

CHARLES ELIOT

HINDUISM AND
BUDDHISM, AN
HISTORICAL SKETCH,
VOL. 1

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Sir Charles Eliot

Hinduism and Buddhism, An Historical Sketch, Vol. 1

BOOK I

INTRODUCTION

1. Influence of Indian Thought in Eastern Asia

Probably the first thought which will occur to the reader who is acquainted with the matters treated in this work will be that the subject is too large. A history of Hinduism or Buddhism or even of both within the frontiers of India may be a profitable though arduous task, but to attempt a historical sketch of the two faiths in their whole duration and extension over Eastern Asia is to choose a scene unsuited to any canvas which can be prepared at the present day. Not only is the breadth of the landscape enormous but in some places it is crowded with details which cannot be omitted while in others the principal features are hidden by a mist which obscures the unity and

connection of the whole composition. No one can feel these difficulties more than I do myself or approach his work with more diffidence, yet I venture to think that wide surveys may sometimes be useful and are needed in the present state of oriental studies. For the reality of Indian influence in Asia—from Japan to the frontiers of Persia, from Manchuria to Java, from Burma to Mongolia—is undoubted and the influence is one. You cannot separate Hinduism from Buddhism, for without it Hinduism could not have assumed its medieval shape and some forms of Buddhism, such as Lamaism, countenance Brahmanic deities and ceremonies, while in Java and Camboja the two religions were avowedly combined and declared to be the same. Neither is it convenient to separate the fortunes of Buddhism and Hinduism outside India from their history within it, for although the importance of Buddhism depends largely on its foreign conquests, the forms which it assumed in its new territories can be understood only by reference to the religious condition of India at the periods when successive missions were despatched.

This book then is an attempt to give a sketch of Indian thought or Indian religion—for the two terms are nearly equivalent in extent—and of its history and influence in Asia. I will not say in the world, for that sounds too ambitious and really adds little to the more restricted phrase. For ideas, like empires and races, have their natural frontiers. Thus Europe may be said to be non-Mohammedan. Although the essential principles of Mohammedanism seem in harmony with European monotheism,

yet it has been deliberately rejected by the continent and often repelled by force. Similarly in the regions west of India¹, Indian religion is sporadic and exotic. I do not think that it had much influence on ancient Egypt, Babylon and Palestine or that it should be counted among the forces which shaped the character and teaching of Christ, though Christian monasticism and mysticism perhaps owed something to it. The debt of Manichaeism and various Gnostic sects is more certain and more considerable, but these communities have not endured and were regarded as heretical while they lasted. Among the Neoplatonists of Alexandria and the Sufis of Arabia and Persia many seem to have listened to the voice of Hindu mysticism but rather as individuals than as leaders of popular movements.

But in Eastern Asia the influence of India has been notable in extent, strength and duration. Scant justice is done to her position in the world by those histories which recount the exploits of her invaders and leave the impression that her own people were a feeble, dreamy folk, sundered from the rest of mankind by their sea and mountain frontiers. Such a picture takes no account of the intellectual conquests of the Hindus. Even their political conquests were not contemptible and were remarkable for the distance if not for the extent of the territory occupied. For there were Hindu kingdoms in Java and Camboja and settlements in Sumatra² and even in Borneo, an island about as far from

¹ The frontier seems to be about Long. 65° E.

² See Coedes's views about Śrīvijaya in *B.E.F.E.O.* 1918, 6. The inscriptions of

India as is Persia from Rome. But such military or commercial invasions are insignificant compared with the spread of Indian thought. The south-eastern region of Asia—both mainland and archipelago—owed its civilization almost entirely to India. In Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Camboja, Champa and Java, religion, art, the alphabet, literature, as well as whatever science and political organization existed, were the direct gift of Hindus, whether Brahmans or Buddhists, and much the same may be said of Tibet, whence the wilder Mongols took as much Indian civilization as they could stomach. In Java and other Malay countries this Indian culture has been superseded by Islam, yet even in Java the alphabet and to a large extent the customs of the people are still Indian.

In the countries mentioned Indian influence has been dominant until the present day, or at least until the advent of Islam. In another large area comprising China, Japan, Korea, and Annam it appears as a layer superimposed on Chinese culture, yet not a mere veneer. In these regions Chinese ethics, literature and art form the major part of intellectual life and have an outward and visible sign in the Chinese written characters which have not been ousted by an Indian alphabet³. But in all, especially in Japan, the influence of Buddhism has been profound and penetrating. None of these lands can be justly described as

Rajendracola I (1012-1042 A.D.) show that Hindus in India were not wholly ignorant of Indian conquests abroad.

³ But the Japanese syllabaries were probably formed under Indian influence.

Buddhist in the same sense as Burma or Siam but Buddhism gave them a creed acceptable in different forms to superstitious, emotional and metaphysical minds: it provided subjects and models for art, especially for painting, and entered into popular life, thought and language.

But what are Hinduism and Buddhism? What do they teach about gods and men and the destinies of the soul? What ideals do they hold up and is their teaching of value or at least of interest for Europe? I will not at once answer these questions by general statements, because such names as Hinduism and Buddhism have different meanings in different countries and ages, but will rather begin by briefly reviewing the development of the two religions. I hope that the reader will forgive me if in doing so I repeat much that is to be found in the body of this work.

One general observation about India may be made at the outset. Here more than in any other country the national mind finds its favourite occupation and full expression in religion. This quality is geographical rather than racial, for it is possessed by Dravidians as much as by Aryans. From the Raja to the peasant most Hindus have an interest in theology and often a passion for it. Few works of art or literature are purely secular: the intellectual and aesthetic efforts of India, long, continuous and distinguished as they are, are monotonous inasmuch as they are almost all the expression of some religious phase. But the religion itself is extraordinarily full and varied. The love of discussion and speculation creates considerable variety in practice and almost

unlimited variety in creed and theory. There are few dogmas known to the theologies of the world which are not held by some of India's multitudinous sects⁴ and it is perhaps impossible to make a single general statement about Hinduism, to which some sects would not prove an exception. Any such statements in this book must be understood as referring merely to the great majority of Hindus.

As a form of life and thought Hinduism is definite and unmistakeable. In whatever shape it presents itself it can be recognized at once. But it is so vast and multitudinous that only an encyclopedia could describe it and no formula can summarize it. Essayists flounder among conflicting propositions such as that sectarianism is the essence of Hinduism or that no educated Hindu belongs to a sect. Either can easily be proved, for it may be said of Hinduism, as it has been said of zoology, that you can prove anything if you merely collect facts which support your theory and not those which conflict with it. Hence many distinguished writers err by overestimating the phase which specially interests them. For one the religious life of India is fundamentally monotheistic and Vishnuite: for another philosophic Sivaism is its crown and quintessence: a third maintains with equal truth that all forms of Hinduism are tantric.

⁴ Probably the Christian doctrine of the atonement or salvation by the death of a deity is an exception. I do not know of any Indian sect which holds a similar view. The obscure verse Rig Veda x. 13. 4 seems to hint at the self-sacrifice of a deity but the hymn about the sacrifice of Purusha (x. 90) has nothing to do with redemption or atonement.

All these views are tenable because though Hindu life may be cut up into castes and sects, Hindu creeds are not mutually exclusive and repellent. They attract and colour one another.

2. Origin and Growth of Hinduism

The earliest product of Indian literature, the Rig Veda, contains the songs of the Aryan invaders who were beginning to make a home in India. Though no longer nomads, they had little local sentiment. No cities had arisen comparable with Babylon or Thebes and we hear little of ancient kingdoms or dynasties. Many of the gods who occupied so much of their thoughts were personifications of natural forces such as the sun, wind and fire, worshipped without temples or images and hence more indefinite in form, habitation and attributes than the deities of Assyria or Egypt. The idea of a struggle between good and evil was not prominent. In Persia, where the original pantheon was almost the same as that of the Veda, this idea produced monotheism: the minor deities became angels and the chief deity a Lord of hosts who wages a successful struggle against an independent but still inferior spirit of evil. But in India the Spirits of Good and Evil are not thus personified. The world is regarded less as a battlefield of principles than as a theatre for the display of natural forces. No one god assumes lordship over the others but all are seen to be interchangeable—mere names and aspects of something which is greater than any god.

Indian religion is commonly regarded as the offspring of an Aryan religion, brought into India by invaders from the north and modified by contact with Dravidian civilization. The materials at

our disposal hardly permit us to take any other point of view, for the literature of the Vedic Aryans is relatively ancient and full and we have no information about the old Dravidians comparable with it. But were our knowledge less one-sided, we might see that it would be more correct to describe Indian religion as Dravidian religion stimulated and modified by the ideas of Aryan invaders. For the greatest deities of Hinduism, Siva, Krishna, Râma, Durgâ and some of its most essential doctrines such as metempsychosis and divine incarnations, are either totally unknown to the Veda or obscurely adumbrated in it. The chief characteristics of mature Indian religion are characteristics of an area, not of a race, and they are not the characteristics of religion in Persia, Greece or other Aryan lands⁵.

Some writers explain Indian religion as the worship of nature spirits, others as the veneration of the dead. But it is a mistake to see in the religion of any large area only one origin or impulse. The principles which in a learned form are championed to-day by various professors represent thoughts which were creative in early times. In ancient India there were some whose minds turned to their ancestors and dead friends while others saw divinity in the wonders of storm, spring and harvest. Krishna is in the main a product of hero worship, but Śiva has no such historical basis. He

⁵ It is possible (though not, I think, certain) that the Buddha called his principal doctrines *ariya* in the sense of Aryan not of noble. But even the Blessed One may not have been infallible in ethnography. When we call a thing British we do not mean to refer it to the ancient Britons more than to the Saxons or Normans. And was the Buddha an Aryan? See V. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 47 for doubts.

personifies the powers of birth and death, of change, decay and rebirth—in fact all that we include in the prosaic word nature. Assuredly both these lines of thought—the worship of nature and of the dead—and perhaps many others existed in ancient India.

By the time of the Upanishads, that is about 600 B.C., we trace three clear currents in Indian religion which have persisted until the present day. The first is ritual. This became extraordinarily complicated but retained its primitive and magical character. The object of an ancient Indian sacrifice was partly to please the gods but still more to coerce them by certain acts and formulae⁶. Secondly all Hindus lay stress on asceticism and self-mortification, as a means of purifying the soul and obtaining supernatural powers. They have a conviction that every man who is in earnest about religion and even every student of philosophy must follow a discipline at least to the extent of observing chastity and eating only to support life. Severer austerities give clearer insight into divine mysteries and control over the forces of nature. Europeans are apt to condemn eastern asceticism as a waste of life but it has had an important moral effect. The weakness of Hinduism, though not of Buddhism, is that ethics have so small a place in its fundamental conceptions. Its deities are not identified with the moral law and the saint is above that law. But this dangerous doctrine is corrected by the dogma, which is also a popular conviction, that a saint must be a passionless ascetic. In India no religious teacher can expect a

⁶ This is not altogether true of the modern temple ritual.

hearing unless he begins by renouncing the world.

Thirdly, the deepest conviction of Hindus in all ages is that salvation and happiness are attainable by knowledge. The corresponding phrases in Sanskrit are perhaps less purely intellectual than our word and contain some idea of effort and emotion. He who knows God attains to God, nay he is God. Rites and self-denial are but necessary preliminaries to such knowledge: he who possesses it stands above them. It is inconceivable to the Hindus that he should care for the things of the world but he cares equally little for creeds and ceremonies. Hence, side by side with irksome codes, complicated ritual and elaborate theology, we find the conviction that all these things are but vanity and weariness, fetters to be shaken off by the free in spirit. Nor do those who hold such views correspond to the anti-clerical and radical parties of Europe. The ascetic sitting in the temple court often holds that the rites performed around him are spiritually useless and the gods of the shrine mere fanciful presentments of that which cannot be depicted or described.

Rather later, but still before the Christian era, another idea makes itself prominent in Indian religion, namely faith or devotion to a particular deity. This idea, which needs no explanation, is pushed on the one hand to every extreme of theory and practice: on the other it rarely abolishes altogether the belief in ritualism, asceticism and knowledge.

Any attempt to describe Hinduism as one whole leads to startling contrasts. The same religion enjoins self-mortification

and orgies: commands human sacrifices and yet counts it a sin to eat meat or crush an insect: has more priests, rites and images than ancient Egypt or medieval Rome and yet out does Quakers in rejecting all externals. These singular features are connected with the ascendancy of the Brahman caste. The Brahmans are an interesting social phenomenon without exact parallel elsewhere. They are not, like the Catholic or Moslem clergy, a priesthood pledged to support certain doctrines but an intellectual, hereditary aristocracy who claim to direct the thought of India whatever forms it may take. All who admit this claim and accord a nominal recognition to the authority of the Veda are within the spacious fold or menagerie. Neither the devil-worshipping aboriginee nor the atheistic philosopher is excommunicated, though neither may be relished by average orthodoxy.

Though Hinduism has no one creed, yet there are at least two doctrines held by nearly all who call themselves Hindus. One may be described as polytheistic pantheism. Most Hindus are apparently polytheists, that is to say they venerate the images of several deities or spirits, yet most are monotheists in the sense that they address their worship to one god. But this monotheism has almost always a pantheistic tinge. The Hindu does not say the gods of the heathen are but idols, but it is the Lord who made the heavens: he says, My Lord (Râma, Krishna or whoever it may be) is all the other gods. Some schools would prefer to say that no human language applied to the Godhead can be correct and that

all ideas of a personal ruler of the world are at best but relative truths. This ultimate ineffable Godhead is called Brahman⁷.

The second doctrine is commonly known as metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls or reincarnation, the last name being the most correct. In detail the doctrine assumes various forms since different views are held about the relation of soul to body. But the essence of all is the same, namely that a life does not begin at birth or end at death but is a link in an infinite series of lives, each of which is conditioned and determined by the acts done in previous existences (karma). Animal, human and divine (or at least angelic) existences may all be links in the chain. A man's deeds, if good, may exalt him to the heavens, if evil may degrade him to life as a beast. Since all lives, even in heaven, must come to an end, happiness is not to be sought in heaven or on earth. The common aspiration of the religious Indian is for deliverance, that is release from the round of births and repose in some changeless state called by such names as union with Brahman, nirvana and many others.

⁷ It is very unfortunate that English usage should make this word appear the same as Brahman, the name of a caste, and there is much to be said for using the old-fashioned word Brahmin to denote the caste, for it is clear, though not correct. In Sanskrit there are several similar words which are liable to be confused in English. In the nominative case they are:(1) Brâhmanah, a man of the highest caste.(2) Brâhmanam, an ancient liturgical treatise.(3) Brahma, the Godhead, stem Brahman, neuter.(4) Brahmâ, a masculine nominative also formed from the stem Brahman and used as the name of a personal deity.For (3) the stem Brahman is commonly used, as being distinct from Brahmâ, though liable to be confounded with the name of the caste.

3. *The Buddha*

As observed above, the Brahmans claim to direct the religious life and thought of India and apart from Mohammedanism may be said to have achieved their ambition, though at the price of tolerating much that the majority would wish to suppress. But in earlier ages their influence was less extensive and there were other currents of religious activity, some hostile and some simply independent. The most formidable of these found expression in Jainism and Buddhism both of which arose in Bihar in the sixth century⁸ B.C. This century was a time of intellectual ferment in many countries. In China it produced Lao-tz[u and Confucius: in Greece, Parmenides, Empedocles, and the sophists were only a little later. In all these regions we have the same phenomenon of restless, wandering teachers, ready to give advice on politics, religion or philosophy, to any one who would hear them.

At that time the influence of the Brahmans had hardly permeated Bihar, though predominant to the west of it, and speculation there followed lines different from those laid down in the Upanishads, but of some antiquity, for we know that there were Buddhas before Gotama and that Mahâvîra, the founder of

⁸ For some years most scholars accepted the opinion that the Buddha died in 487 B.C. but the most recent researches into the history of the Saisunâga dynasty suggest that the date should be put back to 554 B.C. See Vincent Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 52.

Jainism, reformed the doctrine of an older teacher called Parśva.

In Gotama's youth Bihar was full of wandering philosophers who appear to have been atheistic and disposed to uphold the boldest paradoxes, intellectual and moral. There must however have been constructive elements in their doctrine, for they believed in reincarnation and the periodic appearance of superhuman teachers and in the advantage of following an ascetic discipline. They probably belonged chiefly to the warrior caste as did Gotama, the Buddha known to history. The Pitakas represent him as differing in details from contemporary teachers but as rediscovering the truth taught by his predecessors. They imply that the world is so constituted that there is only one way to emancipation and that from time to time superior minds see this and announce it to others. Still Buddhism does not in practice use such formulae as living in harmony with the laws of nature.

Indian literature is notoriously concerned with ideas rather than facts but the vigorous personality of the Buddha has impressed on it a portrait more distinct than that left by any other teacher or king. His work had a double effect. Firstly it influenced all departments of Hindu religion and thought, even those nominally opposed to it. Secondly it spread not only Buddhism in the strict sense but Indian art and literature beyond the confines of India. The expansion of Hindu culture owes much to the doctrine that the Good Law should be preached to all nations.

The teaching of Gotama was essentially practical. This

statement may seem paradoxical to the reader who has some acquaintance with the Buddhist scriptures and he will exclaim that of all religious books they are the least practical and least popular: they set up an anti-social ideal and are mainly occupied with psychological theories. But the Buddha addressed a public such as we now find it hard even to imagine. In those days the intellectual classes of India felt the ordinary activities of life to be unsatisfying: they thought it natural to renounce the world and mortify the flesh: divergent systems of ritual, theology and self-denial promised happiness but all agreed in thinking it normal as well as laudable that a man should devote his life to meditation and study. Compared with this frame of mind the teaching of the Buddha is not unsocial, unpractical and mysterious but human, business-like and clear. We are inclined to see in the monastic life which he recommended little but a useless sacrifice but it is evident that in the opinion of his contemporaries his disciples had an easy time, and that he had no intention of prescribing any cramped or unnatural existence. He accepted the current conviction that those who devote themselves to the things of the mind and spirit should be released from worldly ties and abstain from luxury but he meant his monks to live a life of sustained intellectual activity for themselves and of benevolence for others. His teaching is formulated in severe and technical phraseology, yet the substance of it is so simple that many have criticized it as too obvious and jejune to be the basis of a religion. But when he first enunciated his theses some two thousand five hundred

years ago, they were not obvious but revolutionary and little less than paradoxical.

The principal of these propositions are as follows. The existence of everything depends on a cause: hence if the cause of evil or suffering can be detected and removed, evil itself will be removed. That cause is lust and craving for pleasure⁹. Hence all sacrificial and sacramental religions are irrelevant, for the cure which they propose has nothing to do with the disease. The cause of evil or suffering is removed by purifying the heart and by following the moral law which sets high value on sympathy and social duties, but an equally high value on the cultivation of individual character. But training and cultivation imply the possibility of change. Hence it is a fatal mistake in the religious life to hold a view common in India which regards the essence of man as something unchangeable and happy in itself, if it can only be isolated from physical trammels. On the contrary the happy mind is something to be built up by good thoughts, good words and good deeds. In its origin the Buddha's celebrated doctrine that there is no permanent self in persons or things is not a speculative proposition, nor a sentimental lament over the transitoriness of the world, but a basis for religion and morals. You will never be happy unless you realize that you can make and remake your own soul.

⁹ This is sometimes rendered simply by desire but *desire* in English is a vague word and may include feelings which do not come within the Pali *tanhâ*. The Buddha did not reprobate good desires. See Mrs Rhys David's *Buddhism*, p. 222 and *E.R.E.* s.v. Desire.

These simple principles and the absence of all dogmas as to God or Brahman distinguish the teaching of Gotama from most Indian systems, but he accepted the usual Indian beliefs about Karma and rebirth and with them the usual conclusion that release from the series of rebirths is the *summum bonum*. This deliverance he called saintship (*arahattam*) or nirvana of which I shall say something below. In early Buddhism it is primarily a state of happiness to be attained in this life and the Buddha persistently refused to explain what is the nature of a saint after death. The question is unprofitable and perhaps he would have said, had he spoken our language, unmeaning. Later generations did not hesitate to discuss the problem but the Buddha's own teaching is simply that a man can attain before death to a blessed state in which he has nothing to fear from either death or rebirth.

The Buddha attacked both the ritual and the philosophy of the Brahmans. After his time the sacrificial system, though it did not die, never regained its old prestige and he profoundly affected the history of Indian metaphysics. It may be justly said that most of his philosophic as distinguished from his practical teaching was common property before his time, but he transmuted common ideas and gave them a currency and significance which they did not possess before. But he was less destructive as a religious and social reformer than many have supposed. He did not deny the existence nor forbid the worship of the popular gods, but such worship is not Buddhism and the gods are merely angels who may be willing to help good Buddhists but are in no wise guides

to religion, since they need instruction themselves. And though he denied that the Brahmans were superior by birth to others, he did not preach against caste, partly because it then existed only in a rudimentary form. But he taught that the road to salvation was one and open to all who were able to walk in it¹⁰, whether Hindus or foreigners. All may not have the necessary qualifications of intellect and character to become monks but all can be good laymen, for whom the religious life means the observance of morality combined with such simple exercises as reading the scriptures. It is clear that this lay Buddhism had much to do with the spread of the faith. The elemental simplicity of its principles—namely that religion is open to all and identical with morality—made a clean sweep of Brahmanic theology and sacrifices and put in its place something like Confucianism. But the innate Indian love for philosophizing and ritual caused generation after generation to add more and more supplements to the Master's teaching and it is only outside India that it has been preserved in any purity.

¹⁰ It is practically correct to say that Buddhism was the first universal and missionary religion, but Mahāvira, the founder of the Jains and probably somewhat slightly his senior, is credited with the same wide view.

4. *Asoka*

Gotama spent his life in preaching and by his personal exertions spread his doctrines over Bihar and Oudh but for two centuries after his death we know little of the history of Buddhism. In the reign of Asoka (273-232 B.C.) its fortunes suddenly changed, for this great Emperor whose dominions comprised nearly all India made it the state religion and also engraved on rocks and pillars a long series of edicts recording his opinions and aspirations. Buddhism is often criticized as a gloomy and unpractical creed, suited at best to stoical and scholarly recluses. But these are certainly not its characteristics when it first appears in political history, just as they are not its characteristics in Burma or Japan to-day. Both by precept and example Asoka was an ardent exponent of the strenuous life. In his first edict he lays down the principle "Let small and great exert themselves" and in subsequent inscriptions he continually harps upon the necessity of energy and exertion. The Law or Religion (Dhamma) which his edicts enjoin is merely human and civic virtue, except that it makes respect for animal life an integral part of morality. In one passage he summarizes it as "Little impiety, many good deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity." He makes no reference to a supreme deity, but insists on the reality and importance of the future life. Though he does not use the word *Karma* this is clearly the

conception which dominates his philosophy: those who do good are happy in this world and the next but those who fail in their duty win neither heaven nor the royal favour. The king's creed is remarkable in India for its great simplicity. He deprecates superstitious ceremonies and says nothing of Nirvana but dwells on morality as necessary to happiness in this life and others. This is not the whole of Gotama's teaching but two centuries after his death a powerful and enlightened Buddhist gives it as the gist of Buddhism for laymen.

Asoka wished to make Buddhism the creed not only of India but of the world as known to him and he boasts that he extended his "conquests of religion" to the Hellenistic kingdoms of the west. If the missions which he despatched thither reached their destination, there is little evidence that they bore any fruit, but the conversion of Ceylon and some districts in the Himalayas seems directly due to his initiative.

5. Extension of Buddhism and Hinduism beyond India

This is perhaps a convenient place to review the extension of Buddhism and Hinduism outside India. To do so at this point implies of course an anticipation of chronology, but to delay the survey might blind the reader to the fact that from the time of Asoka onward India was engaged not only in creating but also in exporting new varieties of religious thought.

The countries which have received Indian culture fall into two classes: first those to which it came as a result of religious missions or of peaceful international intercourse, and second those where it was established after conquest or at least colonization. In the first class the religion introduced was Buddhism. If, as in Tibet, it seems to us mixed with Hinduism, yet it was a mixture which at the date of its introduction passed in India for Buddhism. But in the second and smaller class including Java, Camboja and Champa the immigrants brought with them both Hinduism and Buddhism. The two systems were often declared to be the same but the result was Hinduism mixed with some Buddhism, not *vice versa*.

The countries of the first class comprise Ceylon, Burma and Siam, Central Asia, Nepal, China with Annam, Korea and Japan,

Tibet with Mongolia. The Buddhism of the first three countries¹¹ is a real unity or in European language a church, for though they have no common hierarchy they use the same sacred language, Pali, and have the same canon. Burma and Siam have repeatedly recognized Ceylon as a sort of metropolitan see and on the other hand when religion in Ceylon fell on evil days the clergy were recruited from Burma and Siam. In the other countries Buddhism presents greater differences and divisions. It had no one sacred language and in different regions used either Sanskrit texts or translations into Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian and the languages of Central Asia.

1. Ceylon. There is no reason to doubt that Buddhism was introduced under the auspices of Asoka. Though the invasions and settlements of Tamils have brought Hinduism into Ceylon, yet none of the later and mixed forms of Buddhism, in spite of some attempts to gain a footing, ever flourished there on a large scale. Sinhalese Buddhism had probably a closer connection with southern India than the legend suggests and Conjevaram was long a Buddhist centre which kept up intercourse with both Ceylon and Burma.

2. Burma. The early history of Burmese Buddhism is obscure and its origin probably complex, since at many different periods it may have received teachers from both India and China.

¹¹ It may be conveniently and correctly called Pali Buddhism. This is better than Southern Buddhism or Hīnayāna, for the Buddhism of Java which lies even farther to the south is not the same and there were formerly Hīnayānists in Central Asia and China.

The present dominant type (identical with the Buddhism of Ceylon) existed before the sixth century¹² and tradition ascribes its introduction both to the labours of Buddhaghosa and to the missionaries of Asoka. There was probably a connection between Pegu and Conjevaram. In the eleventh century Burmese Buddhism had become extremely corrupt except in Pegu but King Anawrata conquered Pegu and spread a purer form throughout his dominions.

3. Siam. The Thai race, who starting from somewhere in the Chinese province of Yünnan began to settle in what is now called Siam about the beginning of the twelfth century, probably brought with them some form of Buddhism. About 1300 the possessions of Râma Komhëng, King of Siam, included Pegu and Pali Buddhism prevailed among his subjects. Somewhat later, in 1361, a high ecclesiastic was summoned from Ceylon to arrange the affairs of the church but not, it would seem, to introduce any new doctrine. Pegu was the centre from which Pali Buddhism spread to upper Burma in the eleventh century and it probably performed the same service for Siam later. The modern Buddhism of Camboja is simply Siamese Buddhism which filtered into the country from about 1250 onwards. The older Buddhism of Camboja, for which see below, was quite different.

