth in bodies, human or divine.

Between the unmanifested and the manifest lies an Abyss which thought can never cross. Up to the farthest edge of manifested being, the Great Self or Cosmic Ideation, here referred to as the world of *Brahmā* (verse 16), all things are transient, even though they last a thousand ages. From out the dark Unmanifested Nature they issue forth at every Cosmic Dawn. They last for untold ages but the eternal rhythm of Day and Night is on them and at length, there comes a time when, like plants that have flowered, they sink back in the Unmanifested Root of all. In that dark matrix of the Universal Mother the seeds of all that has been lie in latency through the long Night till the next Cosmic Dawn. This mighty rhythm of Cosmic Day and Night, to an idea of which modern astronomers are perhaps dimly groping, was clearly known to the great ancient Seers. They

knew that nothing Cosmic lasts for ever and that even the Unmanifested Mother *Mūla-prakṛiti*, sends forth her shoots again each Cosmic Dawn. Therefore they sought to live in the Eternal, in that Supreme Unmanifested *Brahman*, the Indestructible, the Highest Goal (verses 20 and 21). Beyond the Cosmic Tides, That stands for ever, the Great *Nirvāṇa*, the Supreme Abode. Those who attain It know nor Day nor Night. Like seeds destroyed by fire, no Cosmic Dawn can bring them forth again to worlds of sorrow. Of them naught can be said save the great *mantra* of the *Prajñā Pāramitā* :—

"O Wisdom gone, gone to the Other Shore, landed on the Other Shore, *Swāhā* !" †

This is the Goal reached by the Rainbow Bridge ; what of the means by which to tread that Path? It is one thing to know of the different levels of Consciousness but quite another to be able to raise oneself at will to higher levels. The best means to accomplish this is "unswerving love and devotion to Him in whom all beings abide, by whom all this Cosmos is pervaded." Let there be no misunderstanding here. This is not said in the spirit that has marred so many of the *bhakti* schools of India, the spirit of rivalry with those who teach the Path of Knowledge. Knowledge is indeed the very Path itself. The Path is made of various levels of Knowledge and we have seen the *Jñāni* describ-

\* To understand the real meaning of "Om" consult *Mandukya Upanishad* in which its symbolism is clearly set forth.

This description of the Path is taken from the *Katha Upanishad*. It is introduced here as an expansion of the brief description given in verse 12 of this chapter.

† *Swāhā* is the mantra with which offerings are made in the sacred fire. In this, the *Brahma Yajña*, the self has been offered consumed in the fire of the Eternal.



ed as Krishna's very Self. But this knowledge is not the knowledge found in books. It must be gained by making the ascent to higher levels, and how in fact may that same rising be accomplished? Who is there that has tried to tread the Path and does not know what is referred to here? Above our heads, like the full moon, shines forth that higher level of our being. We see it there, drawing our hearts with beauty, and yet, for all our efforts, inaccessible, beyond our reach.

The best and easiest means to make the ascent is for the disciple to give himself in love and devotion to that which is above his present level. Loving devotion is the easiest way by which man can transcend his limitations. This is the great force which will carry the disciple out of himself. One's self is dear to all, but he who loves or worships with unswerving heart loses his self to find a higher Self in the Beloved or the Worshipped One. Thus does he find himself upon the level which, up till then, had gleamed beyond his reach. Thus does he tread the Path and "sink the senses in the Mind" and so on till he reaches the One Self, the Shining *Atman* within which all live.

This *Atman* may be symbolised for him as his own Teacher or as some great *Avatar*. But, through the symbols, he should ever bear in mind it is the One Great Self of all he worships, for, as it says in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, not for the son or husband are son and husband dear but for the *Atman* which is dear to all. For though one

cannot scale at once the heights of being, yet one can reach them step by step through love, giving oneself to that which stands above one, climbing in this way till the Goal is reached.

It is true that there are other ways of making the ascent. Plotinus said that only he attains the One who has the nature of a lover or philosopher. The disinterested passion for knowledge, which was what he meant by philosophy, is also capable of lifting a man out of his personality, of making him forget all self in contemplation of the universal Truths. But few are they whose feet can tread this latter Path. Many, no doubt, desire Knowledge intensely but, of them, most seek it for the power it confers and not for its own sake. It is in that rare case alone where knowledge is desired for Truth's own sake that man can lose all self in its pursuit.

Love is, in any case, the power by which we rise, whether that love be of the True or of the Beautiful or, best of all, of the One Atman, Krishna, who shines through everything men love or worship. Truth of all truths, Beauty of all things beautiful, Soul of all things beloved, to Him, at last, all come, losing themselves to find their Self in Him.

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest  
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness  
And the souls of whom thou lovest  
Walk upon the winds with lightness  
Till they fail as I am failing  
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

These lines of Shelley's describe, as no words of mine can ever do, the rapture of the Soul, dizzy with loss of self as it soars towards the Light.



There are two Paths, two everlasting Paths ; by one or other must all souls go forth. "By the one he goeth who returneth not, by the other he who again returneth." These are the "Way Above" and the "Way of Death" of Hermes Trismegistus ; probably also the Two Paths, one through the sky and one beneath the earth, mentioned by Plato in his "Vision of Er." These Paths, the Path of Light and the Path of Darkness, have been veiled in symbolism throughout the ages. This particular symbolism is far older than the *Gita* and what the Sages have thought fit to veil need not be here laid bare. Let it suffice to say that these so-called "times" are no times at all. It does not matter when a man may die ; if he has Knowledge he will tread the Upward Path ; if not, the Path of Gloom to birth and death.

These "times" are stages on the Paths that Souls must tread ; the one, the Bright Path of the Consciousness, the Path Beyond, trodden by him who knows the Self in all ; the other, the Dark Path of Matter, trodden by the ignorant. He who goes by the first climbs the steep inner Path from flickering firelight to the Sunshine of Eternal Day. Rising from Light to Light in ever widening splendour, he treads the trackless Swan's Path till the blazing Goal is reached.

The other is the Path of gloom and sorrow. Here the only Light is that reflected in the Moon of matter, and the traveller in that pale radi-

ance, taking foes for friends, losing himself in forms which are illusions, knowing not the Immortal, goes from death to death.