At the courts of Siam and Camboja, as formerly in Burma, there are Brahmans who perform state ceremonies and act as

¹² See Finot, *J.A.* 1912, n. 121-136.

astrologers. Though they have little to do with the religion of the people, their presence explains the predominance of Indian rather than Chinese influence in these countries.

4. Tradition says that Indian colonists settled in Khotan during the reign of Asoka, but no precise date can at present be fixed for the introduction of Buddhism into the Tarim basin and other regions commonly called Central Asia. But it must have been flourishing there about the time of the Christian era, since it spread thence to China not later than the middle of the first century. There were two schools representing two distinct currents from India. First the Sarvâstivâdin school, prevalent in Badakshan, Kashgar and Kucha, secondly the Mahâyâna in Khotan and Yarkand. The spread of the former was no doubt connected with the growth of the Kushan Empire but may be anterior to the conversion of Kanishka, for though he gave a great impetus to the propagation of the faith, it is probable that, like most royal converts, he favoured an already popular religion. The Mahâyâna subsequently won much territory from the other school.

5. As in other countries, so in China Buddhism entered by more than one road. It came first by land from Central Asia. The official date for its introduction by this route is 62 A.D. but it was probably known within the Chinese frontier before that time, though not recognized by the state. Secondly when Buddhism was established, there arose a desire for accurate knowledge of the true Indian doctrine. Chinese pilgrims went to India and

Indian teachers came to China. After the fourth century many of these religious journeys were made by sea and it was thus that Bodhidharma landed at Canton in 520¹³. A third stream of Buddhism, namely Lamaism, came into China from Tibet under the Mongol dynasty (1280). Khubilai considered this the best religion for his Mongols and numerous Lamaist temples and convents were established and still exist in northern China. Lamaism has not perhaps been a great religious or intellectual force there, but its political importance was considerable, for the Ming and Manchu dynasties who wished to assert their rule over the Tibetans and Mongols by peaceful methods, consistently strove to win the goodwill of the Lamaist clergy.

The Buddhism of Korea, Japan and Annam is directly derived from the earlier forms of Chinese Buddhism but was not affected by the later influx of Lamaism. Buddhism passed from China into Korea in the fourth century and thence to Japan in the sixth. In the latter country it was stimulated by frequent contact with China and the repeated introduction of new Chinese sects but was not appreciably influenced by direct intercourse with Hindus or other foreign Buddhists. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Japanese Buddhism showed great vitality, transforming old sects and creating new ones.

In the south, Chinese Buddhism spread into Annam rather late: according to native tradition in the tenth century. This

¹³ There is no Indian record of Bodhidharma's doctrine and its origin is obscure, but it seems to have been a compound of Buddhism and Vedantism.

region was a battlefield of two cultures. Chinese influence descending southwards from Canton proved predominant and, after the triumph of Annam over Champa, extended to the borders of Camboja. But so long as the kingdom of Champa existed, Indian culture and Hinduism maintained themselves at least as far north as Hué.

6. The Buddhism of Tibet is a late and startling transformation of Gotama's teaching, but the transformation is due rather to the change and degeneration of that teaching in Bengal than to the admixture of Tibetan ideas. Such admixture however was not absent and a series of reformers endeavoured to bring the church back to what they considered the true standard. The first introduction is said to have occurred in 630 but probably the arrival of Padma Sambhava from India in 747 marks the real foundation of the Lamaist church. It was reformed by the Hindu Atîśa in 1038 and again by the Tibetan Tsong-kha-pa about 1400.

The Grand Lama is the head of the church as reorganized by Tsong-kha-pa. In Tibet the priesthood attained to temporal power comparable with the Papacy. The disintegration of the government divided the whole land into small principalities and among these the great monasteries were as important as any temporal lord. The abbots of the Sakya monastery were the practical rulers of Tibet for seventy years (1270-1340). Another period of disintegration followed but after 1630 the Grand Lamas of Lhasa were able to claim and maintain a similar

position.

Mongolian Buddhism is a branch of Lamaism distinguished by no special doctrines. The Mongols were partially converted in the time of Khubilai and a second time and more thoroughly in 1570 by the third Grand Lama.

7. Nepal exhibits another phase of degeneration. In Tibet Indian Buddhism passed into the hands of a vigorous national priesthood and was not exposed to the assimilative influence of Hinduism. In Nepal it had not the same defence. It probably existed there since the time of Asoka and underwent the same phases of decay and corruption as in Bengal. But whereas the last great monasteries in Bengal were shattered by the Mohammedan invasion of 1193, the secluded valley of Nepal was protected against such violence and Buddhism continued to exist there in name. It has preserved a good deal of Sanskrit Buddhist literature but has become little more than a sect of Hinduism.

Nepal ought perhaps to be classed in our second division, that is those countries where Indian culture was introduced not by missionaries but by the settlement of Indian conquerors or immigrants. To this class belong the Hindu civilizations of Indo-China and the Archipelago. In all of these Hinduism and Mahayanist Buddhism are found mixed together, Hinduism being the stronger element. The earliest Sanskrit inscription in these regions is that of Vochan in Champa which is apparently Buddhist. It is not later than the third century and refers to an earlier king, so that an Indian dynasty probably existed there

about 150-200 A.D. Though the presence of Indian culture is beyond dispute, it is not clear whether the Chams were civilized in Champa by Hindu invaders or whether they were hinduized Malays who invaded Champa from elsewhere.

8. In Camboja a Hindu dynasty was founded by invaders and the Brahmans who accompanied them established a counterpart to it in a powerful hierarchy, Sanskrit becoming the language of religion. It is clear that these invaders came ultimately from India but they may have halted in Java or the Malay Peninsula for an unknown period. The Brahmanic hierarchy began to fail about the fourteenth century and was supplanted by Siamese Buddhism. Before that time the state religion of both Champa and Camboja was the worship of Śiva, especially in the form called Mukhalinga. Mahayanist Buddhism, tending to identify Buddha with Śiva, also existed but enjoyed less of the royal patronage.

9. Religious conditions were similar in Java but politically there was this difference, that there was no one continuous and paramount kingdom. A considerable number of Hindus must have settled in the island to produce such an effect on its language and architecture but the rulers of the states known to us were hinduized Javanese rather than true Hindus and the language of literature and of most inscriptions was Old Javanese, not Sanskrit, though most of the works written in it were translations or adaptations of Sanskrit originals. As in Camboja, Śivaism and Buddhism both flourished without mutual hostility and there was

less difference in the status of the two creeds.

In all these countries religion seems to have been connected with politics more closely than in India. The chief shrine was a national cathedral, the living king was semi-divine and dead kings were represented by statues bearing the attributes of their favourite gods.

6. *New Forms of Buddhism*

In the three or four centuries following Asoka a surprising change came over Indian Buddhism, but though the facts are clear it is hard to connect them with dates and persons. But the change was clearly posterior to Asoka for though his edicts show a spirit of wide charity it is not crystallized in the form of certain doctrines which subsequently became prominent.

The first of these holds up as the moral ideal not personal perfection or individual salvation but the happiness of all living creatures. The good man who strives for this should boldly aspire to become a Buddha in some future birth and such aspirants are called Bodhisattvas. Secondly Buddhas and some Bodhisattvas come to be considered as supernatural beings and practically deities. The human life of Gotama, though not denied, is regarded as the manifestation of a cosmic force which also reveals itself in countless other Buddhas who are not merely his predecessors or destined successors but the rulers of paradises in other worlds. Faith in a Buddha, especially in Amitâbha, can secure rebirth in his paradise. The great Bodhisattvas, such as Avalokita and Mañjuśrî, are splendid angels of mercy and knowledge who are theoretically distinguished from Buddhas because they have indefinitely postponed their entry into nirvana in order to alleviate the sufferings of the world. These new tenets are accompanied by a remarkable development of art and of

idealist metaphysics.

This new form of Buddhism is called Mahâyâna, or the Great Vehicle, as opposed to the Small Vehicle or Hīnayâna, a somewhat contemptuous name given to the older school. The idea underlying these phrases is that sects are merely coaches, all travelling on the same road to salvation though some may be quicker than others. The Mahayana did not suppress the Hinayana but it gradually absorbed the traffic.

The causes of this transformation were two-fold, internal or Indian and external. Buddhism was a living, that is changing, stream of thought and the Hindus as a nation have an exceptional taste and capacity for metaphysics. This taste was not destroyed by Gotama's dicta as to the limits of profitable knowledge nor did new deities arouse hostility because they were not mentioned in the ancient scriptures. The development of Brahmanism and Buddhism was parallel: if an attractive novelty appeared in one, something like it was soon provided by the other. Thus the Bhagavad-gîtâ contains the ideas of the Mahayana in substance, though in a different setting: it praises disinterested activity and insists on faith. It is clear that at this period all Indian thought and not merely Buddhism was vivified and transmuted by two great currents of feeling demanding, the one a more emotional morality the other more personal and more sympathetic deities.

I shall show in more detail below that most Mahayanist doctrines, though apparently new, have their roots in old Indian ideas. But the presence of foreign influences is not to be

disputed and there is no difficulty in accounting for them. Gandhara was a Persian province from 530 to 330 B.C. and in the succeeding centuries the north-western parts of India experienced the invasions and settlements of numerous aliens, such as Greeks from the Hellenistic kingdoms which arose after Alexander's expedition, Parthians, Sakas and Kushans. Such immigrants, even if they had no culture of their own, at least transported culture, just as the Turks introduced Islam into Europe. Thus whatever ideas were prevalent in Persia, in the Hellenistic kingdoms, or in Central Asia may also have been prevalent in north-western India, where was situated the university town of Taxila frequently mentioned in the Jâtakas as a seat of Buddhist learning. The foreigners who entered India adopted Indian religions¹⁴ and probably Buddhism more often than Hinduism, for it was at that time predominant and disposed to evangelize without raising difficulties as to caste.

Foreign influences stimulated mythology and imagery. In the reliefs of Asoka's time, the image of the Buddha never appears, and, as in the earliest Christian art, the intention of the sculptors is to illustrate an edifying narrative rather than to provide an object of worship. But in the Gandharan sculptures, which are a branch of Græco-Roman art, he is habitually represented by a figure modelled on the conventional type of Apollo. The gods of India were not derived from Greece but they were stereotyped under the influence of western art to this extent that familiarity

¹⁴ This is proved by coins and also by the Besnagar inscription.

with such figures as Apollo and Pallas encouraged the Hindus to represent their gods and heroes in human or quasi-human shapes. The influence of Greece on Indian religion was not profound: it did not affect the architecture or ritual of temples and still less thought or doctrine. But when Indian religion and especially Buddhism passed into the hands of men accustomed to Greek statuary, the inclination to venerate definite personalities having definite shapes was strengthened¹⁵.

Persian influence was stronger than Greek. To it are probably due the many radiant deities who shed their beneficent glory over the Mahayanist pantheon, as well as the doctrine that Bodhisattvas are emanations of Buddhas. The discoveries of Stein, Pelliot and others have shown that this influence extended across Central Asia to China and one of the most important turns in the fortunes of Buddhism was its association with a Central Asian tribe analogous to the Turks and called Kushans or Yüeh-chih, whose territories lay without as well as within the frontiers of modern India and who borrowed much of their culture from Persia and some from the Greeks. Their great king Kanishka is a figure in Buddhist annals second only to Asoka. Unfortunately

¹⁵ I do not think that this view is disproved by the fact that Patañjali and the scholiasts on Pânini allude to images for they also allude to Greeks. For the contrary view see Sten Konow in *I.A.* 1909, p. 145. The facts are (a) The ancient Brahmanic ritual used no images. (b) They were used by Buddhism and popular Hinduism about the fourth century B.C. (c) Alexander conquered Bactria in 329 B.C. But allowance must be made for the usages of popular and especially of Dravidian worship of which at this period we know nothing.

his date is still a matter of discussion. The majority of scholars place his accession about 78 A.D. but some put it rather later¹⁶. The evidence of numismatics and of art indicates that he came towards the end of his dynasty rather than at the beginning and the tradition which makes Aśvaghosha his contemporary is compatible with the later date.

Some writers describe Kanishka as the special patron of Mahayanism. But the description is of doubtful accuracy. The style of religious art known as Gandharan flourished in his reign and he convened a council which fixed the canon of the Sarvâstivâdins. This school was reckoned as Hinayanist and though Aśvaghosha enjoys general fame in the Far East as a Mahayanist doctor, yet his undoubted writings are not Mahayanist in the strict sense of the word¹⁷. But a more ornate and mythological form of religion was becoming prevalent and perhaps Kanishka's Council arranged some compromise between the old and the new.

After Aśvaghosha comes Nâgârjuna who may have flourished any time between 125 and 200 A.D. A legend which makes him live for 300 years is not without significance, for he represents a movement and a school as much as a personality and if he taught in the second century A.D. he cannot have been the *founder* of Mahayanism. Yet he seems to be the first great name definitely connected with it and the ascription to him of

¹⁶ Few now advocate an earlier date such as 58 B.C.

¹⁷ His authorship of *The Awakening of Faith* must be regarded as doubtful.

numerous later treatises, though unwarrantable, shows that his authority was sufficient to stamp a work or a doctrine as orthodox Mahayanism. His biographies connect him with the system of idealist or nihilistic metaphysics expounded in the literature (for it is more than a single work) called Prajñâpâramitâ, with magical practices (by which the power of summoning Bodhisattvas or deities is specially meant) and with the worship of Amitâbha. His teacher Saraha, a foreigner, is said to have been the first who taught this worship in India. In this there may be a kernel of truth but otherwise the extant accounts of Nâgârjuna are too legendary to permit of historical deductions. He was perhaps the first eminent exponent of Mahayanist metaphysics, but the train of thought was not new: it was the result of applying to the external world the same destructive logic which Gotama applied to the soul and the result had considerable analogies to Śankara's version of the Vedanta. Whether in the second century A.D. the leaders of Buddhism already identified themselves with the sorcery which demoralized late Indian Mahayanism may be doubted, but tradition certainly ascribes to Nâgârjuna this corrupting mixture of metaphysics and magic.

The third century offers a strange blank in Indian history. Little can be said except that the power of the Kushans decayed and that northern India was probably invaded by Persians and Central Asian tribes. The same trouble did not affect southern India and it may be that religion and speculation flourished there and spread northwards, as certainly happened in later times.

Many of the greatest Hindu teachers were Dravidians and at the present day it is in the Dravidian regions that the temples are most splendid, the Brahmans strictest and most respected. It may be that this Dravidian influence affected even Buddhism in the third century A.D., for Aryadeva the successor of Nâgârjuna was a southerner and the legends told of him recall certain Dravidian myths. Bodhidharma too came from the South and imported into China a form of Buddhism which has left no record in India.

7. Revival of Hinduism

In 320 a native Indian dynasty, the Guptas, came to the throne and inaugurated a revival of Hinduism, to which religion we must now turn. To speak of the revival of Hinduism does not mean that in the previous period it had been dead or torpid. Indeed we know that there was a Hindu reaction against the Buddhism of Asoka about 150 B.C. But, on the whole, from the time of Asoka onwards Buddhism had been the principal religion of India, and before the Gupta era there are hardly any records of donations made to Brahmans. Yet during these centuries they were not despised or oppressed. They produced much literature¹⁸: their schools of philosophy and ritual did not decay and they gradually made good their claim to be the priests of India's gods, whoever those gods might be. The difference between the old religion and the new lies in this. The Brâhmanas and Upanishads describe practices and doctrines of considerable variety but still all the property of a privileged class in a special region. They do not represent popular religion nor the religion of India as a whole. But in the Gupta period Hinduism began to do this. It is not a system like Islam or even Buddhism but a parliament of religions, of which every Indian creed can become a member on condition of observing some simple rules of the house, such as respect for

¹⁸ Much of the Ramayana and Mahabharata must have been composed during this period, both poems (especially the latter) consisting of several strata.

Brahmans and theoretical acceptance of the Veda. Nothing is abolished: the ancient rites and texts preserve their mysterious power and kings perform the horse-sacrifice. But side by side with this, deities unknown to the Veda rise to the first rank and it is frankly admitted that new revelations more suited to the age have been given to mankind.

Art too enters on a new phase. In the early Indian sculptures deities are mostly portrayed in human form, but in about the first century of our era there is seen a tendency to depict them with many heads and limbs and this tendency grows stronger until in mediaeval times it is predominant. It has its origin in symbolism. The deity is thought of as carrying many insignia, as performing more actions than two hands can indicate; the worshipper is taught to think of him as appearing in this shape and the artist does not hesitate to represent it in paint and stone.

As we have seen, the change which came over Buddhism was partly due to foreign influences and no doubt they affected most Indian creeds. But the prodigious amplification of Hinduism was mainly due to the absorption of beliefs prevalent in Indian districts other than the homes of the ancient Brahmans. Thus south Indian religion is characterized when we first know it by its emotional tone and it resulted in the mediaeval Sivaism of the Tamil country. In another region, probably in the west, grew up the monotheism of the Bhâgavatas, which was the parent of Vishnuism.

Hinduism may be said to fall into four principal divisions

which are really different religions: the Smârtas or traditionalists, the Sivaïtes, the Vishnuites and the Śâktas. The first, who are still numerous, represent the pre-buddhist Brahmans. They follow, so far as modern circumstances permit, the ancient ritual and are apparent polytheists while accepting pantheism as the higher truth. Vishnuites and Sivaïtes however are monotheists in the sense that their minor deities are not essentially different from the saints of Roman and Eastern Christianity but their monotheism has a pantheistic tinge. Neither sect denies the existence of the rival god, but each makes its own deity God, not only in the theistic but in the pantheistic sense and regards the other deity as merely an influential angel. From time to time the impropriety of thus specially deifying one aspect of the universal spirit made itself felt and then Vishnu and Śiva were adored in a composite dual form or, with the addition of Brahmâ, as a trinity. But this triad had not great importance and it is a mistake to compare it with the Christian trinity. Strong as was the tendency to combine and amalgamate deities, it was mastered in these religions by the desire to have one definite God, personal inasmuch as he can receive and return love, although the Indian feeling that God must be all and in all continually causes the conceptions called Vishnu and Śiva to transcend the limits of personality. This feeling is specially clear in the growth of Râma and Krishna worship. Both of these deities were originally ancient heroes, and stories of love and battle cling to them in their later phases. Yet for their respective devotees each becomes God in every sense, God as

lover of the soul, God as ruler of the universe and the God of pantheism who is all that exists and can exist.

For some time before and after the beginning of our era, north-western India witnessed a great fusion of ideas and Indian, Persian and Greek religion must have been in contact at the university town of Taxila and many other places. Kashmir too, if somewhat too secluded to be a meeting-place of nations, was a considerable intellectual centre. We have not yet sufficient documents to enable us to trace the history and especially the chronology of thought in these regions but we can say that certain forms of Vishnuism, Śivaism and Buddhism were all evolved there and often show features in common. Thus in all we find the idea that the divine nature is manifested in four forms or five, if we count the Absolute Godhead as one of them¹⁹.

I shall consider at length below this worship of Vishnu and Śiva and here will merely point out that it differs from the polytheism of the Smârtas. In their higher phases all Hindu religions agree in teaching some form of pantheism, some laying more and some less stress on the personal aspect which the deity can assume. But whereas the pantheism of the Smârtas grew out of the feeling that the many gods of tradition must all be one, the pantheism of the Vishnuites was not evolved out of pre-buddhist Brahmanism and is due to the conviction that the one God must be everything. It is Indian but it grew up in some

¹⁹ *E.g.* the Vyûhas of the Pâncarâtras, the five Jinas of the Mahayanists and the five Sadâśiva tattvas. See Gopinâtha Rao, *Elements of Indian Iconography*, vol. III p. 363.

region outside Brahmanic influence and was accepted by the Brahmans as a permissible creed, but many legends in the Epics and Puranas indicate that there was hostility between the old-fashioned Brahmans and the worshippers of Râma, Krishna and Śiva before the alliance was made.

Śâktism²⁰ also was not evolved from ancient Brahmanism but is different in tone from Vishnuism and Sivaism. Whereas they start from a movement of thought and spiritual feeling, Śâktism has for its basis certain ancient popular worships. With these it has combined much philosophy and has attempted to bring its teaching into conformity with Brahmanism, but yet remains somewhat apart. It worships a goddess of many names and forms, who is adored with sexual rites and the sacrifice of animals, or, when the law permits, of men. It asserts even more plainly than Vishnuism that the teaching of the Vedas is too difficult for these latter days and even useless, and it offers to its followers new scriptures called Tantras and new ceremonies as all-sufficient. It is true that many Hindus object to this sect, which may be compared with the Mormons in America or the Skoptsy in Russia, and it is numerous only in certain parts of India (especially Bengal and Assam) but since a section of Brahmans patronize it, it must be reckoned as a phase of Hinduism and even at the present day it is an important phase.

²⁰ I draw a distinction between Śâktism and Tantrism. The essence of Śâktism is the worship of a goddess with certain rites. Tantrism means rather the use of spells, gestures, diagrams and various magical or sacramental rites, which accompanies Śâktism but may exist without it.

There are many cults prevalent in India, though not recognized as sects, in which the worship of some aboriginal deity is accepted in all its crudeness without much admixture of philosophy, the only change being that the deity is described as a form, incarnation or servant of some well-known god and that Brahmans are connected with this worship. This habit of absorbing aboriginal superstitions materially lowers the average level of creed and ritual. An educated Brahman would laugh at the idea that village superstitions can be taken seriously as religion but he does not condemn them and, as superstitions, he does not disbelieve in them. It is chiefly owing to this habit that Hinduism has spread all over India and its treatment of men and gods is curiously parallel. Princes like the Manipuris of Assam came under Hindu influence and were finally recognized as Kshattiyas with an imaginary pedigree, and on the same principle their deities are recognized as forms of Siva or Durga. And Siva and Durga themselves were built up in past ages out of aboriginal beliefs, though the cement holding their figures together is Indian thought and philosophy, which are able to see in grotesque rustic godlings an expression of cosmic forces.

Though this is the principal method by which Hinduism has been propagated, direct missionary effort has not been wanting. For instance a large part of Assam was converted by the preaching of Vishnuite teachers in the sixteenth century and the process still continues²¹. But on the whole the missionary

²¹ According to *Census of India*, 1911, *Assam*, p. 47, about 80,000 animists were

spirit characterizes Buddhism rather than Hinduism. Buddhist missionaries preached their faith, without any political motive, wherever they could penetrate. But in such countries as Camboja, Hinduism was primarily the religion of the foreign settlers and when the political power of the Brahmans began to wane, the people embraced Buddhism. Outside India it was perhaps only in Java and the neighbouring islands that Hinduism (with an admixture of Buddhism) became the religion of the natives.

Many features of Hinduism, its steady though slow conquest of India, its extraordinary vitality and tenacity in resisting the attacks of Mohammedanism, and its small power of expansion beyond the seas are explained by the fact that it is a mode of life as much as a faith. To be a Hindu it is not sufficient to hold the doctrine of the Upanishads or any other scriptures: it is necessary to be a member of a Hindu caste and observe its regulations. It is not quite correct to say that one must be born a Hindu, since Hinduism has grown by gradually hinduizing the wilder tribes of India and the process still continues. But a convert cannot enter the fold by any simple ceremony like baptism. The community to which he belongs must adopt Hindu usages and then it will be recognized as a caste, at first of very low standing but in a few generations it may rise in the general esteem. A Hindu is bound to his religion by almost the same ties that bind him to his family. Hence the strength of Hinduism in India. But such ties are hard

converted to Hinduism in Goalpara between 1901 and 1911 by a Brahman called Sib Narayan Swami.

to knit and Hinduism has no chance of spreading abroad unless there is a large colony of Hindus surrounded by an appreciative and imitative population²².

In the contest between Hinduism and Buddhism the former owed the victory which it obtained in India, though not in other lands, to this assimilative social influence. The struggle continued from the fourth to the ninth century, after which Buddhism was clearly defeated and survived only in special localities. Its final disappearance was due to the destruction of its remaining monasteries by Moslem invaders but this blow was fatal only because Buddhism was concentrated in its monkhood. Innumerable Hindu temples were destroyed, yet Hinduism was at no time in danger of extinction.

The Hindu reaction against Buddhism became apparent under the Gupta dynasty but Mahayanism in its use of Sanskrit and its worship of Bodhisattvas shows the beginnings of the same movement. The danger for Buddhism was not persecution but tolerance and obliteration of differences. The Guptas were not bigots. It was probably in their time that the oldest Puranas, the laws of Manu and the Mahabharata received their final form. These are on the whole text-books of Smârta Hinduism and two Gupta monarchs celebrated the horse sacrifice. But the Mahabharata contains several episodes which justify the exclusive worship of either Vishnu or Siva, and the architecture

²² It is said that in Burma Hindu settlers become absorbed in the surrounding Buddhists. *Census of India*, 1911, I. p. 120.

of the Guptas suggests that they were Vishnuites. They also bestowed favours on Buddhism which was not yet decadent, for Vasubandhu and Asanga, who probably lived in the fourth century, were constructive thinkers. It is true that their additions were of the dangerous kind which render an edifice top-heavy but their works show vitality and had a wide influence²³. The very name of Asanga's philosophy—Yogâcârya—indicates its affinity to Brahmanic thought, as do his doctrines of Alayavijñâna and Bodhi, which permit him to express in Buddhist language the idea that the soul may be illumined by the deity. In some cases Hinduism, in others Buddhism, may have played the receptive part but the general result—namely the diminution of differences between the two—was always the same.

The Hun invasions were unfavourable to religious and intellectual activity in the north and, just as in the time of Moslim inroads, their ravages had more serious consequences for Buddhism than for Hinduism. The great Emperor Harsha (†647), of whom we know something from Bâna and Hsüan Chuang, became at the end of his life a zealous but eclectic Buddhist. Yet it is plain from Hsiian Chuang's account that at this time Buddhism was decadent in most districts both of the north and south.

This decadence was hastened by an unfortunate alliance with

²³ The life and writings of Vasubandhu illustrate the transition from the Hina- to the Mahayana. In the earlier part of his life he wrote the *Abhidharmakośa* which is still used by Mahayanists in Japan as a text-book, though it does not go beyond Hinayanism. Later he became a Mahayanist and wrote Mahayanist works.

those forms of magic and erotic mysticism which are called Śâktism²⁴. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the corruption, for the singularity of the evil, a combination of the austere and ethical teaching of Gotama with the most fantastic form of Hinduism, arrests attention and perhaps European scholars have written more about it than it deserves. It did not touch the Hinayanist churches nor appreciably infect the Buddhism of the Far East, nor even (it would seem) Indian Buddhism outside Bengal and Orissa. Unfortunately Magadha, which was both the home and last asylum of the faith, was also very near the regions where Śâktism most flourished. It is, as I have often noticed in these pages, a peculiarity of all Indian sects that in matters of belief they are not exclusive nor hostile to novelties. When a new idea wins converts it is the instinct of the older sects to declare that it is compatible with their teaching or that they have something similar and just as good. It was in this fashion that the Buddhists of Magadha accepted Śâktist and tantric ideas. If Hinduism could summon gods and goddesses by magical methods, they could summon Bodhisattvas, male and female, in the same way, and these spirits were as good as the gods. In justice it must be said that despite distortions and monstrous accretions the real teaching of Gotama did not entirely disappear even in Magadha and Tibet.

²⁴ As already mentioned, I think Śâktism is the more appropriate word but Tantrism is in common use by the best authorities.

8. *Later Forms of Hinduism*

In the eighth and ninth centuries this degenerate Buddhism was exposed to the attacks of the great Hindu champions Kumârîla and Śankara, though it probably endured little persecution in our sense of the word. Both of them were Smârtas or traditionalists and laboured in the cause not of Vishnuism or Śivaism but of the ancient Brahmanic religion, amplified by many changes which the ages had brought but holding up as the religious ideal a manhood occupied with ritual observances, followed by an old age devoted to philosophy. Śankara was the greater of the two and would have a higher place among the famous names of the world had not his respect for tradition prevented him from asserting the originality which he undoubtedly possessed. Yet many remarkable features of his life work, both practical and intellectual, are due to imitation of the Buddhists and illustrate the dictum that Buddhism did not disappear from India²⁵ until Hinduism had absorbed from it all the good that it had to offer. Śankara took Buddhist institutions as his model in rearranging the ascetic orders of Hinduism, and his philosophy, a rigorously consistent pantheism which ascribed

²⁵ In India proper there are hardly any Buddhists now. The Kumbhipathias, an anti-Brahmanic sect in Orissa, are said to be based on Buddhist doctrines and a Buddhist mission in Mysore, called the Sakya Buddhist Society, has met with some success. See *Census of India*, 1911, i. pp. 122 and 126.

all apparent multiplicity and difference to illusion, is indebted to Mahayanist speculation. It is remarkable that his opponents stigmatized him as a Buddhist in disguise and his system, though it is one of the most influential lines of thought among educated Hindus, is anathematized by some theistic sects²⁶.

Śankara was a native of southern India. It is not easy to combine in one picture the progress of thought in the north and south, and for the earlier centuries our information as to the Dravidian countries is meagre. Yet they cannot be omitted, for their influence on the whole of India was great. Greeks, Kushans, Huns, and Mohammedans penetrated into the north but, until after the fall of Vijayanagar in 1565, no invader professing a foreign religion entered the country of the Tamils. Left in peace they elaborated their own version of current theological problems and the result spread over India. Buddhism and Jainism also flourished in the south. The former was introduced under Asoka but apparently ceased to be the dominant religion (if it ever was so) in the early centuries of our era. Still even in the eleventh century monasteries were built in Mysore. Jainism had a distinguished but chequered career in the south. It was powerful in the seventh century but subsequently endured considerable persecution. It still exists and possesses remarkable monuments at Sravana Belgola and elsewhere.

But the characteristic form of Dravidian religion is an

²⁶ See the quotation in Schomerus, *Der Śaiva Siddhânta*, p. 20 where a Saiva Hindu says that he would rather see India embrace Christianity than the doctrine of Śankara.

emotional theism, running in the parallel channels of Vishnuism and Śivaism and accompanied by humbler but vigorous popular superstitions, which reveal the origin of its special temperament. For the frenzied ecstasies of devil dancers (to use a current though inaccurate phrase) are a primitive expression of the same sentiment which sees in the whole world the exulting energy and rhythmic force of Siva. And though the most rigid Brahmanism still flourishes in the Madras Presidency there is audible in the Dravidian hymns a distinct note of anti-sacerdotalism and of belief that every man by his own efforts can come into immediate contact with the Great Being whom he worships.

The Vishnuism and Śivaism of the south go back to the early centuries of our era, but the chronology is difficult. In both there is a line of poet-saints followed by philosophers and teachers and in both a considerable collection of Tamil hymns esteemed as equivalent to the Veda. Perhaps Śivaism was dominant first and Vishnuism somewhat later but at no epoch did either extinguish the other. It was the object of Śankara to bring these valuable but dangerous forces, as well as much Buddhist doctrine and practice, into harmony with Brahmanism.

Islam first entered India in 712 but it was some time before it passed beyond the frontier provinces and for many centuries it was too hostile and aggressive to invite imitation, but the spectacle of a strong community pledged to the worship of a single personal God produced an effect. In the period extending from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, in which

Buddhism practically disappeared and Islam came to the front as a formidable though not irresistible antagonist, the dominant form of Hinduism was that which finds expression in the older Puranas, in the temples of Orissa and Khajuraho and the Kailâsa at Ellora. It is the worship of one god, either Siva or Vishnu, but a monotheism adorned with a luxuriant mythology and delighting in the manifold shapes which the one deity assumes. It freely used the terminology of the Sâmkhya but the first place in philosophy belonged to the severe pantheism of Śankara which, in contrast to this riotous exuberance of legend and sculpture, sees the highest truth in one Being to whom no epithets can be applied.

In the next epoch, say the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries, Indian thought clearly hankers after theism in the western sense and yet never completely acquiesces in it. Mythology, if still rampant according to our taste, at least becomes subsidiary and more detachable from the supreme deity, and this deity, if less anthropomorphic than Allah or Jehovah, is still a being who loves and helps souls, and these souls are explained in varying formulae as being identical with him and yet distinct.

It can hardly be by chance that as the Hindus became more familiar with Islam their sects grew more definite in doctrine and organization especially among the Vishnuites who showed a greater disposition to form sects than the Sivaites, partly because the incarnations of Vishnu offer an obvious ground for diversity. About 1100 A.D.²⁷ the first great Vaishnava sect was founded by

²⁷ Some think that the sect called Nimávats was earlier.

Râmânuja. He was a native of the Madras country and claimed to be the spiritual descendant of the early Tamil saints. In doctrine he expressly accepted the views of the ancient Bhâgavatas, which had been condemned by Śankara, and he affirmed the existence of one personal deity commonly spoken of as Nârâyana or Vâsudeva.

From the time of Śankara onwards nearly all Hindu theologians of the first rank expounded their views by writing a commentary on the Brahma Sûtras, an authoritative but singularly enigmatic digest of the Upanishads. Śankara's doctrine may be summarized as absolute monism which holds that nothing really exists but Brahman and that Brahman is identical with the soul. All apparent plurality is due to illusion. He draws a distinction between the lower and higher Brahman which perhaps may be rendered by God and the Godhead. In the same sense in which individual souls and matter exist, a personal God also exists, but the higher truth is that individuality, personality and matter are all illusion. But the teaching of Râmânuja rejects the doctrines that the world is an illusion and that there is a distinction between the lower and higher Brahman and it affirms that the soul, though of the same substance as God and emitted from him rather than created, can obtain bliss not in absorption but in existence near him.

It is round these problems that Hindu theology turns. The innumerable solutions lack neither boldness nor variety but they all try to satisfy both the philosopher and the saint and none

achieve both tasks. The system of Śankara is a masterpiece of intellect, despite his disparagement of reasoning in theology, and could inspire a fine piety, as when on his deathbed he asked forgiveness for having frequented temples, since by so doing he had seemed to deny that God is everywhere. But piety of this kind is unfavourable to public worship and even to those religious experiences in which the soul seems to have direct contact with God in return for its tribute of faith and love. In fact the Advaita philosophy countenances emotional theism only as an imperfect creed and not as the highest truth. But the existence of all sects and priesthoods depends on their power to satisfy the religious instinct with ceremonial or some better method of putting the soul in communication with the divine. On the other hand pantheism in India is not a philosophical speculation, it is a habit of mind: it is not enough for the Hindu that his God is lord of all things: he must *be* all things and the soul in its endeavour to reach God must obtain deliverance from the fetters not only of matter but of individuality. Hence Hindu theology is in a perpetual oscillation illustrated by the discrepant statements found side by side in the Bhagavad-gîtâ and other works. Indian temperament and Indian logic want a pantheistic God and a soul which can transcend personality, but religious thought and practice imply personality both in the soul and in God. All varieties of Vishnuism show an effort to reconcile these double aspirations and theories. The theistic view is popular, for without it what would become of temples, worshippers and

priests? But I think that the pantheistic view is the real basis of Indian religious thought.

The qualified monism of Râmânûja (as his system is sometimes called) led to more uncompromising treatment of the question and to the affirmation of dualism, not the dualism of God and the Devil but the distinctness of the soul and of matter from God. This is the doctrine of Madhva, another southern teacher who lived about a century after Râmânûja and was perhaps directly influenced by Islam. But though the logical outcome of his teaching may appear to be simple theism analogous to Islam or Judaism, it does not in practice lead to this result but rather to the worship of Krishna. Madhva's sect is still important but even more important is another branch of the spiritual family of Râmânûja, starting from Râmânand who probably flourished in the fourteenth century²⁸.

Râmânûja, while in some ways accepting innovations, insisted on the strict observance of caste. Râmânand abandoned this, separated from his sect and removed to Benares. His teaching marks a turning-point in the history of modern Hinduism. Firstly he held that caste need not prevent a man from rightly worshipping God and he admitted even Moslems as members of his community. To this liberality are directly traceable the numerous sects combining Hindu with Mohammedan doctrines, among which the Kabir Panthis and the Sikhs are the most

²⁸ The determination of his precise date offers some difficulties. See for further discussion Book v.

conspicuous. But it is a singular testimony to the tenacity of Hindu ideas that though many teachers holding most diverse opinions have declared there is no caste before God, yet caste has generally reasserted itself among their followers as a social if not as a religious institution. The second important point in Râmânand's teaching was the use of the vernacular for religious literature. Dravidian scriptures had already been recognized in the south but it is from this time that there begins to flow in the north that great stream of sacred poetry in Hindi and Bengali which waters the roots of modern popular Hinduism. Among many eminent names which have contributed to it, the greatest is Tulsi Das who retold the Ramayana in Hindi and thus wrote a poem which is little less than a Bible for millions in the Ganges valley.

The sects which derive from the teaching of Râmânand mostly worship the Supreme Being under the name of Râma. Even more numerous, especially in the north, are those who use the name of Krishna, the other great incarnation of Vishnu. This worship was organized and extended by the preaching of Vallabha and Caitanya (c. 1500) in the valley of the Ganges and Bengal, but was not new. I shall discuss in some detail below the many elements combined in the complex figure of Krishna but in one way or another he was connected with the earliest forms of Vishnuite monotheism and is the chief figure in the Bhagavad-gîtâ, its earliest text-book. Legend connects him partly with Muttra and partly with western India but, though by no means

ignored in southern India, he does not receive there such definite and exclusive adoration as in the north. The Krishnaite sects are emotional, and their favourite doctrine that the relation between God and the soul is typified by passionate love has led to dubious moral results.

This Krishnaite propaganda, which coincided with the Reformation in Europe, was the last great religious movement in India. Since that time there has been considerable activity of a minor kind. Protests have been raised against abuses and existing communities have undergone changes, such as may be seen in the growth of the Sikhs, but there has been no general or original movement. The absence of such can be easily explained by the persecutions of Aurungzeb and by the invasions and internal struggles of the eighteenth century. At the end of that century Hinduism was at its lowest but its productive power was not destroyed. The decennial census never fails to record the rise of new sects and the sudden growth of others which had been obscure and minute.

Any historical treatment of Hinduism inevitably makes Vishnuism seem more prominent than other sects, for it offers more events to record. But though Sivaism has undergone fewer changes and produced fewer great names, it must not be thought of as lifeless or decadent. The lingam is worshipped all over India and many of the most celebrated shrines, such as Benares and Bhubaneshwar, are dedicated to the Lord of life and death. The Śivaism of the Tamil country is one of the most energetic and

progressive forms of modern Hinduism, but in doctrine it hardly varies from the ancient standard of the Tiruvacagam.

9. European Influence and Modern Hinduism

The small effect of European religion on Hinduism is remarkable. Islam, though aggressively hostile, yet fused with it in some sects, for instance the Sikhs, but such fusions of Indian religion and Christianity as have been noted²⁹ are microscopic curiosities. European free thought and Deism have not fared better, for the Brahma Samaj which was founded under their inspiration has only 5504 adherents³⁰. In social life there has been some change: caste restrictions, though not abolished, are evaded by ingenious subterfuges and there is a growing feeling against child-marriage. Yet were the laws against sati and human sacrifice repealed, there are many districts in which such practices would not be forbidden by popular sentiment.

It is easy to explain the insensibility of Hinduism to European contact: even Islam had little effect on its stubborn vitality, though Islam brought with it settlers and resident rulers, ready to make converts by force. But the British have shown perfect toleration and are merely sojourners in the land who spend their youth and age elsewhere. European exclusiveness and Indian

²⁹ The Kadianis and Chet Ramis in the N.W. Provinces are mentioned but even here the fusion seems to be chiefly between Islam and Christianity. See also the article Râdhâ Soârai in *E.R.E.*

³⁰ According to the Census of 1911.

ideas about caste alike made it natural to regard them as an isolated class charged with the business of Government but divorced from the intellectual and religious life of other classes. Previous experience of Moslims and other invaders disposed the Brahmans to accept foreigners as rulers without admitting that their creeds and customs were in the least worthy of imitation. European methods of organization and advertisement have not however been disdained.

The last half century has witnessed a remarkable revival of Hinduism. In the previous decades the most conspicuous force in India, although numerically weak, was the already mentioned Brahma Samaj, founded by Ram Mohun Roy in 1828. But it was colourless and wanting in constructive power. Educated opinion, at least in Bengal, seemed to be tending towards agnosticism and social revolution. This tendency was checked by a conservative and nationalist movement, which in all its varied phases gave support to Indian religion and was intolerant of European ideas. It had a political side but there was nothing disloyal in its main idea, namely, that in the intellectual and religious sphere, where Indian life is most intense, Indian ideas must not decay. No one who has known India during the last thirty years can have failed to notice how many new temples have been built and how many old ones repaired. Almost all the principal sects have founded associations to protect and extend their interests by such means as financial and administrative organization, the publication of periodicals and

other literature, annual conferences, lectures and the foundation of religious houses or quasi-monastic orders. Several societies have been founded not restricted to any particular sect but with the avowed object of defending and promoting strict Hinduism. Among such the most important are, first the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, under the distinguished presidency of the Maharaja of Darbhanga: secondly the movement started by Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and adorned by the beautiful life and writings of Sister Nivedita (Miss Noble) and thirdly the Theosophical Society under the leadership of Mrs Besant. It is remarkable that Europeans, both men and women, have played a considerable part in this revival. All these organizations are influential: the two latter have done great service in defending and encouraging Hinduism, but I am less sure of their success in mingling Eastern and Western ideas or in popularizing Hinduism among Europeans.

Somewhat different, but described by the Census of 1911 as "the greatest religious movement in India of the past half century" is the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Swami Dayanand. Whereas the movements mentioned above support Sanâtana Dharma or Orthodox Hinduism in all its shapes, the Arya Samaj aims at reform. Its original programme was a revival of the ancient Vedic religion but it has since been perceptibly modified and tends towards conciliating contemporary orthodoxy, for it now prohibits the slaughter of cattle, accords a partial recognition to caste, affirms its belief in

karma and apparently approves a form of the Yoga philosophy. Though it is not yet accepted as a form of orthodox Hinduism, it seems probable that concessions on both sides will produce this result before long. It numbers at present only about a quarter of a million but is said to be rapidly increasing, especially in the United Provinces and Panjab, and to be remarkable for the completeness and efficiency of its organization. It maintains missionary colleges, orphanages and schools. Affiliated to it is a society for the purification (shuddhi) of Mohammedans, Christians and outcasts, that is for turning them into Hindus and giving them some kind of caste. It would appear that those who undergo this purification do not always become members of the Śamaj but are merged in the ordinary Hindu community where they are accepted without opposition if also without enthusiasm.

10. *Change and Permanence in Buddhism*

Thus we have a record of Indian thought for about 3000 years. It has directly affected such distant points as Balkh, Java and Japan and it is still living and active. But life and action mean change and such wide extension in time and space implies variety. We talk of converting foreign countries but the religion which is transplanted also undergoes conversion or else it cannot enter new brains and hearts. Buddhism in Ceylon and Japan, Christianity in Scotland and Russia are not the same, although professing to reverence the same teachers. It is easy to argue the other way, but it can only be done by setting aside as non-essential differences of great practical importance. Europeans are ready enough to admit that Buddhism is changeable and easily corrupted but it is not singular in that respect³¹. I doubt if Lhasa and Tantrism are further from the teaching of Gotama than the Papacy, the Inquisition, and the religion of the German Emperor, from the teaching of Christ.

A religion is the expression of the thought of a particular age and cannot really be permanent in other ages which have other thoughts. The apparent permanence of Christianity is due first to the suppression of much original teaching, such as Christ's

³¹ There are curious survivals of paganism in out of the way forms of Christianity. Thus animal sacrifices are not extinct among Armenians and Nestorians. See *E.R.E.* article "Prayer for the Dead" at the end.

turning the cheek to the smiter and Paul's belief in the coming end of the world, and secondly to the adoption of new social ideals which have no place in the New Testament, such as the abolition of slavery and the improved status of women.

Buddhism arising out of Brahmanism suggests a comparison with Christianity arising out of Judaism, but the comparison breaks down in most points of detail. But there is one real resemblance, namely that Buddhism and Christianity have both won their greatest triumphs outside the land of their birth. The flowers of the mind, if they can be transplanted at all, often flourish with special vigour on alien soil. Witness the triumphs of Islam in the hands of the Turks and Mughals, the progress of Nestorianism in Central Asia, and the spread of Manichaeism in both the East and West outside the limits of Persia. Even so Lamaism in Tibet and Amidism in Japan, though scholars may regard them as singular perversions, have more vitality than any branch of Buddhism which has existed in India since the seventh century. But even here the parallel with Christian sects is imperfect. It would be more complete if Palestine had been the centre from which different phases of Christianity radiated during some twelve centuries, for this is the relation between Indian and foreign Buddhism. Lamaism is not the teaching of the Buddha travestied by Tibetans but a late form of Indian Buddhism exported to Tibet and modified there in some external features (such as ecclesiastical organization and art) but not differing greatly in doctrine from Bengali Buddhism of the

eleventh century. And even Amidism appears to have originated not in the Far East but in Gandhara and the adjacent lands. Thus the many varieties of Buddhism now existing are due partly to local colour but even more to the workings of the restless Hindu mind which during many centuries after the Christian era continued to invent for it novelties in metaphysics and mythology.

The preservation of a very ancient form of Buddhism in Ceylon³² is truly remarkable, for if in many countries Buddhism has shown itself fluid and protean, it here manifests a stability which can hardly be paralleled except in Judaism. The Sinhalese, unlike the Hindus, had no native propensity to speculation. They were content to classify, summarize and expound the teaching of the Pitakas without restating it in the light of their own imagination. Whereas the most stable form of Christianity is the Church of Rome, which began by making considerable additions to the doctrine of the New Testament, the most stable form of Buddhism is neither a transformation of the old nor a protest against innovation but simply the continuation of a very ancient sect in strange lands³³. This ancient Buddhism, like Islam which is also simple and stable, is somewhat open to the charge of engaging in disputes about trivial details³⁴, but alike in Ceylon,

³² The Buddhism of Siam and Burma is similar but in Siam it is a mediæval importation and the early religious history of Burma is still obscure.

³³ Although stability is characteristic of the Hinayana its later literature shows a certain movement of thought phases of which are marked by the Questions of Milinda, Buddhaghosa's works and the Abhidhammattha Sangaha.

³⁴ *E.g.* the way a monastic robe should be worn and the Sîmâ.

Burma and Siam, it has not only shown remarkable persistence but has become a truly national religion, the glory and comfort of those who profess it.

11. *Rebirth and the Nature of the Soul*

The most characteristic doctrine of Indian religion—rarely absent in India and imported by Buddhism into all the countries which it influenced—is that called metempsychosis, the transmigration of the soul or reincarnation. The last of these terms best expresses Indian, especially Buddhist, ideas but still the usual Sanskrit equivalent, *Samsâra*, means migration. The body breaks up at death but something passes on and migrates to another equally transitory tenement. Neither Brahmans nor Buddhists seem to contemplate the possibility that the human soul may be a temporary manifestation of the Eternal Spirit which comes to an end at death—a leaf on a tree or a momentary ripple on the water. It is always regarded as passing through many births, a wave traversing the ocean.

Hindu speculation has never passed through the materialistic phase, and the doctrine that the soul is annihilated at death is extremely rare in India. Even rarer perhaps is the doctrine that it usually enters on a permanent existence, happy or otherwise. The idea underlying the transmigration theory is that every state which we call existence must come to an end. If the soul can be isolated from all the accidents and accessories attaching to it, then there may be a state of permanence and peace but not a state comparable with human existence, however enlarged and glorified. But why does not this conviction of impermanence

lead to the simpler conclusion that the end of physical life is the end of all life? Because the Hindus have an equally strong conviction of continuity: everything passes away and changes but it is not true to say of anything that it arises from nothing or passes into nothing. If human organisms (or any other organisms) are mere machines, if there is nothing more to be said about a corpse than about a smashed watch, then (the Hindu thinks) the universe is not continuous. Its continuity means for him that there is something which eternally manifests itself in perishable forms but does not perish with them any more than water when a pitcher is broken or fire that passes from the wood it has consumed to fresh fuel.

These metaphors suggest that the doctrine of transmigration or reincarnation does not promise what we call personal immortality. I confess that I cannot understand how there can be personality in the ordinary human sense without a body. When we think of a friend, we think of a body and a character, thoughts and feelings, all of them connected with that body and many of them conditioned by it. But the immortal soul is commonly esteemed to be something equally present in a new born babe, a youth and an old man. If so, it cannot be a personality in the ordinary sense, for no one could recognize the spirit of a departed friend, if it is something which was present in him the day he was born and different from all the characteristics which he acquired during life. The belief that we shall recognize our friends in another world assumes that these characteristics are immortal,

but it is hard to understand how they can be so, especially as it is also assumed that there is nothing immortal in a dog, which possesses affection and intelligence, but that there is something immortal in a new born infant which cannot be said to possess either.

In one way metempsychosis raises insuperable difficulties to the survival of personality, for if you become someone else, especially an animal, you are no longer yourself according to any ordinary use of language. But one of the principal forms taken by the doctrine in India makes a modified survival intelligible. For it is held that a new born child brings with it as a result of actions done in previous lives certain predispositions and these after being developed and modified in the course of that child's life are transmitted to its next existence.

As to the method of transmission there are various theories, for in India the belief in reincarnation is not so much a dogma as an instinct innate in all and only occasionally justified by philosophers, not because it was disputed but because they felt bound to show that their own systems were compatible with it. One explanation is that given by the Vedânta philosophy, according to which the soul is accompanied in its migrations by the *Sûkshmaśarîra* or subtle body, a counterpart of the mortal body but transparent and invisible, though material. The truth of this theory, as of all theories respecting ghosts and spirits, seems to me a matter for experimental verification, but the Vedânta recognizes that in our experience a personal individual existence

is always connected with a physical substratum.

The Buddhist theory of rebirth is somewhat different, for Buddhism even in its later divagations rarely ceased to profess belief in Gotama's doctrine that there is no such thing as a soul—by which is meant no such thing as a permanent unchanging self or *âtman*. Buddhists are concerned to show that transmigration is not inconsistent with this denial of the *âtman*. The ordinary, and indeed inevitable translation of this word by soul leads to misunderstanding for we naturally interpret it as meaning that there is nothing which survives the death of the body and *a fortiori* nothing to transmigrate. But in reality the denial of the *âtman* applies to the living rather than to the dead. It means that in a living man there is no permanent, unchangeable entity but only a series of mental states, and since human beings, although they have no *âtman*, certainly exist in this present life, the absence of the *âtman* is not in itself an obstacle to belief in a similar life after death or before birth. Infancy, youth, age and the state immediately after death may form a series of which the last two are as intimately connected as any other two. The Buddhist teaching is that when men die in whom the desire for another life exists—as it exists in all except saints—then desire, which is really the creator of the world, fashions another being, conditioned by the character and merits of the being which has just come to an end. Life is like fire: its very nature is to burn its fuel. When one body dies, it is as if one piece of fuel were burnt: the vital process passes on and recommences in another

and so long as there is desire of life, the provision of fuel fails not. Buddhist doctors have busied themselves with the question whether two successive lives are the same man or different men, and have illustrated the relationship by various analogies of things which seem to be the same and yet not the same, such as a child and an adult, milk and curds, or fire which spreads from a lamp and burns down a village, but, like the Brahmans, they do not discuss why the hypothesis of transmigration is necessary. They had the same feeling for the continuity of nature, and more than others they insisted on the principle that everything has a cause. They held that the sexual act creates the conditions in which a new life appears but is not an adequate cause for the new life itself. And unless we accept a materialist explanation of human nature, this argument is sound: unless we admit that mind is merely a function of matter, the birth of a mind is not explicable as a mere process of cell development: something pre-existent must act upon the cells.

Europeans in discussing such questions as the nature of the soul and immortality are prone to concentrate their attention on death and neglect the phenomena of birth, which surely are equally important. For if a soul survives the death of this complex of cells which is called the body, its origin and development must, according to all analogy, be different from those of the perishable body. Orthodox theology deals with the problem by saying that God creates a new soul every time a child is born³⁵

³⁵ I believe this to be the orthodox explanation but it is open to many objections. (1) It

but free discussion usually ignores it and taking an adult as he is, asks what are the chances that any part of him survives death. Yet the questions, what is destroyed at death and how and why, are closely connected with the questions what comes into existence at birth and how and why. This second series of questions is hard enough, but it has this advantage over the first that whereas death abruptly closes the road and we cannot follow the soul one inch on its journey beyond, the portals of birth are a less absolute frontier. We know that every child has passed through stages in which it could hardly be called a child. The earliest phase consists of two cells, which unite and then proceed to subdivide

is a mere phrase. If to create means to produce something out of nothing, then we have never seen such an act and to ascribe a sudden appearance to such an act is really no explanation. Perhaps an act of imagination or a dream may justly be called a creation, but the relation between a soul and its Creator is not usually regarded as similar to the relation between a mind and its fancies.(2) The responsibility of God for the evil of the world seems to be greatly increased, if he is directly responsible for every birth of a child in unhappy conditions.(3) Animals are not supposed to have souls. Therefore the production of an animal's mind is not explained by this theory and it seems to be assumed that such a complex mind as a dog's can be explained as a function of matter, whereas there is something in a child which cannot be so explained.(4) If a new immortal soul is created every time a birth takes place, the universe must be receiving incalculably large additions. For some philosophies such an idea is impossible. (See Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 502. "The universe is incapable of increase. And to suppose a constant supply of new souls, none of which ever perished, would clearly land us in the end in an insuperable difficulty.") But even if we do not admit that it is impossible, it at least destroys all analogy between the material and spiritual worlds. If all the bodies that ever lived continued to exist separately after death, the congestion would be unthinkable. Is a corresponding congestion in the spiritual world really thinkable?

and grow. The mystery of the process by which they assume a human form is not explained by scientific or theological phrases. The complete individual is assuredly not contained in the first germ. The microscope cannot find it there and to say that it is there potentially, merely means that we know the germ will develop in a certain way. To say that a force is manifesting itself in the germ and assuming the shape which it chooses to take or must take is also merely a phrase and metaphor, but it seems to me to fit the facts³⁶.