The man who knows these Paths has, as it were, a compass with which to guide his steps at every instant, in death as in life. For let it not be thought that these teachings are for this life and world alone. Man is a citizen of many worlds and not here alone are dangers and temptations to be faced. Dire illusions await man in the Realms beyond the grave. Those who believe that all has been achieved if mere "survival" can be demonstrated, those who accept the fantasies of mediums as the Truth, expose themselves to dangers which no "spirit-guide" can save them from.

There, in those worlds, the mind, freed from the dragging fetters of a gross material body, treads its own path, the path prepared for it by its own thoughts and actions, done while yet "alive." Either it shines in its own Light or else it burns in self-enkindled flames of hatred, greed and lust, the "three-fold gate of hell" (c. 16, verse 21). This hell is no less real because it is a mind-created one. Fierce illusions\* will beset the soul and he who knows not the Paths will be whirled irresistibly away. Turning his back upon the Fearless, Stainless Light of the One *Atman*, he will embrace the seeming beautiful but horrid phantoms of his own desires. No sooner does he do so than the phantoms change. The

\* A good account of the after-death illusions is given in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, translated into English by Lama Dawa Samdup and edited by Dr. Evans Wentz. In reading it allowance must of course be made for purely Tibetan imagery and also for errors which have crept into the text through its having fallen into the hands of professional deathbed priests.



beauties vanish leaving horrid pits of shame through which the soul descends to birth again and treads once more the weary path of sorrow.

Much that is written in ancient tales of magic is a reality in this enchanted realm. Sir Gawaine, aweared of his questing for the Grail, finds a silken pavilion in a field and merry maidens in it,

..... but the gale  
Tore my pavilion from the tenting pin  
And blew my merry maidens all about.

These illusions work their fell magic from behind the veil even in this daily life of ours, but, after death, they burst upon the disembodied mind with all the vividness of ancient myth. Those who yield to them echo the cry of Tennyson's Gawaine whose ghost cries out

to Arthur at the last :—

Farewell ! there is an isle of rest for thee.  
But I am blown along a wandering wind,  
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.

Two are the Paths, there is no third for man. Cleave to the self in *yoga* or lose yourself in matter. Brief is the choice, yet endless, too, for at each point the Way is forked, one can go up or down. Now should the choice be made while yet the heart is flexible with life, for, in that After-State, the mind is fixed, fixed like a death mask by its previous thought. There but a ghostly shade of choice remains. Sped by its former thoughts and deeds, the soul will either sink through dread illusions to rebirth in matter, or it will rise past heavenly realms of Light, stopping at none till it attains the Goal, the Deathless and Supreme Eternal State.

SRI KRISHNA PREM

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I saw the King of Kings descend the narrow doorway to the dust  
With all his fires of morning still, the beauty, bravery, and lust.  
And yet He is the life within the Ever-living Living Ones,  
The ancient with eternal youth, the cradle of the infant suns,  
The fiery fountain of the stars, and He the golden urn where all  
The glittering spray of planets in their myriad beauty fall.

From "KRISHNA," by A. E.



# MEDITATION IN A BLUEBELL WOOD

## A MESSAGE FOR AUGUST

[ J. S. Collis's musings will interest many readers among whom are some ardent admirers of the author of *Forward to Nature*.—EDS. ]

The countryside dies in the winter. When autumn is over and before spring has begun to approach, during December and January, everything really does die; there is no life, all is dreary and forlorn.

We human beings do not die every year in this manner, and in order that we shall not feel the deadly hand, we have made cities into which we can escape and thus defeat the rhythm and deny the wheel.

Sometimes, walking outside my cottage in the winter, cast down by the casting down of life around, chilled by the cold unsmiling bitterness of so much lifelessness, I have thought that perhaps we likewise should die in some sense every year—so that we also might rise again.

We do not do so. We refuse the natural. We turn our back on the rhythm of life, even declining to recognise when the new year starts, and fixing it for January instead of April. When it really does begin, when the whiff of spring which is the *odour* of resurrection rises from deep down in the earth, when that which was dead is alive again, and that which was lost is found—there are few of us who are so joined with Nature as to rise also with renewed vitality in the radiance of another birth.

It is a pity. For we pay dearly for losing touch with Nature. We thus lose touch with reality. We see no meaning in life. We go mad. I use words carefully. There is no genuine health or sanity in the man who, given brain, eye and common sensation, employs only the first of those instruments when attempting to answer the fundamental questions that vex his soul. Yet that is the approved method. We do not *experience* the world: we puzzle over it by lamplight. But experience must come first, otherwise our thoughts are without value, they have no validity, no foundation. Thought, we must have—certainly. There is no anti-thought movement. We can never have enough good Reason. But there is a vast difference between Reason and *reasoning* in the void.

But you know all this; I am preaching to the converted. The point of this essay is not to make abstract truisms, but to witness concretely to their practice, on however humble a scale. There is a flower called the bluebell. It has done much for me—more than any reasoning *in vacuo*, and more even than books or articles on the danger and futility of such reasoning. It has provided me over and over again with the most far-reaching experiences; there have been occasions



when, standing amongst the bells, I have felt the walls of the imprisoning intellectual consciousness cracking, fields of vision opening before me, and waves of sanity passing through.

I live close to a bluebell wood that is likely to remain as the most remarkable I have ever known (specialist though I am in this matter), owing not only to its oceanic dimensions but to the number of angles at which a fresh surprise is possible. There are not only lakes of bluebells, but a few rivers as broad as the Avon, and some streams with high banks and overhanging branches.

### I

On a May morning last year, rising at six, I went into the wood. The gate, as usual, opened upon a path which led immediately to where heaven had been established upon earth. Then I made for one of the narrow streams, waiting for a special corner. On arriving I stood still—with the authentic spell. I will not call it a long thin stream of blue water, for it was so much more exciting than water, being composed only of bells, and besides there was a *green* footpath in the centre—and the whole was arched by greenery. The sun was rising, and chanced at that moment to throw down some pink and vermilion tinted rays upon an open space of blue, at the far end of the tunnel. And many birds sang.