The doctrines of pre-existence and transmigration (but not, I think, of karma which is purely Indian) are common among savages in Africa and America, nor is their wide distribution strange. Savages commonly think that the soul wanders during sleep and that a dead man's soul goes somewhere: what more natural than to suppose that the soul of a new born infant comes from somewhere? But among civilized peoples such ideas are in most cases due to Indian influence. In India they seem indigenous to the soil and not imported by the Aryan invaders, for they are not clearly enunciated in the Rig Veda, nor formulated before the time of the Upanishads³⁷. They were introduced by Buddhism to

³⁶ This seems to be the view of the Chândogya Up. VI. 12. As the whole world is a manifestation of Brahman, so is the great banyan tree a manifestation of the subtle essence which is also present in its minute seeds.

³⁷ The Brihad Ar. Up. knows of samsâra and karma but as matters of deep philosophy and not for the vulgar: but in the Buddhist Pitakas they are assumed as universally accepted. The doctrine must therefore have been popularized after the composition of the Upanishad. But some allowance must be made for the fact that the

the Far East and their presence in Manichaeism, Neoplatonism, Sufiism and ultimately in the Jewish Kabbala seems a rivulet from the same source. Recent research discredits the theory that metempsychosis was an important feature in the earlier religion of Egypt or among the Druids³⁸. But it played a prominent part in the philosophy of Pythagoras and in the Orphic mysteries, which had some connection with Thrace and possibly also with Crete. A few great European intellects³⁹--notably Plato and Virgil—have given it undying expression, but Europeans as a whole have rejected it with that curiously crude contempt which they have shown until recently for Oriental art and literature.

Considering how fixed is the belief in immortality among Europeans, or at least the desire for it, the rarity of a belief in

Upanishads and the earliest versions of the Buddhist Suttas were produced in different parts of India.

³⁸ Yet many instances are quoted from Celtic and Teutonic folklore to the effect that birds and butterflies are human souls, and Caesar's remarks about the Druids may not be wholly wrong.

³⁹ Several other Europeans of eminence have let their minds play with the ideas of metempsychosis, pre-existence and karma, as for instance Giordano Bruno, Swedenborg, Goethe, Lessing, Lavater, Herder, Schopenhauer, Ibsen, von Helmont, Lichtenberg and in England such different spirits as Hume and Wordsworth. It would appear that towards the end of the eighteenth century these ideas were popular in some literary circles on the continent. See Bertholet, *The Transmigration of Souls*, pp. 111 ff. Recently Professor McTaggart has argued in favour of the doctrine with great lucidity and persuasiveness. Huxley too did not think it absurd. See his *Romanes Lecture, Evolution and Ethics, Collected Essays*, vol. IX. p. 61. As Deussen observes, Kant's argument which bases immortality on the realization of the moral law, attainable only by an infinite process of approximation, points to transmigration rather than immortality in the usual sense.

pre-existence or transmigration is remarkable. But most people's expectation of a future life is based on craving rather than on reasoned anticipation. I cannot myself understand how anything that comes into being can be immortal. Such immortality is unsupported by a single analogy nor can any instance be quoted of a thing which is known to have had an origin and yet is even apparently indestructible⁴⁰. And is it possible to suppose that the universe is capable of indefinite increase by the continual addition of new and eternal souls? But these difficulties do not exist for theories which regard the soul as something existing before as well as after the body, truly immortal *a parte ante* as well as *a parte post* and manifesting itself in temporary homes of human or lower shape. Such theories become very various and fall into many obscurities when they try to define the nature of the soul and its relation to the body, but they avoid what seems to me the contradiction of the created but immortal soul.

The doctrine of metempsychosis is also interesting as affecting the relations of men and animals. The popular European conception of "the beasts which perish" weakens the arguments for human immortality. For if the mind of a dog or chimpanzee contains no element which is immortal, the part of the human mind on which the claim to immortality can be based must be parlously small, since *ex hypothesi* sensation, volition, desire and the simpler forms of intelligence are not immortal.

⁴⁰ The chemical elements are hardly an exception. Apparently they have no beginning and no end but there is reason to suspect that they have both.

But in India where men have more charity and more philosophy this distinction is not drawn. The animating principle of men, animals and plants is regarded as one or at least similar, and even matter which we consider inanimate, such as water, is often considered to possess a soul. But though there is ample warrant in both Brahmanic and Buddhist literature for the idea that the soul may sink from a human to an animal form or *vice versâ* rise, and though one sometimes meets this belief in modern life⁴¹, yet it is not the most prominent aspect of metempsychosis in India and the beautiful precept of ahimsâ or not injuring living things is not, as Europeans imagine, founded on the fear of eating one's grandparents but rather on the humane and enlightened feeling that all life is one and that men who devour beasts are not much above the level of the beasts who devour one another. The feeling has grown stronger with time. In the Vedas animal sacrifices are prescribed and they are even now used in the worship of some deities. In the Epics the eating of meat is mentioned. But the doctrine that it is wrong to take animal life was definitely adopted by Buddhism and gained strength with its diffusion.

One obvious objection to all theories of rebirth is that we do not remember our previous existences and that, if they are connected by no thread of memory, they are for all practical purposes the existences of different people. But this want of memory affects not only past existences but the early phases of

⁴¹ I know well-authenticated cases of Burmese and Indians thinking that the soul of a dead child had passed into an animal.

this existence. Does any one deny his existence as an infant or embryo because he cannot remember it⁴²? And if a wrong could be done to an infant the effects of which would not be felt for twenty years, could it be said to be no concern of the infant because the person who will suffer in twenty years time will have no recollection that he was that infant? And common opinion in Eastern Asia, not without occasional confirmation from Europe, denies the proposition that we cannot remember our former lives and asserts that those who take any pains to sharpen their spiritual faculties can remember them. The evidence for such recollection seems to me better than the evidence for most spiritualistic phenomena⁴³.

Another objection comes from the facts of heredity. On the whole we resemble our parents and ancestors in mind as well as in body. A child often seems to be an obvious product of its parents and not a being come from outside and from another life. This objection of course applies equally to the creation theory. If the soul is created by an act of God, there seems to be no

⁴² Or again, when I wake up in the morning I am conscious of my identity because innumerable circumstances remind me of the previous day. But if I wake up suddenly in the night with a toothache which leaves room for no thought or feeling except the feeling of pain, is the fact that I experience the pain in any way lessened if for the moment I do not know who or where I am?

⁴³ I believe that a French savant, Colonel Rochas, has investigated in a scientific spirit cases in which hypnotized subjects profess to remember their former births and found that these recollections are as clear and coherent as any revelations about another world which have been made by Mrs Piper or other mediums. But I have not been able to obtain any of Col. Rochas's writings.

reason why it should be like the parents, or, if he causes it to be like them, he is made responsible for sending children into the world with vicious natures. On the other hand if parents literally make a child, mind as well as body, there seems to be no reason why children should ever be unlike their parents, or brothers and sisters unlike one another, as they undoubtedly sometimes are. An Indian would say that a soul⁴⁴ seeking rebirth carries with it certain potentialities of good and evil and can obtain embodiment only in a family offering the necessary conditions. Hence to some extent it is natural that the child should be like its parents. But the soul seeking rebirth is not completely fixed in form and stiff: it is hampered and limited by the results of its previous life, but in many respects it may be flexible and free, ready to vary in response to its new environment.

But there is a psychological and temperamental objection to the doctrine of rebirth, which goes to the root of the matter. Love of life and the desire to find a field of activity are so strong in most Europeans that it might be supposed that a theory offering an endless vista of new activities and new chances would be acceptable. But as a rule Europeans who discuss the question say that they do not relish this prospect. They may be willing to struggle until death, but they wish for repose—conscious repose of course—afterwards. The idea that one just dead has not entered into his rest, but is beginning another life

⁴⁴ I use the word *soul* merely for simplicity, but Buddhists and others might demur to this phraseology.

with similar struggles and fleeting successes, similar sorrows and disappointments, is not satisfying and is almost shocking⁴⁵. We do not like it, and not to like any particular view about the destinies of the soul is generally, but most illogically, considered a reason for rejecting it⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ But for a contrary view see *Reincarnation, the Hope of the World* by Irving S. Cooper. Even the Brihad Aran. Upan. (IV. 4. 3. 4) speaks of new births as new and more beautiful shapes which the soul fashions for itself as a goldsmith works a piece of gold.

⁴⁶ The increase of the human population of this planet does not seem to me a serious argument against the doctrine of rebirth for animals, and the denizens of other worlds may be supplying an increasing number of souls competent to live as human beings.

It must not however be supposed that Hindus like the prospect of transmigration. On the contrary from the time of the Upanishads and the Buddha to the present day their religious ideal corresponding to salvation is emancipation and deliverance, deliverance from rebirth and from the bondage of desire which brings about rebirth. Now all Indian theories as to the nature of transmigration are in some way connected with the idea of *Karma*, that is the power of deeds done in past existences to condition or even to create future existences. Every deed done, whether good or bad, affects the character of the doer for a long while, so that to use a metaphor, the soul awaiting rebirth has a special shape, which is of its own making, and it can find re-embodiment only in a form into which that shape can squeeze.

These views of rebirth and karma have a moral value, for they teach that what a man gets depends on what he is or makes himself to be, and they avoid the difficulty of supposing that a benevolent creator can have given his creatures only one life with such strange and unmerited disproportion in their lots. Ordinary folk in the East hope that a life of virtue will secure them another life as happy beings on earth or perhaps in some heaven which, though not eternal, will still be long. But for many the higher ideal is renunciation of the world and a life of contemplative asceticism which will accumulate no karma so that after death

the soul will pass not to another birth but to some higher and more mysterious state which is beyond birth and death. It is the prevalence of views like this which has given both Hinduism and Buddhism the reputation of being pessimistic and unpractical.

It is generally assumed that these are bad epithets, but are they not applicable to Christian teaching? Modern and medieval Christianity—as witness many popular hymns—regards this world as vain and transitory, a vale of tears and tribulation, a troubled sea through whose waves we must pass before we reach our rest. And choirs sing, though without much conviction, that it is weary waiting here. This language seems justified by the Gospels and Epistles. It is true that some utterances of Christ suggest that happiness is to be found in a simple and natural life of friendliness and love, but on the whole both he and St Paul teach that the world is evil or at least spoiled and distorted: to become a happy world it must be somehow remade and transfigured by the second coming of Christ. The desires and ambitions which are the motive power of modern Europe are, if not wrong, at least vain and do not even seek for true peace and happiness. Like Indian teachers, the early Christians tried to create a right temper rather than to change social institutions. They bade masters and slaves treat one another with kindness and respect, but they did not attempt to abolish slavery.

Indian thought does not really go much further in pessimism than Christianity, but its pessimism is intellectual rather than emotional. He who understands the nature of the soul and

its successive lives cannot regard any single life as of great importance in itself, though its consequences for the future may be momentous, and though he will not say that life is not worth living. Reiterated declarations that all existence is suffering do, it is true, seem to destroy all prospect of happiness and all motive for effort, but the more accurate statement is, in the words of the Buddha himself, that all clinging to physical existence involves suffering. The earliest Buddhist texts teach that when this clinging and craving cease, a feeling of freedom and happiness takes their place and later Buddhism treated itself to visions of paradise as freely as Christianity. Many forms of Hinduism teach that the soul released from the body can enjoy eternal bliss in the presence of God and even those severer philosophers who do not admit that the released soul is a personality in any human sense have no doubt of its happiness.

The opposition is not so much between Indian thought and the New Testament, for both of them teach that bliss is attainable but not by satisfying desire. The fundamental contrast is rather between both India and the New Testament on the one hand and on the other the rooted conviction of European races⁴⁷, however much Christian orthodoxy may disguise their expression of it, that this world is all-important. This conviction finds expression not only in the avowed pursuit of pleasure and ambition but in such sayings as that the best religion is the one

⁴⁷ Perhaps Russians in this as in many other matters think somewhat differently from other Europeans.

which does most good and such ideals as self-realization or the full development of one's nature and powers. Europeans as a rule have an innate dislike and mistrust of the doctrine that the world is vain or unreal. They can accord some sympathy to a dying man who sees in due perspective the unimportance of his past life or to a poet who under the starry heavens can make felt the smallness of man and his earth. But such thoughts are considered permissible only as retrospects, not as principles of life: you may say that your labour has amounted to nothing, but not that labour is vain. Though monasteries and monks still exist, the great majority of Europeans instinctively disbelieve in asceticism, the contemplative life and contempt of the world: they have no love for a philosopher who rejects the idea of progress and is not satisfied with an ideal consisting in movement towards an unknown goal. They demand a religion which theoretically justifies the strenuous life. All this is a matter of temperament and the temperament is so common that it needs no explanation. What needs explanation is rather the other temperament which rejects this world as unsatisfactory and sets up another ideal, another sphere, another standard of values. This ideal and standard are not entirely peculiar to India but certainly they are understood and honoured there more than elsewhere. They are professed, as I have already observed, by Christianity, but even the New Testament is not free from the idea that saints are having a bad time now but will hereafter enjoy a triumph, parlously like the exuberance of the wicked

in this world. The Far East too has its unworldly side which, though harmonizing with Buddhism, is native. In many ways the Chinese are as materialistic as Europeans, but throughout the long history of their art and literature, there has always been a school, clear-voiced if small, which has sung and pursued the joys of the hermit, the dweller among trees and mountains who finds nature and his own thoughts an all-sufficient source of continual happiness. But the Indian ideal, though it often includes the pleasures of communion with nature, differs from most forms of the Chinese and Christian ideal inasmuch as it assumes the reality of certain religious experiences and treats them as the substance and occupation of the highest life. We are disposed to describe these experiences as trances or visions, names which generally mean something morbid or hypnotic. But in India their validity is unquestioned and they are not considered morbid. The sensual scheming life of the world is sick and ailing; the rapture of contemplation is the true and healthy life of the soul. More than that it is the type and foretaste of a higher existence compared with which this world is worthless or rather nothing at all. This view has been held in India for nearly three thousand years: it has been confirmed by the experience of men whose writings testify to their intellectual power and has commanded the respect of the masses. It must command our respect too, even if it is contrary to our temperament, for it is the persistent ideal of a great nation and cannot be explained away as hallucination or charlatanism. It is allied to the experiences of European mystics

of whom St Teresa is a striking example, though less saintly persons, such as Walt Whitman and J.A. Symonds, might also be cited. Of such mysticism William James said "the existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe⁴⁸."

These mystical states are commonly described as meditation but they include not merely peaceful contemplation but ecstatic rapture. They are sometimes explained as union with Brahman⁴⁹, the absorption of the soul in God, or its feeling that it is one with him. But this is certainly not the only explanation of ecstasy given in India, for it is recognized as real and beneficent by Buddhists and Jains. The same rapture, the same sense of omniscience and of ability to comprehend the scheme of things, the same peace and freedom are experienced by both theistic and non-theistic sects, just as they have also been experienced by Christian mystics. The experiences are real but they do not depend on the presence of any special deity, though they may be coloured by the theological views of individual thinkers⁵⁰. The earliest Buddhist texts make right rapture (*sammâ samâdhi*) the end and crown of the eight-fold path but offer no explanation of it. They suggest

⁴⁸ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 427. The chapter contains many striking instances of these experiences, collected mostly in the west.

⁴⁹ Compare *St Teresa's Orison of Union*, W. James, *l.c.* p. 408.

⁵⁰ Indian devotees understand how either Śiva or Krishna is all in all, and thus too St Teresa understood the mystery of the Trinity. See W. James, *l.c.* p. 411.

that it is something wrought by the mind for itself and without the co-operation or infusion of any external influence.

13

Indian ideas about the destiny of the soul are connected with equally important views about its nature. I will not presume to say what is the definition of the soul in European philosophy but in the language of popular religion it undoubtedly means that which remains when a body is arbitrarily abstracted from a human personality, without enquiring how much of that personality is thinkable without a material substratum. This popular soul includes mind, perception and desire and often no attempt is made to distinguish it from them. But in India it is so distinguished. The soul (*âtman* or *purusha*) *uses* the mind and senses: they are its instruments rather than parts of it. Sight, for instance, serves as the spectacles of the soul, and the other senses and even the mind (*manas*) which is an intellectual *organ* are also instruments. If we talk of a soul passing from death to another birth, this according to most Hindus is a soul accompanied by its baggage of mind and senses, a subtle body indeed, but still gaseous not spiritual. But what is the soul by itself? When an English poet sings of death that it is "Only the sleep eternal in an eternal night" or a Greek poet calls it [Greek: *atermona nêgreton hupnon*] we feel that they are denying immortality. But Indian divines maintain that deep sleep is one of the states in which the soul approaches nearest to God: that it is a state of bliss, and is unconscious not because consciousness is suspended but because

no objects are presented to it. Even higher than dreamless sleep is another condition known simply as the fourth state⁵¹, the others being waking, dream-sleep and dreamless sleep. In this fourth state thought is one with the object of thought and, knowledge being perfect, there exists no contrast between knowledge and ignorance. All this sounds strange to modern Europe. We are apt to say that dreamless sleep is simply unconsciousness⁵² and that the so-called fourth state is imaginary or unmeaning. But to follow even popular speculation in India it is necessary to grasp this truth, or assumption, that when discursive thought ceases, when the mind and the senses are no longer active, the result is not unconsciousness equivalent to non-existence but the highest and purest state of the soul, in which, rising above thought and feeling, it enjoys the untrammelled bliss of its own nature⁵³.

If these views sound mysterious and fanciful, I would ask those Europeans who believe in the immortality of the soul what, in their opinion, survives death. The brain, the nerves and the sense organs obviously decay: the soul, you may say, is not a product of them, but when they are destroyed or even injured, perceptive

⁵¹ Turîya or caturtha.

⁵² Indians were well aware even in early times that such a state might be regarded as equivalent to annihilation. Br. Ar. Up. II. 4. 13; Chând. Up. VIII. ii. 1.

⁵³ The idea is not wholly strange to European philosophy. See the passage from the *Phaedo* quoted by Sir Alfred Lyall. "Thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her—neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure—when she has as little as possible to do with the body and has no bodily sense or feeling, but is aspiring after being."

and intellectual processes are inhibited and apparently rendered impossible. Must not that which lives for ever be, as the Hindus think, independent of thought and of sense-impressions?

I have observed in my reading that European philosophers are more ready to talk about soul and spirit than to define them⁵⁴ and the same is true of Indian philosophers. The word most commonly rendered by soul is *âtman*⁵⁵ but no one definition can be given for it, for some hold that the soul is identical with the Universal Spirit, others that it is merely of the same nature, still others that there are innumerable souls uncreate and eternal, while the Buddhists deny the existence of a soul *in toto*. But most Hindus who believe in the existence of an *âtman* or soul agree in thinking that it is the real self and essence of all human beings (or for that matter of other beings): that it is eternal *a parte ante* and *a parte post*: that it is not subject to variation but passes unchanged from one birth to another: that youth and age, joy and sorrow, and all the accidents of human life are affections, not so much of the soul as of the envelopes and limitations which surround it during its pilgrimage: that the soul, if it can be released and disengaged from these envelopes, is in itself knowledge and bliss, knowledge meaning the immediate and intuitive knowledge of God. A proper comprehension of this point of view will make

⁵⁴ Mr Bradley (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 498) says "Spirit is a unity of the manifold in which the externality of the manifold has utterly ceased." This seems to me one of the cases in which Mr Bradley's thought shows an interesting affinity to Indian thought.

⁵⁵ But also sometimes *purusha*.

us chary of labelling Indian thought as pessimistic on the ground that it promises the soul something which we are inclined to call unconsciousness.

In studying oriental religions sympathy and a desire to agree if possible are the first requisites. For instance, he who says of a certain ideal "this means annihilation and I do not like it" is on the wrong way. The right way is to ascertain what many of our most intelligent brothers mean by the cessation of mental activity and why it is for them an ideal.

14. *Eastern Pessimism and Renunciation*

But the charge of pessimism against Eastern religions is so important that we must consider other aspects of it, for though the charge is wrong, it is wrong only because those who bring it do not use quite the right word. And indeed it would be hard to find the right word in a European language. The temperament and theory described as pessimism are European. They imply an attitude of revolt, a right to judge and grumble. Why did the Deity make something out of nothing? What was his object? But this is not the attitude of Eastern thought: it generally holds that we cannot imagine nothing: that the world process is without beginning or end and that man must learn how to make the best of it.

The Far East purged Buddhism of much of its pessimism. There we see that the First Truth about suffering is little more than an admission of the existence of evil, which all religions and common sense admit. Evil ceases in the saint: nirvana in this life is perfect happiness. And though striving for the material improvement of the world is not held up conspicuously as an ideal in the Buddhist scriptures (or for that matter in the New Testament), yet it is never hinted that good effort is vain. A king should be a good king.

Renunciation is a great word in the religions of both Europe and Asia, but in Europe it is almost active. Except to advanced

mystics, it means abandoning a natural attitude and deliberately assuming another which it is difficult to maintain. Something similar is found in India in the legends of those ascetics who triumphed over the flesh until they become very gods in power⁵⁶. But it is also a common view in the East that he who renounces ambition and passion is not struggling against the world and the devil but simply leading a natural life. His passions indeed obey his will and do not wander here and there according to their fancy, but his temperament is one of acquiescence not resistance. He takes his place among the men, beasts and plants around him and ceasing to struggle finds that his own soul contains happiness in itself.

Most Europeans consider man as the centre and lord of the world or, if they are very religious, as its vice-regent under God. He may kill or otherwise maltreat animals for his pleasure or convenience: his task is to subdue the forces of nature: nature is subservient to him and to his destinies: without man nature is meaningless. Much the same view was held by the ancient Greeks and in a less acute form by the Jews and Romans. Swinburne's line

Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of
things

is overbold for professing Christians but it expresses both the

⁵⁶ Even when low class yogis display the tortures which they inflict on their bodies, their object I think is not to show what penances they undergo but simply that pleasure and pain are alike to them.

modern scientific sentiment and the ancient Hellenic sentiment. But such a line of poetry would I think be impossible in India or in any country to the East of it. There man is thought of as a part of nature not its centre or master⁵⁷. Above him are formidable hosts of deities and spirits, and even European engineers cannot subdue the genii of the flood and typhoon: below but still not separated from him are the various tribes of birds and beasts. A good man does not kill them for pleasure nor eat flesh, and even those whose aspirations to virtue are modest treat animals as humble brethren rather than as lower creatures over whom they have dominion by divine command.

This attitude is illustrated by Chinese and Japanese art. In architecture, this art makes it a principle that palaces and temples should not dominate a landscape but fit into it and adapt their lines to its features. For the painter, flowers and animals form a sufficient picture by themselves and are not felt to be inadequate because man is absent. Portraits are frequent but a common form of European composition, namely a group of figures subordinated to a principal one, though not unknown, is comparatively rare.

How scanty are the records of great men in India! Great buildings attract attention but who knows the names of the architects who planned them or the kings who paid for them? We

⁵⁷ The sense of human dignity was strongest among the early Buddhists. They (or some sects of them) held that an arhat is superior to a god (or as we should say to an angel) and that a god cannot enter the path of salvation and become an arhat.

are not quite sure of the date of Kâlidâsa, the Indian Shakespeare, and though the doctrines of Śankara, Kabir, and Nânak still nourish, it is with difficulty that the antiquary collects from the meagre legends clinging to their names a few facts for their biographies. And Kings and Emperors, a class who in Europe can count on being remembered if not esteemed after death, fare even worse. The laborious research of Europeans has shown that Asoka and Harsha were great monarchs. Their own countrymen merely say "once upon a time there was a king" and recount some trivial story.

In fact, Hindus have a very weak historical sense. In this they are not wholly wrong, for Europeans undoubtedly exaggerate the historical treatment of thought and art⁵⁸. In science, most students want to know what is certain in theory and useful in practice, not what were the discarded hypotheses and imperfect instruments of the past. In literature, when the actors and audience are really interested, the date of Shakespeare and even the authorship of the play cease to be important⁵⁹. In the same

⁵⁸ Cf. Bosanquet, *Gifford Lectures*, 1912, p. 78. "History is a hybrid form of experience incapable of any considerable degree of being or trueness. The doubtful story of successive events cannot amalgamate with the complete interpretation of the social mind, of art, or of religion. The great things which are necessary in themselves, become within the narrative contingent or ascribed by most doubtful assumptions of insight to this actor or that on the historical stage. The study of Christianity is the study of a great world experience: the assignment to individuals of a share in its development is a problem for scholars whose conclusions, though of considerable human interest, can never be of supreme importance."

⁵⁹ The Chinese critic Hsieh Ho who lived in the sixth century of our era said: "In

way Hindus want to know whether doctrines and speculations are true, whether a man can make use of them in his own religious experiences and aspirations. They care little for the date, authorship, unity and textual accuracy of the Bhagavad-gîtâ. They simply ask, is it true, what can I get from it? The European critic, who expects nothing of the sort from the work, racks his brains to know who wrote it and when, who touched it up and why?

The Hindus are also indifferent to the past because they do not recognize that the history of the world, the whole cosmic process, has any meaning or value. In most departments of Indian thought, great or small, the conception of [Greek: telos or purpose is absent, and if the European reader thinks this a grave lacuna, let him ask himself whether satisfied love has any [Greek: telos. For Hindus the world is endless repetition not a progress towards an end. Creation has rarely the sense which it bears for Europeans. An infinite number of times the universe has collapsed in flaming or watery ruin, aeons of quiescence follow the collapse and then the Deity (he has done it an infinite number of times) emits again from himself worlds and souls of the same old kind. But though, as I have said before, all varieties of theological opinion may be found in India, he is usually represented as moved by some reproductive impulse rather than as executing a plan. Śankara says boldly that no motive can

Art the terms ancient and modern have no place." This is exactly the Indian view of religion.

be attributed to God, because he being perfect can desire no addition to his perfection, so that his creative activity is mere exuberance, like the sport of young princes, who take exercise though they are not obliged to do so.