Then straightway Shakespeare's phrase rose before me—*Ripeness is all*. It is all. Life has no other goal. There is no other aim in life

save that each separate thing may unfold itself perfectly. As I stood there in the bluebell wood I *saw* that so clearly. I knew that Creation was perfect and that it could never be more perfect at one time than at another time. As I stood there I was absolved from the idea of Evolution Upwards, I was liberated from the problem of progress. The goal of life was not going to be attained to-morrow—for lo! it had been attained already here. It would be attained again. When anything unfolds and ripens completely perfection has been achieved, and never can there be any more potentiality of perfection at one time than at another. The Flame of life burns at the same temperature for ever, and evolution only means that God fulfils Himself in many ways. To-day is not a preparation for to-morrow, nor this for that: each thing *is* in its own right, and not subject to comparison. It should not be the conscious goal of anything to evolve slowly throughout centuries from something *low* into something *high*. Rather it should seek to unfold perfectly in the life permitted—each in its own way, each in its own time. There may be a certain mystic evolution beyond our understanding, but we should not intellectualize the idea and cast our present-unloving eyes into the beaming future; but strive for immediate perfection. Beauty does not evolve, joy does not evolve. This was clear to me as I gazed at this piece of perfection, this complete unfolding, where to conceive anything better along those lines would be fantastic. As I stood



there I could feel how the potentialities of life at the moment were exactly the same as they were in the Middle or Dark Ages when the sun also shone and the flowers also unfolded.

I had realised this before in the same dynamic way, but I am always grateful when a fresh revelation comes; it is the kind of capital that I like to replenish. It is a particular realisation that needs constant re-stating, and will always return because it is a truth and not a concept. It is the ancient vision of Heraclitus who saw life as the sustained upleaping of a Fountain of Fire—"the Ever-living Flame, kindled in due measure, and in like measure extinguished."

## II

That was in May. During the following August I was sitting in the wood one day. The bluebells had dried into seeds. Every stalk was now hung with a rattling belfry of seed-pouches. Those green stalks were now dry, yellow, and weightless, and each bell was a hard closed pouch of seeds. I plucked a whole stalk and opened up one of these pouches. I found an average of fifty seeds in each (I must check that again this year), and on each stalk there was an average of eight pouches.  $8 \times 50 = 400$ . There were 10 stalks in every area of, say, my shoe's width and length: that is, room for 4,000 seeds. I looked round at the ocean of seeds; and, like Eddington who has to invent a new word when he gets past trillions in his astronomical calculations, I tried to think of a numeral

that would do justice to such a mass of possible new bluebells. And I thought of the trillions that were already rooted and waiting for the next spring. I wondered how many of the new ones would be successful in their battle to get born.

And as I sat there examining these things carefully, I was as happy in this analysis as earlier in my synthesis. In whatever way one regarded it the spectacle was equally inspiring. I felt the sweep of nature's vitality. The idea of death could receive no emphasis—for everlasting creation and not destruction was what I plainly saw. It was as much a revelation to me as the earlier garment of blue; it was as truly a sign of righteousness; there was in it as great a promise. "I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another," said Thoreau. "The impression made on a wise man is that of universal innocence." In that same mood, in that "blessed mood" as Wordsworth called it, I felt no need to *reconcile* myself to the scene. I was in the presence of Nature, experiencing it in the most simple manner, and therefore not puzzling over it in a study, nor trying to "work out" the problem of evil and reconcile science with religion. My thoughts followed in the wake of my experience—and I still do not see what other validity thoughts can have.

Then I thought of Man. I saw so clearly his nobility. He alone in Nature tried to lessen the destructive element, incessantly endeavour-



ing to minimise the cruelty of life, to succour the unfortunate, to heal the sick, to raise up those who fall. I thought of his mistakes and backward slidings, but they seemed little compared with the new idea of goodness that he had brought into the world. I thought of his endless inventions and how in spite of his inevitable command over destruction he used those weapons for scarcely more than four years of strife out of every fifty.

### III

Some may think that had I not been sitting in that spot, surrounded by the realities of life, in the midst of holy dying and holy living, hemmed in on every side by the signs of ceaseless preparation for everlasting resurrection from the dead—that I might have failed to achieve so just a perspective.

That is true. Nothing can ever really take the place of contact with Nature. We may conquer her, as we say. We may fly from

her. We do both those things. But hers is always the ultimate conquest. For without her guidance we cannot see, we cannot understand—that is, we have no philosophy or religion built upon truth. Again, the city man may say that does not matter, for just as we have said good-bye to Nature so we have learnt to do quite well without religion or philosophy. And that also is true. The mob can do without philosophy and without religion. But a whole nation cannot—unless the people are joined in some great crusade. There must be a nucleus of those who have faith in life. There must be a central core of wise men in a nation from whom the mob may take its counsel and pursue its course. Otherwise the nation cannot hold together, and degenerates. So let us try and keep in touch with Nature even in the winter. She never did betray the hand that loved her—nor the mind and soul.

J. S. COLLIS



## NEW BOOKS AND OLD

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### BACK NOT TO CONFUCIUS BUT TO HAN FEI \*

The time is out of joint in China, and this book is inspired by a great longing to set it right. Mr. Lin begins by surveying the mental and moral constitution of the Chinese people, investigating their origins, analysing their character, and appraising their ideals of life. In the second part, he studies the actual conditions of Chinese life in its social, political, literary and artistic aspects; and finally in the Epilogue, to which one feels that the whole book has been gradually leading up, he comes to grips with the pressing question of the hour: What is to be done to stem corruption and ruin throughout the land? This question he answers honestly, according to his lights; but the solution he offers is a mere counsel of despair, which fails to carry conviction.

The book is certainly a remarkable one; but it deals with so many topics in so unequal a manner that it is impossible to pass judgment on it in a few sentences. Parts of it are full of wisdom and sweet reasonableness, others just the reverse. For Mr. Lin is nothing if not a man of moods. He accuses his countrymen of alternating between megalomania and melancholia, and of easily becoming hysterical. And without wishing to be harsh, it seems to me that Mr. Lin suffers

from precisely this lack of balance. He sighs for a real leader, but soon remembers that the good men in China have always hidden themselves. With palpable admiration, not unmixed with envy, he cites the example of Russia, "peopled with a peasantry just as poor and illiterate as the Chinese people, a bourgeoisie just as indifferent, and a gentry just as corrupt. Yet there was vigour in those old bones, and old Russia... emerged the youngest child of the family of nations, radiant with hope and energy." China's recent attempts at revolution, on the other hand, after blazing furiously at first, have somehow petered out ingloriously in dampness and smoke. And yet "the country cannot be allowed to sink lower and lower under foreign domination while the people are bled white, and the Chinese countryside is rapidly being ruined."