Such views are distasteful to Europeans. Our vanity impels us to invent explanations of the Universe which make our own existence important and significant. Nor does European science altogether support the Indian doctrine of periodicity. It has theories as to the probable origin of the solar system and other similar systems, but it points to the conclusion that the Universe as a whole is not appreciably affected by the growth or decay of its parts, whereas Indian imagination thinks of universal cataclysms and recurring periods of quiescence in which nothing whatever remains except the undifferentiated divine spirit.

Western ethics generally aim at teaching a man how to act: Eastern ethics at forming a character. A good character will no doubt act rightly when circumstances require action, but he need not seek occasions for action, he may even avoid them, and in India the passionless sage is still in popular esteem superior to warriors, statesmen and scientists.

15. *Eastern Polytheism*

Different as India and China are, they agree in this that in order not to misapprehend their religious condition we must make our minds familiar with a new set of relations. The relations of religion to philosophy, to ethics, and to the state, as well as the relations of different religions to one another, are not the same as in Europe. China and India are pagan, a word which I deprecate if it is understood to imply inferiority but which if used in a descriptive and respectful sense is very useful. Christianity and Islam are organized religions. They say (or rather their several sects say) that they each not only possess the truth but that all other creeds and rites are wrong. But paganism is not organized: it rarely presents anything like a church united under one head: still more rarely does it condemn or interfere with other religions unless attacked first. Buddhism stands between the two classes. Like Christianity and Islam it professes to teach the only true law, but unlike them it is exceedingly tolerant and many Buddhists also worship Hindu or Chinese gods.

Popular religion in India and China is certainly polytheistic, yet if one uses this word in contrast to the monotheism of Islam and of Protestantism the antithesis is unjust, for the polytheist does not believe in many creators and rulers of the world, in many Allahs or Jehovahs, but he considers that there are many spiritual beings, with different spheres and powers,

to the most appropriate of whom he addresses his petitions. Polytheism and image-worship lie under an unmerited stigma in Europe. We generally assume that to believe in one God is obviously better, intellectually and ethically, than to believe in many. Yet Trinitarian religions escape being polytheistic only by juggling with words, and if Hindus and Chinese are polytheists so are the Roman and Oriental Churches, for there is no real distinction between praying to the Madonna, Saints and Angels, and propitiating minor deities. William James⁶⁰ has pointed out that polytheism is not theoretically absurd and is practically the religion of many Europeans. In some ways it is more intelligible and reasonable than monotheism. For if there is only one personal God, I do not understand how anything that can be called a person can be so expanded as to be capable of hearing and answering the prayers of the whole world. Anything susceptible of such extension must be more than a person. Is it not at least equally reasonable to assume that there are many spirits, or many shapes taken by the superpersonal world spirit, with which the soul can get into touch?

The worship of images cannot be recommended without qualification, for it seems to require artists capable of making a worthy representation of the divine. And it must be confessed that many figures in Indian temples, such as the statues of Kâlî, seem repulsive or grotesque, though a Hindu might say that none

⁶⁰ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 525-527 and *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 310.

of them are so strange in idea or so horrible in appearance as the crucifix. But the claim of the iconoclast from the times of the Old Testament onwards that he worships a spirit whereas others worship wood and stone is true only of the lowest phases of religion, if even there. Hindu theologians distinguish different kinds of *avatâras* or ways in which God descends into the world: among them are incarnations like Krishna, the presence of God in the human heart and his presence in a symbol or image (*arcâ*). It may be difficult to decide how far the symbol and the spirit are kept separate either in the East or in Europe, but no one can attend a great car-festival in southern India or the feast of Durgâ in Bengal without feeling and in some measure sharing the ecstasy and enthusiasm of the crowd. It is an enthusiasm such as may be evoked in critical times by a king or a flag, and as the flag may do duty for the king and all that he stands for, so may the image do duty for the deity.

16. *The Extravagance of Hinduism*

What I have just said applies to India rather than to China and so do the observations which follow. India is the most religious country in the world. The percentage of people who literally make religion their chief business, who sacrifice to it money and life itself (for religious suicide is not extinct), is far greater than elsewhere. Russia⁶¹ probably comes next but the other nations fall behind by a long interval. Matter of fact respectable people—Chinese as well as Europeans—call this attitude extravagance and it sometimes deserves the name, for since there is no one creed or criterion in India, all sorts of aboriginal or decadent superstitions command the respect due to the name of religion.

This extravagance is both intellectual and moral. No story is too extraordinary to be told of Hindu gods. They are the magicians of the universe who sport with the forces of nature as easily as a conjuror in a bazaar does tricks with a handful of balls. But though the average Hindu would be shocked to hear the Puranas described as idle tales, yet he does not make his creed depend on their accuracy, as many in Europe make Christianity depend on miracles. The value of truth in religion is rated higher in India than in Europe but it is not historical truth. The Hindu approaches his sacred literature somewhat in the spirit in which we approach Milton and Dante. The beauty and value of such

⁶¹ And in Russia there are sects which prescribe castration and suicide.

poems is clear. The question whether they are accurate reports of facts seems irrelevant. Hindus believe in progressive revelation. Many Tantras and Vishnuite works profess to be better suited to the present age than the Vedas, and innumerable treatises in the vernacular are commonly accepted as scripture.

Scriptures in India⁶² are thought of as words not writings. It is the sacred sound not a sacred book which is venerated. They are learnt by oral transmission and it is rare to see a book used in religious services. Diagrams accompanied by letters and a few words are credited with magical powers, but still tantric spells are things to be recited rather than written. This view of scripture makes the hearer uncritical. The ordinary layman hears parts of a sacred book recited and probably admires what he understands, but he has no means of judging of a book as a whole, especially of its coherency and consistency.

The moral extravagance of Hinduism is more serious. It is kept in check by the general conviction that asceticism, or at least temperance, charity and self-effacement are the indispensable outward signs of religion, but still among the great religions of the world there is none which countenances so many hysterical, immoral and cruel rites. A literary example will illustrate the position. It is taken from the drama *Mâdhava* and *Mâlatî* written about 730 A.D., but the incidents of the plot might happen in any native state to-day, if European supervision were removed. In it *Mâdhava*, a young Brahman, surprises a priest of the goddess

⁶² This, of course, does not apply to Buddhism in China, Japan and Tibet.

Châmundâ who is about to immolate Mâlatî. He kills the priest and apparently the other characters consider his conduct natural and not sacrilegious. But it is not suggested that either the police or any ecclesiastical authority ought to prevent human sacrifices, and the reason why Mâdhava was able to save his beloved from death was that he had gone to the uncanny spot where such rites were performed to make an offering of human flesh to demons.

In Buddhism religion and the moral law are identified, but not in Hinduism. Brahmanical literature contains beautiful moral sayings, especially about unselfishness and self-restraint, but the greatest popular gods such as Vishnu and Śiva are not identified with the moral law. They are super-moral and the God of philosophy, who *is* all things, is also above good and evil. The aim of the philosophic saint is not so much to choose the good and eschew evil as to draw nearer to God by rising above both.

Indian literature as a whole has a strong ethical and didactic flavour, yet the great philosophic and religious systems concern themselves little with ethics. They discuss the nature of the external world and other metaphysical questions which seem to us hardly religious: they clearly feel a peculiar interest in defining the relation of the soul to God, but they rarely ask why should I be good or what is the sanction of morality. They are concerned less with sin than with ignorance: virtue is indispensable, but without knowledge it is useless.

17. The Hindu and Buddhist Scriptures

The history and criticism of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures naturally occupy some space in this work, but two general remarks may be made here. First, the oldest scriptures are almost without exception compilations, that is collections of utterances handed down by tradition and arranged by later generations in some form which gives them apparent unity. Thus the Rig Veda is obviously an anthology of hymns and some three thousand years later the Granth or sacred book of the Sikhs was compiled on the same principle. It consists of poems by Nanak, Kabir and many other writers but is treated with extraordinary respect as a continuous and consistent revelation. The Brahmanas and Upanishads are not such obvious compilations yet on careful inspection the older⁶³ ones will be found to be nothing else. Thus the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, though possessing considerable coherency, is not only a collection of such philosophic views as commended themselves to the doctors of the Taittiriya school, but is formed by the union of three such collections. Each of the first two collections ends with a list of the teachers who handed it down and the third is openly called a supplement. One long passage, the dialogue between Yâjnavalkya and his wife, is incorporated in both the first and the second collection. Thus

⁶³ This is not true of the more modern Upanishads which are often short treatises specially written to extol a particular deity or doctrine.

our text represents the period when the Taittirîyas brought their philosophic thoughts together in a complete form, but that period was preceded by another in which slightly different schools each had their own collection and for some time before this the various maxims and dialogues must have been current separately. Since the conversation between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi occurs in almost the same form in two collections, it probably once existed as an independent piece.

In Buddhist literature the composite and tertiary character of the Sutta Pitaka is equally plain. The various Nikayas are confessedly collections of discourses. The two older ones seem dominated by the desire to bring before the reader the image of the Buddha preaching: the Samyutta and Anguttara emphasize the doctrine rather than the teacher and arrange much the same matter under new headings. But it is clear that in whatever form the various sermons, dialogues and dissertations appear, that form is not primary but presupposes compilers dealing with an oral tradition already stereotyped in language. For long passages such as the tract on morality and the description of progress in the religious life occur in several discourses and the amount of matter common to different Suttas and Nikayas is surprising. Thus nearly the whole of the long Sutta describing the Buddha's last days and death⁶⁴, which at first sight seems to be a connected narrative somewhat different from other Suttas, is

⁶⁴ Mahâparinibbâna sutta. See the table of parallel passages prefixed to Rhys Davids's translation, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II. 72.

found scattered in other parts of the Canon.

Thus our oldest texts whether Brahmanic or Buddhist are editions and codifications, perhaps amplifications, of a considerably older oral teaching. They cannot be treated as personal documents similar to the Koran or the Epistles of Paul.

The works of middle antiquity such as the Epics, Puranas, and Mahayanist sutras were also not produced by one author. Many of them exist in more than one recension and they usually consist of a nucleus enveloped and sometimes itself affected by additions which may exceed the original matter in bulk. The Mahâbhârata and Prajñâpâramitâ are not books in the European sense: we cannot give a date or a table of contents for the first edition⁶⁵: they each represent a body of literature whose composition extended over a long period. As time goes on, history naturally grows clearer and literary personalities become more distinct, yet the later Puranas are not attributed to human authors and were susceptible of interpolation even in recent times. Thus the story of Genesis has been incorporated in the Bhavishya Purana, apparently after Protestant missionaries had begun to preach in India.

The other point to which I would draw attention is the importance of relatively modern works, which supersede the older scriptures, especially in Hinduism. This phenomenon is common in many countries, for only a few books such as the

⁶⁵ Much the same is true of the various editions of the Vinaya and the Mahâvastu. These texts were produced by a process first of collection and then of amplification.

Bhagavad-gîtâ, the Gospels and the sayings of Confucius have a portion of the eternal and universal sufficient to outlast the wear and tear of a thousand years. Vedic literature is far from being discredited in India, though some Tantras say openly that it is useless. It still has a place in ritual and is appealed to by reforming sects. But to see Hinduism in proper perspective we must remember that from the time of the Buddha till now, the composition of religious literature in India has been almost uninterrupted and that almost every century has produced works accepted by some sect as infallible scripture. For most Vishnuites the Bhagavad-gîtâ is the beginning of sacred literature and the Nârâyaṇîya⁶⁶ is also held in high esteem: the philosophy of each sect is usually determined by a commentary on the Brahma Sutras: the Bhagavata Purana (perhaps in a vernacular paraphrase) and the Ramayana of Tulsi Das are probably the favourite reading of the laity and for devotional purposes may be supplemented by a collection of hymns such as the Namghosha, copies of which actually receive homage in Assam. The average man—even the average priest—regards all these as sacred works without troubling himself with distinctions as to *śruti* and *smṛiti*, and the Vedas and Upanishads are hardly within his horizon.

In respect of sacred literature Buddhism is more conservative than Hinduism, or to put it another way, has been less productive in the last fifteen hundred years. The Hinayanists are like those Protestant sects which still profess not to go beyond the

⁶⁶ The latter part of Mahâbhârata XII.

Bible. The monks read the Abhidhamma and the laity the Suttas, though perhaps both are disposed to use extracts and compendiums rather than the full ancient texts. Among the Mahayanists the ancient Vinaya and Nikayas exist only as literary curiosities. The former is superseded by modern manuals, the latter by Mahayanist Sutras such as the Lotus and the Happy Land, which are however of respectable antiquity. As in India, each sect selects rather arbitrarily a few books for its own use, without condemning others but also without according to them the formal recognition received by the Old and New Testaments among Christians.

No Asiatic country possesses so large a portion of the critical spirit as China. The educated Chinese, however much they may venerate their classics, think of them as we think of the masterpieces of Greek literature, as texts which may contain wrong readings, interpolations and lacunae, which owe whatever authority they possess to the labours of the scholars who collected, arranged and corrected them. This attitude is to some extent the result of the attempt made by the First Emperor about 200 B.C. to destroy the classical literature and to its subsequent laborious restoration. At a time when the Indians regarded the Veda as a verbal revelation, certain and divine in every syllable, the Chinese were painfully recovering and re-piecing their ancient chronicles and poems from imperfect manuscripts and fallible memories. The process obliged them to enquire at every step whether the texts which they examined were

genuine and complete: to admit that they might be defective or paraphrases of a difficult original. Hence the Chinese have sound principles of criticism unknown to the Hindus and in discussing the date of an ancient work or the probability of an alleged historical event they generally use arguments which a European scholar can accept.

Chinese literature has a strong ethical and political flavour which tempered the extravagance of imported Indian ideas. Most Chinese systems assert more or less plainly that right conduct is conduct in harmony with the laws of the State and the Universe.

18. *Morality and Will*

It is dangerous to make sweeping statements about the huge mass of Indian literature, but I think that most Buddhist and Brahmanic systems assume that morality is merely a means of obtaining happiness⁶⁷ and is not obedience to a categorical imperative or to the will of God. Morality is by inference raised to the status of a cosmic law, because evil deeds will infallibly bring evil consequences to the doer in this life or in another. But it is not commonly spoken of as such a law. The usual point of view is that man desires happiness and for this morality is a necessary though insufficient preparation. But there may be higher states which cannot be expressed in terms of happiness.

The will receives more attention in European philosophy than in Indian, whether Buddhist or Brahmanic, which both regard it not as a separate kind of activity but as a form of thought. As such it is not neglected in Buddhist psychology: will, desire and struggle are recognized as good provided their object is good, a point overlooked by those who accuse Buddhism of preaching inaction⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ Though European religions emphasize man's duty to God, they do not exclude the pursuit of happiness: e.g. Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647). Question 1, "What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever."

⁶⁸ Mrs Rhys Davids has brought out the importance of the will for Buddhist ethics in several works. See *J.R.A.S.* 1898, p. 47 and *Buddhism*, pp. 221 ff. See also Maj. Nik. 19 for a good example of Buddhist views as to the necessity and method of cultivating

Schopenhauer's doctrine that will is the essential fact in the universe and in life may appear to have analogies to Indian thought: it would be easy for instance to quote passages from the Pitakas showing that *tanhâ*, thirst, craving or desire, is the force which makes and remakes the world. But such statements must be taken as generalizations respecting the world as it is rather than as implying theories of its origin, for though *tanhâ* is a link in the chain of causation, it is not regarded as an ultimate principle more than any other link but is made to depend on feeling. The Mâyâ of the Vedanta is not so much the affirmation of the will to live as the illusion that we have a real existence apart from Brahman, and the same may be said of Ahaṃkāra in the Sâṅkhya philosophy. It is the principle of egoism and individuality, but its essence is not so much self-assertion as the *mistaken* idea that this is *mine*, that *I* am happy or unhappy.

There is a question much debated in European philosophy but little argued in India, namely the freedom of the will. The active European feeling the obligation and the difficulties of morality is perplexed by the doubt whether he really has the power to act as he wishes. This problem has not much troubled the Hindus and rightly, as I think. For if the human will is not free, what does freedom mean? What example of freedom can be quoted with which to contrast the supposed non-freedom of the will? If in fact it is from the will that our notion of freedom is derived, is it not unreasonable to say that the will is not free? Absolute freedom

in the sense of something regulated by no laws is unthinkable. When a thing is conditioned by external causes it is dependent. When it is conditioned by internal causes which are part of its own nature, it is free. No other freedom is known. An Indian would say that a man's nature is limited by Karma. Some minds are incapable of the higher forms of virtue and wisdom, just as some bodies are incapable of athletic feats. But within the limits of his own nature a human being is free. Indian theology is not much hampered by the mad doctrine that God has predestined some souls to damnation, nor by the idea of Fate, except in so far as Karma is Fate. It is Fate in the sense that Karma inherited from a previous birth is a store of rewards and punishments which must be enjoyed or endured, but it differs from Fate because we are all the time making our own karma and determining the character of our next birth.

The older Upanishads hint at a doctrine analogous to that of Kant, namely that man is bound and conditioned in so far as he is a part of the world of phenomena but free in so far as the self within him is identical with the divine self which is the creator of all bonds and conditions. Thus the Kaushîtaki Upanishad says, "He it is who causes the man whom he will lead upwards from these worlds to do good works and He it is who causes the man whom he will lead downwards to do evil works. He is the guardian of the world, He is the ruler of the world, He is the Lord of the world and He is myself." Here the last words destroy the apparent determinism of the first part of the

sentence. And similarly the Chândogyâ Upanishad says, "They who depart hence without having known the Self and those true desires, for them there is no freedom in all worlds. But they who depart hence after knowing the Self and those true desires, for them there is freedom in all worlds⁶⁹."

Early Buddhist literature asserts uncompromisingly that every state of consciousness has a cause and in one of his earliest discourses the Buddha argues that the Skandhas, including mental states, cannot be the Self because we have not free will to make them exactly what we choose⁷⁰. But throughout his ethical teaching it is I think assumed that, subject to the law of karma, conscious action is equivalent to spontaneous action. Good mental states can be made to grow and bad mental states to decrease until the stage is reached when the saint knows that he is free. It may perhaps be thought that the early Buddhists did not realize the consequences of applying their doctrine of causation to psychology and hence never faced the possibility of determinism. But determinism, fatalism, and the uselessness of effort formed part of the paradoxical teaching of Makkhali Gosala reported in the Pitakas and therefore well known. If neither the Jains nor the Buddhists allowed themselves to be embarrassed by such denials of free will, the inference is that

⁶⁹ The words are kâmacâra and akâmacâra. Chand. Up. 8. 1-6.

⁷⁰ Mahâvag. I. 6. E.g. Ajâtasattu (Dig. Nik. 2, *ad fin.*) would have obtained the eye of truth, had he not been a parricide. The consequent distortion of mind made higher states impossible.

in some matters at least the Hindus had strong common sense and declined to accept any view which takes away from man the responsibility and lordship of his own soul.

19. *The Origin of Evil*

The reader will have gathered from what precedes that Hinduism has little room for the Devil⁷¹. Buddhism being essentially an ethical system recognizes the importance of the Tempter or Mâra, but still Mâra is not an evil spirit who has spoilt a good world. In Hinduism, whether pantheistic or polytheistic, there is even less disposition to personify evil in one figure, and most Indian religious systems are disposed to think of the imperfections of the world as suffering rather than as sin.

Yet the existence of evil is the chief reason for the existence of religion, at least of such religions as promise salvation, and the explanation of evil is the chief problem of all religions and philosophies, and the problem which they all alike are conspicuously unsuccessful in solving. I can assign no reason for rejecting as untenable the idea that the ultimate reality may be a duality—a good and an evil spirit—or even a plurality⁷², but still it is unthinkable for me and I believe for most minds. If there are two ultimate beings, either they must be complementary and necessary one to the other, in which case it seems to me more

⁷¹ But all general statements about Hinduism are liable to exceptions. The evil spirit Duṣṣaha described in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purâna (chaps. L and LI) comes very near the Devil.

⁷² I can understand that the immediate reality is a duality or plurality and that the one spirit may appear in many shapes.

correct to describe them as two aspects of one being, or if they are quite separate, my mind postulates (but I do not know why) a third being who is the cause of them both.

The problem of evil is not quite the same for Indian and European pantheists. The European pantheist holds that since God is all things or in all things, evil is only something viewed out of due perspective: that the world would be seen to be perfect, if it could be seen as a whole, or that evil will be eliminated in the course of development. But he cannot explain why the partial view of the world which human beings are obliged to take shows the existence of obvious evil. The Hindus think that it is possible and better for the soul to leave the vain show of the world and find peace in union with God. They are therefore not concerned to prove that the world is good, although they cannot explain why God allows it to exist. The Upanishads contain some myths and parables about the introduction of evil but they do not say that a naturally good world was spoilt⁷³. They rather imply that increasing complexity involves the increase of evil as well as of good. This is also the ground thought of the Aggañña Sutta, the Buddhist Genesis (Dig. Nik. XXVII.).

⁷³ E.g. Chand. Up. V. 1. 2. Bri. Ar. Up. I. 3. In the Pāñcarâtra we do hear of a jñânabhramsa or a fall from knowledge analogous to the fall of man in Christian theology. Souls have naturally unlimited knowledge but this from some reason becomes limited and obscured, so that religion is necessary to show the soul the right way. Here the ground idea seems to be not that any devil has spoilt the world but that ignorance is necessary for the world process, for otherwise mankind would be one with God and there would be no world. See Schrader, *Introd. to the Pāñcarâtra*, pp. 78 and 83.

I think that the substance of much Indian pantheism—late Buddhist as well as Brahmanic—is that the world, the soul and God (the three terms being practically the same) have two modes of existence: one of repose and bliss, the other of struggle and trouble. Of these the first mode is the better and it is only by mistake⁷⁴ that the eternal spirit adopts the latter. But both the mistake and the correction of it are being eternally repeated. Such a formulation of the Advaita philosophy would no doubt be regarded in India as wholly unorthodox. Yet orthodoxy admits that the existence of the world is due to the coexistence of Mâyâ (illusion) with Brahman (spirit) and also states that the task of the soul is to pass beyond Mâyâ to Brahman. If this is so, there is either a real duality (Brahman and Mâyâ) or else Mâyâ is an aspect of Brahman, but an aspect which the soul should transcend and avoid, and for whose existence no reason whatever is given. The more theistic forms of Indian religion, whether Sivaite or Vishnuite, tend to regard individual souls and matter as eternal. By the help of God souls can obtain release from matter. But here again there is no explanation why the soul is contaminated by matter or ignorance.

It is clearly illogical to condemn the Infinite as bad or a mistake. Buddhism is perhaps sometimes open to this charge because on account of its exceedingly cautious language about

⁷⁴ The Śatapatha Brāhmana has a curious legend (XI. 1. 6. 8 ff.) in which the Creator admits that he made evil spirits by mistake and smites them. In the Kārikâ of Gauḍapâda, 2. 19 it is actually said: Mayaishâ tasya devasya yayâ sammohitaḥ svayam.

nirvana it fails to set it up as a reality contrasted with the world of suffering. But many varieties of Indian religion do emphatically point to the infinite reality behind and beyond Mâyâ. It is only Mâyâ which is unsatisfactory because it is partial.

Another attempt to make the Universe intelligible regards it as an eternal rhythm playing and pulsing outwards from spirit to matter (*pravritti*) and then backwards and inwards from matter to spirit (*nirvritti*). This idea seems implied by Śankara's view that creation is similar to the sportive impulses of exuberant youth and the Bhagavad-gîtâ is familiar with *pravritti* and *nirvritti*, but the double character of the rhythm is emphasized most clearly in Śākta treatises. Ordinary Hinduism concentrates its attention on the process of liberation and return to Brahman, but the Tantras recognize and consecrate both movements, the outward throbbing stream of energy and enjoyment (*bhukti*) and the calm returning flow of liberation and peace. Both are happiness, but the wise understand that the active outward movement is right and happy only up to a certain point and under certain restrictions.

That great poet Tulsi Das hints at an explanation of the creation or of God's expansion of himself which will perhaps commend itself to Europeans more than most Indian ideas, namely that the bliss enjoyed by God and the souls whom he loves is greater than the bliss of solitary divinity⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ He does not say this expressly and it requires careful statement in India where it is held strongly that God being perfect cannot add to his bliss or perfection by creating

anything. Compare Dante, *Paradiso*, xxix. 13-18: Non per aver a sè di bene acquisto, ch'esser non può, ma perchè suo splendore potesse risplendendo dir: subsisto. In sua eternità di tempo fuore, fuor d' ogni altro comprender, come i piacque, s'aperse in nuovi amor l' eterno amore.

20. *Church and State*

I will now turn to another point, namely the relations of Church and State. These are simplest in Buddhism, which teaches that the truth is one, that all men ought to follow it and that all good kings should honour and encourage it. This is also the Christian position but Buddhism has almost always been tolerant and has hardly ever countenanced the doctrine that error should be suppressed by force⁷⁶. Buddhism does not claim to cover the whole field of religion as understood in Europe: if people like to propitiate spirits in the hope of obtaining wealth and crops, it permits them to do so. In Japan and Tibet Buddhism has played a more secular role than in other countries, analogous to the struggles of the mediaeval European church for temporal authority. In Japan the great monasteries very nearly became the chief military as well as the chief political power and this danger was averted only by the destruction of Hieizan and other large establishments in the sixteenth century. What was prevented in Japan did actually happen in Tibet, for the monasteries became stronger than any of the competing secular factions and the principal sect set up an ecclesiastical government singularly like the Papacy. In southern countries, such as Burma and Ceylon, Buddhism made no attempt to interfere in politics. This aloofness is particularly remarkable in Siam and Camboja, where state

⁷⁶ The history of Japan and Tibet offers some exceptions.

festivals are usually conducted by Brahmans not by Buddhist ecclesiastics. In Siam, as formerly in Burma, the king being a Buddhist is in some ways the head of the Church. He may reform lax discipline or incorrect observances, but apparently not of his own authority but merely as an executive power enforcing the opinion of the higher clergy.

Buddhism and Hinduism both have the idea that the monk or priest is a person who in virtue of ordination or birth lives on a higher level than others. He may teach and do good but irrespective of that it is the duty of the laity to support the priesthood. This doctrine is preached by Hinduism in a stronger form than by Buddhism. The intellectual superiority of the Brahmans as a caste was sufficiently real to ensure its acceptance and in politics they had the good sense to rule by serving, to be ministers and not kings. In theory and to a considerable extent in practice, the Brahmans and their gods are not an *imperium in imperio* but an *imperium super imperium*. The position was possible only because, unlike the Papacy and unlike the Lamas of Tibet, they had no Pope and no hierarchy. They produced no à'Beckets or Hildebrands and no Inquisition. They did not quarrel with science but monopolized it.