What, then is the remedy?—More than two thousand years ago there lived a philosopher called Han Fei, who opposed the Confucian view of "government by gentlemen," and stood for a government by law only. According to him, the beginning of political wisdom lay in rejecting all moral platitudes and in shunning all efforts at moral reform. This is the type of "legalism" that Mr. Lin would like to see adopted. In the

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\* *My Country and My People.* By LIN YUTANG. (Heinemann, London. 15s.)



place of Confucius and his "moral molly-coddle stuff," he has a vision of a Great Executioner, who appears to him in the light of a veritable Saviour. "The only way to deal with corruption in the officials is just to shoot them. The matter is really as simple as that."—But is it? This way has been tried time and again in the world's history, and the results have usually been disappointing. What has the despised Confucius to say on the subject? "People despotically governed and kept in order by punishments may avoid infraction of the law, but they will lose their moral sense. People virtuously governed and kept in order by the inner law of self-control will retain their moral sense, and moreover become good." In other words, laws are useless in the long run unless you have a law-abiding spirit among the population. Justice may very well be what China needs, but those who administer justice must be honest men. Mr. Lin, however, has little confidence in human nature. So far is it from being "fundamentally good" that, given any set of officials, "nine-tenths of them will turn out to be crooks." Hence, "what China needs is not more morals but more prisons for politicians." These are wild and whirling words, which are sufficiently confuted by the author's own estimate of the Chinese character.

In view of such reckless outbursts I cannot echo Mrs. Pearl Buck's opinion that this book is the truest and most profound yet written about China. Still, one can understand her enthusiasm; for, in spite

of occasional defects of temper and judgment, it is full of witty sayings and arresting ideas: "All Chinese are Confucianists when successful, and Taoists when they are failures." "Christian optimism kills all poetry." "True cynics are often the kindest people, for they see the hollowness of life, and from the realization of that hollowness is generated a kind of cosmic pity." "Wordsworth is the most Chinese in spirit of all English poets." Sometimes the epigrams are more startling than profound: "When a man is past forty and does not become a crook, he is either feeble-minded or a genius." "We do not believe that . . . other people's wives are necessarily more beautiful because they are other people's wives." (But is it not a Chinese proverb which tells us that we all love our own compositions but other men's wives?) "I wish our people would sometimes be serious. Humour, above everything else, is ruining China." In short, the book is inconsistent, whimsical, perverse—and stuffed with good things.

As we have seen, Mr. Lin is an honest disbeliever in Confucianism. But he is mistaken in thinking that Confucius placed "tremendous emphasis" on filial piety, and regarded it as "the first of all virtues." This notion is really derived from the so-called *Classic of Filial Piety*, which is a comparatively late production and does not fairly represent Confucius's own ideas. In the *Analects*, the only work which can make this claim, there is remarkably little about filial piety. More serious is the gross perversion of a Confucian



saying on page 89, where these words are put into his mouth: "If one were to try to please the god of the south-west corner of the house, it would be preferable to try to please the god of the kitchen stove." Confucius never said anything quite so naïve (or so clumsy) as this. The truth is that, when asked the meaning of the adage, "Better be civil to the kitchen-god than to the god of the inner sanctum," the Master replied: "The adage is false. He who sins against Heaven can rely on the intercession of none." Lao Tzŭ is also misquoted twice as having said: "Sages no dead, robbers no end." Mr. Lin even apologizes for the pidgin English on the ground that in no other way could he convey "the forceful terseness of the original."

But the sentence does not occur among Lao Tzŭ's sayings at all!

I may conclude with a word of comment on the practice of spelling two-syllable personal names without a hyphen, which is adopted here and defended in a special note. It must be remembered that a name such as our Richard, for instance, is a simple unit which there is no reason for dividing into Rich-ard. The Chinese Tung-p'o, on the contrary, consists of two distinct elements or characters, each with its own meaning ("eastern slope"), though they are not two independent names like William Henry. The French "Jean-Jacques" affords a fairly close parallel, and the insertion of a hyphen seems to meet the case exactly.

LIONEL GILES

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*My Experiments with Death: A Study of the World Soul in its Relations with the Private Self.* By RICHARD DE BARY. (Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., London. 6s.)

Maeterlinck receives no credit for the concept of a pallid and precarious immortality elaborated in this book, but it is of a piece with his suggestion, penned many years ago, that only when the living remember the dead can the latter enjoy anything comparable with what we know as life. The thesis here, however, is somewhat more complicated, and its presentation is laboured. One illustration will suffice. In the preliminary "Summary of Contents" we find as first of the "distinguishing notes of this theme of an afterlife":—

Its acknowledgment of a *continuous inter-*

*dependence* on the mind-body soul-nerve parities in the afterlife status.

We have perused all 191 pages, but that sentence remains baffling, irritating and unilluminated. The conclusions are based largely on the author's experiences in his "Night World" and they seem mutually inconsistent. At one time the author expresses his assurance of his own individual immortality; at another he writes:—

The populations of Old Egypt, Assyria, Athens, even ancient Rome, are really dead . . . unless or until members of living nations come to revisit these departed peoples in interest and sympathy.

It is difficult to see in the so-called experiments with death anything but dreams of a rather distressing type. Their evidential value is slight.

PH. D.



*The Spirit of Zen.* By ALAN W. WATTS. (The Wisdom of the East Series. John Murray, London. 3s. 6d.)

It has been said that the difference between Zen and other forms of religion is that, whereas all other faiths wind slowly up the mountain-side, Zen, like a Roman road, thrusts all obstacles aside and moves straight to its goal. Dispensing with such circuitous paths to truth as dogma, system, and doctrine, this unusually human and realistic philosophy attempts to come into direct contact with truth in its living immediacy of everyday life. It aims, in short, at so close a relation of the individual self to the flow of the life-process that all distinction between subject and object is forgotten. Zen can neither be intellectually formulated nor comprehended. It is the essence of life itself, which, like a stream of water, eludes the grasp.

The Zen philosophy is supposed to have originated at the moment when the Buddha attained supreme enlightenment and to have been handed down across the centuries as a secret message by "direct transmission" to a line of twenty-eight patriarchs, until it came to the sage Bodhidharma who brought it to China in the sixth century A. D. In China it was rapidly assimilated into Taoism, upon which it had a very stimulating effect.

The influence of Zen upon the civilization of Japan may be seen not only in the schools of Sumiye and Kano, which carried on the essential spirit of the great classical tradition of Sung painting, but also in the quiet simplicity of Japanese architecture, extending to every detail of house-furnishing and the design of the smallest articles of daily use. Indeed, Japanese rooms, with their barest minimum of light furniture, the subtly-tinted paper screens that form their walls, the dull yellow rice-straw mats upon the floor and their general sense of tranquillity and space, are but an expression of the Zen teaching of the impermanence of all things and the need to free the mind from all impediments that may come between it and a direct, spontaneous experience of life. Similarly the apparent simplicity

and spontaneity of the Sumiye school of painting, where the artist achieves the most vivid effects by "a stroke of the brush" upon his brittle scroll, is a direct expression of the Zen teaching of the value of sudden, momentary flashes of inspiration that must be caught, before they fade, with a swiftness and dexterity equal to their own. And as it is obvious that these effects, apparently so simple and spontaneous, and yet the very perfection of art, cannot be achieved without long training and the most exacting self-discipline, so the same fresh spontaneity cannot be achieved in daily life by highly civilized and sophisticated people without a similar simplification and refinement of their natures. To this end the whole force of Zen philosophy is directed against any kind of rigid formalism and abstraction.

It is related of a Zen master that once, just as he was about to deliver a sermon in the House of Meditation, a bird began to sing in the garden outside. The master said nothing and every one listened to the bird. When the song stopped the master announced that the sermon had been preached and went away. The masters, however, had other means of bringing their disciples down to earth, and many of the Zen scriptures are nothing but a delightful debunking of intellectual pretension. A monk came to the master Chao-Chou and said: "I have just come to the monastery. Will you give me instruction, please?" "Have you had your breakfast?" replied the master. "Yes, I have sir." Then go and wash your bowels." As a result of this conversation the monk is said to have become enlightened. Again Wu Tsu says: "A cow passes through a window. Its head, horns, and the four legs pass over easily, but only the tail cannot pass through. Why can't it?" Failing to answer such conundrums, disciples frequently received a sharp slap in the face—for the masters never waste words in trying to define what is indefinable and can only be felt. They have always favoured a more empirical method of teaching, for such is Zen.

PHILIP HENDERSON



*The School of the Future.* By K. G. SAIYIDAIN, B.A., M. ED. (The Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad.)

Professor Saiyidain gives us in Part I his views on the school of the future, and in Part II eight articles on special aspects of the subject including the release of the creative impulse, the spirit and the place of University education and the training of teachers, which last is his special subject as Principal of the Training College of Aligarh. He cannot resist opening with a chapter on the present background; somehow in India it is impossible not to growl at things as they are—there is so much to growl about, and so little opportunity to do anything but growl. He expands the following view, quoted from H. G. Wells: "If you want to feel the generations rushing to waste like rapids you should put your heart and mind into a private school." This our author shows clearly is true of the large majority of Indian schools, public or private.

The school of the future, says Professor Saiyidain, will be inspired by the faith that a child's development can be secured only if his native powers are given full play to interact fruitfully with his environment. The child will be provided at school with rich, active and joyous opportunities for play, social co-operation, manual work, creative and constructive activities, and study of spontaneously chosen books and subjects. Such a school will allow a life immediately satisfying and meaningful—the best preparation for the duties of the adult to be, as well as best for the unfolding of his powers. Instead of merely learning, the child will be guided to mastery of the tools of learning; care will be taken to preserve the lively curiosity and the hunger for knowledge natural in the

very young. As far as possible information will be replaced by experience.

The school of the future will have given up the secluded character which enfolds schools of our day; it will be part of the life of the child, who will not have what so many of us remember, a sense that life is something outside the school and that school hours are hours of postponement of all that is worth while. Our author also visualises the schoolhouse of the future as a centre of community life in the evenings.

In two chapters entitled "Education for Happiness" Professor Saiyidain speaks of the necessity of teaching the child that happiness must be found *in* our work, not merely anticipated as the result of it; and further that happiness is to be sought socially, not in mere individual gain or pleasure. This does not mean surrender to a leader or a mob, but the gift of one's own best to the common happiness, which involves true self-respect—the fruit of the quiet conviction that potentially our individuality is infinitely precious, that we are gifted by nature with the right to think our own thoughts and do our own deeds on the basis of our own first-hand experience. Any one who surrenders this ultimate freedom can never attain the greatness of true courage; to him Socrates will always be the inexplicable monomaniac who foolishly preferred a cup of poison to the renunciation of his own true opinions.

This book is a valuable compendium of the latest ideals in education, based upon deep respect for the spirit of man and the possibilities of every child. Still, it suffers a little from being too abstract. One would like to see a companion volume showing specifically how these many principles could be applied.

ERNEST WOOD



*Historic British Ghosts.* By PHILIP W. SERGEANT. (Hutchinson and Co., London. 18s.)

Like a straw that shows the way the wind blows this book shows how public interest is veering towards occult phenomena. It is an entertaining collection of tales, the work of a journalist capable of tackling any subject in a popular, easily read, if superficial way, capable of delving into museum chronicles and a liking to turn their dusty facts into a palatable gossipy "story." Yet it may be questioned whether the facility and even semi-flippancy of the journalistic touch, though preferable to the blood and thunder style, is the best approach to the subject.

There is a mild attempt to question whether "a thing either (1) is; (2) is not; (3) both is and is not; or (4) neither is nor is not," but it fades away in the last chapter into a statement that the objective world is illusion, *maya*, and explanations seem to lead nowhere.

The author seems to find narrative easier than philosophy. It might be argued that narrative is all the public wants, yet since experiences, to have any value, need means of understanding them, it would seem wise to look beyond the wants to the needs of the public, and to educate instead of following it.

There are so many mayfly writers who can beguile the idle moment and the idle mind without leaving their readers one whit better off, but so few who can write constructively. If the explanations so conveniently shelved by Mr. Sergeant were to be tested, checked and verified without bias or prejudice, so far as evidence, reason and perception would permit and the results presented simply and interestingly, as Mr. Sergeant can present facts, the public would have something of value towards understanding themselves and the other beings, human and non-human, relatively real, relatively illusionary, that make up life.