In India kings are expected to maintain the priesthood and the temples yet Hinduism rarely assumes the form of a state religion⁷⁷ nor does it admit, as state religions generally have to admit, that the secular arm has a co-ordinate jurisdiction in ecclesiastical

⁷⁷ There are some exceptions, e.g. ancient Camboja, the Sikhs and the Marathas.

matters. Yet it affects every department of social life and a Hindu who breaks with it loses his social status. Hindu deities are rarely tribal gods like Athene of Athens or the gods of Mr Kipling and the German Emperor. There are thousands of shrines specially favoured by a divine presence but the worshippers think of that presence not as the protector of a race or city but as a special manifestation of a universal though often invisible power. The conquests of Mohammedans and Christians are not interpreted as meaning that the gods of Hinduism have succumbed to alien deities.

The views prevalent in China and Japan as to the relations of Church and State are almost the antipodes of those described. In those countries it is the hardly dissembled theory of the official world that religion is a department of government and that there should be regulations for gods and worship, just as there are for ministers and etiquette. If we say that religion is identified with the government in Tibet and forms an *imperium super imperium* in India, we may compare its position in the Far East to native states under British rule. There is no interference with creeds provided they respect ethical and social conventions: interesting doctrines and rites are appreciated: the Government accepts and rewards the loyal co-operation of the Buddhist and Taoist priesthoods but maintains the right to restrict their activity should it take a wrong political turn or should an excessive increase in the number of monks seem a public danger. The Chinese Imperial Government successfully claimed the strangest powers

of ecclesiastical discipline, since it promoted and degraded not only priests but deities. In both China and Japan there has often been a strong current of feeling in the official classes against Buddhism but on the other hand it often had the support of both emperors and people, and princes not infrequently joined the clergy, especially when it was desirable for them to live in retirement. Confucianism and Shintoism, which are ethical and ceremonial rather than doctrinal, have been in the past to some extent a law to the governments of China and Japan, or more accurately an aspect of those governments. But for many centuries Far Eastern statesmen have rarely regarded Buddhism and Taoism as more than interesting and legitimate activities, to be encouraged and regulated like educational and scientific institutions.

21. Public Worship and Ceremonial

In no point does Hinduism differ from western religions more than in its public worship and, in spite of much that is striking and interesting, the comparison is not to the advantage of India. It is true that temple worship is not so important for the Hindus as Church services are for the Christian. They set more store on home ceremonies and on contemplation. Still the temples of India are so numerous, so conspicuous and so crowded that the religion which maintains them must to some extent be judged by them.

At any rate they avoid the faults of public worship in the west. The practice of arranging the congregation in seats for which they pay seems to me more irreligious than the slovenliness of the heathen and makes the whole performance resemble a very dull concert.

Protestant services are in the main modelled on the ritual of the synagogue. They are meetings of the laity at which the scriptures are read, prayers offered, sermons preached and benedictions pronounced. The clergy play a principal but not exclusive part. The rites of the Roman and Eastern Churches have borrowed much from pagan ceremonial but still they have not wholly departed from the traditions of the synagogue. These have also served as a model for Mohammedan ritual which differs from the Jewish in little but its almost military regularity.

But with all this the ordinary ritual of Hindu temples⁷⁸ has nothing in common. It derives from another origin and follows other lines. The temple is regarded as the court of a prince and the daily ceremonies are the attendance of his courtiers on him. He must be awakened, fed, amused and finally put to bed. This conception of ritual prevailed in Egypt but in India there is no trace of it in Vedic literature and perhaps it did not come into fashion until Gupta times. Although the laity may be present and salute the god, such worship cannot be called congregational. Yet in other ways a Hindu temple may provide as much popular worship as a Nonconformist chapel. In the corridors will generally be found readers surrounded by an attentive crowd to whom they recite and expound the Mahabharata or some other sacred text. At festivals and times of pilgrimage the precincts are thronged by a crowd of worshippers the like of which is hardly to be seen in Europe, worshippers not only devout but fired with an enthusiasm which bursts into a mighty chorus of welcome when the image of the god is brought forth from the inner shrine.

The earlier forms of Buddhist ceremonial are of the synagogue type (though in no way derived from Jewish sources) for, though there is no prayer, they consist chiefly of confession,

⁷⁸ But there are other kinds of worship, such as the old Vedic sacrifices which are still occasionally performed, and the burnt offerings (homa) still made in some temples. There are also tantric ceremonies and in Assam the public worship of the Vishnuites has probably been influenced by the ritual of Lamas in neighbouring Buddhist countries.

preaching and reading the scriptures. But this puritanic severity could not be popular and the veneration of images and relics was soon added to the ritual. The former was adopted by Buddhism earlier than by the Brahmans. The latter, though a conspicuous feature of Buddhism in all lands, is almost unknown to Hinduism. In their later developments Buddhist and Christian ceremonies show an extraordinary resemblance due in my opinion chiefly to convergence, though I do not entirely exclude mutual influence. Both Buddhism and Roman Catholicism accepted pagan ritual with some reservations and refinements. The worship has for its object an image or a shrine containing a relic which is placed in a conspicuous position at the end of the hall of worship⁷⁹. Animal sacrifices are rejected but offerings of flowers, lights and incense are permitted, as well as the singing of hymns. It is not altogether strange if Buddhist and Catholic rituals starting from the same elements ended by producing similar scenic effects.

Yet though the scenic effect may be similar, there is often a difference in the nature of the rite. Direct invocations are not wanting in Tibetan and Far Eastern Buddhism but many services consist not of prayers but of the recitation of scripture by which merit is acquired. This merit is then formally transferred by the officiants to some special object, such as the peace of the dead or the prosperity of a living suppliant.

⁷⁹ This position is of great importance as tending to produce a similar arrangement of religious paraphernalia. The similarity disappears when Buddhist ceremonies are performed round Stūpas out of doors.

The later phases of both Hinduism and Buddhism are permeated by what is called Tantrism⁸⁰, that is to say the endeavour to attain spiritual ends by ritual acts such as gestures and the repetition of formulae. These expedients are dangerous and may become puerile, but those who ridicule them often forget that they may be termed sacramental with as much propriety as magical and are in fact based on the same theory as the sacraments of the Catholic Church. When a child is made eligible for salvation by sprinkling with water, by the sign of the cross and by the mantra "In the Name of the Father," etc., or when the divine spirit is localized in bread and wine and worshipped, these rites are closely analogous to tantric ceremonial.

The Buddhist temples of the Far East are in original intention copies of Indian edifices and in the larger establishments there is a daily routine of services performed by resident monks. But the management of religious foundations in these countries has been much influenced by old pagan usages as to temples and worship which show an interesting resemblance to the customs of classical antiquity but have little in common with Buddhist or Christian ideas. A Chinese municipal temple is a public building dedicated to a spirit or departed worthy. If sacrifices are offered in it, they are not likely to take place more than three or four times a year. Private persons may go there to obtain luck by burning a little incense or still more frequently to divine the future: public

⁸⁰ As explained elsewhere, I draw a distinction between Tantrism and Śāktism.

meetings and theatrical performances may be held there, but anything like a congregational service is rare. Just so in ancient Rome a temple might be used for a meeting of the Senate or for funeral games.

22. The Worship of the Reproductive Forces

One aspect of Indian religions is so singular that it demands notice, although it is difficult to discuss. I mean the worship of the generative forces. The cult of a god, or more often of a goddess, who personifies the reproductive and also the destructive powers of nature (for it is not only in India that the two activities are seen to be akin) existed in many countries. It was prominent in Babylonia and Asia Minor, less prominent but still distinctly present in Egypt and in many cases was accompanied by hysterical and immoral rites, by mutilations of the body and offerings of blood. But in most countries such deities and rites are a matter of ancient history: they decayed as civilization grew: in China and Japan, as formerly in Greece and Rome, they are not an important constituent of religion. It is only in India and to some extent in Tibet, which has been influenced by India, that they have remained unabashed until modern times.

If it is right to regard with veneration the great forces of nature, fire, sun and water, a similar feeling towards the reproductive force cannot be unphilosophic or immoral. Nor does the idea that the supreme deity is a mother rather than a father, though startling, contain anything unseemly. Yet it is an undoubted fact that all the great religions except Hinduism, though they may admit a Goddess of Mercy—Kuan-yin or the Madonna—agree in rejecting essentially sexual deities. Modern

Europe is probably prudish to excess, but the general practice of mankind testifies that words and acts too nearly connected with sexual things cannot be safely permitted in the temple. This remark would indeed be superfluous were it not that many millions of our Hindu fellow-citizens are of a contrary opinion.

Such practices prevail chiefly among the Śâktas in Bengal and Assam but similar licence is permitted (though the theoretical justification and theological setting are different) in some Vishnuite sects. Both are reprobated by the majority of respectable Hindus, but both find educated and able apologists. And though it may be admitted that worship of the linga may exist without bad effects, moral or intellectual, yet I think that these effects make themselves felt so soon as a sect becomes distinctly erotic. Anyone who visits two such different localities as Kamakhya in Assam and Gokul near Muttra must be struck with the total absence in the shrines of anything that can be called beautiful, solemn or even terrible. The general impression is of something diseased, unclean and undignified. The figure of the Great Goddess of life and death might have fired⁸¹ the invention of artists but as a matter of fact her worship has paralyzed their hands and brains.

Nor can I give much praise to the Tantras as literature⁸². It

⁸¹ It does not seem to me to have given much inspiration to Rossetti in his *Aatarte Syriaca*.

⁸² But in justice to the Tantras it should be mentioned that the Mahâ-nirvâṇa Tantra, x. 79, prohibits the burning of widows.

is true that, as some authors point out, they contain fine sayings about God and the soul. But in India such things form part of the common literary stock and do not entitle the author to the praise which he would win elsewhere, unless his language or thoughts show originality. Such originality I have not found in those Tantras which are accessible. The magical and erotic parts may have the melancholy distinction of being unlike other works but the philosophical and theological sections could have been produced by any Hindu who had studied these branches of Indian literature.

23. Hinduism in Practice

After reviewing the characteristics of a religion it is natural to ask what is its effect on those who profess it. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam offer materials for answering such a question, since they are not racial religions. In historical times they have been accepted by peoples who did not profess them previously and we can estimate the consequences of such changes. But Hinduism has racial or geographical limits. It proselytizes, but hardly outside the Indian area: it is difficult to distinguish it from Indian custom, as the gospel is distinguished from the practice of Europe: it is superfluous to enquire what would be its effect on other countries, since it shows no desire to impose itself on them and they none to accept it. It is, like Shinto in Japan, not a religion which has moulded the national character but the national character finding expression in religion. Shinto and Hinduism are also alike in perpetuating ancient beliefs and practices which seem anachronisms but otherwise they are very different, for many races and languages have contributed their thoughts and hopes to the ocean of Hinduism and they all had an interest in speculation and mysticism unknown to the Japanese.

The fact that Hinduism is something larger and more comprehensive than what we call a religion is one reason why it contains much of dubious moral value. It is analogous not to Christianity but to European civilization which produces side by

side philanthropy and the horrors of war, or to science which has given us the blessings of surgery and the curse of explosives. There is a deep-rooted idea in India that a man's daily life must be accompanied by religious observances and regulated by a religious code, by no means of universal application but still suitable to his particular class. An immoral occupation need not be irreligious: it simply requires gods of a special character. Hence we find Thugs killing and robbing their victims in the name of Kali. But though the Hindu is not at ease unless his customs are sanctioned by his religion, yet religion in the wider sense is not bound by custom, for the founders of many sects have declared that before God there is no caste. A Hindu may devote himself to religion and abandon the world with all its conventions, but if like most men he prefers to live in the world, it is his duty to follow the customs and usages sanctioned for his class and occupation. Thus as Sister Nivedita has shown in her beautiful writings, cooking, washing and all the humble round of domestic life become one long ritual of purification and prayer in which the entertainment of a guest stands out as a great sacrifice. But though religion may thus give beauty and holiness to common things, yet inasmuch as it sanctifies what it finds rather than prescribes what should be, it must bear the blame for foolish and even injurious customs. Child marriages have nothing to do with the creed of Hinduism, yet many Hindus, especially Hindu women, would feel it irreligious, as well as a social disgrace, to let a daughter become adult without being

married.

A comparison of Indian Mohammedans and Hindus suggests that the former are more warlike and robust, the latter more intellectual and ingenious. The fact that some Mohammedans belong to hardy tribes of invaders must be taken into account but Islam deserves the credit of having introduced a simple and fairly healthy rule of life which does not allow every caste to make its own observances into a divine law. Yet it would seem that the medical and sanitary rules of Hinduism deserve less abuse than they generally receive. Col. King, Sanitary Commissioner of the Madras Presidency, is quoted as saying in a lecture⁸³: "The Institutes of Vishnu and the Laws of Manu fit in excellently with the bacteriology, parasitology and applied hygiene of the West. The hygiene of food and water, private and public conservancy, disease suppression and prevention, are all carefully dealt with."

Hinduism certainly has proved marvellously stimulating to the intellect or—shall we put it the other way?—is the product of profound, acute, and restless minds. It cannot be justly accused of being enervating or melancholy, for many Hindu states were vigorous and warlike⁸⁴ and the accounts of early travellers indicate that in pre-mohammedan days the people were humane, civilized and contented. It created an original and spiritual art, for Indian art, more than any other, is the direct product of religion and not merely inspired by it. In ages when original talent is rare

⁸³ See *Asiatic Review*, July, 1916, p. 33.

⁸⁴ *E.g.* Vijayanagar, the Marathas and the states of Rajputana.

this close relation has disadvantages for it tends to make all art symbolic and conventional. An artist must not represent a deity in the way that he thinks most effective: the proportions, attitude and ornaments are all prescribed, not because they suit a picture or statue but because they mean something.

Indian literature is also directly related to religion. Its extent is well-nigh immeasurable. I will not alarm the reader with statistics of the theological and metaphysical treatises which it contains. A little of such goes a long way even when they are first-rate, but India may at least boast of having more theological works which, if considered as intellectual productions, must be placed in the first class than Europe. Nor are religious writings of a more human type absent—the language of heart to heart and of the heart to God. The Ramayana of Tulsi Das and the Tiruvwçagam are extolled by Groûse, Grierson and Pope (all of them Christians, I believe) as not only masterpieces of literature but as noble expressions of pure devotion, and the poems of Kabir and Tukaram, if less considerable as literary efforts, show the same spiritual quality. Indian poetry, even when nominally secular, is perhaps too much under religious influence to suit our taste and the long didactic and philosophic harangues which interrupt the action of the Mahabharata seem to us inartistic, yet to those who take the pains to familiarize themselves with what at first is strange, the Mahabharata is, I think, a greater poem than the *Iliad*. It should not be regarded as an epic distended and interrupted by interpolated sermons but as the scripture of the

warrior caste, which sees in the soldier's life a form of religion.

I have touched in several places on the defects of Hinduism. They are due partly to its sanction of customs which have no necessary connection with it and partly to its extravagance, which in the service of the gods sees no barriers of morality or humanity. But suttee, human sacrifices and orgies strike the imagination and assume an importance which they have not and never had for Hinduism as a whole. If Hinduism were really bad, so many great thoughts, so many good lives could not have grown up in its atmosphere. More than any other religion it is a quest of truth and not a creed, which must necessarily become antiquated: it admits the possibility of new scriptures, new incarnations, new institutions. It has no quarrel with knowledge or speculation: perhaps it excludes materialists, because they have no common ground with religion, but it tolerates even the Sâmkhya philosophy which has nothing to say about God or worship. It is truly dynamic and in the past whenever it has seemed in danger of withering it has never failed to bud with new life and put forth new flowers.

More than other religions, Hinduism appeals to the soul's immediate knowledge and experience of God. It has sacred books innumerable but they agree in little but this, that the soul can come into contact and intimacy with its God, whatever name be given him and even if he be superpersonal. The possibility and truth of this experience is hardly questioned in India and the task of religion is to bring it about, not to promote the welfare

of tribes and states but to effect the enlightenment and salvation of souls.

The love of the Hindus for every form of argument and philosophizing is well known but it is happily counterbalanced by another tendency. Instinct and religion both bring them into close sympathy with nature. India is in the main an agricultural country⁸⁵ and nearly three-quarters of the population are villagers whose life is bound up with the welfare of plants and animals and lies at the mercy of rivers that overflow or skies that withhold the rain. To such people nature-myths and sacred animals appeal with a force that Europeans rarely understand. The parrots that perch on the pinnacles of the temple and the oxen that rest in the shade of its courts are not intruders but humble brothers of mankind, who may also be the messengers of the gods.

⁸⁵ According to the census of 1911 no less than 72 per cent. of the population live by agriculture.

24. *Buddhism in Practice*

As I said above, it is easier to estimate the effects of Buddhism than of Hinduism, for its history is the chronicle of a great missionary enterprise and there are abundant materials for studying the results of its diffusion.

Even its adversaries must admit that it has many excellent qualities. It preaches morality and charity and was the first religion to proclaim to the world—not to a caste or country—that these are the foundation of that Law which if kept brings happiness. It civilized many nations, for instance the Tibetans and Mongols. It has practised toleration and true unworldliness, if not without any exception⁸⁶, at least far more generally than any other great religion. It has directly encouraged art and literature and, so far as I know, has never opposed the progress of knowledge. But two charges may be brought against it which deserve consideration. First that its pessimistic doctrines and monastic institutions are, if judged by ordinary standards, bad for

⁸⁶ The chief exceptions are: (a) the Tibetan church has acquired and holds power by political methods. It is an exact parallel to the Papacy, but it has never burnt people. (b) In mediæval Japan the great monasteries became fortified castles with lands and troops of their own. They fought one another and were a menace to the state. Later the Tokugawa sovereigns had the assistance of the Buddhist clergy in driving out Christianity but I do not think that their action can be compared either in extent or cruelty with the Inquisition. (c) In China Buddhism was in many reigns associated with a dissolute court and palace intrigues. This led to many scandals and great waste of money.

the welfare of a nation: second that more than any other religion it is liable to become corrupt.

In all Buddhist lands, though good laymen are promised the blessings of religion, the monastic and contemplative life is held up as the ideal. In Christendom, this ideal is rejected by Protestants and for the Roman and Oriental Churches it is only one among others. Hence every one's judgment of Buddhism must in a large measure depend on what he thinks of this ideal. Monks are not of this world and therefore the world hateth them. If they keep to themselves, they are called lazy and useless. If they take part in secular matters, they meet with even severer criticism. Yet can any one doubt that what is most needed in the present age is more people who have leisure and ability to think?

Whatever evil is said of Buddhist monks is also said of Mt Athos and similar Christian establishments. I am far from saying that this depreciation of the cloistered life is just in either case but any impartial critic of monastic institutions must admit that their virtues avoid publicity and their faults attract attention. In all countries a large percentage of monks are indolent: it is the temptation which besets all but the elect. Yet the Buddhist ideal of the man who has renounced the world leaves no place for slackness, nor I think does the Christian. Buddhist monks are men of higher aspirations than others: they try to make themselves supermen by cultivating not the forceful and domineering part of their nature but the gentle, charitable and intelligent part. The laity treat them with the greatest respect

provided that they set an example of a life better than most men can live. A monastic system of this kind is found in Burma. I do not mean that it is not found in other Buddhist lands, but I cite an instance which I have seen myself and which has impressed most observers favourably.

The Burmese monks are not far from the ideal of Gotama, yet perhaps by adhering somewhat strictly to the letter of his law they have lost something of the freedom which he contemplated. In his time there were no books: the mind found exercise and knowledge in conversation. A monastery was not a permanent residence, except during the rainy season, but merely a halting-place for the brethren who were habitually wanderers, continually hearing and seeing something new. Hermits and solitary dwellers in the forests were not unknown but assuredly the majority of the brethren had no intention of secluding themselves from the intellectual life of the age. What would Gotama have done had he lived some hundreds or thousands of years later? I see no reason to doubt that he would have encouraged the study of literature and science. He would probably have praised all art which expresses noble and spiritual ideas, while misdoubting representations of sensuous beauty.

The second criticism—that Buddhists are prone to corrupt their faith—is just, for their courteous acquiescence in other creeds enfeebles and denaturalizes their own. In Annam, Korea and some parts of China though there are temples and priests more or less deserving the name of Buddhist, there is no idea that

Buddhism is a distinct religion or mode of life. Such statements as that the real religion of the Burmese is not Buddhism but animism are, I think, incorrect, but even the Burmese are dangerously tolerant.

This weakness is not due to any positive defect, since Buddhism provides for those who lead the higher life a strenuous curriculum and for the laity a system of morality based on rational grounds and differing little from the standard accepted in both Europe and China, except that it emphasizes the duties of mankind to animals. The weakness comes from the absence of any command against superstitious rites and beliefs. When the cardinal principles of Buddhism are held strongly these accessories do not matter, but the time comes when the creeper which was once an ornament grows into the walls of the shrine and splits the masonry. The faults of western religions are mainly faults of self-assertion—such as the Inquisition and opposition to science. The faults of Indian religions are mainly tolerance of what does not belong to them and sometimes of what is not only foreign to them but bad in itself.

Buddhism has been both praised and blamed as a religion which acknowledges neither God nor the soul⁸⁷ and its

⁸⁷ See for instance Huxley's striking definition of Buddhism in his *Romanes Lecture*, 1893. "A system which knows no God in the western sense; which denies a soul to man: which counts the belief in immortality a blunder and the hope of it a sin: which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice: which bids men look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation: which in its original purity knew nothing of vows of obedience and never sought the aid of the secular arm: yet spread over a considerable moiety of

acceptance in its later phases of the supernatural has been regarded as proving the human mind's natural need of theism. But it is rather an illustration of that craving for personal though superhuman help which makes Roman Catholics supplement theism with the worship of saints.

On the whole it is correct to say that Buddhism (except perhaps in very exceptional sects) has always taken and still takes a point of view which has little in common with European theism. The world is not thought of as the handiwork of a divine personality nor the moral law as his will. The fact that religion can exist without these ideas is of capital importance⁸⁸. But any statements implying that Buddhism divorces morality from the doctrine of immortality may be misunderstood for it teaches that just as an old man may suffer for the follies of his youth, so faults committed in one life may be punished in another. Rewards and punishments in another world were part of the creed of Asoka

the old world with marvellous rapidity and is still with whatever base admixture of foreign superstitions the dominant creed of a large fraction of mankind." But some of this is too strongly phrased. Early Buddhism counted the desire for heaven as a hindrance to the highest spiritual life, but if a man had not attained to that plane and was bound to be reborn somewhere, it did not question that his natural desire to be reborn in heaven was right and proper.

⁸⁸ It may of course be denied that Buddhism is a religion. In this connection some remarks of Mr Bradley are interesting. "The doctrine that there cannot be a religion without a personal God is to my mind entirely false" (*Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 432). "I cannot accept a personal God as the ultimate truth" (ib. 449). "There are few greater responsibilities which a man can take on himself than to have proclaimed or even hinted that without immortality all religion is a cheat, all morality a self-deception" (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 510).

and tradition represents the missionaries who converted Ceylon as using this simple argument⁸⁹. It would not however be true to say that Buddhism makes the value of morality contingent on another world. The life of an Arhat which includes the strictest morality is commended on its own account as the best and happiest existence.

European assertions about Buddhism often imply that it sets up as an ideal and goal either annihilation or some condition of dreamy bliss. Modern Buddhists who mostly neglect Nirvana as something beyond their powers, just as the ordinary Christian does not say that he hopes to become a saint, lose much of the Master's teaching but do it less injustice than such misrepresentations. The Buddha did not describe Nirvana as something to be won after death, but as a state of happiness attainable in this life by strenuous endeavour—a state of perfect peace but compatible with energy, as his own example showed.

⁸⁹ Mahāvamsa, xii. 29, xiv. 58 and 64. Dîpavamsa, xn. 84 and 85, xiii. 7 and 8.

25. Interest of Indian Thought for Europe

We are now in a better position to answer the question asked at the beginning of this introduction, Is Indian thought of value or at least of interest for Europe?

Let me confess that I cannot share the confidence in the superiority of Europeans and their ways which is prevalent in the west. Whatever view we take of the rights and wrongs of the recent war, it is clearly absurd for Europe as a whole to pose in the presence of such doings as a qualified instructor in humanity and civilization. Many of those who are proudest of our fancied superiority escape when the chance offers from western civilization and seek distraction in exploration, and many who have spent their lives among what they consider inferior races are uneasy when they retire and settle at home. In fact European civilization is not satisfying and Asia can still offer something more attractive to many who are far from Asiatic in spirit. Yet though most who have paid even a passing visit to the East feel its charm, the history, art and literature of Asia are still treated with ignorant indifference in cultured circles—an ignorance and indifference which are extraordinary in Englishmen who have so close a connection with India and devote a disproportionate part of their education to ancient Greece and Rome. I have heard a professor of history in an English university say that he thought the history of India began with the advent of the British and

that he did not know that China had any history at all. And Matthew Arnold in speaking of Indian thought⁹⁰ hardly escaped meriting his own favourite epithets of condemnation, Philistine and *saugrenu*.

Europeans sometimes mention it as an amazing and almost ridiculous circumstance that an educated Chinese can belong to three religions, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. But I find this attitude of mind eminently sensible. Confucianism is an admirable religion for State ceremonies and College chapels. By attending its occasional rites one shows a decent respect for Heaven and Providence and commits oneself to nothing. And though a rigid Confucianist may have the contempt of a scholar and statesman for popular ideas, yet the most devout Buddhist and Taoist can conform to Confucianism without scruple, whereas many who have attended an English coronation service must have wondered at the language which they seemed to approve of by their presence. And in China if you wish to water the aridity of Confucianism, you can find in Buddhism or Taoism whatever you want in the way of emotion or philosophy and you will not be accused of changing your religion because you take this refreshment. This temper is not good for creating new and profound religious thought, but it is good for sampling and appreciating the "varieties of religious experience" which offer their results as guides for this and other lives.

For religion is systematized religious experience and this

⁹⁰ *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, Amiel.

experience depends on temperament. There can therefore be no one religion in the European sense and it is one of the Hindus' many merits that they recognize this. Some people ask of religion forgiveness for their sins, others communion with the divine: most want health and wealth, many crave for an explanation of life and death. Indian religion accommodates itself to these various needs. Nothing is more surprising than the variety of its phases except the underlying unity.

This power of varying in sympathetic response to the needs of many minds and growing in harmony with the outlook of successive ages, is a contrast to the pretended *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*⁹¹ of Western Churches, for in view of their differences and mutual hostility it can only be called a pretence. Indians recognize that only the greatest and simplest religious questions can be asked now in the same words that came to the lips more than two thousand years ago and even if the questions are the same, the answers of the thoughtful are still as widely divergent as the pronouncements of the Buddha and the Brahmans. But nearly all the propositions contained in a European creed involve matters of history or science which are obviously affected by research and discovery as much as are astronomy or medicine, and not only are the propositions out of date but they mostly refer to problems which have lost their interest. But Indian religion eschews creeds and will not die with

⁹¹ This definition of orthodoxy is due to St Vincent of Lerins. *Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est.*

the spread of knowledge. It will merely change and enter a new phase of life in which much that is now believed and practised will be regarded as the gods and rites of the Veda are regarded now.