W. E. W.

*The Philosophy of Religion versus the Philosophy of Science: An Exposure of the Worthlessness and Absurdity of Some Conventional Conclusions of Modern Science.* By ALBERT EAGLE. (Simpkin Marshall, Ltd., London. 5s.)

With the advance of science disbelief in religion has grown, disturbing many whose faith was their chief support. The spirit of science is the spirit of analysis, and the advance of science is the advance of clarified knowledge. In the process of analysis, hazy ideas and superstitions have vanished. But science has turned iconoclast and is attempting to analyse away realities. Now the real defies analysis. To analyse higher realities like Life and Mind, and values like Truth, Beauty and Goodness, is to reduce them into things lower than they are, and consequently to destroy them. Religious experience is a unique value that refuses to be analysed into other terms.

The conflict between the claims of

science and religion has led recently to examination and valuation of their methods, implications and results; and good literature has of late appeared on the subject. The present work from the pen of a mathematician and a scientist is a useful contribution along that line. The author shows how interpretation of life in terms of physics and chemistry, and of mind in terms of biology, physiology or physics and chemistry, is not valid. He attempts to refute the theories of Relativity and Indeterminism. He believes in a personal God (p. 148), and his doctrine of the four orders of substance (pp. 141-2) reminds the student of Indian Philosophy of the Vedantic theory of the five *kosas*, though the correspondence between the two theories is not exact.

The book is written in the spirit of a Christian propagandist (p. 19), and with undue aggressiveness. It will be useful so far as its criticisms of science go, but it seems to be hasty and, on some points, unconvincing in its positive con-



clusions. Mere criticism of the sciences is not enough to support such views as that because the egos of animals need not be immortal (p. 61), therefore animals may be killed and eaten (p. 337); that Christ is the only great revealer

of truth (p. 151); or the author's inclination toward the theory of predestination (pp. 233, 263). These points will certainly be controverted by the followers of other religions.

P. T. RAJU

*Aspects of Modernism.* By JANKO LAVRIN. (Stanley Nott, Ltd., London. 6s.)

Mr. Janko Lavrin hitherto has dealt only with those towering personalities who have been seminal powers in modern European literature. In this new book, he has analysed some current tendencies as embodied in a few representative writers. Mr. Lavrin demands of art a certain nobility, and especially that it shall not dissociate itself from life. He dwells upon the tragedy of artists who have ventured on experimentation after cutting all moorings from life. Most aspects of modernism therefore appear to Mr. Lavrin to be of a "decadent" type, illustrating well his remarks made elsewhere on modern Romanticism. In his *Studies in European Literature* he declared:—

Most European Romanticists were spiritual descendants of Rousseau and not of Shakespeare; that is, they were in a continuous discord with life, from which they tried to shelter themselves behind various poetic substitutes.

In his opinion Wilde's egotism is an "exaggerated hysterical egotism"; d'Annunzio's novels are a "compendium of decadence"; Hamsun with all his pantheistic devotion shows "the introspective brooding of a decadent who is familiar with some of the most tortuous nuances and contradictions of the human soul"; while Alexandar Blok, that symbolist *par excellence*, reveals the "inverted idealism of an incurable dreamer."

Mr. Lavrin anatomizes to its barest elements that wonderfully complex aggregate called "novelty," and on the strength of his findings adjudicates each author's claim to literary permanence. Though occasionally he arouses the suspicion that he expects authors to be real Christians, yet fair-mindedness prevails, and authors like Wilde and Rimbaud suffer no diminution in the

glory they really deserve. Freedom from ethical bias can also be traced in his treatment of such contradictory personalities as Rozanov and Weininger.

Mr. Lavrin's preoccupation with development of thought and analysis of creeds leaves, however, an impression that the formal aspects of literature have not received adequate treatment. To mention only one instance: while Pirandello's intellectual vigour and his philosophy of life have been admirably revealed, the superb use which he makes of the "inset play" in the exposition of his queer attitude towards life—a literary device which may be considered as symbolising his mental outlook—has not been dwelt upon.

*Aspects of Modernism* does not embrace all modern tendencies but it takes us through a wide range of modern European literature. It even includes Ivan Cankar, the heroic representative of a politically insignificant nation. Some of Mr. Lavrin's remarks on individual authors would admit of wider application, either to coteries or to the times, and it is regrettable that he has fought shy of an introductory essay on Modernism in general. Notwithstanding the diversity and the elusive nature of modern literature, one could pick out with some precision certain prominent traits as indicating general tendencies. Even the authors selected by Mr. Lavrin are enough to show that literary semination has been more international in the present age than ever before and that modern writers have, by a strange inversion of values, prized "processes more than results." Mr. Lavrin does refer in the preface to "the utter atomization of the individual." Is it unreasonable to demand that in the author's next book he should try to detect more unifying factors underlying that variety which has discouraged him from generalising in the present volume?

B. RAGHAVA BALIGA



*The Haunting of Cashen's Gap: A Modern 'Miracle' Investigated.* By HARRY PRICE and R. S. LAMBERT. (Methuen and Co., Ltd., London, 6s.)

Since 1931 a lonely farmstead on the Isle of Man has been the scene of happenings so extraordinary that representatives of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation have looked into them and published their scientific but admittedly inconclusive findings in this book. Mr. Price is a psychic investigator; Mr. Lambert, the Editor of *The Listener*.

Briefly, the story is that in the fall of 1931 a small animal or an animal spectre, somewhat resembling a weasel or a mongoose, but possessing the power of speech, took up its quarters in the isolated farm home of James T. Irving, a retired commercial traveller, his wife and their thirteen-year-old daughter. Among the animal's alleged feats are pushing and throwing furniture about, making terrific thumps on the walls, several almost simultaneously in different parts of the house, strangling rabbits for his host's larder and then announcing where the carcasses were to be found. He has also offered to kill lambs belonging to any enemy Mr. Irving might have. "You don't know what mischief I could do if I was roused. I could kill you too if I wished, but I won't." He throws small objects or stones at people he does not like, spits at them through a crack in the panelling and sometimes threatens worse violence. Be it noted that these demonstrations are not similar to the familiar poltergeist phenomena produced by non-human forces, in which stones fall harmlessly around the medium and others without touching them. "Gef," as the entity is called, sometimes makes a hit, though he has never yet done serious physical damage. At times he is excessively rude and vulgar in his remarks; at times plaintive in tone; occasionally he is hilarious. He laughs sometimes like a maniac—"satanic laughter," is Mr. Irving's description; he says it is infrequent but very trying. Gef cannot stand human eyes, even through the panelling.

Gef is sufficiently material to have bitten his hostess's finger and to have struck with force the hand of his host. The creature obligingly furnished for analysis hairs supposed to be from its coat, but they were proven to have grown on the family's sheep-dog. It made a pretence also of impressing its footprints in dough and in plasticene, but the prints do not match in size or shape and have been rejected by expert opinion as prints of feet of the same animal. The fact that Gef, while refusing mongoose food, eats biscuits, sweets and more substantial cooked food is no argument against the spectre hypothesis. The *houen* of China are alleged to devour funeral repasts spread to propitiate them, and the records of Spiritism in the last century contain evidence of alleged spirits capable of drinking tea and wine and of eating apples and cakes. According to the records of Eastern psychology, however, ghosts who partake of physical food are no relatively harmless shells.

Gef is very elusive on the subject of his own identity, generally denying being a spirit and saying he is "a little extra, extra clever mongoose." He claims an age of eighty-three years and points to his prowess as a rabbit killer as proof of his substantial existence. Sometimes he says he is the Holy Ghost. Again he has said he knows what he is but that his hosts will never know, and he has referred to himself upon occasion as an "earthbound spirit."

Common sense is strained almost to breaking-point in the attempts to find a psychological explanation of the events narrated. But unless conscious deception on the part of one or more members of the Irving family is involved, the events recounted cannot be made to fit the hypothesis of an adolescent fantasy indulged and shared by the young girl's parents. And the writers admit that there is serious evidence, apart altogether from the family's testimony, for the reality of Gef.

In an appendix Gef is compared to the talking imps or familiars of the witchcraft excitement of three hundred years ago, among which the ferret was



common, but the authors seem to include those manifestations among the "unpleasant but ludicrous habits of witchcraft," to which, "out of a mere exhibitionism," women living in isolated conditions used to confess.

The reader desiring to learn more about the subject is referred to *Isis Unveiled* by H. P. Blavatsky, especially on the subject of Elementaries or what the

Hindus call Prêtas and Pisâchas, and what Andrew Jackson Davis named the Diakka.

The Irvings' naïve pride in their unusual visitor is a pathetic feature of this narrative, for the danger of moral contagion from the proximity of such a being is very real. They will be well advised to move away if thereby they can rid themselves of "Gef."

PH. D.

*Mohammed : The Man and His Faith.* By TOR ANDRAE. Translated from the Swedish by THEOPHIL MENZEL. (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London. 8s. 6d.)

With the yearning for mutual understanding amove the world over, an increasing interest in the religious and cultural heritage of different peoples is natural. A historic study of Islam and its Prophet is important inasmuch as Mohammed released a spiritual force that still exerts a deep influence over a vast portion of humanity. Assistance in this direction is to be doubly appreciated by the people of India, where Islam and Hinduism have merged into a common destiny.

With judgment and industry, Professor Andrae of the University of Upsala presents the Islamic faith in relation to the primitive monotheism of Arabia. The Bedouins of Mohammed's day believed in a Supreme God above many subordinate divinities.

Here it strikes a Hindu that the Apostle of Allah bears a message much the same as that of the Vedic Seers. The Sage of the Upanishad admonished his people that their gods of rain and wind and sun and fire and death were but all working at the will of the Supreme God.

Another fact helpful for understanding the Prophet is that Mohammed, so much misjudged as a facile opportunist, was no fanatic and would easily change his mind in the light of later wisdom. It is this virtue that led the Prophet to confirm the scriptures of other religions and to believe that religious revelations are

dynamic and are delivered in varying aspects in different ages. Later, out of the growing bitterness of opposition to his mission, this sense of spiritual harmony underwent a transformation. The Prophet began to yield to the desire "to be victorious over every other religion." But this can hardly be taken as merely "a proud belief in the future of his religion" as Professor Andrae claims (p. 237); rather, it was mingled with "a feeling after a new independent religion" compatible with "national distinctiveness" (p. 153). Islam was to become not only a religion but also a brotherhood (p. 191). Professor Andrae's analysis of the evolution of militarism in Islam is logical (pp. 205-207).

The complaint, however, with which the book closes—that Mohammed's moral personality falls short of his religious endowments—is due perhaps to the author's limiting his observations to a purely objective study—unquestionably an essential requirement of a historical survey. This necessary limitation precludes the light that only mystic love can shed upon a subject, *e. g.*, one's own faith. Professor Andrae's contribution to the study of the Prophet of Islam, leaving this natural failing aside, is noble in spirit and valuable in matter. His method of carefully employing knowledge of the background makes it particularly interesting to all students of comparative religion, while its absolute freedom from technicalities of research renders the work a suitable vehicle for a wider understanding of religious values and the promotion of cultural fellowship.

ATULANANDA CHAKRABARTI



# CORRESPONDENCE

## MACHINERY OF JUSTICE

Men are still living who, as children, have seen the pillory in active use, for it was not abolished until Queen Victoria had been twelve months on the Throne. A Bill to this effect had passed the Commons twenty years earlier, but Ellenborough and his fellow obscurantists, true to type, had checked its progress through the Upper House. The pillory had existed in England since 1260, and they looked upon it as a bulwark of the Constitution. Hanging in chains went first. There was also a dreadful custom of "gibbeting." In such instances, the corpse would be tarred or smeared with pitch, to prevent too rapid a decomposition, and then left exposed from the gallows-beam for a month or more, as a warning to evil-doers. The last time that recourse was had to this practice was at Leicester in 1832, when a sanctimonious scoundrel named Cook, who served Dickens as a model for his "Uriah Heep," was the protagonist.

The assumption by the State of the sole right of punishment was the first real step in penological evolution. The original idea behind this was to balance the weight of wrong that had been suffered by the weight of a judicially inflicted penalty. The idea, however, of thereby deterring and reforming came into the scheme much later.

It must not be forgotten when considering the fierceness of some of the old-time judges, that brutal laws make brutal administrators. Hence, there is something to be said even for those Sadistic monsters, Chief Justice Scroggs and Judge Jeffreys. After all, their conduct on the Bench was strictly in accordance with tradition; and they were not responsible that the tradition of the period was rough and brutal.