I do not think that there is much profit in comparing religions, which generally means exalting one at the expense of the others, but rather that it is interesting and useful to learn what others, especially those least like ourselves, think of these matters. And in religious questions Asia has a distinct right to be heard.

For if Europeans have any superiority over Asiatics, it lies in practical science, finance and administration, not in thought or art. If one were collecting views about philosophy and religion in Europe, one would not begin by consulting financiers and engineers, and the policeman who stands in the middle of the street and directs the traffic to this side and that is not intellectually superior to those who obey him as if he were something superhuman. Europeans in Asia are like such a policeman: their gifts are authority and power to organize: in other respects their superiority is imaginary.

I do not think that Christianity will ever make much progress in Asia, for what is commonly known by that name is not the teaching of Christ but a rearrangement of it made in Europe and like most European institutions practical rather than thoughtful. And as for the teaching of Christ himself, the Indian finds it excellent but not ample or satisfying. There is little in it which cannot be found in some of the many scriptures of Hinduism

and it is silent on many points about which they speak, if not with convincing authority, at least with suggestive profundity. Neither do I think that Europe is likely to adopt Buddhist or Brahmanic methods of thought on any large scale. Theosophical and Buddhist societies have my sympathy but it is sympathy with lonely workers in an unpopular cause and I am not sure that they always understand what they try to teach. There is truth at the bottom of the dogma that all Buddhas must be born and teach in India: Asiatic doctrine may commend itself to European minds but it fits awkwardly into European life.

But this is no reason for refusing to accord to Indian religion at least the same attention that we give to Plato and Aristotle. Every idea which is held strongly by any large body of men is worthy of respectful examination, although I do not think that because an opinion is widespread it is therefore true. Thus the idea that in the remote past there was some kind of paradise or golden age and that the span of human life was once much longer than now is found among most nations. Yet research and analogy suggest that it is without foundation. The fact that about half the population of the world has come under the influence of Hindu ideas gives Indian thought historical importance rather than authority. The claim of India to the attention of the world is that she, more than any other nation since history began, has devoted herself to contemplating the ultimate mysteries of existence and, in my eyes, the fact that Indian thought diverges widely from our own popular thought is a positive merit. In

intellectual and philosophical pursuits we want new ideas and Indian ideas are not familiar or hackneyed in the west, though I think that more European philosophers and mystics have arrived at similar conclusions than is generally supposed.

Indian religions have more spirituality and a greater sense of the Infinite than our western creeds and more liberality. They are not merely tolerant but often hold that the different classes of mankind have their own rules of life and suitable beliefs and that he who follows such partial truths does no wrong to the greater and all-inclusive truths on which his circumstances do not permit him to fix his attention. And though some Indian religions may sanction bad customs, sacrifice of animals and immoral rites, yet on the whole they give the duty of kindness to animals a prominence unknown in Europe and are more penetrated with the idea that civilization means a gentle and enlightened temper—an idea sadly forgotten in these days of war. Their speculative interest can hardly be denied. For instance, the idea of a religion without a personal God may seem distasteful or absurd but the student of human thought must take account of it and future generations may not find it a useless notion. It is certain that in Asia we find Buddhist Churches which preach morality and employ ritual and yet are not theistic, and also various systems of pantheism which, though they may use the word God, obviously use it in a sense which has nothing in common with Christian and Mohammedan ideas.

India's greatest contribution to religion is not intellectual,

as the mass of commentaries and arguments produced by Hindus might lead us to imagine, but the persistent and almost unchallenged belief in the reality and bliss of certain spiritual states which involve intuition. All Indians agree that they are real, even to the extent of offering an alternative superior to any ordinary life of pleasure and success, but their value for us is lessened by the variety of interpretations which they receive and which make it hard to give a more detailed definition than that above. For some they are the intuition of a particular god, for others of divinity in general. For Buddhists they mean a new life of knowledge, freedom and bliss without reference to a deity. But apart from such high matters I believe that the mental training preliminary to these states—what is called meditation and concentration—is well worth the attention of Europeans. I am not recommending trances or catalepsy: in these as in other matters the Hindus are probably prone to exaggerate and the Buddha himself in his early quest for truth discarded trances as an unsatisfactory method. But the reader can convince himself by experiment that the elementary discipline which consists in suppressing "discursive thought" and concentrating the mind on a particular object—say a red flower—so that for some time nothing else is present to the mind and the image of the flower is seen and realized in all its details, is most efficacious for producing mental calm and alertness. By such simple exercises the mind learns how to rest and refresh itself. Its quickness of apprehension and its retentive power are considerably increased,

for words and facts imprinted on it when by the suppression of its ordinary activities it has thus been made a *tabula rasa* remain fixed and clear.

Such great expressions of emotional theism as the Râmâyana of Tulsi Das are likely to find sympathetic readers in Europe, but the most original feature of Indian thought is that, as already mentioned, it produces systems which can hardly be refused the name of religion and yet are hardly theistic. The Buddha preached a creed without reference to a supreme deity and the great Emperor Asoka, the friend of man and beast, popularized this creed throughout India. Even at the present day the prosperous and intelligent community of Jains follow a similar doctrine and the Advaita philosophy diverges widely from European theism. It is true that Buddhism invented gods for itself and became more and more like Hinduism and that the later Vedantist and Sivaite schools have a strong bent to monotheism. Yet all Indian theism seems to me to have a pantheistic tinge⁹² and India is certainly the classic land of Pantheism. The difficulties of Pantheism are practical: it does not lend itself easily to popular cries and causes and it finds it hard to distinguish and condemn evil⁹³. But it appeals to the scientific

⁹² I know that this statement may encounter objections, but I believe that few Indians would be surprised at the proposition that God is all things. Some might deny it, but as a familiar error.

⁹³ But orthodox Christianity really falls into the same difficulty. For if God planned the redemption of the world and we are saved by the death of Christ, then the Chief Priests, Judas, Pilate and the soldiers who crucified Christ are at least the instruments

temper and is not repulsive to many religious and emotional natures. Indeed it may be said that in monotheistic creeds the most thoughtful and devout minds often tend towards Pantheism, as witness the Sufis among Moslems, the Kabbalists among the Jews and many eminent mystics in the Christian Church. In India, the only country where the speculative interest is stronger than the practical, it is a common form of belief and it is of great importance for the history and criticism of religion to see how an idea which in Europe is hardly more than philosophic theory works on a large scale.

Later Buddhism—the so-called Mahayana—may be justly treated as one of the many varieties of Indian religion, not more differentiated from others than is for instance the creed of the Sikhs. The speculative side of early Buddhism (which was however mainly a practical movement) may be better described as an Indian critique of current Indian views. The psychology of the Pitakas has certainly enough life to provoke discussion still, for it receives both appreciative treatment and uncompromising condemnation at the hands of European scholars. To set it aside as not worth the labour spent on elucidating it, seems to me an error of judgment. As a criticism of the doctrine developed in the Upanishads, it is acute and interesting, even if we hold the Upanishads to be in the right, and no serious attempt to analyze the human mind can be without value, for though the facts are before every human being such attempts are rare. It is singular

that so many religions should prescribe and prophecy for the soul without being able to describe its nature. Hesitation and diffidence in defining the Deity seem proper and natural but it is truly surprising that people are not agreed as to the essential facts about their own consciousness, their selves, souls, minds and spirits: whether these are the same or different: whether they are entities or aggregations. The Buddha's answers to these questions cannot be dismissed as ancient or outlandish, for they are practically the conclusions arrived at by a distinguished modern psychologist, William James, who says in his *Psychology*⁹⁴, "The states of consciousness are all that psychology requires to do her work with. Metaphysics or theology may prove the soul to exist, but for psychology the hypothesis of such a substantial principle of unity is superfluous" and again "In this book the provisional solution which we have reached must be the final one: The thoughts themselves are the thinkers."

Equally in sympathy with Buddhist ideas is the philosophy of M. Bergson, which holds that movement, change, becoming is everything and that there is nothing else: no things that move and change and become⁹⁵. Huxley too, speaking of idealism, said "what Berkeley does not seem to have so clearly perceived is that the non-existence of a substance of mind is equally arguable...."

⁹⁴ Wm James, *Psychology*, pp. 203 and 216.

⁹⁵ I quote this epitome from Wildon Carr's Henri Bergson, *The Philosophy of Change*, because the phraseology is thoroughly Buddhist and appears to have the approval of M. Bergson himself.

It is a remarkable indication of the subtlety of Indian speculation that Gautama should have seen deeper than the greatest of modern idealists⁹⁶."

Even Mr Bradley says "the soul is a particular group of psychical events in so far as those events are taken merely as happening in time⁹⁷." There is a smack of the Pitakas about this, although Mr Bradley's philosophy as a whole shows little sympathy for Buddhism but a wondrous resemblance both in thought and language to the Vedânta. This is the more remarkable because there is no trace in his works of Sanskrit learning or even of Indian influence at second hand. A peculiarly original and independent mind seems to have worked its way to many of the doctrines of the Advaita, without entirely adopting its general conclusions, for I doubt if Sankara would have said "the positive relation of every appearance as an adjective to reality and the presence of reality among its appearances in different degrees and with different values—this double truth we have found to be the centre of philosophy." But still this is the gist of many Vedantic utterances both early⁹⁸ and late. Gauḍapâda states that the world of appearance is due to *svabhâva* or the essential nature of Brahman and I imagine that the thought here is

⁹⁶ *Romanes Lecture*, 1893.

⁹⁷ *Appearance*, p. 298.

⁹⁸ Thus the Śvetâśvatara Up. says that the whole world is filled with the parts or limbs of God and metaphors like sparks from a fire or threads from a spider seem an attempt to express the same idea. Br. Ar. Up. 2. 1. 20; Mund. Up. 2. 1. 1.

the same as when Mr Bradley says that the Absolute is positively present in all appearances.

Among many coincidences both in thought and expression, I note the following. Mr Bradley⁹⁹ says "The Perfect . . . means the identity of idea and existence, accompanied by pleasure" which is almost the verbal equivalent of *saccidânanda*. "The universe is one reality which appears in finite centres." "How there can be such a thing as appearance we do not understand." In the same way Vedantists and Mahayanists can offer no explanation of Maya or whatever is the power which makes the universe of phenomena. Again he holds that neither our bodies nor our souls (as we commonly understand the word) are truly real¹⁰⁰ and he denies the reality of progress "For nothing perfect, nothing genuinely real can move." And his discussion of the difficulty of reconciling the ideas of God and the Absolute and specially the phrase "short of the Absolute, God cannot rest and having reached that goal he is lost and religion with him" is an epitome of the oscillations of philosophic Hinduism which feels the difficulty far more keenly than European religion, because ideas analogous to the Absolute are a more vital part of religion (as

⁹⁹ *Appearance*, p. 244; *Essays on Truth*, p. 409; *Appearance*, p. 413. Though the above quotations are all from Mr Bradley I might have added others from Mr Bosanquet's *Gifford Lectures* and from Mr McTaggart.

¹⁰⁰ "The plurality of souls in the Absolute is therefore appearance and their existence not genuine . . . souls like their bodies, are as such nothing more than appearance—Neither (body and soul) is real in the end: each is merely phenomenal." *Appearance*, pp. 305-307.

distinguished from metaphysics) in India than in Europe¹⁰¹.

Nor can Indian ideas as to Maya and the unreality of matter be dismissed as curious dreams of mystical brains, for the most recent phases of Physics—a science which changes its fundamental ideas as often as philosophy—tend to regard matter as electrical charges in motion. This theory is a phrase rather than an explanation, but it has a real affinity to Indian phrases which say that Brahman or Śakti (which are forces) produce the illusion of the world.

I am not venturing here on any general comparison of European and Indian thought. My object is merely to point out that the latter contains many ideas to which British philosophers find themselves led and from which, when they have discovered them in their own way, they do not shrink. It can hardly then be without interest to see how these ideas have been elaborated, often more boldly and thoroughly, in Asia.

¹⁰¹ Since I wrote this I have read Mr Wells' book *God the Invisible King*. Mr Wells knows that he is indebted to oriental thought and thinks that European religion in the future may be so too, but I do not know if he realizes how nearly his God coincides with the Mahayanist conception of a Bodhisattva such as Avalokita or Mañjuśrī. These great beings have, as Bodhisattvas, a beginning: they are not the creators of the world but masters and conquerors of it and helpers of mankind: they have courage and eternal youth and Mañjuśrī "bears a sword, that clean discriminating weapon." Like most Asiatics, Mr Wells cannot allow his God to be crucified and he draws a distinction between God and the Veiled Being, very like that made by Indians between Īśvara and Brahman.

BOOK II

EARLY INDIAN RELIGION

A GENERAL VIEW

In this book I shall briefly sketch the condition of religion in India prior to the rise of Buddhism and in so doing shall be naturally led to indicate several of the fundamental ideas of Hinduism. For few old ideas have entirely perished: new deities, new sects and new rites have arisen but the main theories of the older Upanishads still command respect and modern reformers try to justify their teaching from the ancient texts.

But I do not propose to discuss in detail the religion of the Vedic hymns for, so far as it can be distinguished from later phases, it looks backward rather than forward. It is important to students of comparative mythology, of the origins of religion, of the Aryan race. But it represents rather what the Aryans brought into India than what was invented in India, and it is this latter which assumes a prominent place in the intellectual history of the world as Hinduism and Buddhism. The ancient nature gods of the wind and the dawn have little place in the mental horizon of either the Buddha or Bhagavad-gîtâ and even when the old names remain, the beings who bear them generally have new attributes. Still, Vedic texts are used in modern worship and in many respects there is a real continuity of thought.

In the first chapter I enquire whether there is any element common to the religions of India and to the countries of Eastern Asia and find that the worship of nature spirits and the veneration of ancestors prevail throughout the whole of this vast region and have not been suppressed by Buddhism or Brahmanism. Then coming to the purely Indian sphere, I have thought it might not be amiss to give an epitome of such parts of Indian history as are of importance for religion. Next I endeavour to explain how the social institutions of India and the unique position acquired by the Brahman aristocracy have determined the character of Hindu religion—protean and yet unmistakably Indian in all its phases—and I also investigate the influence of the belief in rebirth, which from the time of the Upanishads onwards dominates Indian thought. In the fourth and fifth chapters I trace the survival of some ancient ideas and show how many attributes of the Vedic gods can be found in modern deities who are at first sight widely different and how theories of salvation by sacrifice or asceticism or knowledge have been similarly persistent. In the sixth chapter I attempt to give a picture of religious life, both Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic, as it existed in India about the time when the Buddha was born. Of the non-Brahmanic sects which then flourished most have disappeared, but one, namely the Jains, has survived and left a considerable record in literature and art. I have therefore devoted a chapter to it here.

My object in this book is to discuss the characteristics of Indian religion which are not only fundamental but ancient.

Hence this is not the place to dwell on Bhakti or relatively modern theistic sects, however great their importance in later Hinduism may be.

CHAPTER I

RELIGIONS OF INDIA AND EASTERN ASIA

The countries with which this work deals are roughly speaking India with Ceylon; Indo-China with parts of the Malay Archipelago; Japan and China with the neighbouring regions such as Tibet and Mongolia. All of them have been more or less influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism and in hardly any of them is Mohammedanism the predominant creed¹⁰², though it may have numerous adherents. The rest of Asia is mainly Mohammedan or Christian and though a few Buddhists may be found even in Europe (as the Kalmuks) still neither Hinduism nor Buddhism has met with general acceptance west of India.

In one sense, the common element in the religion of all these countries is the presence of Indian ideas, due in most cases to Buddhism which is the export form of Hinduism, although Brahmanic Hinduism reached Camboja and the Archipelago. But this is not the element on which I wish now to insist. I would rather enquire whether apart from the diffusion of ideas which has taken place in historical times, there is any common substratum in the religious temperament of this area, any fund of primitive, or at least prehistoric ideas, shared by

¹⁰² The Malay countries are the only exception.

its inhabitants. Such common ideas will be deep-seated and not obvious, for it needs but little first-hand acquaintance with Asia to learn that all generalizations about the spirit of the East require careful testing and that such words as Asiatic or oriental do not connote one type of mind. For instance in China and Japan the control of the state over religion is exceptionally strong: in India it is exceptionally weak. The religious temperaments of these nations differ from one another as much as the Mohammedan and European temperaments and the fact that many races have adopted Buddhism and refashioned it to their liking does not indicate that their mental texture is identical. The cause of this superficial uniformity is rather that Buddhism in its prime had no serious rivals in either activity or profundity, but presented itself to the inhabitants of Eastern Asia as pre-eminently the religion of civilized men, and was often backed by the support of princes. Yet one cannot help thinking that its success in Eastern Asia and its failure in the West are not due merely to politics and geography but must correspond with some racial idiosyncrasies. Though it is hard to see what mental features are common to the dreamy Hindus and the practical Chinese, it may be true that throughout Eastern Asia for one reason or another such as political despotism, want of military spirit, or on the other hand a tendency to regard the family, the clan or the state as the unit, the sense of individuality is weaker than in Western Asia or Europe, so that pantheism and quietism with their doctrines of the vanity of the world and the bliss of absorption arouse less opposition

from robust lovers of life. This is the most that can be stated and it does not explain why there are many Buddhists in Japan but none in Persia.

But apart from Buddhism and all creeds which have received a name, certain ideas are universal in this vast region. One of them is the belief in nature spirits, beings who dwell in rocks, trees, streams and other natural objects and possess in their own sphere considerable powers of doing good or ill. The Nagas, Yakshas and Bhutas of India, the Nats of Burma, the Peys of Siam, the Kami of Japan and the Shen of China are a few items in a list which might be indefinitely extended. In many countries this ghostly population is as numerous as the birds of the forest: they haunt every retired spot and perch unseen under the eaves of every house. Theology has not usually troubled itself to define their status and it may even be uncertain whether respect is shown to the spirits inhabiting streams and mountain peaks or to the peaks and streams themselves¹⁰³.

They may be kindly (though generally requiring punctilious attention), or mischievous, or determined enemies of mankind. But infinite as are their variations, the ordinary Asiatic no more doubts their existence than he doubts the existence of animals. The position which they enjoy, like their character, is various, for in Asia deities like men have careers which depend on luck.

¹⁰³ OThus Motoori (quoted in Aston's *Shintō*, p. 9) says "Birds, beasts, plants and trees, seas and mountains and all other things whatsoever which deserve to be dreaded and revered for the extraordinary and pre-eminent powers which they possess are called *Kami*."

Many of them remain mere elves or goblins, some become considerable local deities. But often they occupy a position intermediate between real gods and fairies. Thus in southern India, Burma and Ceylon may be seen humble shrines, which are not exactly temples but the abodes of beings whom prudent people respect. They have little concern with the destinies of the soul or the observance of the moral law but much to do with the vagaries of rivers and weather and with the prosperity of the village. Though these spirits may attain a high position within a certain district (as for instance Maha Saman, the deity of Adam's Peak in Ceylon) they are not of the same stuff as the great gods of Asia. These latter are syntheses of many ideas, and centuries of human thought have laboured on their gigantic figures. It is true that the mental attitude which deifies the village stream is fundamentally the same as that which worships the sun, but in the latter case the magnitude of the phenomenon deified sets it even for the most rustic mind in another plane. Also the nature gods of the Veda are not quite the same as the nature spirits which the Indian peasants worship to-day and worshipped, as the Pitakas tell us, in the time of the Buddha. For the Vedic deities are such forces as fire and light, wind and water. This is nature worship but the worship of nature generalized, not of some bold rock or mysterious rustling tree. It may be that a migratory life, such as the ancient Aryans at one time led, inclined their minds to these wider views, since neither the family nor the tribe had an abiding interest in any one place. Thus the ancestors of the Turks

in the days before Islam worshipped the spirits of the sky, earth and water, whereas the more civilized but sedentary Chinese had genii for every hamlet, pool and hillock.

It is difficult to say whether monotheism is a development of this nature worship or has another origin. In Japanese religion the monotheistic tendency is markedly absent. The sun-goddess is the principal deity but remains simply *prima inter pares*. But in the ancient religion of China, T'ien or Heaven, also called Shang-ti, the supreme ruler, though somewhat shadowy and impersonal, does become an omnipotent Providence without even approximate rivals. Other superhuman beings are in comparison with him merely angels. Unfortunately the early history of Chinese religion is obscure and the documents scanty. In India however the evolution of pantheism or theism (though usually with a pantheistic tinge) out of the worship of nature forces seems clear. These gods or forces are seen to melt into one another and to be aspects of one another, until the mind naturally passes on to the idea that they are all manifestations of one force finding expression in human consciousness as well as in physical phenomena. The animist and pantheist represent different stages but not different methods of thought. For the former, every natural object which impresses him is alive; the latter concurs in this view, only he thinks the universe is instinct with one and the same life displaying itself in infinite variety.

One difficulty incidental to the treatment of Asiatic religions in European languages is the necessity, or at any rate the

ineradicable habit, of using well-known words like God and soul as the equivalents of Asiatic terms which have not precisely the same content and which often imply a different point of view. For practical life it is wise and charitable to minimize religious differences and emphasize points of agreement. But this willingness to believe that others think as we do becomes a veritable vice if we are attempting an impartial exposition of their ideas. If the English word God means the deity of ordinary Christianity, who is much the same as Allah or Jehovah—that is to say the creator of the world and enforcer of the moral law—then it would be better never to use this word in writing of the religions of India and Eastern Asia, for the concept is almost entirely foreign to them. The nature spirits of which we have been speaking are clearly not God: when an Indian peasant brings offerings to the tomb of a deceased brigand or the Emperor of China promotes some departed worthy to be a deity of a certain class, we call the ceremony deification, but there is not the smallest intention of identifying the person deified with the Supreme Being, and odd as it may seem, the worship of such "gods" is compatible with monotheism or atheism. In China, Shang-ti is less definite than God¹⁰⁴ and it does not appear that he is thought of as the creator of the world and of human souls. Even the greater Hindu deities are not really God, for those

¹⁰⁴ This impersonality is perhaps a later characteristic. The original form of the Chinese character for T'ien Heaven represented a man. The old Finnish and Samoyede names for God—Ukko and Num—perhaps belong to this stage of thought.

who follow the higher life can neglect and almost despise them, without, however, denying their existence. On the other hand Brahman, the pantheos of India, though equal to the Christian God in majesty, is really a different conception, for he is not a creator in the ordinary sense: he is impersonal and though not evil, yet he transcends both good and evil. He might seem merely a force more suited to be the subject matter of science than of religion, were not meditation on him the occupation, and union with him the goal, of many devout lives. And even when Indian deities are most personal, as in the Vishnuite sects, it will be generally found that their relations to the world and the soul are not those of the Christian God. It is because the conception of superhuman existence is so different in Europe and Asia that Asiatic religions often seem contradictory or corrupt: Buddhism and Jainism, which we describe as atheistic, and the colourless respectable religion of educated Chinese, become in their outward manifestations unblushingly polytheistic.

Similar difficulties and ambiguities attend the use of the word soul, for Buddhism, which is supposed to hold that there is no soul, preaches retribution in future existences for acts done in this, and seeks to terrify the evil doer with the pains of hell; whereas the philosophy of the Brahmans, which inculcates a belief in the soul, seems to teach in some of its phases that the disembodied and immortal soul has no consciousness in the ordinary human sense. Here language is dealing with the same problems as those which we describe by such phrases as the

soul, immortality and continuous existence, but it is striving to express ideas for which we have little sympathy and no adequate terminology. They will be considered later.

But one attitude towards that which survives death is almost universal in Eastern Asia and also easily intelligible. It finds expression in the ceremonies known as ancestor worship. This practice has attracted special attention in China, where it is the commonest and most conspicuous form of religious observance, but it is equally prevalent among the Hindus, though less prominent because it is only one among the many rites which engage the attention of that most devout nation. It is one of the main constituents in the religions of Indo-China and Japan, though the best authorities think that it was not the predominant element in the oldest form of Shinto. It is less prominent among the Tibeto-Burmese tribes but not absent, for in Tibet there are both good and evil ghosts who demand recognition by appropriate rites. It is sometimes hard to distinguish it from the worship of natural forces. For instance in China and southern India most villages have a local deity who is often nameless. The origin of such deities may be found either in a departed worthy or in some striking phenomenon or in the association of the two.

The cult of ghosts may be due to either fear or affection, and both motives are found in Eastern Asia. But though abundant examples of the propitiation of angry spirits can be cited, respect and consideration for the dead are the feelings which usually inspire these ceremonies at the present day and form the

chief basis of family religion. There is no need to explain this sentiment. It is much stronger in Asia than in Europe but some of its manifestations may be paralleled by masses and prayers for the dead, others by the care bestowed on graves and by notices *in memoriam*. As a rule both in China and India only the last three generations are honoured in these ceremonies. The reason is obvious: the more ancient ancestors have ceased to be living memories. But it might be hard to find a theoretical justification for neglecting them and it is remarkable that in all parts of Asia the cult of the dead fits very awkwardly into the official creeds. It is not really consistent with any doctrine of metempsychosis or with Buddhist teaching as to the impermanence of the Ego. In China may be found the further inconsistency that the spirit of a departed relative may receive the tribute of offerings and salutations called ancestor worship, while at the same time Buddhist services are being performed for his deliverance from hell. But of the wide distribution, antiquity and strength of the cult there can be no doubt. It is anterior not only to Brahmanism but to the doctrines of transmigration and karma, and the main occupation of Buddhist priests in China and Japan is the performance of ceremonies supposed to benefit the dead. Even within Buddhism these practices cannot be dismissed as a late or foreign corruption. In the Khuddaka-pâṭha which, if not belonging to the most ancient part of the Buddhist canon, is at least pre-Christian and purely Indian, the dead are represented as waiting for offerings and as blessing those who give them.

It is also curious that a recent work called *Raymond* by Sir O. Lodge (1916) gives a view of the state after death which is substantially that of the Chinese. For its teaching is that the dead retain their personality, concern themselves with the things of this world, know what is going to happen here and can to some extent render assistance to the living¹⁰⁵. Also (and this point is specially remarkable) burning and mutilation of the body seem to inconvenience the dead.