Punishment for wrong-doing began in the Garden of Eden. Nobody can say with certitude where it will end. What, however, can be said is that, with the

passage of years, the gulf between elementary humanity and penology has become less wide. The late King Edward, when opening the new Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey in 1907, referred to this subject:—

The barbarous penal code, which was deemed necessary a hundred years ago, has gradually been replaced in the progress towards a higher civilisation by laws breathing a more humane spirit and aiming at a nobler purpose.

But the gulf took a long time to bridge. Thus, until the year 1837, a prisoner charged with felony could not employ counsel to speak for him; it was not until 1898 that an accused person was permitted to give evidence on his own behalf; and, until Lord Brougham's Act of 1851, the defendant in a civil case was under a similar disability. Before this, there was an idea that such testimony would necessarily be unreliable, as coming from an interested party, just as if all evidence did not emanate from such a source. There was for long a period, too, when a wife was not a competent witness. This ruling led, as may be imagined, to some curious developments. For example, a man once established an *alibi* by getting his mistress to prove that he had been in her company when he was alleged to have committed an offence elsewhere. His wife, however, would have been barred from doing so. Similarly a murderer has been convicted on the deposition of his mistress, whereas he could not have been convicted had he been her husband.

Looking at this matter as a whole, it may fairly be said that in England the existing machinery for establishing the guilt or innocence of an accused person is thoroughly effective. The result is, there are very few authenticated miscarriages of justice. Where, however, the machinery is not so effective as in its



treatment of the individual against whom a verdict has been delivered. There is still too much attempting to "make the punishment fit the crime," when it is, of course, far more important that the punishment should fit the criminal. No real effort, however, is made to secure this. The Law standardizes human beings, just as it standardizes human turpitude. Education, upbringing, habits, and surroundings, etc., are all put on one common denominator. Such a course is neither humane, nor scientific, nor even commonly intelligent.

Crime is a disease, and, like other diseases, requires, as shown by its nature and symptoms, a particular remedy for each manifestation that develops. Yet this is just what it does not get, for, once in prison, all offenders—be they absconding solicitors, fraudulent company-promoters, sexual perverts, cat-burglars, or pickpockets—are subjected to precisely the same treatment. Under the circumstances, it is not astonishing that the cures should be few. What, however, is astonishing is that there should be any.

The whole question of imprisonment is very difficult. Even the experts contradict themselves. Thus, Enrico Ferri, in Italy, who has devoted immense labour to a practical, as well as to a theoretical study of the subject, roundly declares that "long sentences are productive of no good"; and Sir William Joynson-Hicks, in England, gave it as his considered opinion that "short sentences are useless." It would, therefore, appear on the face of it that all imprisonment is futile. Bill Sikes and his cronies would probably agree.

The naïve idea that force is a good remedy against force has long been exploded. The atrocious punitive methods of the early lawgivers never checked the atrocious actions of the criminals who incurred them. Their result, indeed, was precisely the opposite. It is, however, more than questionable if nowadays we are not rather going to the other extreme in respect of the ameliorative conditions employed. Thus, the crank and the treadmill have long ceased to

revolve, and oakum-picking is reduced to a minimum; diet has been improved; solitary confinement shortened; and the "silence rule" abrogated; changes for the better, too, in the matter of dress; and even the time (dis)-honoured broad arrows are on their last legs. Various small privileges can now be earned; and well conducted prisoners are eligible for a not illiberal allowance of letters and visits. But the most valued concession of all is the possibility of securing a substantial remission of sentence, amounting to as much as one-fourth.

Still, all said and done, prison is prison.

The volume of work performed by the Court of Criminal Appeal, which has now been in operation since 1907, is eloquent of the care that is taken to avoid any possible miscarriage of justice. An accused person who has been convicted on indictment can go to this Court on (1) a question of law alone (provided it be not held "frivolous"); (2) on a question of fact and law together; or (3) on a question of his sentence. In these two latter cases, however, he must first get permission. Appeals are heard by three Judges, and the decision is by the majority. While sentences may be increased, they are so much more often reduced, or even quashed altogether, that the average appellant decides that he has little to lose and much to gain. In a murder case, at any rate, he cannot be worse off, since the most that can happen is that the appeal shall be dismissed. The result is, practically every capital conviction is submitted to this Court.

In a murder case there is yet another appeal possible. In theory this is made to the Crown. In practice, however, it is left to the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the exercise of the "prerogative of mercy." An insane person capitally convicted is always reprieved, whether the insanity manifested itself before the trial, or after it. Such a case occurred in 1928, when a man who had been sentenced to death for murder was found to be mad while awaiting execution.

HORACE WYNDHAM



## ENDS AND SAYINGS

"\_\_\_\_\_ends of verse

*And sayings of philosophers."*

The remains of the League of Nations are lying in state at Geneva. The funeral oration, pathetic and dignified, delivered by the Emperor of Abyssinia on the thirtieth of June, most clearly reveals the cause of the death. It is "legal" murder.

All the League members are responsible for the foul deed, but most of all are those "big" Powers who, in betraying the Emperor of Abyssinia, have killed the only international organization that could effectively impose peace on a tired world. The Italian Dictator has emerged the only honest man—however hard; from the start he said what he meant to do and did it. The Negus is the only real sufferer; he trusted the big Powers well, but not too wisely.

The signatories of the League Covenant entered into serious and far-reaching agreements. Such commitments could stand the strain to which they were bound to be subjected only on condition that they were built upon a solid foundation: absolute sincerity, unflinching determination, unselfishness of purpose and moral power. They were not so built.

The germ of hypocrisy was present from the start. The main-

tenance of the *status quo* was accepted as an end without regard to whether the existing situation was just. Future spoliation was declared anathema, but past spoils of imperial greed were confirmed as the lawful property of their present possessors. The recollection of certain episodes in their own not too distant past made it less embarrassing for the big Powers to look the other way while Japan violated the integrity of China, and on other occasions.

The policy of the League has been vacillating when everything depended upon firm, decisive action. The motive in almost every case has not been the common good, but self-interest in one form or another, however cunningly veiled. Breaches of the peace in the dooryard of the big Powers have aroused greater concern than high crimes and misdemeanours at a safe distance. The germ of hypocrisy was allowed to develop, and broken pledges and violated honour are the result.

The politician and the diplomat have failed; the martial dictator holds the field. Not only has the cause of peace suffered; the standard of public morality has been lowered—almost destroyed.