Early Chinese works prescribe that during the performance of ancestral rites, the ghosts are to be represented by people known as the personators of the dead who receive the offerings and are supposed to be temporarily possessed by spirits and to be their mouthpieces. Possession by ghosts or other spirits is, in popular esteem, of frequent occurrence in India, China, Japan and Indo-China. It is one of the many factors which have contributed to the ideas of incarnation and deification, that is, that gods can become men and men gods. In Europe the spheres of the human and divine are strictly separated: to pass from one to the other is exceptional: a single incarnation is regarded as an epoch-making event of universal importance. But in Asia the frontiers are not thus rigidly delimited, nor are God and man thus opposed. The ordinary dead become powers in the spirit world and can bless or injure here: the great dead become deities: in another order of ideas, the dead immediately become reincarnate and reappear on earth: the gods take the shape of

¹⁰⁵ See the account of the Faunus message in this book.

men, sometimes for the space of a human life, sometimes for a shorter apparition. Many teachers in India have been revered as partial incarnations of Vishnu and most of the higher clergy in Tibet claim to be Buddhas or Bodhisattvas manifest in the flesh. There is no proof that the doctrine of metempsychosis existed in Eastern Asia independently of Indian influence but the ready acceptance accorded to it was largely due to the prevalent feeling that the worlds of men and spirits are divided by no great gulf. It is quite natural to step into the spirit world and back again into this.

It will not have escaped the reader's attention that many of the features which I have noticed as common to the religions of Eastern Asia—such as the worship of nature spirits and ancestors—are not peculiar to those countries but are almost, if not quite, universal in certain stages of religious development. They can, for instance, be traced in Europe. But whereas they exist here as survivals discernible only to the eye of research and even at the beginning of the Christian era had ceased to be the obvious characteristics of European paganism, in Asia they are still obvious. Age and logic have not impaired their vigour, and official theology, far from persecuting them, has accommodated its shape to theirs. This brings us to another point where the linguistic difficulty again makes itself felt, namely, that the word religion has not quite the same meaning in Eastern Asia as in Mohammedan and Christian lands. I know of no definition which would cover Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and

the superstitions of African savages, for the four have little community of subject matter or aim. If any definition can be found it must I think be based on some superficial characteristic such as ceremonial. Nor is there any objection to refusing the title of religion to Buddhism and Confucianism, except that an inconvenient lacuna would remain in our vocabulary, for they are not adequately described as philosophies. A crucial instance of the difference in the ideas prevalent in Europe and Eastern Asia is the fact that in China many people belong to two or three religions and it would seem that when Buddhism existed in India the common practice was similar. Paganism and spiritual religion can co-exist in the same mind provided their spheres are kept distinct. But Christianity and Islam both retain the idea of a jealous God who demands not only exclusive devotion but also exclusive belief: to believe in other Gods is not only erroneous; it is disobedience and disloyalty. But such ideas have little currency in Eastern Asia, especially among Buddhists. The Buddha is not a creator or a king but rather a physician. He demands no allegiance and for those who disobey him the only punishment is continuance of the disease. And though Indian deities may claim personal and exclusive devotion, yet in defining and limiting belief their priests are less exacting than Papal or Moslim doctors. Despite sectarian formulas, the Hindu cherishes broader ideas such as that all deities are forms and passing shapes of one essence; that all have their proper places and that gods, creeds and ceremonies are necessary helps in the lower stages of

the religious life but immaterial to the adept.

It does not follow from this that Hindus are lukewarm or insincere in their convictions. On the contrary, faith is more intense and more widely spread among them than in Europe. Nor can it be said that their religion is something detachable from ordinary life: the burden of daily observances prescribed and duly borne seems to us intolerable. But Buddhism and many forms of Hinduism present themselves as methods of salvation with a simplicity and singleness of aim which may be paralleled in the Gospels but only rarely in the national churches of Europe. The pious Buddhist is one who moulds his life and thoughts according to a certain law: he is not much concerned with worshipping the gods of the state or city, but has nothing against such worship: his aims and procedure have nothing to do with spirits who give wealth and children or avert misfortune. But since such matters are of great interest to mankind, he is naturally brought into contact with them and he has no more objection to a religious service for procuring rain than to a scientific experiment for the same purpose. Similarly Confucians follow a system of ethics which is sufficient for a gentleman and accords a decorous recognition to a Supreme Being and ancestral spirits. Much concession to superstition would be reprehensible according to this code but if a Confucian honours some deity either for his private objects or because it is part of his duties as a magistrate, he is not offending Confucius. He is simply engaging in an act which has nothing to do with Confucianism. The same

distinction often applies in Indian religion but is less clear there, because both the higher doctrine as well as ordinary ceremonial and mythology are described under one name as Hinduism. But if a native of southern India occasionally sacrifices a buffalo to placate some village spirit, it does not follow that all his religious notions are of this barbarous type.

Asiatic ideas as to the relations between religions are illustrated by an anecdote related to me in Assam. Christianity has made many converts among the Khasis, a non-Hindu tribe of that region, and a successful revival meeting extending over a week was once held in a district of professing Christians. When the week was over and the missionaries gone, the Khasis performed a ceremony in honour of their tribal deities. Their pastors regarded this as a woeful lapse from grace but no disbelief in Christianity or change of faith was implied. The Khasis had embraced Christianity in the same spirit that animated the ancient disciples of the Buddha: it was the higher law which spoke of a new life and of the world to come. But it was not understood that it offered to take over the business of the local deities, to look after crops and pigs and children, to keep smallpox, tigers and serpents in order. Nobody doubted the existence of spirits who regulate these matters, while admitting that ethics and the road to heaven were not in their department, and therefore it was thought wise to supplement the Christian ceremonies by others held in their honour and thus let them see that they were not forgotten and run no risk of incurring their

enmity.

My object in this chapter is to point out at the very beginning that in Asia the existence of a duly labelled religion, such as Buddhism or Confucianism, does not imply the suppression of older nameless beliefs, especially about nature spirits and ghosts. In China and many other countries we must not be surprised to find Buddhists honouring spirits who have nothing to do with Buddhism. In India we must not suppose that the doctrines of Râmânuja or any other great teacher are responsible for the crudities of village worship, nor yet rashly assume that the villager is ignorant of them.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL

It may be useful to insert here a brief sketch of Indian history, but its aim is merely to outline the surroundings in which Hindu religion and philosophy grew up. It, therefore, passes lightly over much which is important from other points of view and is intended for reference rather than for continuous reading.

An indifference to history, including biography, politics and geography, is the great defect of Indian literature. Not only are there few historical treatises¹⁰⁶ but even historical allusions are rare and this curious vagueness is not peculiar to any age or district. It is as noticeable among the Dravidians of the south as among the speakers of Aryan languages in the north. It prevails from Vedic times until the Mohammedan conquest, which produced chronicles though it did not induce Brahmans to write them in Sanskrit. The lacuna is being slowly filled up by the labours of European scholars who have collected numerous data from an examination of inscriptions, monuments and coins,

¹⁰⁶ The chief exception in Sanskrit is the *Râjataranginî*, a chronicle of Kashmir composed in 1148 A.D. There are also a few panegyrics of contemporary monarchs, such as the *Harshacarita* of Bâna, and some of the Puranas (especially the *Matsya* and *Vâyu*) contain historical material. See Vincent Smith, *Early History of India*, chap. I, sect. II, and *Pargiter Dynasties of the Kali Age*. The Greek and Roman accounts of Ancient India have been collected by McCrindle in six volumes 1877-1901.

from the critical study of Hindu literature, and from research in foreign, especially Chinese, accounts of ancient India.

At first sight the history of India seems merely a record of invasions, the annals of a land that was always receptive and fated to be conquered. The coast is poor in ports and the nearest foreign shore distant. The land frontiers offer more temptation to invaders than to emigrants. The Vedic Aryans, Persians, Greeks and hordes innumerable from Central Asia poured in century after century through the passes of the north-western mountains and after the arrival of Vasco da Gama other hordes came from Europe by sea. But the armies and fleets of India can tell no similar story of foreign victories. This picture however neglects the fact that large parts of Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago (including Camboja, Champa, Java and even Borneo) received not only civilization but colonists and rulers from India. In the north too Nepal, Kashmir, Khotan and many other districts might at one time or another be legitimately described as conquered or tributary countries. It may indeed be justly objected that Indian literature knows nothing of Camboja and other lands where Indian buildings have been discovered¹⁰⁷ and that the people of India were unconscious of having conquered them. But Indian literature is equally unconscious of the conquests made by Alexander, Kanishka and many others. Poets and philosophers

¹⁰⁷ The inscriptions of the Chola Kings however (c. 1000 A.D.) seem to boast of conquests to the East of India. See Coedès "Le royaume de Çrîvijaya" in *B.E.F.E.O.* 1918

were little interested in the expeditions of princes, whether native or foreign. But if by India is meant the country bounded by the sea and northern mountains it undoubtedly sent armies and colonists to regions far beyond these limits, both in the south-east and the north, and if the expansion of a country is to be measured not merely by territorial acquisition but by the diffusion of its institutions, religion, art and literature, then "the conquests of the Dhamma," to use Asoka's phrase, include China, Japan, Tibet and Mongolia.

The fact that the Hindus paid no attention to these conquests and this spread of their civilization argues a curious lack of interest in national questions and an inability to see or utilize political opportunities which must be the result of temperament rather than of distracting invasions. For the long interval between the defeat of the Huns in 526 A.D. and the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni about 1000 A.D. which was almost entirely free from foreign inroads, seems precisely the period when the want of political ideas and constructive capacity was most marked. Nor were the incursions always destructive and sterile. The invaders, though they had generally more valour than culture of their own, often brought with them foreign art and ideas, Hellenic, Persian or Mohammedan. Naturally the northern districts felt their violence most as well as the new influences which they brought, whereas the south became the focus of Hindu politics and culture which radiated thence northwards again. Yet, on the whole, seeing how vast is the area occupied by the Hindus,

how great the differences not only of race but of language, it is remarkable how large a measure of uniformity exists among them (of course I exclude Mohammedans) in things religious and intellectual. Hinduism ranges from the lowest superstition to the highest philosophy but the stages are not distributed geographically. Pilgrims go from Badrinath to Ramesvaram: the Vaishnavism of Trichinopoly, Muttra and Bengal does not differ in essentials, the worship of the linga can be seen almost anywhere. And though India has often been receptive, this receptivity has been deliberate and discriminating. Great as was the advance of Islam, the resistance offered to it was even more remarkable and at the present day it cannot be said that in the things which most interest them Indian minds are specially hospitable to British ideas.

The relative absence of political unity seems due to want of interest in politics. It is often said that the history of India in pre-Mohammedan times is an unintelligible or, at least, unreadable, record of the complicated quarrels and varying frontiers of small states. Yet this is as true of the history of the Italian as of the Indian peninsula. The real reason why Indian history seems tedious and intricate is that large interests are involved only in the greatest struggles, such as the efforts to repulse the Huns or Mohammedans.

The ordinary wars, though conducted on no small scale, did not involve such causes or principles as the strife of Roundheads with Cavaliers. With rare exceptions, states and empires were

regarded as the property of their monarchs. Religion claimed to advise kings, like other wealthy persons, as to their duties and opportunities, and ministers became the practical rulers of kingdoms just as a steward may get the management of an estate into his hands. But it rarely occurred to Hindus that other persons in the estate had any right to a share in the government, or that a Raja could be dispossessed by anybody but another Raja. Of that, indeed, there was no lack. Not only had every sovereign to defend himself against the enemies in his own house but external politics seemed based on the maxim that it is the duty of a powerful ruler to increase his territory by direct and unprovoked attacks on his neighbours. There is hardly a king of eminence who did not expand his power in this way, and the usual history of a royal house is successful aggression followed by collapse when weaker hands were unable to hold the inherited handful. Even moderately long intervals of peace are rare. Yet all the while we seem to be dealing not with the expansion or decadence of a nation, but with great nobles who add to their estates or go bankrupt.

These features of Indian politics are illustrated by the Arthaśâstra, a manual of state-craft attributed to Cānakya, the minister of Candragupta and sometimes called the Indian Macchiavelli. Its authenticity has been disputed but it is now generally accepted by scholars as an ancient work composed if not in the fourth century, at least some time before the Christian era. It does not, like Manu and other Brahmanic law-books,

give regulations for an ideal kingdom but frankly describes the practice of kings. The form of state contemplated is a small kingdom surrounded by others like it and war is assumed to be their almost normal relation, but due to the taste or policy of kings, not to national aspirations or economic causes. Towards the Brahmans a king has certain moral obligations, towards his subjects and fellow monarchs none. It is assumed that his object is to obtain money from his subjects, conquer his neighbours, and protect himself by espionage and severe punishments against the attacks to which he is continually exposed, especially at the hands of his sons. But the author does not allow his prince a life of pleasure: he is to work hard and the first things he has to attend to are religious matters.

The difficulty of writing historical epitomes which are either accurate or readable is well known and to outline the events which have occurred in the vast area called India during the last 2500 years is a specially arduous task, for it is almost impossible to frame a narrative which follows the fortunes of the best known Hindu kingdoms and also does justice to the influence of southern India and Islam. It may be useful to tabulate the principal periods, but the table is not continuous and even when there is no gap in chronology, it often happens that only one political area is illuminated amid the general darkness and that this area is not the same for many centuries.

1. From about 500 to 200 B.C. Magadha (the modern Bihar) was the principal state and the dominions of its great king Asoka

were almost the same as British India to-day.

2. In the immediately succeeding period many invaders entered from the north-west. Some were Greeks and some Iranians but the most important were the Kushans who ruled over an Empire embracing both north-western India and regions beyond it in Afghanistan and Central Asia. This Empire came to an end in the third century A.D. but the causes of its collapse are obscure.

3. The native Hindu dynasty of the Guptas began to rule in 320 A.D. Its dominions included nearly all northern India but it was destroyed by the invasions of the Huns in the fifth and sixth centuries.

4. The Hindu Emperor Harsha (606-647 A.D.) practically reconstituted the Gupta Empire but his dominions split up after his death. At the same time another Empire which extended from Gujarat to Madras was founded by Pulakeśin, a prince from the south, a region which though by no means uncivilized had hitherto played a small part in the general history of India.

5. From 650 to 1000 A.D. India was divided among numerous independent kingdoms. There was no central power but Bengal and the Deccan were more prominent than previously.

6. After 1000 A.D. the conquests of Mohammedan invaders became important and the Hindu states of northern and central India collapsed or grew weak. But the Hindus held out in Rajputana, Orissa, and above all in Vijayanagar.

7. In 1526 came the invasion of the Mughals, who founded

an Empire which at its zenith (1556-1707) included all India except the extreme south. In its decadence the Marathas and Sikhs became powerful and Europeans began to intervene.

It is generally agreed that at a period which, though not fixed, was anterior to 1000 B.C.¹⁰⁸ a body of invaders known as Aryans and nearly akin to the ancient Iranians entered India through the north-western mountains. They found there other tribes not deficient in civilization but unable to offer any effective resistance. These tribes who retired southwards are commonly known as Dravidians¹⁰⁹ and possibly represent an earlier invasion of central-Asiatic tribes allied to the remote ancestors of the Turks and Mongols¹¹⁰. At the time when the earlier hymns of

¹⁰⁸ 0Very different opinions have been held as to whether this date should be approximately 1500 B.C. or 3000 B.C. The strong resemblance of the hymns of the Rig Veda to those of the Avesta is in favour of the less ancient date, but the date of the Gathas can hardly be regarded as certain.

¹⁰⁹ 1Linguistically there seems to be two distinct divisions, the Dravidians and the Munda (Kolarian).

¹¹⁰ 1The affinity between the Dravidian and Ural-Altai groups of languages has often been suggested but has met with scepticism. Any adequate treatment of this question demands a comparison of the earliest forms known in both groups and as to this I have no pretension to speak. But circumstances have led me to acquire at different times some practical acquaintance with Turkish and Finnish as well as a slight literary knowledge of Tamil and having these data I cannot help being struck by the general similarity shown in the structure both of words and of sentences (particularly the use of gerunds and the constructions which replace relative sentences) and by some resemblances in vocabulary. On the other hand the pronouns and consequently the conjugation of verbs show remarkable differences. But the curious Brahui language, which is classed as Dravidian, has negative forms in which *pa* is inserted into the verb, as in Yakut Turkish, e.g. Yakut *bis-pa-ppin*, I do not cut; Brahui *khan-pa-ra*, I do not

the Rig Veda were composed, the Aryans apparently lived in the Panjab and did not know the sea, the Vindhya mountains or the Narbudda river. They included several tribes, among whom five are specially mentioned, and we hear that a great battle was fought on the Ravi, in which a confederation of ten kings who wished to force a passage to the east was repulsed by Sudas, chief of the Tritsus. Still the south-eastern movement, across the modern United Provinces to the borders of Bengal, continued and, so far as our records go, it was in this direction rather than due south or south-west, that the Aryans chiefly advanced¹¹¹. When the Brâhmaṇas and earlier Upanishads were composed (c. 800-600 B.C.) the principal political units were the kingdoms of the Pancâlas and Kurus in the region of Delhi. The city of Ayodhyâ (Oudh) is also credited with a very ancient but legendary history.

The real history of India begins with the life of the Buddha who lived in the sixth century B.C.¹¹² At that time the small states of northern India, which were apparently oligarchies or monarchies restricted by the powers of a tribal council, were in process of being absorbed by larger states which were absolute monarchies and this remained the normal form of government in

see. The plural of nouns in Brahui uses the suffixes *k* and *t* which are found in the Finnish group and in Hungarian.

¹¹¹ 1See the legend in the Śat. Brâh. I. 4. 1. 14 ff.

¹¹² 1This much seems sure but whereas European scholars were till recently agreed that he died about 487 B.C. it is now suggested that 543 may be nearer the true date. See Vincent Smith in *Oxford History of India*, 1920, p. 48.

both Hindu and Moslim times. Thus Kosala (or Oudh) absorbed the kingdom of Benares but was itself conquered by Magadha or Bihar, the chief city of which was Pataliputra or Patna, destined to become the capital of India. We also know that at this period and for about two centuries later the Persian Empire had two satrapies within the limits of modern India, one called "India," including the country east of the Indus and possibly part of the Panjab, and the other called Gândhâra (Peshawar) containing Takshaśilâ¹¹³, a celebrated university. The situation of this seat of learning is important, for it was frequented by students from other districts and they must have felt there in early times Persian and afterwards Hellenistic influence. There are clear signs of Persian influence in India in the reign of Asoka. Of Magadha there is little to be said for the next century and a half, but it appears to have remained the chief state of northern India.

In 327 B.C. Alexander the Great after over-throwing the Persian Empire invaded India, where he remained only nineteen months. He probably intended to annex Sind and the Panjab permanently to his Empire but he died in 323 and in the next year Candragupta, an exiled scion of the royal house of Magadha, put an end to Macedonian authority in India and then seized the throne of his ancestors. He founded the Maurya dynasty under which Magadha expanded into an Empire comprising all India except the extreme south. Seleucus Nicator, who had

¹¹³ 1Pali Takkasila. Greek Taxila. It was near the modern Rawal Pindi and is frequently mentioned in the Jâtakas as an ancient and well-known place.

inherited the Asiatic possessions of Alexander and wished to assert his authority, came into collision with Candragupta but was completely worsted and about 303 B.C. concluded a treaty by which he ceded the districts of Kabul, Herat and Kandahar. Shortly afterwards he sent as his ambassador to the court of Pataliputra a Greek named Megasthenes who resided there for a considerable time and wrote an account of the country still extant in a fragmentary form. The grandson of Candragupta was Asoka, the first ruler of all India (c. 273-231 B.C.). His Empire extended from Afghanistan almost to Madras and was governed with benevolent but somewhat grandmotherly despotism. He was an ardent Buddhist and it is mainly owing to his efforts, which are described in more detail below, that Buddhism became during some centuries the dominant faith in India. Asoka's Empire broke up soon after his death in circumstances which are not clear, for we now enter upon one of those chaotic periods which recur from time to time in Indian history and we have little certain information until the fourth century A.D. Andhra, a region including large parts of the districts now called the Northern Circars, Hyderabad and Central Provinces, was the first to revolt from the Mauryas and a dynasty of Andhra kings¹¹⁴, who claimed to belong to the Śâtavâhana family, ruled until 236 A.D. over varying but often extensive territories. What remained of the Maurya throne was usurped in 184 B.C. by the Sungas who in their turn were overthrown by the Kaṇvas. These latter could

¹¹⁴ Most of them are known by the title of Śâtakarṇi.

not withstand the Andhras and collapsed before them about 27 B.C.

Alexander's invasion produced little direct effect, and no allusion to it has been found in Indian literature. But indirectly it had a great influence on the political, artistic and religious development of the Hindus by preparing the way for a series of later invasions from the north which brought with them a mixed culture containing Hellenic, Persian and other elements. During some centuries India, as a political region, was not delimited on the north-western side as it is at present and numerous principalities rose and fell which included Indian territory as well as parts of Afghanistan.

These states were of at least three classes, Hellenistic, Persian or Parthian, and Scythian, if that word can be properly used to include the Sakas and Kushans.

Bactria was a Persian satrapy before Alexander's invasion but when he passed through it on his way to India he founded twelve cities and settled a considerable number of his soldiers in them. It formed part of the Empire of Seleucus but declared itself independent in 250 B.C. about the same time that the Parthians revolted and founded the Empire of the Arsacidae. The Bactrian kings bore Greek names and in 209 Antiochus III made peace with one of them called Euthydemus, in common cause against the nomads who threatened Western Asia. Demetrius, the son of this Euthydemus, appears to have conquered Kabul, the Panjab and Sind (c. 190 B.C.) but his reign was troubled

by the rebellion of a certain Eukratides and it is probable that many small and contending frontier-states, of which we have a confused record, were ruled by the relatives of one or other of these two princes. The most important of them was Menander, apparently king of the Kabul valley. About 155 he made an incursion to the east, occupied Muttra and threatened Pataliputra itself but was repulsed. He is celebrated in Buddhist literature as the hero of the Questions of Milinda but his coins, though showing some Buddhist emblems, indicate that he was also a worshipper of Pallas. Shortly after this Hellenic influence in Bactria was overwhelmed by the invasion of the Yüeh-chih, though the Greek principalities in the Panjab may have lasted considerably longer.

In the reign of Mithridates (c. 171-138 B.C.) the Parthian Empire was limitrophe with India and possibly his authority extended beyond the Indus. A little later the Parthian dependencies included two satrapies, Aracosia and the western Panjab with capitals at Kandahar and Taxila respectively. In the latter ruled kings or viceroys one of whom called Gondophores (c. 20 A.D.) is celebrated on account of his legendary connection with the Apostle Thomas.

More important for the history of India were the conquests of the Sakas and Yüeh-chih, nomad tribes of Central Asia similar to the modern Turkomans¹¹⁵. The former are first heard of in

¹¹⁵ 1But perhaps not in language. Recent research makes it probable that the Kushans or Yüeh-chih used an Iranian idiom.

the basin of the river Ili, and being dislodged by the advance of the Yüeh-chih moved southwards reaching northwestern India about 150 B.C. Here they founded many small principalities, the rulers of which appear to have admitted the suzerainty of the Parthians for some time and to have borne the title of satraps. It is clear that western India was parcelled out among foreign princes called Sakas, Yavanas, or Pallavas whose frontiers and mutual relations were constantly changing. The most important of these principalities was known as the Great Satrapy which included Surashṭra (Kathiawar) with adjacent parts of the mainland and lasted until about 395 A.D.

The Yüeh-chih started westwards from the frontiers of China about 100 B.C. and, driving the Sakas before them, settled in Bactria. Here Kadphises, the chief of one of their tribes, called the Kushans, succeeded in imposing his authority on the others who coalesced into one nation henceforth known by the tribal name. The chronology of the Kushan Empire is one of the vexed questions of Indian history and the dates given below are stated positively only because there is no space for adequate discussion and are given with some scepticism, that is desire for more knowledge founded on facts. Kadphises I (c. 15-45 A.D.) after consolidating his Empire led his armies southwards, conquering Kabul and perhaps Kashmir. His successor Kadphises II (c. 45-78 A.D.) annexed the whole of north-western India, including northern Sind, the Panjab and perhaps Benares. There was a considerable trade between India and the Roman Empire at

this period and an embassy was sent to Trajan, apparently by Kanishka (c. 78-123), the successor of Kadphises. This monarch played a part in the later history of Buddhism comparable with that of Asoka in earlier ages¹¹⁶. He waged war with the Parthians and Chinese, and his Empire which had its capital at Peshawar included Afghanistan, Bactria, Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan¹¹⁷ and Kashmir. These dominions, which perhaps extended as far as Gaya in the east, were retained by his successors Huvishka (123-?140 A.D.) and Vasudeva (?140-178 A.D.), but after this period the Andhra and Kushan dynasties both collapsed as Indian powers, although Kushan kings continued to rule in Kabul. The reasons of their fall are unknown but may be connected with the rise of the Sassanids in Persia. For more than a century the political history of India is a blank and little can be said except that the kingdom of Surashṭra continued to exist under a Saka dynasty.

Light returns with the rise of the Gupta dynasty, which roughly marks the beginning of modern Hinduism and of a reaction against Buddhism. Though nothing is known of the fortunes of Pataliputra, the ancient imperial city of the Mauryas, during the first three centuries of our era, it continued to exist. In 320 a local Raja known as Candragupta I increased his

¹¹⁶ Fleet and Franke consider that Kanishka preceded the two Kadphises and began to reign about 58 B.C.

¹¹⁷ He appears to have been defeated in these regions by the Chinese general Pan-Chao about 90 A.D. but to have been more successful about fifteen years later.

dominions and celebrated his coronation by the institution of the Gupta era. His son Samudra Gupta continued his conquests and in the course of an extraordinary campaign, concluded about 340 A.D., appears to have received the submission of almost the whole peninsula. He made no attempt to retain all this territory but his effective authority was exercised in a wide district extending from the Hugli to the rivers Jumna and Chambal in the west and from the Himalayas to the Narbudda. His son Candragupta II or Vikramâditya added to these possessions Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar and for more than half a century the Guptas ruled undisturbed over nearly all northern India except Rajputana and Sind. Their capital was at first Pataliputra, but afterwards Kausambi and Ayodhya became royal residences.

The fall of the Guptas was brought about by another invasion of barbarians known as Hûnas, Ephthalites¹¹⁸ or White Huns and apparently a branch of the Huns who invaded Europe. This branch remained behind in Asia and occupied northern Persia. They invaded India first in 455, and were repulsed, but returned about 490 in greater force and overthrew the Guptas. Their kings Toramâṇa and Mihiragula were masters of northern India till 540 and had their local capital at Sialkot in the Panjab, though their headquarters were rather in Bamyin and Balkh. The cruelties of Mihiragula provoked a coalition of Hindu princes. The Huns were driven to the north and about 565 A.D. their destruction was completed by the allied forces of the Persians

¹¹⁸ 1Or Hephthalites. The original name seems to have been something like Haptal.

and Turks. Though they founded no permanent states their invasion was important, for many of them together with kindred tribes such as the Gurjaras (Gujars) remained behind when their political power broke up and, like the Sakas and Kushans before them, contributed to form the population of north-western India, especially the Rajput clans.

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